

Monthly Update

January 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

After coming out of the Christmas season and with positive, uplifting information in the December edition of our Update, I wanted to bridge into the news of the world with a positive story. For that reason, the first item in “The Good Stuff” has a human interest narrative that exemplifies what I believe to be true of many American people – that we tend to have a caring, innovative, generous approach to life. In actuality, with all of our faults, I believe that Americans tend to be generous to not only others here within the United States, but also to those less fortunate around the world.

Other bits of information contained in this issue of the Update are about issues within our United Methodist Church, some apparently trivial, and some obviously important. It is interesting how in life it is the seemingly “trivial” problems that can become major crises if not resolved. We strive to bring to the attention of the leaders and members of the general boards and agencies – and as many people as possible – those issues that we believe are important to the continued survival of our denomination, while hoping that that they will be corrected. We would like to see our church start to grow again, not for the sake of numbers, but as a result of revived spirituality and a hunger for the things of God.

To summarize just some of our actions in 2015, our efforts in Concerned Methodists were engaged in preparation for the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, and the defeat of “bad” legislation we know is coming that would harm our church and lead to the further decline of our denomination. We are fully focused on the upcoming conference and making the greatest impact on the outcome there. We also have recognized that some of the actions are uncomfortably similar to initiatives taken before the 2008 General Conference that was held in Fort Worth, Texas – and with the apparent manipulation. You may be assured that we will be striving with all of our might to effect a positive outcome.

From those of us here at Concerned Methodists, may I say “thank you” for your continued partnering with us? We strive to serve our Lord Jesus Christ to the greatest extent possible while making the best possible use of our resources during these very difficult times.

Please pray. When we ask that you pray a Psalm 91 hedge of protection around the United States, we would ask that you open your Bible to that Psalm, read the words out loud, and offer them up as a prayer to our Lord and our God.

Again, please pray. Powerful, earnest prayers are needed now as never before.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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January 2015 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

“I would hope the agencies exist to support the work of the local church and not the other way around.”

– The Rev. Clayton Oliphint, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas.

As reported in the UMNS Daily Digest, October 30, 2015

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The Good Stuff

+ *The Happiest Day of My Life.*

It started innocently.

Many years ago, I worked in an office with large windows that looked out over a busy overpass. I stood by one of those windows one day, when a woman in a passing car looked up and made eye contact with me—naturally, I waved. A chuckle escaped my lips as she turned and tried to identify me. It was the beginning of a year of window antics. When things were slow, I stood in the window and waved at the passengers who looked up. Their strange looks made me laugh, and the stress of work was washed away. My co-workers took an interest. They stood back out of view and watched the reactions I received with amusement.

Late afternoon was the best time. Rush-hour traffic filled the overpass with cars and transit buses, and provided a wealth of waving opportunities for my end-of-day routine. It didn't take long to attract a following—a group of commuters who passed by the window every day and looked up at the strange waving man. There was a man with a construction truck who would turn on his flashing yellow lights and return my wave. There was the carpool crowd and the business lady with her children fresh from day care. My favorite was the transit bus from the docks that passed my window at 4:40 PM. It carried the same group every day. They were my biggest fans.

Waving grew boring, so I devised ways to enhance my act. I made signs: “Hi!”, “Hello!”, “Be Happy!” I posted them in the window and waved. I stood on the window ledge in various poses; created hats from paper and file-folders, made faces, played peek-a-boo by bouncing up from below the window ledge, stuck out my tongue, tossed paper planes in the air, and once went into the walkway over the street and danced while co-workers pointed to let my fans know I was there.

Christmas approached, and job cuts were announced. Several co-workers would lose their jobs. Everyone was depressed. Stress reached a high point. We needed a miracle to break the tension.

