

Monthly Update

March 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Did you hear about the Irish man who passed by two other guys involved in a fight? He stood there for a few minutes and then asked, “Excuse me, but is this a private fight or can I join in?” Of course, this is meant as humor but it does reflect how we feel sometimes. I know that after I became a Christian (late in life – at age 39), I determined that after I retired from the Army I wanted to do all that I could for the Lord, so grateful was I for what He had done for me. I was involved in volunteer youth ministry and Concerned Methodists (just after three other men and I had formed the organization). I was debating on whether to attend Southeastern Seminary and study youth ministry or Asbury Seminary to be ordained as a pastor. I received a word in my spirit that I was to do neither. In looking back, it makes perfect sense. God clearly had called me to “contend for the faith”; I had already received the tactical training I needed from my military background. If the enemy is storming the gates of the city, that is not the time to go to West Point to study warfare; that is the time to get into the battle.

That is just what GC2016 in May is shaping up to be: a real battle. This “Monthly Update” contains information on a wide variety of issues that are on our radar screen: in “Happenings around the Church,” Dr. Riley Case covers deep issues in the UMC; Saul Alinsky’s 12 Rules for Radicals frames the “rules of combat” used by those who oppose us; problems in The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) that exemplify where we are going if we lose the homosexual battle; United Methodist Church officials banning a pro-intelligent design information table at GC2016, and “Rev.” Cynthia Meyer of the Great Plains Annual Conference announcing that she is living in a partnered relationship with another woman. She had served 12 years as dean of students at UM-related Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. With just that last bit of information, think of the influence she had on so many students, the “future leaders” of the UMC. What does that say as to how they were influenced to believe?

We had wanted to start our Update on a positive note with a perspective from someone involved with Aldersgate Renewal Ministries. That is a highlight in what we do – fellowshipping with hundreds of Methodists who truly love the Lord.

As in last month’s Update, I would ask that you please continue to read Psalm 91 as a prayer and “hedge of protection” around our United Methodist Church, our nation and the country of Israel. And I very much thank you for continuing to partner with us by your prayers and your gifts in what He has called us to do.

In His service:

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

March 2016 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip. – Will Rogers

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The Good Stuff

+ *A Thought from Aldersgate Renewal Ministries (ARM).*

Praise the Lord! We are commanded to Praise the Lord. We have reasons to Praise the Lord. When we worship we should Praise the Lord. We have been given garments of Praise instead of spirits of despair. Praise the Lord! Psalm 150 declares – “Let everything that has breath Praise the Lord.”

I remember the first Aldersgate [conference I attended]. I attended after being appointed to a new church in the 1990s. I had not been in a while, but the worship drew me back again and again. The freedom to express worship and praise to God was amazing. I didn't want to leave the service. I was so caught up in praising God. That freedom was what I needed; what I longed for. For many people their churches do not allow much freedom. If it's not in the bulletin, it isn't going to happen. That's how many churches are. They have never seen freedom in worship. They may have felt at one time or another a sense that there might be something different, but they were bound to the way their church was. They had heard what other churches might do, but not their church.

When many people come to an ARM event and see the freedom people have, they are amazed. They have never seen the pageantry. They have not experienced the music and singing. They have not sensed the movement of the Holy Spirit. They have not seen people involved in worshipping and praising God in such ways. It almost makes them just want to sit down and watch, but no! They cannot be in the presence of God and just sit and watch. The Spirit draws them into the praise, into the freedom. And we, the ARM family share with them that this is where we get our worship on, too. Not all of us come from churches where we worship God freely. When we come to an ARM event, we are free and we express ourselves in our worship and praise. Thank God for the place where we can experience such worship!

Holy God, You have made us to be people of praise. Sometimes, we forget that. Sometimes we allow ourselves to be bound to conformity. We thank You for those opportunities when we come together and experience the freedom You make available. Help us share this freedom with others in ways that allow them to be themselves in Your presence. We enjoy this freedom so much. It almost seems like we are experiencing a part of heaven. You are a gracious God. We are grateful for all You give us. Amen.

