

Monthly Update

September 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update contains some of the final summaries of the annual conference meetings from across the United Methodist Church, with some passing resolutions continuing the push for homosexual normalization. Many of these actions take the form of support for the “cessation of clergy trials” and affirming “all of God’s people” – a euphemism for those involved in “LGBTQ” lifestyles. An example is that of the California–Pacific Conference’s Bishop Minerva Carcaño in one of her statements:

“We have made some bold statements as a denomination . . . When Jesus saw the opportunity to extend God’s grace and heal the bent over woman, all hell broke loose. Did he not know that he had broken the rules? . . . Jesus might expect us to follow him. So, we stick to the rules, rather than listening to Jesus. . . . Rules do not regulate the heart of God, and we are fortunate that this is the case because where would you and I be if it were not for God’s grace? So, how shall we be, how shall we act, what shall we do? . . . I want to stand with and follow Jesus on this journey to wholeness, a journey of grace and joy. Won’t you come with me?”

Disobey the Book of Discipline and support “gay weddings” equate to doing the will of Jesus? Her question asking of Jesus “Did he not know that he had broken the rules?” is ludicrous. Her conference’s statistics? “Membership is 73,668, down 3%. Worship attendance is 46,701, down 2%.” Statistics from the Susquehanna Conference speak to another aspect: “Clergy: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 4; ordained elder: 7; retired: 25; memorial service: 38. Conference: membership down 3%. worship attendance down 4%. And what is the result of this misguidedness? Declining membership and attendance, and clergy retiring and dying with few replacements.

Then since we seem unable to even get our own house in order, some of our leaders insist on helping our national leadership solve the world’s problems. “Peace for Korea Now!” “Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula” were two of the themes of a group of about 200 people as they marched the mile from Foundry UMC to Lafayette Park in front of the White House on July 26. Two prominent figures were retired Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, ecumenical officer for the Council of Bishops, and Wisconsin Area Bishop Hee-Soo Jung. Yet this peninsula is divided by one of the most ruthless dictatorships on earth. Exactly how will this advocacy and protest help the situation?

We have serious problems – and these are going to require effective solutions.

Our summer has seen a drop in giving – as is often the case at this time of the year for Christian ministries. Could we ask you to make a donation now – and to keep both our United Methodist Church and our country in prayer?

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

September 2014 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Smile and...be kind to everyone you see. ~ From an e-mail sent by Weeks Parker

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The Good Stuff

+ ***THE SITUATION.*** In Washington, D.C., at a Metro Station, on a cold January morning in 2007, a man with a violin played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, approximately 2,000 people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. After about 3 minutes, a middle-aged man noticed that there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds, and then he hurried on to meet his schedule.

About 4 minutes later: The violinist received his first dollar. A woman threw money in the hat and, without stopping, continued to walk.

At 6 minutes: A man leaned against the wall to listen to him, then looked at his watch and started to walk again.

At 10 minutes: A 3-year old boy stopped, but his mother tugged him along hurriedly. The kid stopped to look at the violinist again, but the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk, turning his head the whole time. This action was repeated by several other children, but every parent - without exception – forced their children to move on quickly.

At 45 minutes: The musician played continuously. Only 6 people stopped and listened for a short while. About 20 gave money but continued to walk at their normal pace. The man collected a total of \$32.

After 1 hour: He finished playing – silence took over. No one noticed; no one applauded. There was no recognition at all.

No one knew this, but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, with a violin worth \$3.5 million dollars. Two days before, Joshua Bell sold-out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged \$100 each to sit and listen to him play the same music. Joshua Bell, playing incognito in the D.C. Metro Station, was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment about perception, taste and people's priorities. This experiment raised several questions:

*In a common-place environment, at an inappropriate hour, do we perceive beauty?

*If so, do we stop to appreciate it?

*Do we recognize talent in an unexpected context?

One possible conclusion reached from this experiment could be this: If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world, playing some of the finest music ever written, with one of the most beautiful instruments ever made how many other things are we missing as we rush through life?

Enjoy life NOW... It has an expiration date!

– From an e-mail sent by Weeks Parker

+ ***"Watchmen on the Wall" pastors' meeting***

Allen, Having just returned from the Family Research Council's "Watchmen on the Wall" pastors' meeting in Washington, D.C., I feel compelled to share some of my hopes for the pulpits of America:

1) That Jesus and His Word would be shared with conviction and passion. "If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32).

