

Monthly Update

November 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This “Monthly Update” contains some of the information that we had wanted to include but could not because of the space devoted to the various Annual Conference reports from across Methodism. Note especially the study on men and church entitled “Why 2/3 of men are unhappy in church”; men’s church involvement is important.

After the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson proclaimed October 28, 1865: “It has pleased Almighty God...to relieve our beloved country from the fearful scourge of civil war...Whereas righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people... I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby recommend...that...the whole people make confession of our national sins against His infinite goodness, and with one heart and...mind implore the divine guidance in the ways of national virtue and holiness.”

For this Thanksgiving, I offer a message delivered in 2009 by Senator Robert C. Byrd:

Thanksgiving is one of America’s most beloved holidays. It is a day devoted to turkey, family gatherings, football games, parades, and the beginning of the Christmas-holiday season. But it also should be a day devoted to giving thanks to God for our many blessings....The Pilgrims conducting the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in Plymouth Colony. Thanksgiving was...a religious celebration to give thanks to God for helping them survive that first brutal...winter.

During the American Revolution, following the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 that marked a turning point in the war, the Continental Congress approved a resolution proclaiming a day of “Thanksgiving and praise.” In his...notes on the war, General Washington wrote: “Tomorrow being the day set apart by the honorable Congress for Public Thanksgiving and praise, ...duty call[s] us devoutly to express our grateful acknowledgments to God for the manifold blessings he has granted us.” Following the establishment of the new government of the United States in 1789, President George Washington issued a “Thanksgiving Proclamation” designating a “day of public thanks-giving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many favors of Almighty God...”

During the American Civil War, following the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln asked the people of the United States to set aside the last Thursday of November “as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father.” President Lincoln proclaimed, the country should take a day to acknowledge the “gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”

On this Thanksgiving, I would like to thank God for the young American men and women who will spend this holiday in harm’s way protecting our country and the values we hold dear.

We thank you for partnering with us by your gifts and in your prayers, especially as we are focused on our plan to deal with the crucial issues going into General Conference 2016. We also ask that you continue to pray for our nation.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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November 2015 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Dr. Stephen Gunter: "We are now more than a generation removed from a Methodist membership who have made conscious decisions to become Christians. In over two decades of teaching Methodist seminarians, I would generously estimate that 5 percent of my students were asked in their Methodist churches to make that explicit decision. We have been catechized to believe that we evolve into being Christian by simply joining the church. The notion of professing Christ as Savior sounds, well, Baptist." [Note: How far have we drifted from the truth? Professing Christ as Savior is Biblical, not "Baptist".]

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The Good Stuff

+ *From Every Patriot Grave*. Abraham Lincoln had no chance to prepare for war. He took the Oath of Office on March 4, 1861. In his Inaugural Address, the new president appealed for peace. He ended with this eloquent paean to patriotism: "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature." That same day, Gen. Winfield Scott gave him a message from the besieged Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. Capt. Robert Anderson informed his Washington superiors that he could not hold out against the rebels much longer. Lincoln was unprepared for the artillery barrage that opened up on Fort Sumter on April 12th, but he said, "we have the war upon us."

When the Great War broke out in Europe one hundred years ago this July, the United States was not involved. President Woodrow Wilson urged Americans to remain neutral in thought as well as deed. He would say: "there is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight." He kept the United States out of the European war for almost three years. In that time, he might have prepared this country in case we found ourselves drawn in despite our prayers. He chose not to do so. Wilson's Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, actually took pride in the fact that we were unprepared when war finally came in 1917. "I delight in the fact that when we entered this war were not, like our adversary [Germany], prepared for it and inviting it. Accustomed to peace, we were not ready."

Such statements seem ridiculous to us today, or should. But they are not much different than hearing our current Secretary of Defense say we cannot afford the defense we may need. So, in the face of mounting threats abroad, he is forcefully advocating deeper cuts in our defense budget. At least he is doing something forcefully.

It is not that this administration is wholly unprepared for conflict. They are conducting a vigorous kulturkampf (culture clash) against believers within our all-volunteer services. They seem to think that if they cannot make our adversaries fear us, at least they can put the fear of God into the godly.

The poignant story of the painting *Gassed*, by John Singer Sargent needs to be studied and reflected upon. Sargent was one of the most famous American artists of his day. Ordinarily, his subjects were grand ladies of society or stately wielders of power. In this powerful painting, however, we see our World War I Doughboys stepping high together, each wounded man with his hand on his brother's shoulder. They have been hit by a cruel and barbarous new weapon, first deployed by the Germans -- chlorine gas. Some will regain their sight, but others will be blinded for life.

This Singer painting is a haunting memorial. It might also be called "The Blind leading the Blinded." That is because the civilian leadership of our country at that time was blind to the need for preparedness. They forgot the old Roman maxim: If you seek peace, prepare for war.

The wars of America have filled hundreds of thousands of patriot graves. This month marks the 150th anniversary of the terrible Civil War battlefield known as "The Wilderness." It was during this long and bloody 1864 battle that Gen. Grant ordered repeated charges at Cold Harbor, in his drive on the Confederate capital of Richmond. The night before that assault, Union boys were seen quietly sewing bits of cloth with their names and hometowns on their blue uniform jackets. They knew what their fate would be on the morrow.

