

Monthly Update

April 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In this edition of the Monthly Update, we address some of the ongoing controversy in our United Methodist Church surrounding sexuality issues. We have amendments that have been proposed to our Book of Discipline which, as you know, is regarded as the “constitution” in our UMC. Two commentaries provide insight into issues that are concerns. Also, leading out I offer what is my “life verse” that guides my life. As far as the proposed amendments, we oppose the approval of both 1 and 2 for these reasons:

1. Gender equality. This amendment contains the phrase “maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies, not the divine.” God has given us our identities through how He has created us. To try to separate the two will lead to the declaration of “gender fluidity” – that a biological male can decide he wants to be a female – and use women’s restrooms, shower with women, be a part of a woman’s sports team, etc. This is a result of “gender disorientation” or “gender confusion” with all of its attendant confusion, psychoses, abuses, and complications.
2. Inclusion in membership. If adopted, this amendment would add “no member shall be ‘denied access to an equal place in the life, worship and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status or economic’” to our polity. I am highly suspicious of this wording and believe that it would open the door for gender confusion and acceptance of homosexual/lesbian practice in our UMC – and twisted in other ways.

When I worry about what is happening in our church, our country, and our world – it is important to focus on what is truly important in life. This is April – the month in which we celebrate Easter. In a recent letter from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Franklin wrote of a time when his parents, Billy and Ruth, were crossing the Atlantic Ocean on a passenger ship. His mother had looked out of a porthole, saw the menacing sky and was concerned that a severe storm was coming. She expressed her concerns to a steward. His response was, “We’ve already come through that storm. It’s behind us.”

Because of the cross, the fear of judgment is behind us. If we have given ourselves to Jesus and accepted Him as our Lord and Savior – the “storm” truly is behind us by His suffering for our sins and being crucified on the cross. That is part of the good news. The second is that on the third day, He rose from the dead. If he is our Savior, we have these twin assurances: forgiveness for our sins and living with Him in Heaven after we die. We can rest on the foundation of that knowledge – regardless of what our life holds.

During this time of reflection – and joy, I would invite you to not only remember the solid Rock on which our faith rests but also to continue to do all you can to address the problems in our world – and to pray. We owe Him no less than our very best.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

April 2017 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. – Colossians 3:23

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The Good Stuff

+ *Kimberly Shelley's testimony.*

[Note: This is what a high school senior from Fayetteville Christian School had posted when she returned home after a mission trip. When you read this, you see the clear, straightforward thoughts of a very sweet Christian girl. – AOM]

“It’s bittersweet being home. I am very grateful to see my family and friends again, but Swaziland was such a life-changing experience. I felt as if I could stay there forever, despite the surprisingly large bugs and the lack of plumbing. It’s amazing how much God revealed Himself in the trip. I saw Him everywhere I looked – in the gorgeous view of the mountains He created, in the eyes of all the kids we interacted with, in the voice of the missionaries whose council and lessons I will never forget, in the music from the peoples’ lips that filled the room and our hearts (no matter the size), in my class as we grew in unity and in character, and in myself (finally). I could go on and on and on in the lessons that I learned from this trip. I truly believe that God broke down my walls during this trip (whether [I] liked it or not) and I’m overjoyed that He did so. I feel like I’ve grown in character and in my relationship with Him, and I’ve never felt such a fulfilling peace in my heart. I can honestly say that I miss Africa and all the people and experiences within, and I hope to return there someday in the near or distant future.

I guess what I’m trying to say is that I’m glad to be back, and the mission trip is going to be one of my favorite memories for a long while.

Although it’s finished and I’m back, the mission is never over. God never disappoints.”

+ *How a Christian movement is growing rapidly in the midst of religious decline.*

(The Conversation) In August of 2011, more than 30,000 people cheered wildly as the then U.S. presidential candidate and Texas Gov. Rick Perry – now secretary of energy in the Trump administration – came to the center stage at The Response: A Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis at Reliant Stadium in Houston. Perry quoted from the Bible and preached about the need for salvation that comes from Jesus. He concluded with a prayer for a country he believed to be overwhelmed by problems: “We see discord at home. We see fear in the marketplace. We see anger in the halls of government.” He then proceeded to ask God for forgiveness for forgetting “who made us, who protects us and who blesses us.” In response, the crowd exploded into cheers and praise to God.