While working a night shift, a red lab jacket attracted my attention. I picked it up and turned it in my hands. In a back corner, where packing material was kept, I used my imagination and cut thin, white sheets of cloth-like foam into strips and taped them around the cuffs and collar, down the front, and around the hem of the lab jacket. A box of foam packing and strips of tape became Santa's beard. I folded a red file folder into a hat and taped the beard to it. The whole thing slipped over my head in one piece. The next day I hid from my co-workers and slipped into the costume. I walked bravely to my desk, sat down, held my belly, and mocked Santa's chuckle. They gathered around me and laughed for the first time in weeks. A few minutes later, my supervisor walked through the door. He took three steps, and then looked up and saw me. Pausing, he shook his head, turned, and left.

I feared trouble. The phone on the desk rang. It was my boss, and he grumbled, “Mike, come to my office!” I shuffled down the hall. The foam beard swished across my chest with each step.

“Come in!” The muffled voice replied to my knock. I entered and sat down. The foam on my beard creaked. He looked away from me. A bead of sweat rolled down my forehead. The only sound in the room was the hammering of my heart. “Mike...” That was all he managed to say. He lost his composure, leaned back in his chair, and bellowed with laughter as he held his stomach. Tears formed in his eyes, while I sat silent and confused. When he regained control, he said, “Thanks, Mike! With the job cuts, it's been hard to enjoy the Christmas season. Thanks for the laugh, I needed it.”

That evening, and every evening of that Christmas season, I stood proudly in the window and waved to my fans. The bus crowd waved wildly, and the little children smiled at the strange Santa. My heart filled with joy.

For a few minutes each day, we could forget the job losses. I didn't know it then, but a bond was forming between my fans and I. The next spring, I discovered just how close we had become.

My wife and I were expecting our first child. I wanted the world to know. Less than a month before the birth, I posted a sign in the window, "25 DAYS UNTIL 'B' DAY." My fans passed and shrugged their shoulders. The next day the sign read, "24 DAYS UNTIL 'B' DAY." Each day the number dropped, and the passing people grew more confused.

One day a sign appeared in the bus, "What is 'B' DAY?" I just waved and smiled.

Ten days before the expected date, the sign in the window read, "10 DAYS UNTIL BA-- DAY." Still the people wondered. The next day it read, "9 DAYS UNTIL BAB- DAY," then "8 DAYS UNTIL BABY DAY." My fans finally knew what was happening.

By then, my following had grown to include twenty or thirty different busses and cars. Every night, they watched to see if my wife had given birth. The number decreased and excitement grew. My fans were disappointed when the count reached "zero" without an announcement. The next day the sign read, "BABY DAY 1 DAY LATE". I pretended to pull out my hair.

Each day the number changed and the interest from passing traffic grew. My wife was fourteen days overdue before she finally went into labor. Our daughter was born the next morning. I left the hospital at 5:30 AM, screamed my joy into the morning air, and drove home to sleep. I got up at noon, bought cigars, and appeared at my window in time for my fans. My co-workers were ready with a banner posted in the window:

"IT'S A GIRL!"

I didn't stand alone that evening. My co-workers joined me in celebration. We stood and waved our cigars in the air, as every vehicle that passed acknowledged the birth of my daughter. Finally, the bus from the docks made its turn onto the overpass and began to climb the hill.

When it drew close, I climbed onto the window ledge and clasped my hands over my head in a victory pose. The bus was directly in front of me when it stopped in heavy traffic, and every person on board stood with their hands in the air.

I was choked with emotion as I watched them celebrate my new daughter.

Then it happened – – – a sign popped up. It filled the windows and stretched half the length of the bus. "CONGRATULATIONS!" it read.

Tears formed in the corners of my eyes as the bus slowly resumed its journey. I stood in silence as it pulled away from view. More fans passed. They tooted their horns and flashed their lights to congratulate me. I hardly noticed them, as I pondered what had just happened.

My daughter had been born fourteen days late. Those people must have carried that sign for weeks. Each day they must have unrolled it and then rolled it back up. The thought of them going through so much just to celebrate my new baby made me cry.

I made a fool of myself in that window for eight months. I made those people smile after a long day at work. They must have enjoyed it, because on the happiest day of my life they showed their appreciation.

That day, more than twenty years ago, changed me. I just wanted to make my day better. I didn't realize how it affected others.