Ric Holladay, Associate
Executive Director

– Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, *Equipping the local church to minister to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit*; ARM Weekly Update, Feb. 22, 2016; 121 East Avenue, Goodlettsville TN 37072. Tel.: 877-857-9372; 615-851-9192.

+ ***The Movie “Risen”***. “What a powerful film, as seen from the eyes of an unbeliever!”

[Note: This has received affirmation from Christian viewers. Even though the movie itself is made by a secular film company (remember the deplorable “Last Temptation of Christ”?), “Risen” has received very positive reviews. – AOM]

Here’s the synopsis: This is the epic Biblical story of the Resurrection and the weeks that followed, as seen through the eyes of an unbelieving Clavius, a high-ranking Roman Military Tribune. Clavius and his aide Lucius (Tom Felton) are instructed by Pontius Pilate to ensure Jesus’ radical followers don’t steal his body and claim resurrection. When the body goes missing within days, Clavius sets out on a mission to locate the missing body in order to disprove the rumors of a risen Messiah and prevent an uprising in Jerusalem. – Received from an associate.

Of Interest.

+ ***GC 2016: Saving the World by Resolutions***. I misplaced my United Methodist Book of Resolutions (BR). For the record I do consult it from time to time. When I was leading classes for new members I would present it along with the Doctrinal Standards, the General Rules, and the Discipline, as documents serious UMs should know about. One man asked to borrow my copy. When he brought it back he indicated he was no longer interested in church membership; furthermore, he would not be attending our church any more. No wonder a number of pastors I know would just as soon keep the existence of the BR a secret.

But back to the misplaced book. No problem, I thought. I will borrow one from another pastor, or a church library, or at least the district office. What I found out was that none of the pastors I knew, nor the churches I was acquainted with, nor the district office, nor a second district office, had a copy. One district secretary told me, “We used to order them but we never got any requests for them.”

Not everyone in the church, of course, is so disinterested. Church bureaucrats and social activists and seminary classes on social justice live by the book, the “book” being not the Bible but the Book of Resolutions (BR). For some, United Methodism is not so much about doctrine and being saved and commitment to Jesus Christ, but about the environment and GMOs and new definitions of “rights” and new understandings of “equality” and “diversity” and how the Church recommends that government should be run. All of this can be found in the Book of Resolutions.

The BR is made up of resolutions and position papers prepared mostly by boards and agencies and approved by the General Conference. At most General Conferences other matters take up so much time that the resolutions are presented and passed without much debate, usually during the last hours of the last day of conference when persons are tired and want to go home. Indeed, it would be of interest to know whether any significant number of the delegates had even read the resolutions they approved. This is particularly true of overseas delegates because: 1) at this writing these resolutions for 2016 have not even been translated for the benefit of those delegates for whom English is not their first language: 2) the resolutions are almost entirely US centric dealing with matters overseas delegates know little about.

The United Methodist Church has not always had a BR. Before the 1968 merger of Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren, resolutions were printed in the Discipline and consisted of positions of the church on issues of interest to persons in local churches. These resolutions were typically short statements on matters such as the family and the evils of alcohol

and working for world peace. With the Methodist-EUB merger in 1968 resolutions were taken to a new level. The structure of the new United Methodist denomination created superboards which were (are) basically independent fiefdoms which saw (see) themselves as leading the church to a brave new future, in part through the wisdom of resolutions prepared by the boards and approved by the General Conference. After 1968 the thinking seemed to be that the more resolutions the quicker the kingdom would come.

So, from a few pages in the Discipline before 1968 the number of resolutions multiplied exponentially. By 1980 the Book of Resolutions had grown to 218 pages. By 2004 the Book of Resolutions had grown to 954 pages and was 2¼" thick. This book consisted of 30 different resolutions on Native Americans; 8 on racism, and 11 on women. There were 2 resolutions on evangelism and 2 on the family. Among other things a resolution called for a United Methodist boycott of Taco Bell. The 2012 Book of Resolutions carries over 300 resolutions with more resolutions piling up for Native Americans (now up to 39); there are 23 resolutions relating to African-Americans and another 6 related to Black Americans; the "social community" which addresses the rights and privileges that society needs to bestow upon persons or groups (as defined by boards and agencies) garners 30 resolutions. 48 resolutions relate to the environment and what we need to be doing about it.