Five years later, on April 9, 2016, and 1,500 miles away at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, tens of thousands of people gathered to pray for the supernatural transformation of America. The event consisted of more than 16 hours of healing sessions, worship music and prophecy from some of the most popular Charismatic Christian leaders in the world.

While not directly affiliated, these two events and the leaders who organized them are central players in a movement that we call “Independent Network Charismatic,” or INC, Christianity in our recently released book, “The Rise of Network Christianity.”

Based on our research, we believe that INC Christianity is significantly changing the religious landscape in America – and its politics. Here is what we found about INC. INC Christianity is led by a network of popular independent religious entrepreneurs, often referred to as “apostles.” They have close ties, we found, to conservative U.S. politicians, including Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Bobby Jindal, Rick Perry and, more recently, President Donald Trump. Charismatic Christians emphasize supernatural miracles and divine

interventions, but INC Christianity is different from other charismatics – and other Christian denominations in general – in the following ways:

- It is not focused primarily on building congregations but rather on spreading beliefs and practices through media, conferences and ministry schools.
- It is not so much about proselytizing to unbelievers as it is about transforming society through placing Christian believers in powerful positions in all sectors of society.
- It is organized as a network of independent leaders rather than as formally organized denominations.

INC Christianity is the fastest-growing Christian group in America and possibly around the world. Over the 40 years from 1970 to 2010, the number of regular attenders of Protestant churches as a whole shrunk by an average of .05 percent per year, while independent neo-charismatic congregations (a category in which INC groups reside) grew by an average of 3.24 percent per year. Its impact, however, is much greater than can be measured in church attendance. This is because INC Christianity is not centrally concerned with building congregations, but spreading beliefs and practices.

The influence of INC Christianity can be seen in the millions of hits on many of their web-based media sites, large turnouts at stadium rallies and conferences, and millions of dollars in media sales. In our interviews with leaders, we found that Bethel, an INC ministry based in Redding, Calif., for example, in 2013 had an income of \$8.4 million in media sales (music, books, DVDs, web-based content) and \$7 million in tuition to their Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry.

According to the director of media services at the Kansas City-based International House of Prayer (IHOP), their website receives over 25 million hits every year from all over the world and is one of the top 50 websites in the world in terms of viewed video content (a million hours of watched video content per month).

Appeal of INC. As part of our research we conducted in-depth interviews with senior leaders, staff and current and former participants in INC Christian ministries. We also conducted supplementary interviews with Christian leaders and scholars with knowledge of the changing religious landscape and attended conferences, numerous church services, ministry school sessions, healing sessions and exorcisms. In all, we conducted 41 in-depth interviews.

Our primary conclusion is that the growth of these groups is largely the result of their network governance structure. When compared to the oversight and accountability of formal congregations and denominations, these structures allow for more experimentation. This includes “extreme” experiences of the supernatural, unorthodox beliefs and practices and financing as well as marketing techniques that leverage the power of the internet.

In our research, we witnessed the appeal of INC Christianity, particularly among young people. We saw the thrill of holding impromptu supernatural healing sessions in the emergency room of a large public hospital, the intrigue of ministry school class sessions devoted to the techniques of casting out demonic spirits and the adventure of teams of young people going out into public places, seeking direct guidance from God as to whom to heal or to relay specific divine messages.

‘Seven mountains of culture’: In addition to the growth numbers, the importance of INC Christianity lies in the fact that its proponents have a fundamentally different view of the relationship between the Christian faith and society than most Christian groups throughout American history.

Most Christian groups in America have seen the role of the church as connecting individuals to God through the saving grace of Jesus and building congregations that provide communities of meaning and belonging through worship services. They also believe in serving and providing for the needs their local communities. Such traditional Christian groups believe that although the world can be improved, it will not be restored to God’s original plan (until Jesus comes back again to rule the Earth).

INC beliefs, however, are different – their leaders are not content simply to connect individuals to God and grow congregations. Most INC Christian groups we studied seek to bring heaven or God’s intended perfect society to Earth by placing “kingdom-minded people” in powerful positions at the top of all sectors of society.

INC leaders have labeled them the “seven mountains of culture.” These include business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, family and religion. In this form of “trickle-down Christianity,” they believe if Christians rise to the top of all seven “mountains,” society will be completely transformed.