Ever since then, I try to put a smile on someone's face every day. I compliment strangers on their clothing. I start conversations in elevators. I even make jokes in crowded New York City subways. Some may think I am stupid, but I know there is a chance that I'm making someone's day – someone who may one day hold up a sign that says "Congratulations!".

– By Michael T. Smith. As received by e-mail.

+ ***The “brush-back” pitch***, by Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr.

I just returned from being a part of the Tri-Annual Meeting of the International Association of Methodist related Schools, Colleges and Universities, held in Hiroshima, Japan. While we were there some of the people I traveled with attended a baseball game in Hiroshima. They told me that one of the striking differences between Japanese baseball players and American baseball players is that when the pitcher "brushes" back the hitter in Japan, the hitter does not respond with angry outburst or intimidating moves toward the pitcher's mound like players in the United States. Japanese players take it in stride as if it is just another part of the game. We in the good ol' U.S. of A know that it is a game tactic, but we have been socialized to see it as a hostile move and that the proper response is a hostile one. We are just being "picked on" and we must respond in anger. But, what if we saw brush backs as growth opportunities?

Another hurdle to overcome

Another obstacle to traverse

Another mountain climb or...

Another lesson to learn

If we could view a brush back not as an opportunity to defend ourselves maybe we could improve our ability, dust ourselves off, get up, get a hit, and do something positive with our lives. Lord knows – I've had my share of brush-back pitches, and I haven't always responded well, but I'm determined now to gather myself, try to compose myself, get my wits and notice how I might learn from this.

I hear Job speaking to us

"Surely he knows my way; when he tests me, I will emerge as gold." – Job 23:10 CEB)

Blessings.

– Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., President of the General Commission on UM Men. bishop@mississippi-umc.org

+ ***Layman named distinguished evangelist***

LAWRENCEBURG, Ind. (UMNS) – The Foundation for Evangelism has named Harry J. Lyness, a member of Dearborn Hills United Methodist Church near Lawrenceburg, as the 2015 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church. A 40-year veteran in the mission field, Lyness has led mission teams in 14 states and six countries.

– United Methodist News Service (UMNS); October 13, 2015.

+ ***Church has heart for special-needs adults***

CANTON, Texas (UMNS) – Special-needs adults represent an often overlooked mission field, but not at First United Methodist Church in Canton. The church's Followers Class for such adults has 30 active members and recently got financial help from the broader Canton community to attend a camp at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center. The Texas Conference reports.

– UMNS; October 13, 2015.

+ ***Commentary: Why not start a Deaf ministry?***

FREDERICK, Md. (UMNS) – The Rev. Leo Yates Jr. asks churches to consider adding a Deaf ministry that is welcoming and includes Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened and Deaf-blind individuals in the life of the church. Yates is a deacon in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

13, 2015.

– UMNS; October

+ ***Methodist University students help with flood cleanup***

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. – A group of students from Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina, planned to spend their fall break cleaning up St. Paul's Waccamaw United Methodist Church on Pawleys Island, South Carolina.

– UMNS; October 14, 2015

+ ***Appalachian Trail chaplain shares stories.***

Alcoa, Tennessee. Besides wearing out three pairs of boots and eating through 46 boxes of food (mailed or delivered to him along the way), David Smith's 2,200-mile hike of the Appalachian Trail included aiding a hiker

suffering from Lyme Disease in Pennsylvania and another with an injured ankle in Virginia. Those are just two of the encounters Smith, United Methodist chaplain for the Appalachian Trail, shared with Annette Spence of the Holston Conference.

– UMNS; October 24, 2014.

+ ***Bumper Drive Leads to Repeat O-fenders.*** The buzz is usually about who's in police cars -- not what's on them. But that's all changed after the explosion of the national motto bumper stickers cropping up on vehicles across the country. No one knows exactly how it started, but since mid-summer, it's become a national phenomenon. In Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Missouri, Texas, Florida, and other states, policemen are combating the negativity about law enforcement by proudly sticking "In God We Trust" on their fleets.