That sacrifice continues. Each week, we receive reports of brave young Americans laying down their lives for us and for our freedoms. They are not really dying for Kabul or Kandahar, in Afghanistan, but for Kansas and the Kanawha Valley.... Each of these young heroes has taken to heart the message engraved on the great bronze doors of the Naval Academy Chapel: "Not for self but for country."

[Anytime] would be a good time to pause and look at the "Faces of the Fallen" and to pray solace for their loved ones. It is always good to honor the dead by lifting up the living. In World War II, one in every eleven Americans was in uniform. Today, only 1 in 200 serves us and this land we love. Our all-volunteer military needs our sincere support.

We can resolve to intercede for the members of our U.S. Armed Services. We should pray for them and speak up for them, especially for their endangered religious freedoms. They defend us. Only we can defend them.

– By Robert Morrison, FRC's Senior Fellow for Policy Studies; Washington Update, Family Research Council.

+ *Back-to-Church Sunday yields record attendance*

QUITMAN, Texas (UMNS) – Quitman United Methodist Church members are still celebrating the joy of inviting people to church – some who visited for the first time & others who returned after long absences. The Texas Conference details how a midsized church saw its attendance boom with nearly 100 more people. – UMNS; September 29, 2015.

+ *Teacher of the Year leads 3 United Methodist churches*

WARDENSVILLE, W.Va. (UMNS) – The Rev. Michael Funkhouser, the 2013 West Virginia Teacher of the Year, leads three rural United Methodist churches as a part-time local pastor. "Teaching made me a better minister and ministry made me a better teacher," he said. – UMNS; September 29, 2015.

Of Interest.

+ *2015 Listing of Annual Conference meetings that were held:*

Alabama-West Florida Conference May 31-June 3, 2015, in Montgomery, Alabama

Alaska Conference June 5-6, 2015, at St. John United Methodist Church in Anchorage, Alaska

Arkansas Conference June 14-17, 2015, Bank of the Ozarks Arena, Hot Springs, Arkansas

Austria Conference May 28-31, 2015 in Vienna, Austria.

Baltimore-Washington Conference May 27-30, 2015, Marriott Waterfront Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland

Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Conference took place from April 2-5, 2015, in Shumen (Bulgaria).

California-Nevada Conference June 17-20, 2015, in Burlingame, California

Czech Republic-Slovakia Conference June 5-7, 2015 in Bratislava, Slovakia

Dakotas Conference June 4-6, Fargo, North Dakota

Desert Southwest Conference June 18-21, 2015, in Glendale, Arizona

Detroit Conference May 13-17, 2015, in Detroit, Michigan

East Ohio Conference June 15-18, 2015, Lakeside Chautauqua in Marblehead, Ohio

Eastern Pennsylvania Conference May 14-16, 2015, Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, Pennsylvania

Florida Conference June 10-13, 2015, in Daytona Beach, Florida

Great Plains Conference June 10-13, 2015, Wichita, Kansas

Greater New Jersey Conference May 28-30, 2015 in Wildwood, New Jersey

Holston Conference June 7-11, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Hungary Provisional Conference on April 23-26 in Budakesi, Hungary.

Illinois Great Rivers Conference June 10-13, 2015, in Peoria, Illinois

Indiana Annual Conference May 28-30, 2015 in Indianapolis, Indiana

Iowa Conference June 6-9, 2015 in Des Moines, Iowa

Kentucky Conference June 8-12, the Sloan Convention Center, Bowling Green, Kentucky

Liberia Conference April 13-19, 2015 in Gardnersville, Monrovia, Liberia.

Louisiana Conference June 7-10, 2015 at Centenary College in Shreveport, La.

Memphis Conference May 31-June 3 in Jackson, Tennessee
 Minnesota Conference May 27-29, 2015 in St. Cloud, Minn.
 Mississippi Conference June 4-6, 2015, Jackson Convention Complex, Jackson, Mississippi
 Missouri Conference June 5-8, 2015, in Springfield, Mo.
 New England Conference June 17-20, 2015 at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester, New Hampshire
 New York Conference June 10-13, 2015 at Hofstra University
 North Alabama Conference May 31- June 2, 2015, at Birmingham-Southern College
 North Carolina Conference, June 11-13, 2015, at the Convention Center, Wilmington, North Carolina
 North Georgia Conference June 16-19, 2015, the Classic Center, Athens, Georgia.
 North Texas Conference June 7-9, St. Andrews United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas.
 Northern Illinois Conference June 14-16, 2015, in St. Charles, Illinois
 Northwest Texas Conference June 11-13, 2015, Lubbock, Texas
 Oklahoma Conference May 25-28, 2015 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference June 4-7, 2015, at the Southwest Region Center, west of Anadarko, OK.
 Oregon-Idaho Conference June 11-13, 2015, in Salem, Oregon
 Pacific Northwest Conference June 24-27, 2015, in Pasco, Washington
 Peninsula-Delaware Conference June 4-6, 2015 at University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, Maryland
 Poland Conference June 26-28, Ostroda, Poland
 Red Bird Missionary Conference May 16, Hope United Methodist Church, Frakes, Ky.
 Rio Texas Conference June 11-14, 2015, at the American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas
 Rocky Mountain Conference June 11-14, 2015 in Estes Park Colorado
 Serbia-Macedonia Provisional Conference took place in Monospitovo, April 17-19.
 Sierra Leone Conference April 24-26, in Bo, Sierra Leone.
 South Carolina Conference June 7-11, 2015, in Florence, South Carolina
 South Georgia Annual Conference June 3-6, 2015, University of Georgia Tifton Conference Center,
 Susquehanna Conference June 11-13, 2015, Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania
 Texas Conference May 24-27, 2015, Houston, Texas
 Upper New York Conference May 28-30, 2015, in Syracuse, New York
 Virginia Conference July 19-21, Roanoke, Virginia
 West Michigan Conference June 4-7, Calvin College, Grand Rapids
 West Ohio Conference June 7-10, 2015, at Lakeside Chautauqua
 West Virginia Conference June 11-14, 2015, in Buckhannon, W.Va.
 Western North Carolina Conference June 17-21, 2015, Lake Junaluska, N.C.
 Western Pennsylvania Conference June 11-14, 2015, Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania
 Wisconsin Conference June 12-15, 2015, in Madison, Wisconsin
 Yellowstone Conference June 18-20, 2015, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Helena, Montana