What about resolutions having to do with winning the world for Jesus Christ? Despite the fact that making disciples of Jesus Christ is the mission statement of the church, only one resolution in the 2016 BR speaks of evangelism and that is in the statement on Holy Communion. If the church's boards and agencies have any concern for the lost of the world it is not apparent from the BR.

The BR is one of the best examples of why ordinary United Methodists distrust church leadership [emphasis added]. It is the story of bureaucrats operating as if persons in local churches do not matter. Church "stances" do not reflect the convictions of local church members but of the denomination's progressive elite.

For example, what about one of the greatest concerns among Americans today, and for that matter, for persons the world over, namely, the threat of terrorism? There are no resolutions directly related to terrorism in the 2012 book. One petition, however, is concerned about repression in the name of "anti-terrorism." By the same token there evidently are very few resolutions to be considered by the 2016 General Conference on terrorism, especially as it relates to Muslim extremists. Every mention of Muslims in the 2012 Book of Resolutions speaks about dialogue and understanding. If there is any concern about the tens of thousands of persons who die at the hands of Muslim terrorists it is not to be found....

This is not to say there are not a number of good resolutions in the Book of Resolutions. But it is to say that the book is imbalanced, and even, in some instances, counterproductive and embarrassing. And so the BR advocates for socialized medicine and many other positions that would make Bernie Sanders proud. Some resolutions are so extreme even mainline progressives might be drawn up short. The BR continues to carry the resolution on "Puerto Rican Political Prisoners," a reference to a group of terrorists some years ago who declared "war" on the United States in order to liberate Puerto Rico from colonialism and were convicted and jailed. (According to polls only 4% of Puerto Ricans favor independence.) The terrorists were re-branded "political prisoners" and their release became a cause for progressives. Eventually President Bill Clinton offered them clemency if they would promise not to engage in further acts of violence. One prisoner, Lopez Rivera, would not so promise and is still incarcerated. So for

Lopez Rivera's sake the BR continues to carry the resolution. Do United Methodists know resolutions like this are in the BR? What percent of UMs support this resolution? Would it be 1% or less than 1%?

In 2012 a major effort was made at General Conference to pass a resolution requiring the church to divest from certain companies doing business in Israel. The petition failed by something like 2 to 1. Never mind, progressive lobbyists have now convinced the Board of Pensions that the spirit of the resolutions on responsible investing warrants anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic action. So the Board of Pensions has withdrawn business from several Israeli banks.

Because of a resolution opposing Intelligent Design (p. 653) or any faith-based teaching in the area of science in public schools, the Commission on the General Conference has denied information space at the 2016 General Conference to a group that supports creationism. (I know of one church which has left the denomination over this resolution.) The resolution is so extreme that it places the UM Church on the side of atheists, forbidding all teaching in schools but evolution through natural selection. In one poll of Americans in general (which includes atheists and non-Christians) 70% do not agree with this decision. Again, what percentage of UMs would support this extreme view? Would it be as many as 5%? To compound the problem the Commission on the General Conference is denying the space with the argument that it is not consistent with the Social Principles of the Church. Do they not know the BR is not the same as the Social Principles? If groups are to be denied space in the Exhibition Hall because they are opposed to the teaching of the church the commission should start with the gay advocacy groups. And of course what do the overseas delegates think about being dragged into a US issue?

Is there any chance General Conference will act responsibly in regard to the BR? Don't hold your breath. The BR which will be published after the 2016 General Conference promises to be even bigger and more complex and more extreme. The General Board of Church and Society has submitted 70 resolutions, either new resolutions or re-writes or amended resolutions. None speaks to the problem of terrorism. None say anything about evangelism. There are resolutions, however, on the evils of Israel including another effort for divestment from Caterpillar.

So the church limps along.