Florida's Bay County Sheriff Frank McKeithen thought the idea was so great that he offered to pay for 200 of them out of pocket. But he never got the chance. An anonymous donor stepped up to buy hundreds for the local stations -- a trend that's continued in counties all over America. "I'm not hiding from the fact that it's religious, and I'm not trying to make an excuse for the fact that it's religious," McKeithen said. At his agency, he explained, "We still pray. We pray before we go to a horrible situation where we think someone could get hurt or killed."

And they aren't alone. In Missouri, Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader made no apologies for the move. "There has been no better time than now to proudly display our national motto," Rader explained in a post that's had more than two million views. "I'm very humbled at the amount of support behind it." As usual, the spoilsports at Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) are desperate to put the brakes on the craze. But so far, they haven't had much luck. The initiative is so popular that the Foundation was forced to hunt for an offended party in blast emails. "Specifically," they wrote in a recent all-call, "we're searching for police officers and sheriff's deputies who are being affected by this -- these bumper stickers -- and being forced to drive around cars that proclaim religious belief."

In the meantime, the group has sent more than 50 cease and desist letters to law enforcement agencies across the country. If that was supposed to scare people like Texas Police Chief Adrian Garcia, it didn't. "Go fly a kite," he wrote back. Another station fired back "NO" in big letters.

In Bay County, another one of the Foundation's targets, a reporter asked if Sheriff McKeithen would pull down his viral videos after FFRF's legal threat. Actually, he shrugged, "I plan on adding a few more." In most cases, the stickers were donated by local citizens. But even that didn't satisfy the secularists. "The fact that these stickers were privately funded indicates that you know it is inappropriate for the government to fund religious statements."

Of course, the irony is that the government has been funding religious statements since 1957 -- on our currency. The national motto didn't suddenly become unconstitutional just because it's on a police car instead! Texas's Lt. Governor Dan

Paxton agrees. This week, he released a formal opinion responding to the Foundation's complaint. "There is an unbroken history of official acknowledgment by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life from at least 1789.' (Lynch, 465 U.S. at 674.) A law enforcement department's decision to display the national motto on its vehicles is consistent with that history. Thus, a court is likely to conclude that a law enforcement department's display of 'In God We Trust' on its patrol vehicles is permissible under the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution."

Good for him! Surely, America's police force has more important things to respond to than a petty lawsuit. While the fringe groups like FFRF try to recruit people for their intimidation campaign, most people agree with Sheriff McKeithen: "Morals and ethics [are]... what law enforcement's supposed to be about." With reminders like this one, he hopes more people are convicted -- in a different kind of way.

– Tony Perkins, Washington Update. Family Research Council:
801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001; November 6, 2015

Of Interest.

+ ***Missouri Conference sells camps.***

[Note: This is just a response to the downsizing of the United Methodist Church. It would be a good sign if they did not have to sell the camps but needed to expand them to accommodate more campers because more people

were attending because the membership of the Missouri Conference were growing. But that is not the case; they are in decline. – AOM]

COLUMBIA, Mo. (UMNS) – Three camps owned by the Missouri Conference were sold at auction Oct. 21. The Blue Mountain Camp, Wilderness Retreat and Camp Galilee went for a combined \$1.75 million.

– UMNS Daily Digest; October 23, 2015

+ ***Pilot project helps churches with disciple-making.***

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – A pilot project by United Methodist Discipleship Ministries will help United Methodist churches in the United States engage in dedicated disciple-making as they become vital congregations. "The Building H.O.P.E. Project is a life-giving process for a local church to engage in to say, "We can make disciples and live into our mission," said the Rev. Sara Thomas, chief strategist for Vital Congregations. – UMNS Daily Digest; October 23, 2015

+ ***History of Hymns: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God".***

DALLAS (UMNS) — No hymn is identified with the Protestant Reformation more than Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress." Luther left a body of congregational songs that both defined the Lutheran confessional tradition and became truly ecumenical in influence. C. Michael Hawn talks about the hymn's development and dispels the myth that the melody began as a tavern song. – UMNS Daily Digest, December 14, 2015

+ ***Vital Conversations: An Interactive Video Series on Today's Realities of Race and Racism.***

[Note: This is seen as a complete waste of money and a misplaced priority in the United Methodist Church, an inability to get past perceived injustices of the past, and the need to "blame the white man" rather than to face up to one's own responsibility in different situations. Problems in ethnic communities are not because of the "white man" but are usually traceable to individual or cultural mistakes. The theme here is going to be to examine "white privilege." – AOM]

"Developing White Racial Literacy." [At] The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race's website: The series begins with Robin DiAngelo's "Misunderstanding of Racism." DiAngelo is a professor of multicultural education at Westfield State University and the author of "What Does it Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy."