One INC leader we interviewed summed it up this way:

“The goal of this new movement is transforming social units like cities, ethnic groups, nations rather than individuals ... if Christians permeate each mountain and rise to the top of all seven mountains ... society would have biblical morality, people would live in harmony, there would be peace and not war, there would be no poverty.”

We heard these ideas repeatedly in most of our interviews, at events we attended and in INC media materials. Most significantly, since the 2016 presidential election, some INC leaders have released public statements claiming that the Trump presidency is part of fulfilling God’s plan to “bring heaven to Earth” by placing believers in top posts, including Rick Perry, who is currently heading the Energy Department; Betsy DeVos directing the Department of Education; and Ben Carson leading the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Changing the landscape. INC Christianity is a movement to watch because we think it will continue to draw adherents in large numbers in the future. It will produce a growing number of Christians who see their goal not just as saving souls but as transforming society by taking control over its institutions.

We see the likelihood of INC Christians taking over the “seven mountains of culture” as slim. However, we also believe that this movement is sure to shake up the religious and political landscape for generations to come. Brad Christerson is professor of sociology at Biola University, and Richard Flory is senior director of research and evaluation at the University of Southern California – Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

This article was originally published on The Conversation. RNS’s comments section is meant to be a place of lively yet respectful and edifying discussion of our stories and the issues they raise.

Comment to the Religion News Service: As a staunchly conservative evangelical with past experience in the charismatic movement, and with friends who are charismatic in their approach to Christianity, I think the approach being adopted by INC will in the end prove largely unfruitful and ineffective, with perhaps some nominal gains to Christianity as measured by conversions. The dominionist paradigm has never proved successful in the history of Christianity, at least not on the macro level. The Roman Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire, nor the Calvinists of Switzerland ever wholly achieved or sustained their aims spiritually or politically. How many times have different Christian sects proclaimed the advent of a theocratic approach to governance that will lead to a golden age prior to the Return of Jesus Christ, and how many times have we been misled and disappointed?..Edward Borges-Silva [Note: I’m not sure I agree with Brad. – AOM] –
By Brad Christerson and Richard Flory; March 18, 2017.

Of Interest.

+ *Annual conference voters will consider five potential amendments to The United Methodist Church’s constitution.*

[Note: This is of sufficient importance for us to examine. This analysis comes to us from one of our supporters. – AOM]

General Conference delegates had their say last year. Now, it’s up to annual conference voters to determine whether five amendments will become part of The United Methodist Church’s constitution. To be ratified, a constitutional amendment first requires at least a two-thirds vote at General Conference, which happened in May 2016. Then, it must win at least a two-thirds majority of the total voters at annual conferences around the world. The voting starts at the Liberia Conference, meeting this week, and will continue through potentially early next year, depending on when annual conferences schedule their meetings. The Council of Bishops will certify the results at its next meeting after the voting concludes. Here is an overview of the amendments in the order submitted to annual conference voters.

1. Gender equality. This amendment declares, “men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God.” It goes on to say that maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies, not the divine. It also asserts that The United Methodist Church will “seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large.” The amendment, if ratified, would become the new Paragraph 6 in the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s governing document. Subsequent constitutional paragraphs would be renumbered. General Conference approved the measure by 746 to 56.

Carol Napier, a Sunday school teacher for 17 years at Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church in the North Georgia Conference, submitted the amendment. “I hope that this amendment will help churches remember that girls and women are of equal worth to boys and men because everyone is made in the image of God,” she said. “I believe that when churches remember and live out of this truth in all of their ministries, then villages, cities and even nations will be transformed to reflect Jesus’ perfect love for all of us.”

2. Inclusion in membership. If adopted, this amendment would add gender, ability, age and marital status to the list of characteristics that do not bar people from membership in the church. Specifically, the amended Paragraph 4 would say that no member shall be “denied access to an equal place in the life, worship and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status or economic condition.” The vote at General Conference was 509 to 242. The United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women submitted the amendment and put together a site seeking to answer frequently asked questions about the changes. For example, the agency notes that gender refers simply to men and women. The amendment also has the support of United Methodist Women, Discipleship Ministries and the DisAbility Ministries Committee. “Paragraph IV, Article 4 protects people in The United Methodist Church against discrimination in membership based on age, gender, marital status and ability, while still protecting exclusivity in groups like United Methodist Women, youth groups and singles ministries, to name a few,” said Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive of the Status and Role of Women agency. “We are enthusiastically supporting the ratification of this amendment for the betterment of The United Methodist Church.”

