

Monthly Update

June 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In this June Monthly Update, the first thing that I must do is to apologize for what I had said in last month's edition of the Update. In my cover letter, I had this in the 4th paragraph:

In this edition of the Monthly Update, we give a challenge for people to try for the next 30 days – kindness; we offer a heart-warming story of how college kids reached out to a 12-year old girl who had a serious illness; and we delve into some serious issues that are fundamental to who we are as Christians. Then, of course, we address areas of the ongoing “sexuality issues” in our United Methodist Church with an update from the commission appointed to study “a way forward” for our denomination.

Referring to the college kids reaching out to the sick girl, I believe that we Americans overall have a deep-seated spirit of compassion that wants to make life better for others.

That was in the first draft of the May Update. However, as we got more information in on the issues affecting our church to include “A Way Forward” the story of the 12-year old girl was relegated to the June Update. I neglected to correct my cover letter to say that – and for that, I must apologize for my error. I receive some small measure of comfort in the words of James Michener, the famous author, who wrote, “I have reconciled myself to the fact that I will not find the last of my errors until I review the finished book from the company”; after his book was published, he still found errors.

I would like to repeat the words from my last letter that opened with, “We live in momentous times” – not only within our United Methodist Church, but also in our country and the world. We have much more information we had wanted to include in this Update that will be deferred to the June issue.

We are paying a great deal of attention to the five constitutional amendments that are being considered by conferences from around the world, and give a “lion’s share” of the coverage in this issue to the results from the Liberia conference votes on them. I am so grateful for the faithful exegesis and witness of our brother and sisters in Africa. We also cover world events surrounding the ongoing terrorism from Islamists who spread it.

I would again remind you of my paraphrase from the book of Esther, “It may be that we are ‘called for such a time as this’ in the United Methodist Church, in society, and in our world”; I believe this to be both true and vitally important.

I thank you gain for the continued support of your notes, prayers, and financial gifts; I believe that we may be in the most important time of the history of our church.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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June 2017 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

– Martin Luther [Note: this is included again for emphasis.]

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The Good Stuff

+ *The thief on the cross*. A man from Norfolk , Virginia called a local radio station to share what happened on September 11th, 2003, two years after the tragedy of planes flying into buildings. His name was Robert Matthews. These are his words:

A few weeks before Sept. 11th, my wife and I found out we were going to have our first child. She planned a trip out to California to visit her sister. On our way to the airport, we prayed that God would grant my wife a safe trip and be with her. Shortly after I said “amen,” we both heard a loud pop and the car shook violently. We had blown out a tire. I replaced the tire as quickly as I could, but we still missed her flight. Both very upset we drove home.

I received a call from my father who was retired NYFD. He asked what my wife’s flight number was, but I explained that we missed the flight. My father informed me that her flight was the one that crashed into the southern tower. I was too shocked to speak. My father also had more news for me; he was going to help. “This is not something I can’t just sit by for; I have to do something.”

I was concerned for his safety, of course, but more because he had never given his life to Christ. After a brief debate, I knew his mind was made up. Before he got off of the phone, he said, “Take good care of my grandchild.” Those were the last words I ever heard my father say; he died while helping in the rescue effort.

My joy that my prayer of safety for my wife had been answered quickly became anger. I was angry at God, at my father, and at myself. I had gone for nearly two years blaming God for taking my father away. My son would never know his grandfather, my father had never accepted Christ, and I never got to say good-bye.

Then something happened. About two months ago, I was sitting at home with my wife and my son, when there was a knock on the door. I looked at my wife, but I could tell she wasn’t expecting anyone. I opened the door to a couple with a small child.

The man looked at me and asked if my father’s name was Jake Matthews. I told him it was. He quickly grabbed my hand and said, “I never got the chance to meet your father, but it is an honor to meet his son.”

He explained to me that his wife had worked in the World Trade Center and had been caught inside after the attack. She was pregnant and had been caught under debris. He then explained that my father had been the one to find his wife and free her. My eyes welled up with tears as I thought of my father giving his life for people like this. He then said, “There is something else you need to know.” His wife then told me that as my father worked to free her, she talked to him and led him to Christ. I began sobbing at the news.

Now I know that when I get to Heaven, my father will be standing beside Jesus to welcome me, and that this family would be able to thank him themselves...