– UMNS Daily Digest; October 27, 2015

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

+ ***The Incredibly Shrinking Continent.*** Europe is in crisis, but one of a different sort than we usually see in the headlines -- a crisis of population. Our friends at the pro-life Population Research Institute note that "The United Nations Population Division projects that between 2005 and 2050, the continent will lose 93 million people, imploding from 725 million to 632 million. European leaders are getting concerned, which is why this week FRC's Dr. Pat Fagan traveled to Hungary to speak at the Budapest Demographic Forum, which is being hosted by the Hungarian government. The Demographic Forum will be attended by heads of census offices from across Europe, as well as many high level government officials, including some cabinet members, from European Union countries.

Fagan was asked to present the factual case that the intact married family that worships God weekly is the greatest creator of social and economic goods in the world. His presentation emphasizes one key social science fact: the only social science variable that points to fertility at or above replacement level is weekly worship of God. Fagan argues that Europe has a choice: return to weekly worship of God or face a long-term replacement by historically non-European populations. As he points to what the social sciences demonstrate: To have a vibrant population, grow the young intact married family that worships God weekly. Then, all social factors begin to fall into place and all social outcomes begin to improve.

As Fagan said earlier this year at a speech to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "To strengthen marriage and the family, society must stop looking to government for solutions and instead affirm the three people-forming institutions: Family, church and school." God's design for the family, whether in North America, Europe, or anywhere else, works. And no government can ever change it.

– Tony Perkins, Washington Update. Family Research Council:
801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001; November 6, 2015

(UM) General Board of Church and Society.

+ *Faith leaders push for criminal justice legislation.*

[Note: This is seen as another complete waste of money. The push is for equal outcomes and proportionate representation in prison. In other words, if one minority is 18% of the population, there ought to be no more than 18% of inmates who are members of that same ethnic group or “racism” is evident, regardless of higher crime rates among those groups. Rather than taking responsibility for criminal actions, they want to see equal outcomes by racial representation. – AOM]

WASHINGTON, D.C. (UMNS) – Forty faith organizations supporting bipartisan criminal justice and sentencing reform legislation sent a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee before a hearing on the legislation. The faith leaders said they believed the legislation "is an important step toward fixing the federal prison crisis." The Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition organized the campaign, and the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society was among the organizations that supported the letter. – UMNS Daily Digest; October 22, 2015

+ *Calling on leaders to address climate change.*

[Note: Yet as another complete waste of money. Despite the fact that God controls the weather and has done a pretty good job of engineering the atmosphere when He created the world, there are some in the world who want to look for a human cause. Yes, we as humans have a responsibility to live respecting nature and not trashing our environment, but we need to recognize that, since “global warming” could not be substantiated, the alarmists are chasing a new ghost. This is representative of “Green Theology” and an attack on the capitalistic, free enterprise system. Do not sign this. – AOM]

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – The United Methodist Board of Church and Society is encouraging United Methodists to sign the Faith Climate Petition, an interfaith petition calling on leaders to address climate change issues.

– UMNS Daily Digest; October 23, 2015

+ *German 'climate pilgrims' halfway on walk to Paris.*

[Note: This is a related story reflecting misguided actions, but ignoring real threats – such as that posed by ISIS. – AOM]

GENEVA (WCC) – Faith groups are building awareness of the importance of reaching a binding and ambitious agreement at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. Climate pilgrims walking more than 1,000 kilometers from Flensburg, Germany, to Paris reached the halfway point in Wuppertal recently, where many Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders welcomed them. A Related story was "Seeking climate justice in Paris".