+ ***Scary Obituary***. In 1887 Alexander Tyler, a Scottish history professor at the University of Edinburgh, had this to say about the fall of the Athenian Republic some 2,000 years prior: "A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse over loose fiscal policy, (which is) always followed by a dictatorship."

"The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history, has been about 200 years. During those 200 years, these nations always progressed through the following sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith;

From spiritual faith to great courage;
From courage to liberty;
From liberty to abundance;
From abundance to complacency;
From complacency to apathy;
From apathy to dependence;
From dependence back into bondage.”

The Obituary follows: “Born 1776, Died 2016” [?]. Professor Joseph Olson of Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota...Olson believes the United States is now somewhere between the “complacency and apathy” phase of Professor Tyler’s definition of democracy, with some 40% of the nation’s population already having reached the “governmental dependency” phase. [Note: One political analyst has put those on “governmental dependency” at 87%.

If Congress grants amnesty and citizenship to twenty million criminal invaders called illegal’s – and they vote – then we can say goodbye to the USA in fewer than five years.

[Note: Reprinted from the November 2012 Update. We feel that it is especially apropos & prescient today. – AOM]

– Received from Mr. Martin Rasmussen

+ ***Representation at 2016 General Conference.*** There will be 864 total delegates at the 2016 General Conference. This represents a decrease of approximately 13 percent from the 2012 total. The main justification for this decrease was to save money. U.S. representation is declining roughly equivalent to its membership decline over the past four years. The U.S. will have 58 percent of the 2016 delegates, down from 62 percent in 2012. All U.S. jurisdictions declined in membership. The Western Jurisdiction suffered the greatest decline (2.4%) while the South Central Jurisdiction showed the smallest decline (0.6%).

In recent years the African central conferences have been gaining an average of 220,000 members annually while the U.S. church has been losing about 90,000 annually. If these trends continue, the African church may outnumber the U.S. church within 8 to 10 years. Africans accounted for 28.5 percent of the 2012 General Conference delegates. In 2016 they will account for 30.1 percent. 10 percent will come from Europe and 6 percent from the Philippines.

+ ***Renewing waters: Church teachings on baptism.***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Baptism marks Christians' initiation into the church and the beginning of a lifetime of discipleship. For umc.org, Joe Iovino explains what United Methodists teach about the sacrament. “It is an act that brings you into a spiritual relationship with the whole body of Christ. In which you are becoming one with them and they are becoming one with you.” – The Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards on baptism, as reported in the UMNS; October 14, 2015.

+ ***Part-time local pastors filling more pulpits***

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (UMNS) - Part-time licensed local pastors, many of them bivocational, are growing in number as more small churches conclude they can't afford a full-time clergy leader. The UMNS series “Trending Local: The Rise of United Methodist Local Pastors” continues, with articles by Sam Hodges and photos by Mike DuBose. “I’m not sure the denomination as a whole has opened their eyes to this. We’re very dependent on part-time pastors.”

– Retired United Methodist Bishop Alfred Gwinn, who chaired the 2008-2012 Ministry Study Commission, as reported in the UMNS; September 29, 2015.

+ ***Faith groups, others urge support for embassy in Cuba***

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – A broad representation of organizations and faith groups – including the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, National Council of Churches, Church World Service and Washington Office on Latin America – have issued a joint statement urging Congress to support the establishment of a U.S. embassy in Cuba.

[Note: This comes from a far-left political perspective. What about the rights of the oppressed Cuban people? – AOM]

+ ***U.S. faith leaders: Take in more Syrian refugees***

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – The U.S. must act on the refugee crisis, said church leaders who gathered Sept. 28 near the U.S. Capitol to press Congress and the Obama Administration to resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees. The resettlement of Vietnamese refugees provides a precedent, Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño pointed out.

[Note: We need to recognize that upwards of 84% of the “refugees” are military-age men, hardly “refugees”. – AOM]

– UMNS; September 29, 2015.

+ ***Why 2/3 of men are unhappy in church.*** My friend Thom Schultz recently wrote an insightful blog post, “Sitting through God school.” He laments how the church has evolved from a relationship with God into an institution that dispenses information about God. Thom writes: Academic institutions serve their purpose. Subjects get taught. But when it comes to the church, there’s one problem. Faith is not a subject. Faith is a relationship.