– “Happenings around the Church,” by Dr. Riley Case. Dr. Case is an elder and former D.S. in the Indiana Conference.

+ ***Vital Conversations***. Join us for the next Vital Conversation: Featuring Dr. Philip Klinkner exploring the continued struggles in American race relations. Join The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) in a Vital Conversation on Wednesday, January 13 at 9 p.m. ET with Dr. Philip Klinkner as he explores the continued struggles in American race relations. Dr. Klinkner is a political scientist, blogger, et. al.

– North Carolina Conference (NC Conference) of The UMC, 9 Jan 2016

[Note: GCORR is one of the organizations that was almost eliminated at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Florida, along with the Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW). Both organizations were seen by many as a waste of apportionment money. The “race problem” will continue to fester as long as we keep making an issue of it. I would that this country has done more to resolve this than has any other country in the world. As far as “vital conversations” where is the conversation in which we should engage about winning people to Christ? – AOM]

+ *Pilgrimage 2016*. November, 11-13: Pilgrimage is a weekend-long event where youth groups come to celebrate, worship, and learn about God on a large scale. Youth and their leaders will gather at the Crown Coliseum (in Fayetteville) for 4 amazing worship services with a house band full of youth leading the music, youth shared testimonies..

– NC Conference of The UMC, Jan 04, 2016.

[Note: This is something of which you need to be aware. Each conference has something similar for the youth. It is good to know what happens since it often involves influencing youth into an agenda supportive of left-wing politics. – AOM]

+ *Saul Alinsky's 12 Rules for Radicals*.

[Note: This is being included because it is the “operating methodology” of many in the public sphere that we see; it also reflects the “unseen tactics” and manipulation used in opposing what we in Concerned Methodists do in striving for renewal of the United Methodist Church. While we would wonder at the lack of civility and the prevalence of working behind the scenes, we deplored this conduct in a Christian church. These “rules” explain to a great extent this conduct. This is especially sad since Saul Alinsky, who had formulated these rules, was an atheist and Marxist/anarchist. – AOM]

Here is Saul Alinsky's list of “12 Rules for Radicals”:

* **RULE 1:** “Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.” Power is derived from 2 main sources – money and people. “Have-Nots” must build power from flesh and blood. (These are two things of which there is a plentiful supply. Government and corporations always have a difficult time appealing to people, and usually do so almost exclusively with economic arguments.)

* **RULE 2:** “Never go outside the expertise of your people.” It results in confusion, fear and retreat. Feeling secure adds to the backbone of anyone. (Organizations under attack wonder why radicals don't address the “real” issues. This is why. They avoid things with which they have no knowledge.)

* **RULE 3:** “Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy.” Look for ways to increase insecurity, anxiety and uncertainty. (This happens all the time. Watch how many organizations under attack are blind-sided by seemingly irrelevant arguments that they are then forced to address.)

* **RULE 4:** “Make the enemy live up to its own block of rules.” If the rule is that every letter gets a reply, send 30,000 letters. You can kill them with this because no one can possibly obey all of their own rules. (This is a serious rule. The besieged entity's very credibility and reputation are at stake, because if activists catch it lying or not living up to its commitments, they can continue to chip away at the damage.)

* **RULE 5:** “Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.” There is no defense. It's irrational. It's infuriating. It also works as a key pressure point to force the enemy into concessions. (Pretty crude, rude and mean, huh? They want to create anger and fear.)

* **RULE 6:** “A good tactic is one your people enjoy.” They'll keep doing it without urging and come back to do more. They're doing their thing, and will even suggest better ones. (Radical activists, in this sense, are no different that any other human being. We all avoid “un-fun” activities, and but we revel at and enjoy the ones that work and bring results.)

* **RULE 7:** “A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.” Don’t become old news. (Even radical activists get bored. So to keep them excited and involved, organizers are constantly coming up with new tactics.)

* **RULE 8:** “Keep the pressure on. Never let up.” Keep trying new things to keep the opposition off balance. As the opposition masters one approach, hit them from the flank with something new. (Attack, attack, attack from all sides, never giving the reeling organization a chance to rest, regroup, recover and re-strategize.)