– UMNS Daily Digest; October 28, 2015

+ *Pension board releases sustainability report.*

GLENVIEW, Ill. (UMNS) – The United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits has released its annual sustainable investment report. The "Global Investor, Global Impact" report summarizes United Methodist investment philosophy, which is designed to abide by church social teachings and protect the future financial security of 91,000 plan participants and institutional investors. –

UMNS Daily Digest; October 22, 2015

+ ***Vital merger model works for Florida church.***

BRADENTON, Fla. (UMNS) – With an aging congregation, Christ United Methodist Church faced the sad prospect of shuttering its sanctuary and disbanding. Enter Harvest United Methodist, Lakewood Ranch, which was growing steadily. With the encouragement of the Florida Conference and the Gulf Central District, leaders of the two churches agreed to join forces as one congregation with two campuses. – UMNS Daily Digest; October 28, 2015

Homosexuality. *Military under Sexual Siege.* Despite millions of dollars in new programs, military sexual attacks are through the roof -- and after the latest study, Congress may be too! As alarming as the sexual crisis in the military is, the American Psychological Association believes it's much worse than the government is letting on. Based on its own research, the APA thinks the Defense Department may be covering up the real numbers, which suggest "rates of military sexual trauma among men who served... as much as 15 times higher than has been previously reported." If that were true, it would translate into 180,000 male-on-male sexual assaults each year -- with more than 57,000 of them qualifying as rape. In a shocking new analysis, leading psychologist Sean Sheppard of the University of Utah, told the Washington Times that "the survey methods for the official military study were remarkably loose."

If the Association is right, it paints a frightening picture of the Pentagon -- which is not only denying the fallout of its policies, but far worse, denying our servicemen the treatment and help they need. For years, the DOD has shrugged off the possibility that repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) would have any impact on the ranks. Now, four years into this brave new world, it turns out that conservatives and the dozens of military leaders who fought the change were right. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that when Congress introduced even more sexual tension into the ranks, it put thousands of our brave men and women into a defenseless and compromising position.

The Pentagon downplayed the effects of open homosexuality when it was implemented in the military in 2011-- something it will certainly have a tough time doing now. Until that changes, every service member will be a victim of this sexually-charged environment.

– Tony Perkins, Washington Update. Family Research Council:
801 G Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001; November 6, 2015

(UM) Judicial Council.

+ ***Court defers review of "Plan UMC Revised".***

[Note: It would be good for the Judicial Council to decide on the plan now so people can prepare for GC-2016. – AOM]

ST. LOUIS (UMNS) — A ruling on the constitutionality of legislation for a proposed organizational plan for The United Methodist Church has been deferred until May. During its Oct. 21-24 fall meeting, the United Methodist Judicial Council said that making a declaratory decision about one specific piece of proposed legislation "could intrude" on the full legislative authority of General Conference, the denomination's top decision-making body.

– UMNS Daily Digest, October 27, 2015

+ ***Could reorganizing agencies boost church vitality?***

[Note: I was at General Conference 2012 when this plan was developed – and then ruled unconstitutional. Yes, it is a good plan and even if it did not meet all of its goals, it would help get the UMC on the right track. – AOM]

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – Plan UMC Revised, a proposed restructuring of United Methodist general agencies, aims to align denominational resources toward fostering vital congregations. Church members debate

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The worst thing about growing old is listening to your children's advice. There's not much wrong with the younger generation that becoming a parent and a taxpayer won't cure.

Global Outlook

People are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom.

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Commentary: Speak out about persecuted church

[Note: Bill Mefford has it right – it is our duty to speak out when we have brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted for their beliefs. But we should do it more than during just two Sundays; we need to do it year round. We must take a stand, or silence will be seen as weakness, and we may face persecution for our faith here. – AOM]

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – The first two Sundays in November are set aside as a time to speak out and pray for Christians who face persecution for their faith. "Remembering our persecuted sisters and brothers is always important and necessary," writes Bill Mefford of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

– UMNS Daily Digest – October 22, 2015

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What one generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace. – John Wesley