That last line got my hackles up. I’ve written extensively on the theological and exegetical weaknesses of the “personal relationship with Jesus” metaphor – particularly when it comes to reaching men. But as I stepped back and re-read his column, I realized Thom was describing one skirmish in a much larger war playing out in church today. For the past 1700 years we have been locked in a battle between the Peters, Jameses and Johns for control of the church. For centuries, James has had the upper hand – but his grip is slipping.

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Jesus placed three men at the core of his organization: Peter, the will; James, the mind; and John, the emotions. These three men represent a trinity that’s present in the soul of every person. You have a mind, a will, and emotions. But one of those three is your default setting.

Peter represents the will. His default setting is “do first.” Religion of the hands.

James represents the mind. His default setting is “think first.” Religion of the head.

John represents the emotions. His default setting is “love first.” Religion of the heart.

So which one are you? What is your default?

Ever since the conversion of Constantine in the year 312, Jameses have ruled Christianity. Theologians, teachers and thinkers have dominated church hierarchies for 1700 years. (Full disclosure: I am a James) As a result, churches have organized along doctrinal lines. Our leaders were men of letters who modeled the local church after an educational institution – right down to the classrooms and lecture halls. The great conflicts that consumed Christians from AD 1517 through the mid-1900s were theological. We fought over what we believed – and splintered into denominations that reflected those beliefs.

In the late 1700s, Peters began to re-appear in church leadership. Peter led the great missionary movements that expanded Christianity across the globe – and made our faith the world’s largest religion. But Peter’s influence has waned as John began taking the upper hand in the 20th century. Over the past 100 years, Christianity has tacked strongly in the direction of emotion — both in public worship, as well as in personal devotion.

Modern church culture reflects the growing influence of John. Worship music used to be sung about God, but today it’s sung to God. We stand for long periods with hands outstretched, singing love songs directly to Jesus, tears rolling down our cheeks. Churchgoers are no longer content to learn facts about God; they want to feel him personally every Sunday. Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on emotional expression, is driving the growth of global Christianity.

Even the way we talk about our faith has become more John-like. Until the 1970s, the term “personal relationship with Jesus” was rarely used in Christian literature. It never appears in scripture. Yet today it’s the number one term Evangelicals use to describe the Gospel. Why? Because it describes our faith in emotional terms. When people say, “Christianity isn’t a religion — it’s a relationship,” they are seeing the gospel through John’s lenses (and taking a rhetorical swipe at James for systematizing the faith).

And so today we have a somewhat fractured church, in which Jameses still control the seminaries and church hierarchies; Johns increasingly control Sunday morning worship, and Peters find themselves pushed out of church altogether – or retreating to parachurch organizations that focus on getting things done.

James' subsiding influence has had some positives. Christians no longer fight as much over petty doctrinal differences. Churches don't split over minutiae such as the timing of Christ's return. It's been a long time since I heard a Christian claim that adherents of another denomination are headed to hell by virtue of their misguided beliefs. Christians who baptize by immersion are no longer at war with those who sprinkle.

The influence of Johns seems to be strengthening by the day – but there's a growing backlash to the emotionalism that has taken hold in many churches. Some young Christians are returning to liturgy – and are longing for more rigorous teaching. Even Pentecostal churches are curbing some of their more flamboyant practices in order to make their Sunday services less frightening to visitors.

So where are we today?

James still controls the seminaries – and as such, selects the next generation of pastors. He still wields great influence, but James has had to go underground because he represents doctrine – which is increasingly seen as divisive and hurtful.

Young Peters are coalescing around the missional movement. This little band of renegades is out to remind navel-gazing Johns and idea-obsessed Jameses that there is work to be done.

But John is still dominant in worship – and his influence is on the rise. As contemporary services eclipse traditional ones, we can expect even greater emphasis on “feeling” God. Preaching will de-emphasize doctrinal distinctives in favor of practical messages that make worshippers feel something.

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How does all this impact men and their participation in church?

John's ascension has brought much needed reform – but it has also steered the church toward practices that are more feminine in nature. Men are generally less comfortable showing emotion in public than women are. Men often have a harder time sharing feelings, holding hands with other men, hugging other men, singing love songs to a man (Jesus) than women do. As church services become more emotive, more men will struggle to fit in. Emotive worship services draw more Johns to church. They, in turn, push the church in a more relational direction. We're creating a feedback loop – even as church becomes more welcoming to feelers, it appeals less to thinkers and doers.

Men admire doers, not thinkers or feelers. Herein lies our challenge: as James and John jockey for control, how can we convince guys that church is not just for eggheads and softies?

So to my friend Thom Schultz: I share your frustration. As I wrote in *Why Men Hate Going to Church*: “church is an educational institution you never graduate from.” You and I are experiencing a tension that has existed in the church since AD 312.

Since the beginning, churches have consisted of three kinds of people. If we're going to fulfill our mission we must balance their influence – with Peter leading the parade. If one faction dominates, then two-thirds of men will be unhappy in church.

– By David Murrow. Received from Charlie Gray. May 14, 2014.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/churchformen/2014/05/why-23-of-men-are-unhappy-in-church/#ixzz32Nzw2IXy>

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

+ *Planned Parenthood videos*, by: Tim Wildmon.