2) That regardless of the circumstance, pastors would preach the whole counsel of God. I firmly believe the most effective way to accomplish this is by preaching expositively through the Bible. "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel

of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:26-28).

3) That pastors would be an example in word and deed as pastor, husband, parent, church member and citizen of the United States of America. "...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

4) That pastors fulfill their calling and use the gifts that God has given them to help carry out the church's mission of evangelism and to encourage others in the ministries that God has given them. "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure..." (2 Peter 1:10). "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Thanks for caring enough to get involved.

– Bert Harper, Director of Marriage, Family, and Pastoral Ministries; American Family Association; Repairing the Foundations, P.O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803

+ Below are two websites you might want to check out. Both give you specific ways for your church and your people to be involved in praying for the Muslim world and for the persecuted church. If you decide you want for your church to participate in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, you'll need to order materials, so you might want to start early as sometimes they run out (of materials, not prayers).

30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World – <http://www.30-days.net/>

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church – <http://www.idop.org/>

Of Interest.

+ *Who is Lord for United Methodists? Jesus or ...*

Thanks to recent developments, a growing number of United Methodists are wondering: Will our denomination split? And if we are not to split, what basis for unity do we have in terms of common faith, operative communal standards, commitment to Golden-Rule treatment of each other, and common mission? But a far more fundamental question facing all of us is: Who is our Lord? Are we really committed to submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord of ALL of our lives - our time, our talents, our finances, our relationships?

Sadly, even paying lip service to this is not a point of unity with the theologically liberal activist wing of the United Methodist Church. This was powerfully demonstrated for me at the 2012 General Conference when I observed one of the most outspokenly "progressive" clergy delegates categorically denounce any sort of "hierarchical" language for God, declaring, "I don't have a king!" Regardless of such unorthodox protests, the fact that "Jesus is Lord" necessarily means that other things are not Lord.

IRD/UM Action has long documented the ways in which some have sought to define our church's official moral teachings, values, and offering-plate-funded public actions in subservience to the left wing of the Democratic Party – as if secular politicians should be treated as lords of our church! But if Jesus is Lord, then our government (which we are generally biblically commanded to obey) is ultimately not Lord. Our obligations to the Former must always trump our obligations to the latter in cases where the two obligations cannot be reconciled. Here is an explanation of how UMC bureaucrats have begun devoting church dollars to supporting sexual immorality, and how this short-sightedly treats Caesar as lord.

And if Jesus is Lord, then our primary obligations are to Him rather than to the very fallible structures and bishops of our top-heavy denominational hierarchy. Of course, true Christian faithfulness will never involve breaking clear biblical commands such as by committing sins of lying or sexual immorality. And we take seriously how our membership covenant involved each of us vowing "[t]o be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church." But it is precisely because of our primary loyalty to Christ that we cannot offer unquestioning loyalty to renegade bishops like Martin McLee of New York, who again broke our biblical, properly agreed-upon, communal standards by recently protecting a clergywoman for facing any accountability for her acknowledged sexual immorality. Nor do we owe unquestioning loyalty to other bishops who, due to their own lack of courage or conviction, have allowed and enabled Bishop McLee's schismatic, covenant-breaking behavior.

UM Action will continue to encourage and support those of our bishops who seek to govern our church with faithfulness and integrity. In the meantime, we will work with our renewal allies to provide the public clarity and leadership our church so desperately needs for the challenging days ahead.

– John Lomperis, M.Div.; UM Action Director. <http://their.org/united-methodist/>

+ *Methodist Crossroads*

Background: The United Methodist Church is at a crossroads: it must choose between faithfulness to Scripture or changing 2,000 years of Christian teaching. One vocal and persistent group argues for change while others, both here in the U.S. and around the world, are determined to uphold the church’s position. This theological divide threatens the very unity and future of our church. Despite claims that more liberal teachings would attract new members, those parts of the U.S. church that are most progressive in their viewpoint are the areas experiencing the fastest membership decline with 45 years of uninterrupted losses for the entire denomination. Within the last two years, the division within the United Methodist Church has become a crisis. Scores of UM pastors have presided at gay marriages; entire annual conferences and a jurisdiction have voted to ignore The Book of Discipline; bishops have stated they will not hold disobedient clergy accountable for breaking the covenant they have agreed to uphold; and the Council of Bishops has been unwilling or unable to discipline fellow bishops who are breaking their vows. We believe our only hope for unity in the church is for bishops and other church leaders to restore the integrity of our covenant and church order. We believe God wants more for us than decline and division. Methodist Crossroads invites you to explore this website and then read and endorse the statement “Integrity and Unity.” We’re at a crossroads, and we hope to find a way that leads to a better day. Join us!