* **RULE 9:** “The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.” Imagination and ego can dream up many more consequences than any activist. (Perception is reality. Large organizations always prepare a worst-case scenario, something that may be furthest from the activists’ minds. The upshot is that the organization will expend enormous time and energy, creating in its own collective mind the direst of conclusions. The possibilities can easily poison the mind and result in demoralization.)

* **RULE 10:** “If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive.” Violence from the other side can win the public to your side because the public sympathizes with the underdog. (Unions used this tactic. Peaceful [albeit loud] demonstrations during the heyday of unions in the early to mid-20th Century incurred management’s wrath, often in the form of violence that eventually brought public sympathy to their side.)

* **RULE 11:** “The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.” Never let the enemy score points because you’re caught without a solution to the problem. (Old saw: If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem. Activist organizations have an agenda, and their strategy is to hold a place at the table, to be given a forum to wield their power. So, they have to have a compromise solution.)

* **RULE 12:** Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.” Cut off the support network and isolate the target from sympathy. Go after people and not institutions; people hurt faster than institutions. (This is cruel, but very effective. Direct, personalized criticism and ridicule works.)

– Glen Beck; Best of Beck

+ *The Presbyterian Church Is Dying A Slow Death After Abandoning Biblical Orthodoxy.*

[Note: This is especially applicable to us in the United Methodist Church. The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) has been declining, as have been all other mainline denominations, but ever since it had caved into the radical homosexual agenda and started down the slippery slope of acceptance of that practice, its decline has accelerated. This is one reason that we must stand against those who are pushing it on the UMC. If we ever cave, we will follow the same path. – AOM]

Churches are supposed to be growing, not shrinking, but one major denomination is facing crisis rates of decline. The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) is expecting to see a loss of over 400,000 members between 2015 and 2020, according to an internal document titled The Layman. The Layman is the publication for the Presbyterian Lay Committee, a group of theologically conservative Presbyterians whose founding predates the formation of PCUSA.

PCUSA’s Office of the General Assembly and Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Executive Committee held a recent meeting where projected losses were discussed. Michael Gryboski for the Christian Post reported that a slide from the meeting also showed that COGA (Committee on the Office of the General Assembly) predicted membership losses of 100,000 for both 2015 and

2016. Membership losses for 2017-2020 are projected to be 75,000 each year. “We also assume that the 2016 projection of 100,000 is based on information that the OGA has about churches in the process of seeking to leave the PCUSA. So, those numbers are likely pretty good,” said Presbyterian Lay Committee President Carmen Fowler LaBerge. “The projected membership decline is equivalent to the denomination closing 1,000 churches a year, every year, for five years. That would cut the number of PCUSA churches in the country literally in half,” she added.

Over the past several years, PCUSA has suffered a steep decline in the number of affiliated congregations and membership counts. An example of the serious levels of progressive decline: In the year 2000, the denomination had more than 2.5 million members or approximately 1 million more people than in 2014. In May 2015, Gryboski also reported that the number of congregations belonging to Presbyterian Church (USA) fell below the 10,000 mark during 2014, according to statistics released by the denomination. PCUSA had earlier reported that it had 9,829 congregations in 2014, which represents a decline from the 10,038 congregations it had in 2013. 110 congregations were listed as dissolved and another 101 were dismissed to other denominations.

What exactly is behind the massive and steady exodus of laity from the Presbyterian Church? The CP states that one self-inflicted contribution to the decline has been the general theological direction of the General Assembly – especially its growing acceptance of homosexuality. For example, the 2010 General Assembly approved Amendment 10a, which allowed for local bodies, or presbyteries, to ordain non-celibate homosexuals. As a result, in 2012, a group of conservative Presbyterians founded the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians, which presently boasts more than 200 member congregations.