After two extremely disturbing videos surfaced describing the barbaric actions by Planned Parenthood abortion providers, the American Family Association is encouraging Americans to contact lawmakers so that the abortion giant will be defunded for good. In an Action Alert sent to its one million-plus friends and supporters, AFA is encouraging Americans to contact members of Congress to urge them to cut all federal funding to Planned Parenthood and hold elected officials accountable for forcing taxpayers to pay for Planned Parenthood's despicable actions. “For decades, we've known that Planned Parenthood has furthered the abortion industry and contributed heavily to the millions of lives lost since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision,” said AFA President Tim Wildmon. “But these videos show just how barbaric and

disgusting their practices really are, with no regard for sacred human life. Now is the time for Americans to rally together to urge our lawmakers to defund Planned Parenthood. Not one taxpayer dollar should ever be used to help this abortion giant continue to end precious lives. Generations yet unborn will thank those who stand for life.”

In one recently released video that first created the controversy, undercover pro-lifers from The Center for Medical Progress posed as buyers for a human biologics company who were seeking body parts. What they recorded were sickly details of abortionists harvesting baby organs such as livers, brains and hearts. With hidden cameras rolling, Dr. Deborah Nucatola, the senior director of medical services for Planned Parenthood, casually described harvesting the body parts over a meal and wine. In the video, Nucatola recounted how to properly administer the morbid procedure of dismembering aborted preborn babies. In a second scathing video released yesterday, another doctor haggled about the price of fetal body parts because she wanted “a Lamborghini,” according to Fox News. AFA is urging Americans concerned about the gruesome abortion industry and the stain it’s left on the nation’s landscape to visit the Action Alert web page and send a letter to their senators and representatives, asking them to defund Planned Parenthood when so many Americans are struggling. “In addition,” the proposed letter concludes, “I support House Speaker John Boehner’s call for Congress to investigate Planned Parenthood for the illegal trafficking of human body parts.”

– http://www.afa.net/the-stand/sanctity-of-life/defund-planned-parenthood/#disqus_thread; July 23, 2015.

+ ***Planned Parenthood Struggles Under Bad Publicity From Body Parts Trafficking Scandal***

Washington, DC - David Daleiden, Director of the Center for Medical Progress, appeared on the Hannity Fox News program last night discussing his nearly 3-year investigation into Planned Parenthood's participation in the illegal profiting from the sale of aborted baby body parts that has resulted in national scandal. Fox News Host Sean Hannity asked Daleiden, "So we are going to see tape after tape after tape as bad as the two we've already seen or worse?"

Daleiden responded, "Exactly. Even worse." Daleiden continued, "We did this because Planned Parenthood had been harvesting and selling the body parts from the abortions they commit for decades now and no one has held them accountable. They held themselves above the law and this is something offensive to the American public, it's offensive to us and human beings, it violates human dignity and it has to stop."

The fallout for Planned Parenthood has been staggering to the abortion giant, which was caught off-guard by the videos produced by the Center for Medical Progress in consultation with Operation Rescue. Operation Rescue is one of the leading opponents to abortion and has become a strong voice for the pro-life movement in America. Operation Rescue is now headquartered in a former abortion clinic that it bought and closed in 2006. From there, Operation Rescue launches its innovative new strategies across the nation, exposing and closing abortion clinics through peaceful, legal means. Its activities are on the cutting edge of the abortion issue, taking direct action to stop abortion and ultimately restore legal personhood to the pre-born in obedience to biblical mandates.

– E-mail; July 23, 2015

Homosexuality.

+ ***Duke study: More religious acceptance of homosexuals***

DURHAM, N.C. (UMNS) – The willingness of religious congregations to welcome homosexuals as members – and place them in leadership positions – is on the rise, according to a new Duke University study.

[Note: It is no wonder with the push by radical homosexual groups within and outside of the UMC. – AOM]

– Duke Today, as reported in the UMNS; September 15, 2014.

+ ***Pastor expects trial for same-sex wedding***

LANSING, Mich. (UMNS) - The Rev. Michael Tupper notified his bishop on Sept. 28 that he would not agree to a just resolution after helping to officiate at the same-sex wedding of his friend, the Rev. Benjamin Hutchison. His decision opens the way for a process that could culminate in a church trial. “I don’t believe God wants me to get ‘off the hook,’” he said.

– UMNS; September 29, 2015.

Illegal Immigration Issues.

+ ***United Methodists praise president's immigration order***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – President Barack Obama's immigration plan offers "a word of mercy and a measure of justice," said United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño, co-chair of the denomination's interagency task force on immigration reform. – Kathy L. Gilbert and Sam Hodges, as reported in the UMNS; November 24, 2014.

+ ***A history of welcoming the immigrant***

[Note: Note the parallel that is drawn between the legal immigration that happened in our past history and that helped to build our country – and the illegal immigration that is being pushed now – to the grave detriment of our country. – AOM]

MADISON, N. J. (UMNS) – Immigrant women, often traveling alone or with children in tow, arrived on American shores to join their husbands or other relatives who had come to the U.S. ahead of them in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They found help from United Methodist women. The Rev. Alfred T. Day III, top executive for United Methodist Commission on Archives and History, writes about how the current debate over immigration brings the work with long-ago immigrant women into focus. – UMNS; November 24, 2014.