When their baby boy was born, they named him Jacob Matthew, in honor of the man who gave his life so that a mother and baby could live.

[Note: You may wonder why I entitled this “The thief on the cross.” Just like the thief on the cross, Jake received salvation at the last minute – right before his life was taken from him. – AOM]

– Posted by Robert Timothy Cole; May 25, 2017.

+ ***Mom Knows Frat Guys Can See Through Daughter's Window.***

Hospital rooms are nothing new to 12-year-old Lexi Brown, who's been fighting cancer since July of 2014. But when she wound up in a hospital room overlooking the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) House at the University of California, Los Angeles, she never imagined the friendship that would unfold. According to NBC News, in an attempt to forget Lexi's diagnosis, she and her mom, Lisa, put up a sign in the hospital window asking for pizza. Little did Lexi know, the gentlemen of SAE saw the sign and decided to do something about the little girl's pizza predicament. "Five guys come in, and they had a guitar, a dozen roses, and a box of pizza," Lisa says. "They introduced themselves and said, 'We saw your sign; we're here.'" They stayed for a half an hour, they sang this song and I started bawling my head off. I'm like, 'I can't believe these people are here for my child.'"

SAE member, Chase Gasper, who also happens to be on the Men's Soccer Team at UCLA, learned about Lexi's love of soccer and had a heartwarming idea. Gasper tells Independent Journal Review: "I texted my teammates and they all stepped up to the plate to visit her. Everyone who got to know her was really moved. It was an incredible experience and we really want her to get through this." They had their picture taken with her in her hospital room.

Their kindness didn't stop there – the team even donated jerseys, t-shirts, hats and scarves to Lexi before surprising her with tickets to one of their games. "When we played our game, we kind of played with an extra edge," Gasper says. "We really wanted to win for her, and we did."

Word spread quickly about Lexi's story. Players from the men's and women's rowing, swimming, and tennis teams, as well as the Christian Campus Ministry and two sororities paid her a visit as well.

But the men who truly won over Lexi's heart were the gentlemen of SAE.

According to her GoFundMe page, Lexi was first diagnosed a year-and-a-half ago, when doctors removed a tumor from the muscle in her thigh. After undergoing chemotherapy and radiation, scans proved her cancer was no more. Lexi was later granted a wish, attending the Women's World Cup in Canada this past summer with her family. She even got to meet the team. After Make a Wish sent the 12-year-old to Hawaii with her friend, Faith, who also had cancer, she found that her cancer had returned. But the brothers of SAE are committed to making sure Lexi's heart is full of love and wanted her to see how much they cared for her, just by looking out her window. "So, they had me turn around and look at the lights, and I saw my name on the roof," Lexi tells CBS Los Angeles. "I thought it was really cool. I didn't think that that would ever happen." Lexi learned her cancer spread to her lungs and says the lights help "keep her mind off things."

Gasper says meeting Lexi has put his life into perspective. "I have had a very blessed life, nothing comes close to what she's gone through," he explains. "She's such a strong girl."

Lexi's name will be lit up in lights throughout the holiday season [this past Christmas].

The unlikely bond between the brothers of SAE and Lexi Brown goes to show how friendship can be born out of even the most difficult circumstances.

[Note: This reflects what I believe about American – on the whole, they can be very caring and compassionate. – AOM]

Of Interest.

+ ***Liberia conference votes on Constitutional Amendment.*** Decision of the Liberia Annual Conference, United Methodist Church on Five Proposed Constitutional Amendments.

This year, each of the several dozen annual conferences into which the United Methodist Church is geographically organized must vote on whether or not to ratify five proposed amendments to the denomination's constitution. While annual conferences in the United States generally have their annual meetings in May or June, annual conferences elsewhere in the world convene at other times throughout the year. The following is a report on how the 184th session of the UMC's Liberia Annual Conference in West Africa voted on each of the five amendments in February, with an explanation of why. It was received from the Rev. Dr. Jerry Kulah P. Kulah, Dean of the UMC's Gbanga School of Theology in Liberia.