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Integrity and Unity

We are United Methodists. We are sinners, saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who have found a spiritual home in The United Methodist Church. We firmly believe in our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith. We treasure our orthodox Wesleyan heritage. We value our polity and our connectionalism. We trust the process of holy conferencing and many of us have given decades of our lives to serving the church we love. We are grateful for those bishops who uphold our Discipline and covenant with faithfulness. And we have never wanted to be anything other than faithful United Methodists.

We are grieved that our church has been torn asunder by those who disregard the will of General Conference, who disobey the Book of Discipline, who reject holy conferencing as a means of discerning God’s will for his church, and who misuse the quadrilateral by elevating experience above Scripture and the teachings of the Church Universal. Sadly, many of those who are sowing discord and who are undermining our unity are pastors and bishops.

For more than 40 years, we have been willing to live with our differences and to converse about the issues that divide us. For more than 40 years, we have prayed for our church and for the unity that our Lord prayed for in John 17. For more than 40 years, we have stayed at the table, listening respectfully to those who differ with us. For more than 40 years, we have supported UM boards and agencies that have promoted policies that we have often disagreed with. For more than 40 years, we have witnessed church meetings, including the Connectional Table and several General Conferences, being disrupted and hijacked by those with a single-issue agenda — at times with the foreknowledge, blessing, and encouragement of some of our bishops.

We have witnessed an entire jurisdiction vote to disregard parts of the Discipline with which it disagrees. We have heard active bishops publicly declare their disagreement with our United Methodist positions, even encouraging governing authorities to adopt policies contrary to the will of General Conference. Many of us have served in annual conferences where our orthodox beliefs and our traditional views regarding sexuality are distorted and demeaned.

Despite all of this, we have remained in the church and in conversation with those who disagree with its teachings. We have persisted because, in spite of our differences, our bishops pledged to uphold the Book of Discipline. When pastors broke covenant, there was an agreed upon process for holding them accountable. However, we no longer have that assurance. Some of our bishops have already used their influence to circumvent the process of accountability outlined in the Discipline, and still others have said they would do likewise. And though these bishops have broken faith with the General Conference and the church, and though their actions undermine the integrity and the moral authority of the Council of Bishops, the council has not demanded they recant their statements or...give an explanation for their actions.

We respect our Council of Bishops' desire to be signs of unity for the church. Their responsibilities also include "to teach and uphold the theological traditions of The United Methodist Church" (BOD ¶414.5). We believe that faithful leadership and teaching from our bishops is desperately needed at this time, particularly in matters related to same-sex practices. Therefore, we look to our bishops to exercise their spiritual and moral authority by teaching and upholding, at a corporate and individual level, our United Methodist doctrine of human sexuality as expressed in the Discipline.

We believe that the issue is not ultimately one of sexuality alone, but of covenant and governance. Therefore, we call upon our bishops at the close of their 2014 fall meeting to issue a public statement to restore the unity of the church and the integrity of our life together. We believe faithful expressions of this governance in keeping with the Discipline of The United Methodist Church would include:

- The Council's commitment to promote, defend and uphold the church's biblical teaching that marriage is a sacred covenant between one man and one woman;
- A commitment from all active bishops that they will fully enforce the Discipline with respect to those clergy members who disregard church teaching and choose to preside at same sex services;
- A strongly worded directive to all annual conferences and jurisdictions not to circumvent the Discipline's teachings regarding same sex services or the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals;
- A public statement noting that those bishops who have stated they will use their influence to prevent trials as a means of just resolution for clergy who preside at same sex services have been censured by the council; and,
- A commitment from all bishops that when trials occur they will appoint as counsel for the church individuals fully supportive of the church's teachings and the necessity for organizational accountability.