(UM) Judicial Council. Top court reviews agency structure plan

ST. LOUIS (UMNS) — The Judicial Council will meet Oct. 21-24 and review a revised plan to restructure The United Methodist Church. In 2012, the council voided a similar plan just after it was approved by the 2012 General Conference. [Note: By November, the Judicial Council will have met and decided this issue. This is a matter of importance. – AOM] – Linda Bloom, UMNS; October 14, 2015.

Islam. Muslim Prayers Take Over Streets of Downtown Los Angeles. Can you believe this is downtown Los Angeles October 17th in middle of the street. Is this [the] United States or we live in a different world[?] This is happening everywhere: Washington, DC, Moscow, New York, Rome, Milan, [&] London yesterday....[Pictures on Facebook of Muslims kneeling in prayer in public in each of those cities.]

– From Pam Gellar (Thanks to Shahin Pourdavoud); Oct 24, 2015

(UM) Men.

+ ***United Methodists work to reverse Scout losses***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - The number of young people involved in Scouting declined nationwide from 2012 to 2014, and programs in The United Methodist Church followed that trend - dropping from 365,565 in 2012 to 349,614 in 2013. Leaders of United Methodist Men are working to reverse that loss, Rich Peck reports.

[Note: I wonder why we are pushing to reverse the trend – given the problematic issue that this is. – AOM]

– UMNS; September 10, 2014.

+ ***Final Decision by Boy Scouts of America to Allow Openly Homosexual Adult Leaders Places Sponsoring Churches at Greater Legal Risk***

Note:

Updates from the Home Office

July 23, 2015

From personal knowledge and experience, I believe I can confidently say the Board of Directors, staff, and members of Trail Life USA have no desire to dishonor the tremendous legacy of the Boy Scouts of America. However, our love for God's church and our concern for the welfare of boys compels us to release the following statement and accompanying position paper. Please share it with your church leader, as we believe it contains vital information that could affect the legal status and well-being of their church or parish. May God bless and grant wisdom to the leaders and members of the Boy Scouts of America.

Mark Hancock, CEO, Trail Life USA

Final Decision by Boy Scouts of America to Allow Openly Homosexual Adult Leaders
Places Sponsoring Churches at Greater Legal Risk

Memorandum Released by Former BSA General Counsel Explains Liability to Churches:

ORLANDO – The pending final and binding decision by the top leadership of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to allow openly homosexual adults and youth within the program, reverses over a hundred years of tradition, values and also alters years of the youth protection policy within the organization.

Trail Life USA is a Christian outdoor youth program focused on adventure, character and leadership. Trail Life's Chairman of the Board, Attorney John Stemberger of Orlando, Florida, issued the following statement regarding this decision: "We are greatly saddened by the BSA's resolution which is expected to pass the National Executive Board on Monday, July 27, 2015. This change in membership policy places the churches and religious institutions who sponsor BSA troops at greater legal risk especially in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent Obergefell decision declaring same-sex marriage a "fundamental right" and homosexuality an "immutable" characteristic. These Supreme Court holdings coupled with BSA's new membership policy changes, place the religious liberties of churches at even greater risk for legal attack and litigation. Dissenting justices on the high court gave clear warnings that: "people of faith can take no comfort in the treatment they receive from the majority today." (Justice Roberts); "has potentially ruinous consequences for religious liberty." (Justice Thomas); and "will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy." (Justice Alito).

Accordingly, public accommodation laws and non-discrimination laws are about to become major challenges as a result of the court's rulings. While the BSA may be well-meaning in its intent to create a local troop option for membership standards, for churches, this decision will be unsustainable over time, given the hostile nature of the courts and their "evolution" on issues related to gay-rights and human sexuality. Some courts have already declared the BSA to be a public accommodation, and such rulings are likely to increase. This could have a direct effect upon the churches chartering troops in those jurisdictions if they were to face litigation over revoking the membership of the homosexual member who wears his uniform in the Gay Pride Parade, an adult who publicly marries his same-sex partner, or to the girl who believes she is actually a male. Pastors and priests must also realize that the new local troop option only applies to adult members and churches are still prohibited from denying any openly homosexual youth "membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference."

Finally, the new resolution to be passed by the BSA clearly affirms that homosexual acts can be "moral, honorable, committed and respectful." This opinion is wholly incompatible with historic Christian theology and ethics, and will make it even more challenging for a church to integrate a BSA unit as part of a church's ministry offerings."

Attorney Richard Mathews, who served as Legal Counsel for the Boy Scouts of America for 11 years, and National General Counsel for the last three years, has authored a legal memorandum explaining the litigation risk that churches will undertake by continuing to charter BSA units or starting new ones. Mathews currently serves as General Counsel to Trail Life USA.

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+ *Boy Scouts sued after Homosexual Troop leaders abuse Four Kids*

[Note: Is it any wonder that this happened? We can expect to see this replicated many times over and for countless boys to be led into this practice. – AOM]

"Yet another man is charging the Boy Scouts with failing to protect him decades ago against a former St. Paul adult scout leader who allegedly abused him dozens of times when he was an adolescent and took naked photographs of him," the Minneapolis Star Tribune reports. "The scout leader, Leland Lee Opalinski, has been named in three other civil suits against the Boy Scouts of America since late June, when Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough announced he was seeking damages from the Scouts and the local Northern Star Council for four years of sexual abuse by Opalinski.