Introduction. By decision of 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church that each of the annual conferences of the global UMC must make a decision on the following five proposed Constitutional

Amendments; the Liberia Area of the UMC is pleased to submit its report The vote cast by a delegation of 956 comprising of laity and clergy made the following decisions:

Proposed Amendments number one and two were given a “no” vote by the Liberia Annual Conference, while Amendments number three, four and five were given a “yes” vote. The analysis and position of the Liberia Area of the UMC regarding each vote is stated after each proposed amendment below.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment #1: In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division One, add a new paragraph between current ¶¶ 5 and 6: As the Holy Scripture reveals, both men and women are made in the image of God and, therefore, men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God. The United Methodist Church recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female, as maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies and cultures, not characteristics of the divine. The United Methodist Church acknowledges the long history of discrimination against women and girls. The United Methodist Church shall confront and 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 United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten the cause of women’s and girl’s equality and well-being. [emphasis added] If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, this would become the new ¶6, and the current ¶¶ 6-61 would be renumbered as ¶¶ 7-62.

Our Analysis & Position: We are in total agreement, and consistent with Scripture (Genesis. 1:26-27; 9:6; I Corinthians 11:7), that humanity is made in the image of God. Therefore both male and female are of equal value before God. We also stand strongly opposed to discrimination against women and girls, for we are all God’s children. However, we strongly opposed the reference that “it is contrary to Scripture and to logic” to acknowledge or claim the maleness or fatherhood of God. The Scripture is replete with references to God as Father. When Jesus taught his disciples, (and, by implication, us) how to pray, he taught them to call God “Our Father” (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2); throughout his teaching and preaching ministry, Jesus often referred to God as “Father” (Matt. 5:16; 6:9,26; 11:27; Luke 2:9; John 2:16; 4:21; 10:17,30; 14:6-11; 15:9). When he prayed, while carrying the sin of the entire world on the cross, he addressed God as his Father (Luke 23:34). After Jesus’ resurrection, he informed his disciples that he was returning to his Father and their Father (John 20:17). In addition, the Apostles referred to God as “our Heavenly Father” (Romans 8:15; Phil. 2:11; 1 John 1:3; 2:15, 22-23). Furthermore, to accept this inclusion, “The United Methodist Church recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female, as maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies and cultures, not characteristics of the divine” would undermine the doctrine of the Trinity, nullify our affirmation of faith (Apostle Creed), and portions of the Bible as non-scripture. Therefore, we voted “NO” to this proposed amendment with a “no” vote of 956; a “yes” vote of 0; and abstention vote of 0.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment #2: In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division One, ¶4, Article IV, amend by deletion and addition as follows: After “all persons” delete “without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition”. After “because of race, color, national origin,” delete “status,” and “ability”. At the end of the paragraph, add “nor shall any member 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.” ¶ 4 would read: The United Methodist Church is part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In the United Methodist church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, ability, or economic condition, nor shall any member 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.

Our Analysis & Position: We acknowledge that this proposed amendment seeks to make changes to Paragraph 4 on inclusiveness. We support inclusiveness, because all of humanity is of sacred worth. However, as the

proposed new paragraph stands, it asserts that “all persons shall be eligible... to receive the sacraments.” We disagree because only baptized persons are eligible to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. Second, it asserts that “In the United Methodist church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member... nor shall any member 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.” We disagree because we believe membership into the local church should not be based on baptism and making a vow only. The pastor (s) must continue to have a shepherding role (counseling, training, church discipline, etc.) in determining when a person is ready for full membership. Also, we believe that a member may be denied “an equal place in the life, worship and governance of the church” based on a person’s spiritual gifting or maturity; or, if a person’s doctrinal beliefs or choice of lifestyle contradicts the teaching of Scripture (eg.: a practicing polygamist; sorcerer; self-avowed homosexual, unrepentant criminal, etc.). Therefore, we voted “NO” to the proposed amendment with a “no” vote of 955; “yes” vote of 1; and abstention vote of 0.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment #3: In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division Two, Section VI, ¶ 34, Article III) amend by addition as follows: After the first sentence, add, “Such elections shall include open nominations from the floor by the annual conference, and delegates shall be elected by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast.”