We have arrived at the moment when the future of our denomination is being determined. Our prayer is that the Council of Bishops will act to restore our covenant and make true unity possible.

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To sign the statement, go to the following website: www.methodistcrossroads.org

+ ***Act of Repentance Not a One-time Event.*** A group of Native American UM leaders has a message for the church: Repentance for sins against indigenous peoples is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Their Open Letter on Acts of Repentance asserts that the church not only must confess past sins but also must address present challenges in ministering effectively with Native Americans and other indigenous people. [Note: As one who is proud of his Indian heritage (Cherokee and Creek) I deplore the injustices that were done against us and the other tribes. However, the past is past. All people have suffered injustices in one form or another. It is not good to wallow in the self-pity of the past but best to move on and focus on the future. Joseph in the Bible gave the second-best example (next to Jesus) of how to treat injustices done against him. It is the same here. I am saddened that we persist in this – and do not move forward. – AOM]

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

+ ***General Commission on Archives and History.*** The Rev. Robert Williams retired Aug. 1, as top executive of the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH). – As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

Homosexuality. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), by a 61–39% vote, decided June 19 to allow same-sex weddings within its churches wherever they are legal. The change becomes church law only when a majority of the 172 regional presbyteries votes to ratify the new language.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 2, 2014.

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Dream as if you'll live forever; live as if you'll die today. ~ As quoted by Ashley Henson, student at Fayetteville Christian School

Global Outlook

It is better to be defeated on principle than to win on lies. ~ Arthur Calwell

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Israel.

[Note: The Mainline denominations to include the United Methodist Church are on the side of the “Palestinians” and advocate for their rights while all too often ignoring the aggression of the radical terrorist groups that are determined to destroy Israel. As I had stated before, during my involvement in Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf in 1990-1991 I spoke with Muslims on numerous occasions. I mainly just listened to what their thoughts were on this area. I concluded then that as long as there were one square foot of land on this earth that was called “Israel” they would not be satisfied. We need to be ever mindful that if it were not for the Jewish people, where would we as Christians be? The Bible states in more than one place, “He who blesses Israel, I will bless, but he who curses Israel, I will curse.” If we fail to support Israel, God’s hand of judgment will be against our country (even more than it is now). – AOM]

+ 5,000 Hamas rockets threaten Israel in Gaza

Muslim terrorists continue to dig tunnels and launch rockets to kill Jews in Israel. "Despite three weeks of relentless attacks by Israeli forces to destroy Hamas' arsenal of weapons, militants in Gaza may still have nearly 5,000 rockets, enough to keep firing at Israeli cities for weeks," reports USA Today.

"The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said Hamas started the conflict on July 8 with about 10,000 rockets. Since then, the militants have fired more than 2,600 rockets and mortars toward Israel and Israeli forces have destroyed about 3,000, estimated Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, IDF's spokesman."

"Israel has struggled to destroy Hamas' arsenal because Hamas had built an extensive underground network of tunnels and bunkers designed to conceal weapons caches and firing positions.

"The U.S.-designated terror group also has hidden rockets in civilian locations, according to the IDF and the U.N. refugee agency. That makes it difficult for Israel to destroy them without causing massive casualties among children and other non-combatants."

Let's petition Congress to stand with Israel and help her protect her own citizens.

– Chaplain Klingenschmitt, PhD, e-mail: chaps@prayinjesusname.org; July 30, 2014

+ Israel launches Ground Offensive into Gaza.

"Israeli soldiers launched a ground invasion, escalating a 10-day campaign of heavy air bombardments to try to destroy Hamas' rocket-firing abilities and the tunnels militants use to infiltrate Israel," reports Politico.

"Flares lit up the night sky before dawn and the wail of ambulance sirens mixed with the Muslim call to prayer from

mosque loudspeakers as thick smoke rose into the air from sites where shells and missiles struck.

"'There is a tank shell every minute,' said an official in the Gaza security operations room, who said all of the seaside strip's border areas were being shelled and that Hamas fighters were exchanging fire with Israeli troops near a northern Gaza town.

"Israel launched the offensive late Thursday after becoming increasingly exasperated with unrelenting rocket fire from Gaza on its cities, especially following Hamas' rejection of an Egyptian cease-fire plan earlier in the week. Palestinian militants have fired more than 1,500 rockets at Israeli cities since fighting began...