This is not surprising considering that the pro-homosexuality stance taken by the PCUSA is but the tip of the apostasy iceberg. Indications are that the PCUSA has radically departed from the principles and tenets of faith that undergird most mainstream Christian churches and movements, regressing into what has been described as theological liberalism and full-blown apostasy. In mid-2014, Joel C. Rosenberg delved into the details of the PCUSAs steady theological and moral decline based on its own statistics and feedback from its clergy:

- The majority PCUSA pastors and members, according to the denominations’ own data, completely deny the Deity of Jesus Christ.
- As far back as 1970, the PCUSA General Assembly declared that abortions were morally permissible and should not be restricted by law.
- In 2010, the PCUSA released a survey that only 39% of its members agreed or strongly agreed that only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved. The same survey found that only 35% of its pastors agreed or strongly agreed that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.
- In 2011, a PCUSA survey found only 50% of its pastors read the Bible on a daily basis, and only 6% believed the Bible should be taken literally. 19% of its pastors do not believe Jesus is coming back to Earth one day, and 30% of its members don’t believe that either. The same year, the PCUSA General Assembly voted to approve people in homosexual relationships to be ordained as pastors, elders, and deacons.
- In 2013, the PCUSA rejected the popular hymn, “In Christ Alone” from its hymn book because it so deeply disagreed with the lyric’s theology.
- In 2014, the PCUSA General Assembly voted to approve of homosexual marriages.

Other Biblically-supported positions have become PCUSA casualties as well. An example is the rejection of Israel; effectively seeking to curse them through divestment, whereas God declared that He would bless those who bless them and curse those who curse them (Genesis 12:3). To explain, Rosenberg recounted how the PCUSA General Assembly voted to divest from companies that operate in Israel. The top Presbyterian legislative body had reportedly been considering divestment for a decade. Representatives of the Presbyterian socially responsible investment arm told the national meeting in Detroit that their efforts to lobby three companies for change had failed. Carol Hylkema of the Israel/Palestine Mission Network, a Presbyterian group that advocates for Palestinians and spearheaded the drive for divestment, said their action was modeled on the divestment movement to end apartheid in South Africa.

Rosenberg concluded: “What we are seeing inside PCUSA is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It is tragic, but at least the Lord warned us ahead of time that things like this would happen. What’s interesting is that the further PCUSA gets from Biblical orthodoxy, the more its members – and whole congregations – are leaving the denomination.

The numbers don’t lie, yet the PCUSA leadership remains in deep denial over the sinking of their Titanic, focusing instead on perceived positives. In a statement released mid-2015, the Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PCUSA said that numbers were but one indicator of vitality. “Membership statistics and church numbers tell one story, but it’s not the entire message of how the PCUSA is impacting the world,” said the Rev. Parsons.

– By Tom Olago, February 15, 2016.

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues. Kori was suffering from the devastation, grief, and trauma of a recent abortion, when she discovered Concerned Women for America “It was such a blessing to know that there were people out there who were trying to save women like me from the trauma that often comes as a result of abortion, and that they were trying to rescue the innocent victims – the babies who die in this barbaric practice.”

– E-mail from Concerned Women for America

[Note: This gives an example of the devastating effects of abortion on many women who undergo this procedure and they realize that they have killed their unborn baby. This is one reason why it is important to spread the truth on this. – AOM]

(UM) General Conference – 2016.

[Note: This gives one example of the types of issues we will address at GC2016 in Portland, Oregon. In the next Update, GC2016 is shaping up to be like both GC2008 & GC2012 combined – and promises to be very “challenging.” – AOM]

+ *Americans overwhelmingly oppose United Methodist decision to ban intelligent design group.*

SEATTLE – According to a new poll released today by Discovery Institute, a super-majority of Americans oppose the decision of United Methodist Church (UMC) officials to ban the pro-intelligent design Discovery Institute from sponsoring an information table at the UMC’s upcoming General Conference in May. An even greater majority believes that the UMC’s ban contradicts its stated commitment to “open hearts, open minds, open doors.” Intelligent design is the idea that life and the universe show evidence of being the result of purposeful design rather than unguided processes.