¶ 34 would read: The annual conference shall elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference and to its jurisdictional or central conference in the manner provided in this section, Articles IV and V. Such elections shall include open nominations from the floor by the annual conference, and delegates shall be elected by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast. The persons first elected up to the number determined by the ratio for representation in the General Conference shall be representatives in that body. Additional delegates shall be elected to complete the number determined by the ratio for representation in the jurisdictional or central conference, who, together with those first elected as above, shall be delegates in the jurisdictional or central conference. The additional delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference shall in the order of their election be the reserve delegates to the General Conference. The annual conference shall also elect reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference as it may deem desirable. These reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conferences may act as reserve delegates to the General Conference when it is evident that not enough reserve delegates are in attendance at the General Conference.

Our Analysis & Position: This proposed amendment requires nominations from the floor and election of delegates by simple majority vote. It will standardize the process of election, so all annual conferences elect their delegates to General and Central or Jurisdictional conferences in the same form and manner. We therefore voted “yes” to this proposed amendment with a “yes” vote of 956; no vote of 0; and abstention; 0.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment #4: General Conference timing. In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division Three, ¶ 46, Article I, amend by addition, as follows: To the end of the paragraph, add “provided that Episcopal elections in central conferences shall be held at a regular, not an extra, session of the central conference, except in the case where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.” ¶ 46 would read: The bishops shall be elected by the respective jurisdictional and central conferences and consecrated in the historic manner at such time and place as may be fixed by the General Conference for those elected by the jurisdictions and by each central conference for those elected by such central conference, provided that Episcopal elections in central conferences shall be held at a regular, not an extra, session of the central conference, except in the case where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.

Our Analysis & Position: This proposed amendment requires that Episcopal elections in the central and jurisdictional conferences be held at a regularly scheduled conference, for effective coordination and effectiveness in the elections of persons as bishops without fear of foul play. We voted “yes” with a vote of 956; “no” vote of 0; and abstention vote of 0.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment#5: Accountability. In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division Three, ¶ 50, Article VI, amend by addition, as follows: After the last paragraph, add “These provisions shall not preclude that adoption by the General Conference of provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in Episcopal areas.”

The bishops, both active and retired, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and of The Methodist Church at the time union is consummated shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church. The bishops of The Methodist Church elected by the jurisdictions, the active bishops of The Evangelical United Brethren Church at the time of union, and bishops elected by the jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church shall have life tenure. Each bishop elected by a central conference of The Methodist Church shall have such tenure as the central conference electing him shall have determined.

The jurisdictional conference shall elect a standing committee on episcopacy to consist of one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual conference, on nomination of the annual conference delegation. The committee 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. The committee shall recommend the assignments of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the jurisdictional conference. These provisions shall not preclude that adoption by the General Conference of provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in Episcopal areas.

Our Analysis & Position: This proposed amendment enhances accountability for bishops by allowing the Council of Bishops (COB) to hold its members accountable. This would allow the COB to step in any case or problem that has to do with any of their colleagues when the complaint process against a bishop fails. We voted “yes” to this proposed amendment with a vote of 956; a “no” vote of 0; and abstention vote of 0.

– The Reverend Dr. Jerry Kulah; Juicy Ecumenism; The Institute on Religion & Democracy, 1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005; UM Voices; WestAfricanWriters.org; Posted May 25, 2017. (Dr. Kulah is Dean of the UMC’s Gbanga School of Theology in Liberia.)

3 Responses to Decision of the Liberia Annual Conference, UMC on Five Proposed Constitutional Amendments:

Mike Childs says: [May 24, 2017] I will vote exactly as our United Methodist Brothers and Sisters in Liberia voted. Their convictions and values reflect my own. I am a member of the Mississippi Annual Conference meeting in June.

Jonathan Razon says: [May 24, 2017 at 7:05 pm] The Northeast Philippines Annual Conference voted the same: NO for 1 & 2; and YES for 3, 4 & 5.

Larry Collins says: [May 25, 2017 at 12:00 am] VERY sound reasoning on their part regarding all of the Amendments. Let’s hope the US Conferences follow their lead and line of thinking.

+ **Constitutional Amendments.** [Note: This was received from one of our associates. – AOM]

“Dear orthodox UM friends,

Very soon, our annual conferences will be voting on five proposed constitutional amendments. Also, both the Texas and Indiana annual conferences will vote on motions to have a recall election for the 2019 special conference, with this being pushed by liberals upset over how well evangelicals did in the last round of elections.