"Hamas struck a defiant tone. A spokesman, Fawzi Barhoum, said Israel 'will pay dearly' for the assault. 'Hamas is ready for a confrontation,' he said."

[Dr. Chaps' comment: We must pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Muslims launch rockets into Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, threatening peaceful civilians. They dig tunnels into Israel to bring bombs to kill Jews. And if Israel defends herself, they accuse her falsely.]

If America doesn't stand with Israel, who will?

Consider:

- 1) "Abbas rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demand that he recognize Israel as a Jewish state."
- 2) Abbas "also refused to abandon the Palestinian demand for a 'right of return' for millions of Palestinians and their descendants — a demand that, if implemented, would drastically alter Israel's demographic balance and which no conceivable Israeli government would accept."
- 3) Abbas "refused to commit to an 'end of conflict,' under which a peace deal would represent the termination of any further Palestinian demands of Israel."

– Chaplain Klingenschmitt, PhD, e-mail: chaps@prayinjesusname.org; July 30, 2014

+ *Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system*

U.S. lawmakers united in support of Israel on Friday before going on a five-week summer recess, with the Senate approving another \$225 million for the Iron Dome missile defense system. The House followed Friday by voting 395-8 in favor of the measure. "We could not go out for a month or five weeks and not act to help the Israelis replenish their supply of Iron Dome missiles," said Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). On Thursday, Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) blocked the Iron Dome funding requested by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel because it would add to the budget deficit. McCain and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) then spoke to Coburn about the critical moment facing Israel, Graham said, adding that "to his credit, he let it go."

– Received by e-mail; Thursday, August 7, 2014

+ *Synopsis of the Middle East conflict.* Join Dennis Prager of Prager University <https://www.youtube.com/user/PragerUniversity> as he gives a lucid and knowledgeable synopsis of the Middle East conflict. Although his explanation is based on historical fact, these facts are becoming murkier and murkier as the Moslem countries of the Middle East attempt to rewrite them. Dennis Prager asks an intriguing question. Why can't the one Jewish state in the world be allowed to exist? Who is he in essence asking? The Arab nations that surround Israel? America? The UN? When observing the behavior of the Moslem nations and then the behavior of the Jewish nation you begin to wonder why the world tends to support the Moslem stand on this extremely straightforward issue. As Prager explains "One side wants the other dead." Another website that could prove helpful is a letter to our leaders in the hope that some peace can come to this region: <http://www.stophamasnow.com/>

– Received by e-mail; Dennis Prager of Prager University; Published on Jul 12, 2014

Korea. *Dream for Peace on the Korean Peninsula.* "Peace for Korea Now!" shouted about 200 people, primarily Korean or Korean Americans, as they marched the mile from Foundry UMC to Lafayette Park in front of the White House on July 26. The Korea Peace March and Vigil was the culmination of a two-day event timed to coincide with the 61st anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Agreement that ended the Korean War on July 27, 1953. "Jesus prayed that all Christians become one," said retired Bishop Mary Ann Swenson,

ecumenical officer for the Council of Bishops. “For us, this march is about being one in Christ, being one people, one land and truly having peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula as a part of our Christian witness.” The day before, about 60 people participated in an international ecumenical roundtable held at the historic Foundry church. “We gather to witness the human cost of the unended Korean War, walk and pray together to raise our voices to end the war and establish peace for the people of two Koreas and the world,” said Rev. Kyeong-Ah Woo, a member of the Korea Peace Forum, March and Vigil Team, a sponsor of the event.

Each year, the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation jointly prepare a Prayer for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula for use on the Sunday before Aug. 15, “the day when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial oppression, and ironically, the day when Korea was divided by external forces.” Bishop Swenson read the prayer during the Washington, D.C., gathering. Swenson also serves as vice moderator of the WCC and introduced a “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” approved at the WCC Assembly in Busan, South Korea, last year.