3. Delegate elections. This amendment to Paragraph 34 specifies that elections of delegates to General Conference as well as jurisdictional and central conference meetings will include open nominations from the floor at annual conference sessions. The measure also calls for the election of delegates “by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast.”

General Conference supported the amendment by a vote of 767 to 22. Paul Clinton Law of the Democratic Republic of the Congo submitted the amendment. The current provision in Paragraph 13 states that delegates “shall be elected in a fair and open process by the annual conferences.” Law said that is “unduly vague in some cultures without a democratic tradition.”

4. Bishop elections. This amendment to Paragraph 46 states that central conferences are to elect bishops at a regular, not an extra session of the central conference “except where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.” General Conference voted for the change by 621 to 15. Lonnie D. Brooks, a member of the Alaska Conference, said the amendment aims to treat bishop elections in the central conferences – church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe – in much the same way they are treated in U.S. jurisdictions. When bishops are elected in a special session, he said, “some of the delegates who would be present at the regular session will either not be present at a special session or will be placed in a hardship condition by the call of a session for the purpose of electing bishops.”

5. Bishop accountability. Under this amendment to Paragraph 50, General Conference can adopt provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold individual bishops accountable. General Conference approved the amendment by 715 to 79. The Western Pennsylvania Conference submitted the legislation to address a ruling by the denomination’s top court, the Judicial Council. That ruling holds that it is unconstitutional for the Council of Bishops to hold its members accountable. Currently, any complaints against bishops are to be handled in the jurisdictions or central conferences where they are elected.

[Note: In Judicial Council Decisions related to this last amendment, the following information is offered. We in Concerned Methodists believe that accountability of the bishops is key to moving forward into the future in any kind of a viable way for our UMC. – AOM]

Decision No. 475: April 16 1980; In Re: Accountability of Bishops and the Constitutionality of Par. 525.3 of the Discipline.

Digest of Case: Par. 525.3 of the Discipline is unconstitutional because it is in conflict with Par. 55 of the Constitution. Bishops elected by Jurisdictional Conferences are accountable to the Jurisdictional Conferences.

Statement of Facts: The Council of Bishops has requested the Judicial Council to render a declaratory decision on the constitutionality of Par. 525.3 of the Discipline, which states: The Council of Bishops is, thus, also the body in which the individual bishops are held accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in episcopal areas. The question is whether the above paragraph of the Discipline is in conflict with Par. 55 of the Constitution which states in part that the standing Committee on Episcopacy elected by the Jurisdictional Conference shall: ... review the work of the bishops, pass on their character and official administration, and report to the Jurisdictional Conference its findings for such action as the conference may deem appropriate within its constitutional warrant of power.

JURISDICTION The Judicial Council has jurisdiction under Par. 2515 of the 1976 Discipline.

ANALYSIS There is conflict between Par. 525.3 of the Discipline and Par. 55 of the Constitution. Par. 55 provides that bishops elected by Jurisdictional Conferences are accountable to those Conferences. The standing Committees on Episcopacy of the Jurisdictional Conferences have oversight of the work of the bishops and pass on their character and official administration. The committee must, however, report its findings to the Jurisdictional Conference for such action as the Conference may deem appropriate. (See also Par. 2520 which relates to both Jurisdictional and Central Conferences.) It is clear that Par. 525.3 of the Discipline which purports to make bishops accountable to the Council of Bishops is in conflict with Par. 55 of the Constitution and therefore unconstitutional. Decision Par. 525.3 of the Discipline is in conflict with Par. 55 of the Constitution and is therefore unconstitutional and of no effect. Bishops elected by Jurisdictional Conferences are accountable to the Jurisdictional Conferences.

The Rev. Robert Zilhaver, who wrote the legislation, said the goal is to keep primary responsibility for a bishops' accountability where they are elected, while also creating a mechanism for the Council of Bishops to step in for global accountability if needed. Zilhaver is the senior pastor of DuBois Lakeside United Methodist Church in Pennsylvania. "It moves us to a position, where in our church we might hold ourselves accountable for a sin that rises to global expressions," he said, pointing to the example of a bishop holding slaves, which led to the denomination's split in 1844. At the same time, he said, he wants to protect "cultural expressions from being labeled a sin and being prosecuted."