I believe it is VERY important to DEFEAT Proposed Amendment #2 (which would commit the UMC to absolute non-discrimination based on any age, “gender,” or “marital status”) and to PASS Proposed Amendment #5 (bringing GLOBAL accountability for bishops). It is important to understand that EVERY individual vote

I personally plan to stand with our Liberian brothers and sisters by voting NO on both #1 and #2, and hope you will join me, as I see the dangers greatly outweighing the positives. I am especially concerned about #2, given the BIG problems with transgenderism and same-sex “marriages” that could come with establishing absolute non-discrimination based on “gender” (without defining it) or “marital status,” and how I see it raising

some (though not all) of the same problems with the “open membership” amendment we defeated in 2009. Most simply, we just had a major Judicial Council ruling that in many ways said that UMC clergy cannot have the “marital status” of being in a same-sex union – but if we pass amendment #2 to say our church has absolute inclusion based on “marital status” that could potentially overturn this biblical standard.

I also note that this is an awkward time in US and Western history to commit our church to absolute inclusion and discrimination of all “genders” WITHOUT explicitly saying that we only mean “male or female.” A recent Time magazine cover story was all about this new idea that there are far more than just two genders, with some popular social-media apps giving dozens of options for different genders:

<http://time.com/4703058/time-cover-story-beyond-he-or-she/>

As of this writing, the state of Oregon is now moving to officially offer a third gender on drivers’ licenses:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-oregon-lgbt-license-idUSKBN18626V>

At the very least, we should not rush through a Constitutional amendment that could end up settling some of these questions for our church before we’ve had some thorough study and discussion.”

– Received from an associate.

Islam.

+ This weekend marks the beginning of Ramadan, Muslim’s holy month. Last year was the bloodiest 30 days of Ramadan on record with 421 dead and 729 wounded by Islamic terrorist attacks. This includes Orlando, the largest mass shooting in America’s history with the highest death toll from terrorism on American soil since 9/11. Join me in praying that this year will not be a repeat. After the Manchester bombing, these radical Islamists have called for an “all out war” on “infidels” in the West. They said in a video posted on YouTube that the targeting of innocent people was “beloved” by them. This shows the wickedness of the hatred in their hearts.

– As posted on Facebook

+ Poland to Muslims: “Here, Jesus is our King so get out.” Along with this, on YouTube I saw what was stated as “the largest march in the history of Poland.” It was a march testifying to the people’s belief in Jesus Christ and that Christianity is the faith of Poland. It was peaceful, the speakers were eloquent but forceful.

– Posted by Komorusan; May 28, 2017.

+ ***Polish Prime Minister SMASHES European Union – “GET OFF YOUR KNEES EUROPE!”*** Poland’s conservative prime minister, Beata Szyd, spoke out against the EU’s forced, immigration policies this Wednesday. It seems that in America, the UK, and all across Europe, the nationalist movement is growing stronger.

It began with Nigel Farage pushing forward Brexit, solidified with Trump’s election to make America great again, and has been growing in strength ever since. Although Le Pen’s defeat to the globalist Macron in the French election has dampened many spirits, the nationalist youth movement has not been shaken. A backlash to the past 50 years of globalization, today’s youth are more conservative than any generation since World War II...and it's showing in the debates, the elections, and the impassioned political speeches given by pro-nationalist leaders.

“Poland will not submit to any blackmail on the part of the European Union,” Poland’s prime minister said in a parliamentary debate on Wednesday. She stated that her nation would not be participating in the “madness of the Brussels elites,” who’ve been pushing forced immigration heavily for the past decade. The prime minister added that “The head of the government pointed out that the principle of sovereignty is written down in the Polish constitution, and it should be followed, first and foremost, by all parliamentarians.” – she emphasized.

Polish media reports:

She referenced the Manchester bombing, which killed 22, mainly children, and injured nearly 100 more earlier this week. The attack was specifically chosen to take place at an Ariana Grande concert, in order to attack teenage girls. Speaking in the Polish Parliament... Beata Szyd seized the moment to launch an excoriating attack on European Union leaders following the Manchester attack which, among others, claimed the lives of a

Polish couple, leaving their two daughters as orphans. “We are not going to take part in the madness of the Brussels elite,” she railed. “We want to help people, not the political elites.”