More than 70% of the 1,946 respondents to the nationwide survey agreed that “the United Methodist Church should not have banned an intelligent design group from renting an information table at its conference.” More than 78% of respondents agreed that “the United Methodist Church’s ban on the intelligent design group seems inconsistent with the Church’s stated commitment to encourage ‘open hearts, open minds, open doors.’ “United Methodist officials who want to prevent discussion about intelligent design in their denomination are not only out of step with their own membership; they are out of step with most Americans,” said Dr. John West, Vice President of Discovery Institute. The Institute has set up a web page to make it easy for people to communicate their opposition to the ban to United Methodist officials: www.discovery.org/umc. – Robert Crowther, rob@discovery.org; John West, jwest@discovery.org; January 26, 2016.

Homosexuality. *Provocation from the Pulpit.* During her sermon..., the Rev. Cynthia Meyer, a clergy member of the Great Plains Annual Conference, announced to her Edgerton, Kansas, congregation that she is living in a partnered relationship with another woman. The announcement was made in cooperation with Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), a United Methodist affiliated organization advocating on behalf of LGBTQ rights in the UM Church.

The organization recently kicked-off a pre-General Conference campaign called “It’s Time.” According to RMN’s website, the campaign aims to overturn the UM Church’s teaching on same-sex marriage and the practice of homosexuality. In a blog post regarding Meyer’s announcement, Matthew Berryman, executive director of RMN wrote, “I’ve been thinking ever since how powerful and beautiful it is each time queer clergy ‘come out’ as she did.”

Earlier this year the Great Plains Annual Conference considered a pro-LGBTQ petition intended for General Conference. It called for lifting the ban on the ordination of openly gay clergy and the prohibition against pastors presiding at same-sex weddings. The petition won the approval of the annual conference, but it immediately exposed deep fissures in the conference that includes the states of Kansas and Nebraska. The Rev. Rob Schmutz, pastor at a UM Church in Park City, Kansas, and opposed to liberalizing church teaching on marriage, surrendered his ministerial credentials to Bishop Scott Jones shortly after the petition was approved. Other conservative laity and pastors were shocked to discover they were now part of a more liberal annual conference.

“I was saddened to hear of the announcement made from the pulpit by Rev. Meyer,” said the Rev. Rick Just of Asbury UMC in Wichita. Just, who is currently president of Kansans for United Methodist Renewal, added that, “While I respect her convictions, it hurts my heart to know she has broken the covenant made with us as members of the conference. I am very concerned about the future of the church and fear that her decision to disregard the vows she made at her ordination will cause many who are part of our conference to leave the connection altogether. I have full confidence in Bishop Jones and the cabinet,” said Rev. Just. “They will respond in a manner that is timely and proper and in keeping with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, and the United Methodist Book of Discipline. I am praying for all involved.” UMNS also reported that Meyer has found the people of Edgerton UMC to be “beautifully supportive and affirmative” since she shared her news with the congregation.

Meyer made her statement to the congregation just six months into her tenure with the church. Prior to serving at Edgerton UMC, she served 12 years as dean of students at United Methodist related Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. According to its 2014

statistical report, the Edgerton congregation, which is approximately 40 miles southwest of Kansas City, Kansas, has 209 members and its average worship attendance is 76.

The Rev. Thomas Lambrecht said the announcement fits the pattern of Reconciling Ministries “ramping up pressure before General Conference. We’re not surprised by this incident and we expect there’s more to come. We disagree with the tactic and believe it undermines the health and vitality of local UM churches both here and abroad.”

– By Walter Fenton. Walter Fenton is a UM clergyperson and analyst for Good News. E-mail received from an associate.

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The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed. – James Hudson Taylor

Global Outlook

Life is a journey... NOT a guided tour.

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Haiti. Rehoboth Ministries Is Moving! “To our faithful supporters, please send any donations to this address and mark your check “Haiti” to earmark them for our ministry: The Lord’s Table Church, PO Box 11049, Goldsboro, NC 27532”

[Note: This is a good ministry that does great work of bringing individuals to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ while ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the people in Haiti. I deeply admire and respect what they do. – AOM]

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Labor to keep alive in your Breast that little Spark of Celestial fire called Conscience. – George Washington