“In a civil suit filed Tuesday in Ramsey County District Court, John Doe 153 charges that Opalinski repeatedly had ‘sexual contact’ with him between 1967 and 1971, when he was 12 to 16.”

“Doe 153 is haunted by the possibility that the pictures of him, which he never saw, might still exist, Minneapolis attorney Patrick Noaker said.”

“McDonough’s announcement last month helped open the door to other victims, who had imagined that they were the only ones molested by Opalinski, Noaker said.”

“Noaker said that Doe 153, now 54 and living in St. Paul, filed the suit to support McDonough and make a difference in how children are protected.

“But he doesn’t relish going back and bringing back those painful memories,” Noaker said.

(Dr. Chaps’ comment: I spoke with Commissioner McDonough who confirmed this report. Does anybody still think the Boy Scouts made the right decision to invite openly homosexual men to become troop leaders and camp with boys in the woods?)

– Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt, PhD.

(UM) Women/Women’s Issues. Analysis: Rate of new female clergy slowing

CHICAGO (UMNS) – In its latest "Women By the Numbers," focusing on clergy in 2014, the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women finds "the number of female clergy is increasing but at a slower rate compared to 1992 and 2002. United Methodist clergy are getting older, with fewer young people coming up through the process to replace an aging population."
– UMNS; July 14, 2015.

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Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding – Proverbs 3:5

Global Outlook

Dr. David Lloyd-Jones, great evangelical preacher at London’s Westminster Chapel for over 30 years, died in 1981 of cancer. His last message to his family, scribbled shakily on a note pad just before he died, when his voice had already gone, was this: “Don’t pray for healing. Don’t try to hold me back from the glory.” On his tombstone are these words from St. Paul: “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

– By J.I. Packer in his book *Chosen Vessels*

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Haiti.

+ ***UMCOR Haiti Anniversary Report.*** January 12 marked the fifth anniversary of the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010 from an epicenter just 10 miles southwest of the capital, Port-au-Prince. An estimated 3 million people were affected by the quake, more than 2.6 million people were displaced from their homes and more than 200,000 lives were claimed. The disaster touched the hearts of many and ignited their desire to give and act. The needs of survivors inspired partnerships to form, including the Haiti Response Plan, a three-year partnership between UMCOR, EMH (Methodist Church of Haiti) and UVMIM to coordinate recovery efforts.

In the years following the earthquake, UMCOR established other key partnerships which helped to cement livelihood opportunities through construction training, improve food security, promote agricultural production, provide new homes, and much more. Read here about the unique collaboration of UVMIM, UMCOR and EMH staff, and the outpouring of volunteer support over the last five years.

In Haiti and elsewhere around the world, UMCOR school kits fill a critical need. In Haiti, UMCOR is working with CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) to distribute thousands of school kits and health kits each year to the most vulnerable children. But these kits are in short supply at UMCOR warehouses.

– UMCOR, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 02 / January 14, 2015

+ **Haiti: Recovery to Development.** Just five years ago, on Jan. 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake nearly leveled Port au Prince, Haiti, and left more than 200,000 dead; displaced 1.5 million throughout the island nation and damaged or destroyed some 300,000 buildings. UMS – who donated some \$45 million to UMCOR for the earthquake response – have participated collectively and individually in relief and recovery efforts for Haiti. UMCOR’s strategic plan through 2017 is to have a maximum impact on sustainable development in partnership with the Eglise Méthodiste d’Haïti, or the Methodist Church of Haiti. The denomination’s earthquake response has focused on shelter and reconstruction, education, health and hygiene, livelihoods and capacity building. Many other UMCOR partners have played a significant role in the five-year recovery. UMCOR’s Haiti office currently has a staff of about 40 people, the majority of whom are Haitian. Included in the earthquake’s death toll was Jean Arnwine, a UM volunteer, and two executives from the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM): the Rev. Sam Dixon, who then led UMCOR, and the Rev. Clinton Rabb, head of Mission Volunteers. The Rev. Jim Gulley, who was trapped with the men in the wreckage of the Hotel Montana, now serves as the GBGM adviser and partner coordinator for the work in Haiti. Both he and the Rev. Gesner Paul, president of the Methodist Church of Haiti, acknowledged overall concerns about unemployment and inadequate housing. Paul said he has found the recovery process to be “very slow,” lamenting that more than 70,000 Haitians still live in tents. He believes many nongovernmental organizations “did not reach the targets or goals they were supposed to achieve.” An approach taken in the last few years to provide rent money and let people find their own housing has helped reduced the numbers of those displaced, Gulley said. Both Paul and Gulley agree that new jobs are crucial to progress in Haiti. With 60% unemployment, Paul said, “most of the people are self-employed. They survive with the little things they can do.” The many schools operated by the Methodist Church of Haiti remain “the most important thing,” Paul said, but education also “is where we have most of the problems.” UMCOR just released funds to the Haitian church to help pay the arrears in teacher salaries. The overwhelming international response after the Haiti earthquake, as with the Indian Ocean tsunami five years earlier, “far outstripped the ability of the country to absorb it,” said Susan Watkins, Haiti Head of Mission for UMCOR. Improved procedures, regulations and standards have brought some progress, she noted. “Overall, we expect accelerated development in the coming years based on the lessons learned [and the] partnerships and foundations for working relationships that have been set.”