– Heather Hahn, United Methodist News Service (UMNS), 2017.

+ ***An Open Letter to Colin Kaepernick:*** Dear Colin, guess you have been pretty busy these last few days. For the record I don't think any more or less of you for not standing for the National Anthem. Honestly, I never thought that much about you, or any professional athlete for that matter, to begin with. I've read your statement a few times and want you to know I am one of the reasons you are protesting. You see I am a retired police officer that had the misfortune of having to shoot and kill a 19-year-old African American male. And just like you said, I was the recipient of about \$3,000 a month while on leave which was a good thing because I had to support a wife and three children under 7-years-old for about 2 months with that money. Things were pretty tight because I couldn't work part time. Every police officer I've ever known has worked part-time to help make ends meet.

You know Colin the more I think about it the more we seem to have in common. I really pushed myself in rehab to get back on the street, kind of like you do to get back on the field. You probably have had a broken bone or two and some muscle strains and deep bruising that needed a lot of work. I just had to bounce back from a gunshot wound to the chest and thigh. Good thing we both get paid when we are too banged up to "play", huh?

We both also know what it's like to get blindsided. You by a 280-pound defensive end, ouch! Me, by a couple of rounds fired from a gun about 2 feet away, into my chest and thigh. We also both make our living wearing uniforms, right? You have probably ruined a jersey or two on the field of play. I still have my blood stained shirt that my partner and paramedics literally ripped off my back that cold night in January. Fortunately, like you I was given a new one. Speaking of paramedics aren't you glad the second we get hurt trainers and doctors are standing by waiting to rush onto the field to scoop us up. I'm thankful they get to you in seconds. It only took them about 10 minutes to get to me. By the grace of God, the artery in my thigh didn't rupture or else 10 minutes would have been about 9 minutes too late. We also have both experienced the hate and disgust others have just because of those uniforms we wear. I sure am glad for your sake that the folks who wear my uniform are on hand to escort you and those folks that wear your uniform into stadiums in places like Seattle!

I guess that's where the similarities end Colin. You entertain for a living, I and almost 800,000 others across this country serve and protect. Are there some bad apples within my profession? Absolutely and they need to be identified and fired or arrested! But you know what, the vast majority do the right thing, the right way, for the right reason. Did I mention that seconds before I was shot, an elderly African American gentleman walking down the sidewalk, turned to my partner and I as we rode past and said, "Get them." Get who you ask? The thugs terrorizing an otherwise good and decent neighborhood, home to dozens of good, decent African American families trying to raise those families in communities not protected by gates and security guards. No, these folks and families depend on America's Law Enforcement Officers.

Colin I have buried 7 friends, killed in the line of duty and three others who have committed suicide. I have attended more funerals than I care to remember of neighboring departments who have lost officers in the line of duty, during my career. Law Enforcement Officers with different backgrounds, upbringings, and experiences united by their willingness to answer the call to protect and serve their fellow citizens.

Colin I am sorry for the endorsement deals you may lose and the dip in jersey sales, but please know you will NEVER lose what these men and women and their families have lost. And so whether you stand or sit during the National Anthem means very little to me. As for me and the men and women on whose team I was privileged to serve, we will put on our ballistic vests, badge, and gun, kiss our loved ones goodbye, for some tragically for the last time, and out into a shift of uncertainty we will go. We will continue to protect and continue to serve and we will be standing at attention Colin, not just for playing of our National Anthem, but far more importantly for the playing of Taps. – Chris Amos, Aug. 29, 2016

A Way Forward. *Conferences need final say on gay issues.* Commentary by UM Bishop William B. Lewis. [Note: I include this analysis, flawed though it is, to show some of the arguments offered by the "other side"; I shall also give a lengthy analysis at the end of his arguments. I am including this because it exemplifies flawed reasoning. – AOM]

The church I love and have served for most of my 85 years is stretched on a rack between the theological culture of Wilmore, Kentucky, and that of the Tenderloin District in San Francisco. One is determined to elevate what was initially a part of our Social Principles not intended to be "church law" into a hard and fast rule for all ordained clergy; the other is determined to defy it. Wilmore is the home of Asbury Theological Seminary, viewed as a conservative or traditional seminary, and the original home of the Good News evangelical group. The Tenderloin is the home of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, a symbol of progressive ministry.