The 2012 General Conference approved “A Call for Peace March” (petition 201478), calling UMs to organize a march for peace for the Korean Peninsula. The Washington gathering was in part a response to that call, noted Wisconsin Area Bishop Hee-Soo Jung in his welcoming remarks. “But for most of us, it is deeper than the words of a resolution; it is a deep sense of standing for what is right and just,” Jung said. “I am grateful for the presence of all of you and for all you do to help the cause of bringing peace and reconciliation for the people of Korea. “We gather here because of our desire for peace, not only for Korea, but for the people of Palestine and Israel and the Ukraine, and all places where hatred and fear find expression in war and violence.” Jung pointed out several steps churches can take. “Christian awareness is crucial,” he said. In addition to witness and persistent prayer, churches can advocate to Congress, the Obama Administration and the U.S. State Department to work toward a permanent treaty and lift sanctions on North Korea “that are such a hardship on the people there,” the bishop said.

– Linda Worthington and the Rev. Jacob Lee, UMCOM, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 31 / August 6, 2014

Sierra Leone. The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa continues to create problems and put strains on the local medical systems. So far, there have been at least 600 cases and 390 deaths across Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia since March 2014. In Sierra Leone, efforts by the government to prepare for new outbreaks have been focused on government facilities. Limited resources are available to prepare non-government facilities, such as those of The UMC, for possible new cases. UMCOR is partnering with the Sierra Leone Annual Conference Health Board to provide health facilities with materials to prevent contagion. They also will construct an isolation unit at Mercy Hospital.

– As reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 28; July 16, 2014.

Sierra Leone and Liberia. *Task Forces Target Ebola in Sierra Leone and Liberia*

Sierra Leone’s two main faith groups—Christians and Muslims—have formed an alliance to join the fight against Ebola amid increasing infection and death rates from the epidemic in the country. The Religious Leaders Task Force on Ebola, chaired by UM Bishop John K. Yambasu, was launched July 11 in Freetown. Recent figures from Sierra Leone’s health ministry show more than 100 deaths among a population of six million, with most occurring in the eastern Kenema and Kailahun districts through which the epidemic entered the country from neighboring Guinea. Bo District Medical Officer Dr. Alhaji Turay said the authority of religious leaders is an important factor in convincing people to take the epidemic seriously. In the coming weeks and months, the task force will embark on an aggressive awareness raising campaign on Ebola symptoms, prevention measures and what to do when infected; work with community leaders to propagate the prevention message; train religious leaders and health workers of faith-based health facilities and hospitals and provide them with equipment; and work with government and other nongovernmental organizations to intensify training and protection of health staff.

The UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has provided funding for the initial trainings and materials, but the task force will need additional funding in the coming months, the bishop said. President of the Republic of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a prominent UM, is now heading the task force for the fight against the Ebola virus in Liberia. President Sirleaf made the announcement July 26 in Monrovia during festivities marking the celebration of Liberia's Independence Day. President Sirleaf has declared the fight against Ebola a national emergency and called on all Liberians, religious leaders and traditional leaders to send individuals to the task force for immediate action. "We all need to get involved in spreading preventive messages about protecting the nation," she asserted. On July 25, the National Health Worker's Association of Liberia released a statement indicating that seven health workers were afflicted by the virus, while several others were on the probable Ebola case lists. The statement was released barely 13 days after the association held a memorial service for eight members who had earlier died from the Ebola virus while caring for others. The health worker association also requested friendly nations, donors, and the international community to send supplies of protective gear instead of cash to the Liberian government or any institution.

– Phileas Jusu, for UMCOM in Sierra Leone, and E. Julu Swen, Liberia Annual Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 31 / August 6, 2014

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Here's the difference between us. We're using missile defense to protect our civilians, and they're using their civilians to protect their missiles. – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Annual Conference Reports

Correction and Update: Central Texas Conference: The July 15 issue of Newscope showed an incorrect number of members in the Central Texas Conference; this was reported in our August Update. The number is 166,162 (not 16,162).