“Where are you headed, Europe?” she demanded. “Rise from your knees and from your lethargy or you will be crying over your children every day.”

“If you can’t see this – if you can’t see that terrorism currently has the potential to hurt every country in Europe, and you think that Poland should not defend itself, you are going hand in hand with those who point this weapon against Europe, against all of us.”

“It needs to be said clearly and directly: This is an attack on Europe, on our culture, on our traditions.”

It remains unclear whether or not Poland will stay with the European Union, but one thing is for certain---the once powerful organization is beginning to crumble, as more and more leaders speak out.

[Note: I believe that the EU will collapse – as it should. The fact that the leadership would take such an irresponsible position allowing unfettered Islamic “refugees” to come into the continent bringing in lawlessness and violence without any control is mindless. Members of the German Polizei have remarked that never have things been this bad. – AOM]

– By John Anthony; Polish media reports; May 26th, 2017.

Stewardship: Monitoring How UM Money is Spent.

+ Here is a list of the 10 agencies that receive funding from church offering plates: General Council on Finance and Administration; Discipleship Ministries; the Board of Global Ministries; the Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the Board of Church and Society; the Commission on Archives and History; the Commission on Religion and Race; the Commission on the Status and Role of Women; the Commission on United Methodist Men and United Methodist Communications (which includes United Methodist News Service). – United Methodist News Service (UMNS)

+ *Church investments take on climate change.* Wespath Benefits and Investments, The United Methodist Church’s pension agency, has invested some \$30 million in enterprises that provide solar-powered lighting and home kits for people who live off the electrical grid. The investment in solar lights is just one way Wespath seeks to live out church social teachings while carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities to United Methodist clergy and other investors.

Here is another. Wespath has joined 13 other global investors in launching the Transition Pathway Initiative, an assessment of how companies are making the transition to a low-carbon economy. Carbon dioxide, as a heat-trapping gas, is one of the main contributors to climate change. [Note: Carbon dioxide is a part of animal-plant symbiosis. – AOM] The focus on reducing carbon emissions – both on the ground in individual homes and on the global scale of multinational businesses – is not only about supporting creation care. Wespath staff members say planning for a low-carbon future also makes good financial sense. [Note: Again, this also is not true. By imposing unreasonable emission standards on commercial companies, they eliminate jobs, with those at the lower end of the economic scale being first. – AOM]

Wespath is the largest publicly reported faith-based pension fund in the world and among the top 100 pension funds in the United States. The agency manages benefit plans for more than 100,000 participants, including United Methodist clergy and lay employees. It also manages the assets of United Methodist-affiliated endowments, foundations and other institutions. “The prudent fiduciary in us has to realize how the world around us is changing and position our investments to respond to that,” said Kirsty Jenkinson, Wespath’s managing director of sustainable investment strategies. “The transition to a low-carbon economy is already underway.” Even with President Trump’s expected changes to U.S. environmental policy, Jenkinson said she expects that transition to continue unabated. “We believe it is being driven by global public policies, by technology changes and by the physical impact of a changing climate,” Jenkinson said. “They are all drivers that provide us with risks to our investments but also great opportunities.”

About 1.1 billion people – mostly in Africa and Asia – still live without access to electricity, according to the World Bank. For their energy needs, these individuals often depend on burning the highly flammable fossil fuel kerosene. World development organizations increasingly point to solar power as the safer, cleaner alternative for

connecting people to modern conveniences. This fall, Wespath invested \$30 million through investment manager Developing World Markets to support solar companies in the developing world. In recent years, more than 100 million people who live off the grid have moved away from kerosene and other fossil-fuel sources for energy, reports the World Bank's Lighting Global and the Global Off-Grid Lighting Association. Today, in places where no power or telephones lines thread the landscape, families use a solar cell to charge mobile phones, power television sets and brighten their businesses.

– By Heather Hahn; UMNS; Feb. 21, 2017.

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Civilization is not inherited; it has to be learned and earned by each generation anew; if the transmission should be interrupted... civilization would die, and we should be savages again.

– Will and Ariel Durant in the Lessons of History, 1968