For a while at General Conference 2016, it seemed as if this tension would tear us apart. Then the majority, almost out of desperation, looked to the bishops to form a commission to find "A Way Forward" that keeps us together. The bishops are now asking, "How do we, as a Council of Bishops, lead in such a manner that maintains unity?"

They are asking the right question, but it won't be easy.

For some of us, this represents the denouement of our worst fears. Many...who were at General Conference in 1972 when this issue first hit the floor were shaken by the realization that this could be devastatingly divisive. Forty-four years into this wilderness has brought us to the abyss. I have been there with a front-row seat through

nearly all of these struggles – usually trying to pour some oil on troubled waters. What happens at General Conference, where most of this struggle has been engaged, is not followed very closely by the folks at home. I have been there for nearly every General Conference since 1968, but my heart has always been in the local church. In almost 50 years, there have only been 3 or 4 dozen cases dealing specifically with this issue – in a connection of over 40,000 clergy and more than 12 million constituents; there have been hundreds of cases dealing with heterosexual deviations. The ratio is better than 10 to 1.

What’s the big deal? Most of us are unwitting victims of the conflict, or have been until it neared the point of schism. The average person in the pew is hardly aware it is going on. As Bishop Woodie White recently said, “Our people are way ahead of us on this issue.” Most folks have gay relatives, friends or associates & don’t get bent out of shape about it.

A lesson in fundamental Methodist polity would be helpful. The “due process” our church law provides for dealing with behavioral problems among clergy is vested in the annual conference – not the General Conference. Through boards of ordained ministry, committees and procedures are spelled out for a system that guarantees that those duly charged with immoral behavior will be judged and disciplined by a body of their peers. The annual conference is the basic body of the church. It preceded and created the General Conference. This is fundamental to our polity and has been from the beginning. We are so accustomed to thinking about authority as “top-down” that we just assume the General Conference has the power to tell one part of the church how to deal with personnel matters in another part of the church. It has never been so, though it has been tried several times and the attempt has always failed.

Once upon a time, when the issue was slavery, it divided us. The defiance was regional then, as it is now. I have frequently asked my determined colleagues if they think this really is comparable to slavery.

Problems arise when General Conference makes behavioral rules intended to apply to the entire denomination. We have a lengthy history of such frustrating and failed attempts at “one-size-fits-all” legislation, i.e., bans against the use of tobacco or alcoholic beverages or remarriage of divorced persons. The General Conference doesn’t have the power or machinery for enforcement of such rules because that prerogative belongs to the annual conference and therein to a body of one’s peers.

Perhaps, then, we should leave this to the annual conferences. It could be argued that that is where it is already. I have occasionally wondered what would happen if a presiding bishop at General Conference declared such a proposed rule out of order. What would the Judicial Council do with it?

The current conflict is exacerbated by a substantial array of vested interests. The Wilmore faction has become an extensive enterprise with four major functioning units, a combination of publication enterprises, paid staff and direct mail funding. The denominational shift toward globalization has been decidedly to its advantage as this faction has been able to exploit an alliance with the African constituency. The progressive faction is well organized and partially funded, but markedly less effective. Together they have fueled the greatest threat to the unity of the denomination in more than a century.

There are a good many of us who think the system, though imperfect, works pretty well as it is and would be pleased if nothing were done to change it. Some of us see the current conflict over human sexuality issues as something we have to live through and could ultimately resolve if we stay together in dialogue and charity....

Sometimes it may be best not to do anything.

[Note: His arguments are severely flawed in several respects.

1. He correctly compares the “3 or 4 dozen {homosexual/lesbian practice} cases to dealing with hundreds of cases dealing with heterosexual deviations”; that is true and a point we in Concerned Methodists have often made. But then he goes on to ask, “What’s the big deal?” The “big deal” is sin and people going to hell as a result of it. God views all sex outside of marriage as sin; the fact that there are more numerous cases of heterosexual sin does not negate the reality of homosexual sin – both are tragic. If “3 or 4 dozen” or even 3 or 4 people go to hell – that is a big deal, a really big deal.

2. He then goes on to say that “Most folks have gay relatives, friends... & don’t get bent out of shape about it.” Many people grieve about this, as they well should. Spirit-filled Christians are also concerned about the spiritual consequences.