California–Pacific.The conference met June 18–21 at University of Redlands in Redlands, Calif. with Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño officiating. Guest speakers: Bishop Thomas Bickerton (Pittsburgh Area) Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Carcaño: "We have made some bold statements as a denomination . . . but, most of the time, they [the rules] just sit. . . . When Jesus saw the opportunity to extend God's grace and heal the bent over woman, all hell broke loose. Did he not know that he had broken the rules? . . . Jesus might expect us to follow him. So, we stick to the rules, rather than listening to Jesus. . . . Rules do not regulate the heart of God, and we are fortunate that this is the case because where would you and I be if it were not for God's grace? So, how shall we be, how shall we act, what shall we do? . . . I want to stand with and follow Jesus on this journey to wholeness, a journey of grace and joy. Won't you come with me?" **Main actions enacted and resolutions adopted by the conference:** Approved: 2015 budget with no change in total but increase for new ministries; merger of two congregations, discontinuance of four congregations and launching of two new ministries; resolution encouraging a reprieve on clergy trials. Celebrated: vision statement—"Inspiring the world as passionate followers of Jesus Christ so all may experience God's life-giving love."

Delegates elected to 2016 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference: Lay delegates to General Conference: Leanne Nakanishi, Rosie Rios, Kenneth Ellis and Mele Maka. Clergy delegates to General Conference: Cedrick Bridgeforth, Tom Choi, Patricia Farris and Sandy Olewine. Lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: JoAnn Yoon Fukumoto, Mele Faiva Blagojevich, Mark Stephenson, Ralph Hogan, Norma Kehrberg, Dione Taylor and Mary Hawkins. Clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Molly Vetter, Bau Dang, Frank Wulf, Judy Chung, Tony Harris, Piula E. Ala'ilima and Charlene Zuill. Lay reserve delegates: Monalisa Tui'tahi and Elizabeth Roark. Clergy reserve delegates: Richard Bentley and Nestor Gerente. Clergy remembered at memorial service: 33.

Conference statistics: Membership is 73,668, down 3%. Worship attendance is 46,701, down 2%.

– James J. Kang, California–Pacific Annual Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 23, 2014.

Desert Southwest. The conference met June 26–29 at the Glendale Renaissance Hotel & Spa with Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata officiating. Guest speakers: The Rev. Jeffry Kuan (president, Claremont School of Theology) and the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe (general secretary, General Board of Church and Society [GBCS]). Memorable points or quotes by speakers: At the closing worship service, Bishop Bob Hoshibata announced that each congregation in the Desert Southwest Conference would receive a gift of \$2,000 that day to use as seed money to jump start something new to create vital ministry to reach new people. Churches were asked to dream boldly and use their God-given imagination to ignite a passion for Jesus Christ in a new way. The expectation is that like the parable of the talents, this gift will be multiplied because of their imagination and faith. Main actions enacted and resolutions adopted by the conference: Offerings: 43,946 pairs of socks distributed to various conference agencies; raising awareness and funds for Imagine No Malaria.

Approved: resolutions to abolish the death penalty; concerning conference response to human trafficking; to agree to disagree; to stop clergy trials for conducting same-sex unions; to designate the Sunday prior to Nov. 20 as Transgender Remembrance Day. □ Observed: Acts of Repentance with Native American tribes. Calls to Action: for churches to become involved in Open Table, Bible study by Rev. Henry-Crowe.

Conference statistics: Membership is 34,851, down 1,051. Worship attendance is 23,996, down 889.

– Christina Dillabough, Desert Southwest Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 23, 2014.

New England. The conference met June 11–14 at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass. The theme was “On the Wings of Love: Powered by Presence and Service”; the officiating bishop was Sudarshana Devadhar. Guest speakers: Bible Study: Terry Teykl and Grace Imathiu. Memorable points or quotes by speakers: The Rev. Mark Garnaas-Holmes: “We are the bread that God gives to the world. We are the bread that God takes, God blesses, God breaks and gives into the world.” He reminded the gathered community that the point of God’s mission is not to build up the membership of our churches. “We built it, but they didn’t come,” he observed. “Well, they aren’t supposed to come. We are supposed to go!” Bishop Devadhar highlighted the importance of Christian community, and outlined three dimensions as we are formed: Up, In, and Out. “The ‘up’ dimension of our Christian faith is lived out through prayer and worship as personal and community practices,” the bishop said. “The ‘in’ dimension pays attention to the nurture of our spiritual lives. And we go ‘out’ to our community and to our world as we become present to others and as we model servanthood to others.”

Main actions enacted and resolutions adopted by the conference: □ Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$18,000; includes \$3,000 from Miles for Mission 5k fun run). Approved: Conference Strategic Plan; 34 resolutions, including inclusivity, cessation of church trials, and marriage equality; Mission Share spending limit of \$7,056,863; Mission Share apportionment to local congregations of \$7,966,908 (includes provision for churches unable to pay 100%).