– Linda Bloom, UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 03 / January 21, 2015

Liberia. *Liberia Partners: In Mission Together.*

+ ***The Liberia Partners Summit.*** The Liberia Partners Summit met at Nardin Park UMC in Farmington Hills, Mich. Nov. 13–14. While Ebola was talked about and prayed over, the theme of the event was the power of relationship. Ellen Knudsen, director of The Advance noted, “To most of the world, Liberia is Ebola. While Ebola has everyone’s attention, this is our opportunity to share a positive message about God’s people in Liberia . . . what their needs are and where the hope is.” The eighty participants from 14 annual conferences included two bishops, John G. Innis (Liberia Area) and Deborah Lieder Kiesey (Michigan Area). Missionaries Nancy Carew and Princess Jusu, preparing to return to the Women’s Training Center in Monrovia, were present to witness to the work of that UM institution. Three other missionaries joined the conversation via Skype. Daytime plenary sessions featured staff members from the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), each bringing their area of focus to bear on healthy mission partnerships. GBGM’s director of In Mission Together, the Rev. Patrick Friday, noted that a balance of “being and doing” will help make United Methodism “a movement once again.” He encouraged volunteers in mission to build fewer buildings and have more class meetings. Then Friday noted that listening is the key to moving beyond short-term, needs-based relief toward long-term, asset-based development. To listen to what is needed is more important than to assert, “This is what you need.” He urged a 50/50 engagement among partners. “When partners are equal, we raise people up rather than pushing people down,” Friday concluded. – Kay DeMoss, Michigan Area, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 48 / December 3, 2014

+ **Praise Report.** “Brethren, Praise the Lord!! We cannot just hold back what God has done and is doing in Liberia. The latest (March 5 2015) update is that on yesterday Liberia released its last Ebola patient (Beatrice Yardolo, 58) after going through a week without any new cases of the virus, according to the World Health organization (WHO). Please join us to say a BIG AMEN!!! However, it is not yet over because in Guinea and Sierra Leone there are still new cases surfacing. In fact, WHO has said that as of March 1, Guinea and Sierra Leone have experienced 132 new cases. This is very sad!! Therefore, please join us to pray for our neighboring sister countries. Logically, Liberia will not be rid of the virus if our neighbors are still in turmoil. But God is faithful and can do anything He wishes!!

The second good news is that schools have reopened over eight months of closure because of the virus. There are over 2,000 Ebola orphans whose future is uncertain as far as their education is concerned. Again, join us to pray for them for a brighter and hopeful future (Jer. 29:110).

Lastly, we are still taking all the preventive measures because Ebola kills; but God saves!!

In God’s rest,

Pastor Kenneth C. Jackson, Associate Director, DEM/LAC/UMC.

– E-mail received from an associate in the South Georgia Conference.

Sudan. Holston Conference Seeks New Partners for Sudan. The Rev. Michael Blake has just returned from South Sudan, where he visited with 14 orphans he met on previous trips. He saw for himself the new home built for them and the two “mamas” hired to take care of them. He saw how healthy the children looked since they have been eating regularly. In the newest nation in the world, Greenland Home for Children is just one of the ministries where UMs are partnering with African brothers and sisters to help bring peace and prosperity to South Sudan. When church members from the Memphis Conference decided to reach across the world to build new relationships in the name of Jesus, they didn’t have to do it alone. Blake and his colleague, Beth Brown, benefited from someone else’s experience and alliances when they formed a friendship with Holston Conference, on the other side of Tennessee. “We have a strong sense of connection,” said Blake, “and we’re thankful other UMs can help us do what we can’t do on our own.” Blake and Brown became interested in visiting Sudan after teaching a UM Women’s Mission U study on the East African nation in 2009.

Holston Conference sent its first mission team to Sudan in 2006. Since then, Holston has partnered with the East Africa Conference and invested more than \$2.8 million to send missionaries and teams, build churches and schools, dig wells, improve health, and develop leaders in and near Yei, South Sudan. To expand the mission into more isolated parts of the nation, five of 20 local churches in South Sudan have formed individual partnerships with Memphis churches as well as Holston churches. Holston leaders are now encouraging other groups from the denomination or beyond to partner with the remaining South Sudanese congregations, who are ready to grow and help their communities. “We’re not only building a nation, we’re building the body of Christ,” said the Rev. Fred Dearing, a Holston pastor serving as district superintendent in South Sudan since 2011. “We’re transforming a world caught up in so much violence.”

South Sudan is recovering from 50 years of civil war and related death, destruction and disease.

In 2011, South Sudan separated from Sudan, yet conflicts between tribes and government leaders still threaten the young nation’s peace. “I remember in 2010, we met under a tree, under a tarp,” Danny Howe told a Kenyi congregation during a visit to the new church and orphanage in August 2014. “Your commitment has inspired the people of Holston and Memphis Conference to want to be a part of your congregation.” Howe, Holston’s coordinator for South Sudan mission, is working with Dearing to recruit new groups to visit emerging congregations and help them accomplish their goals. “The church’s tendency is for the short-term offering, but we’re in this for the long term,” Howe said.

– Annette Spence, Holston Annual Conference, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 42, Issue 48 / December 3, 2014

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In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin.

But this is predicated upon the person’s becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American...

There can be no divided allegiance here.

Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all.

We have room for but one flag, the American flag...

We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language...

and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.

– Theodore Roosevelt, 1907