3. He then stated, “The defiance was regional then, as it is now.” No, it is spiritual and moral. From Genesis to Revelation in the Bible, every scripture reference to homosexual/lesbian practice is negative or condemning.

4. He then states, “General Conference makes behavioral rules intended to apply to the entire denomination. We have a lengthy history of such frustrating and failed attempts at ‘one-size-fits-all’ legislation, i.e., bans against the use of tobacco or alcoholic beverages or remarriage of divorced persons...” He uses moral equivalence in his argument. The “two sides” on this issue are not equivalent. Biblical, social, moral, medical, and psychiatric data agree that this is a bad way to live.

5. He then states, “prerogative belongs to the annual conference...” Again, here he is in error. In our denomination, we are a “connectional church” – as clergy remind us when trying to get us to pay our apportionments over objections to how the money is used. We have doctrinal issues on which we must agree; otherwise there is not connection.

6. Finally, and this is telling. He cites Glide Memorial United Methodist Church as being a symbol of “progressive” ministry. “Progressive” in the spiritual realm is another term for departure from orthodox Christian doctrine; in the politico/social realm, it is a term coined to replace “Liberal” which replaced “Socialist” which replaced “Communist” in the 1930s when its common acceptance had been tainted by the reality of the brutal Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. We must remember that Communism is atheistic at its core, and the successive iterations of its names have at their cores deviance from the fundamentals that have made our country great and the uniqueness of our Christian faith and doctrine.

In actuality, Glide Memorial United Methodist Church is named after Mrs. Lizzie Glide’s family, who were very devout Christian Methodists – and they would be horrified to know that the church named after them, and probably funded by their generosity, had departed so far from the essentials of the orthodox Wesleyan Christian faith.

It should also be observed that Bishop Lewis is a product of the Dakotas Area, which is in the Western Jurisdiction – the most theological liberal {that is, departing from our orthodox Christian doctrine} area of the UMC. – AOM]

– By Bishop William B. Lewis; January 25, 2017. Lewis served the Dakotas Area until his retirement in 1996.

+ **Wesleyan Covenant Association** Conference is being held in Memphis April 28-29 to address the recent developments in the United Methodist Church. – Jeff Greenway, Chair, Wesleyan Covenant Association

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For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servant for Jesus’ sake.

– 2 Corinthians 4:5

Global Outlook

You tell us that the man who has striven to live a good life and has tried to be religious and to say his prayers, you say that he is in the same position as a man who has never prayed, has never been near a place of worship, and has lived only for sin and evil and vice and lust, you say that they are in the same lost condition?

That is precisely what the Cross of Christ says.

– Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, M.D. He later became a tireless evangelist.

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+ **Mozambique. United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Emergency Grant For Mozambique Communities Affected by Cyclone Dineo.** On February 17, 2017, the United Methodist Committee on Relief

(UMCOR) granted \$10,000 to United Methodist Church (UMC) in Mozambique for food distribution in the Inhambane area on Mozambique's southeast coast, for those affected by cyclone Dineo. This will be the fourth grant issued by UMCOR to the Emergency Department of the UMC in Mozambique. On February 16, 2017, Inhambane, Mozambique was struck by winds of more than 62 miles per hour (100 kilometers per hour) and battered by torrential rain and rough seas. Cyclone Dineo killed at least seven people, injured more than 50 and displaced thousands across southern Mozambique. More than 20,000 homes, 70 health centers and 1000 school rooms were destroyed by the cyclone. Mozambique, one of the world's poorest countries, is often struck by deadly flooding and storms. Scores have already died in the current rainy season, which began in October 2016. Cyclone Dineo has affected more than 650,000 people in southeastern Africa. Dineo's impact was greatest in Inhambane, an area popular with tourists. Jack Amick, Senior Director, of UMCOR Disaster Response, said, "Today, I witnessed a fine example of how UMCOR gives more than money." He continued, "It was a team effort between the leadership at UMC Mozambique, UMCOR, and other parts of Global Ministries. Everyone worked hard today and will rest well, knowing that all of us worked together to make life a little better for the survivors of this storm. There will be more work for UMCOR to do in response to the disasters facing Mozambique right now, but we're off to a good start." – United

Methodist Insight; Feb 21, 2017 9:20 PM

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Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees. – Willaim Cowper