Conference statistics: Membership is 89,459, down 1,971. Worship attendance is 30,328, down 1,308.

– Alexx Wood, New England Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 26; July 23, 2014.

Susquehanna. The conference met June 12–14 at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa. The theme was “Raising Up Transformational Leaders,” the second in a quadrennial focus on “Alive in Christ, Together”; the officiating bishop was

Bishop Jeremiah Park. Guest speakers: Bishop Joseph Yeakel (retired); Yvette Davis. Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Park: “Jesus reminds us that the world will know us as his disciples, not by taking certain biblical, theological and doctrinal positions, but by our love for one another. . . . The transformational leaders are already here. They are within this room and within the churches of the Susquehanna Conference. We

do not have to wait until some people arrive or until God provides someone else, for God has already provided. My brothers and sisters in Christ, you and I are the ones God has called and sent to make a difference . . . for such a time as this.”

Main actions enacted and resolutions adopted by the conference: Special offerings to date: Bishop’s Partners in Mission (\$26,087.07); Stop Hunger Now (\$20,901.69); Mission Central (\$17,356.93); Youth Service Fund (\$6,171.19). Approved: resolution related to Mental Health Awareness Month.

Clergy statistics: provisional deacon: 0; ordained deacon: 2; provisional elder: 4; ordained elder: 7; retired: 25; remembered at memorial service: 38. Conference statistics: Membership is down 3%. Worship attendance is down 4%.

– Jerry Wolgemuth, Susquehanna Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 32 / August 13, 2014

Texas. The conference met May 24–28 at the Hilton Americas in Downtown Houston. The officiating bishop was Janice Riggle Huie. Guest speakers: The Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey and the Rev. Olu Brown. Memorable points or quotes by speakers: The episcopal address asked conference members to question how they are responding to today’s challenges: the changing face of Texas that is now a majority-minority populated state; the fact that millennials (14–34 year-olds) are the largest generation in U.S. history and they as a group view the church as irrelevant; that Christians are reluctant to share our faith story—we are willing to share what we do in missions and in service to the community but are hesitant to share WHY we do it. The Rev. Olu Brown suggested that we need to focus on relationships, not memberships, and use our spaces and our resources to reach out and build relationships. Main actions enacted and resolutions adopted:

Defeated: 10 resolutions related to human sexuality, ordination, and the performance of same-sex marriages in the church

Total clergy statistics for the conference (average age): provisional deacon: 8 (45); ordained deacon: 36 (54); provisional elder: 35 (35); ordained elder: 456 (52); received into associate membership: 8 (63); licensed local pastors: 83 (51); retired: 442 (75); remembered at memorial service: 39.

Conference statistics: Membership is 285,944, up 1,738. Worship attendance is 104,375, down 1,484.

– Paula Arnold, Texas Annual Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 31 / August 6, 2014

West Virginia. The conference met June 12–15 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon. The theme was “Discover Christ”; the officiating bishop was Sandra Steiner Ball. Guest speakers: guest preacher: Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton (Pittsburgh Area); conference teacher: Dr. Elaine Heath; guest preacher: retired Bishop Ernest S. Lyght. Memorable points or quotes by speakers: Bishop Bickerton, returning to the place of his ordination, preached twice. Speaking of John 4, Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, Bickerton said, “I believe this story represents one of the greatest challenges of the Christian journey, to love people as [Jesus] did.” Bishop Steiner Ball: “God wants to renew our strength, to make us able. . . . I hear Isaiah [40:31] telling us to look around at the big world. Behind it is a Creator who has the expansive power of life that can make a grasshopper soar like an eagle.” Bishop Lyght: “When we are on the spiritual path, the whole world is open.” Main actions enacted and resolutions:

Offerings: Imagine No Malaria (\$425,000 raised since 2007). Approved: resolution strengthening clergy training regarding sexual assault; a rule change that allows seminarians to take up to two-thirds of courses online, except those related to preaching and pastoral care; budget of \$12,027,139, a decrease of .49%.

Conference statistics: Membership is 97,363, down 1,818. Worship attendance is 41,820, down 1,725.

– Laura Harbert Allen, West Virginia Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 31 / August 6, 2014

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Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson