

# Monthly Update

August 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Monthly Update covers the second set of the annual conference reports from meetings across our Methodist connection. In the interest of getting out more information to you on other issues, we have shortened the information provided. As in our last month's Update, if you want more complete information on your particular annual conference, please call, write, or e-mail us and we will be glad to send it to you.

We are also including some issues of interest in our country and our world during these times – especially those on the “A Way Forward” for the 2019 General Conference.

On a personal note, my brother in Christ Onye Umerah from Nigeria, whom I have known for over 20 years, had asked me to do something that was a “first” for me: to witness the arrangement and presentation of a dowry from a young man, Ifeanyi, who lives in the UK and serves in the Royal Navy; he wanted to marry Onye's and Amaka's daughter Kaodi. As it happens, he comes from the same area in Nigeria and from the same tribe as Onye's family: Igbo. After the arrangements for the dowry were completed, Onye spoke to the young man about his expectations for the marriage between Ifeanyi and their daughter; then Amaka also had shared her hopes for their marriage. I mentioned to Kaodi that I had known her since she was a young girl. Then I offered to the prospective couple the picture of a marriage being like a triangle with him at one corner of the bottom and her at the other corner of the bottom and God at the top; as each tries to get closer to God, they will become closer to each other.

That evening I was privileged to watch them get married in a private ceremony in which they had communion at Manna Church. Coincidentally, the pastor shared with the couple the picture of a marriage being like a triangle; Amaka looked over at me & smiled.

We finished the evening with a celebration dinner.

I have said before that Onye is a brother to me in the truest sense of the word. In the book of Proverbs it states, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Onye and I talk about things to an extent that I have never done with either of my two brothers or my sister. At times I can say something – and it is what he is thinking. There are other examples of how the Lord works through him to inform me, or vice versa. I continue to be amazed that a person born thousands of miles away on another continent, who was raised in a different culture and speaks a different language could be so close spiritually, mentally, and morally. Only in Christ could something like that happen!

I want to thank each and every one of you who have supported us in your prayers, kind expressions of affirmation, and your finances. Without you, we would not be able to do what you have enabled through your partnership. I would ask that you continue to keep us in your prayers as we “contend for the faith” as the Lord has called us to do.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris  
Executive Director

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# August 2018 Update

## **Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church**

Work as if it is all up to you. Pray as if it is all up to God.

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### **The Good Stuff**

+ ***2 of 3 detained missionaries leave Philippines.***

MANILA, Philippines (UMNS) – Two of three United Methodist missionaries who had been detained in the Philippines have left the country, and one, Adam Shaw, has been reunited with his family in Ohio.

– Sam Hodges; United Methodist News Service (UMNS) Weekly Digest; Jul 06, 2018.

+ ***Sexual Integrity On The Rise.#2*** The Centers for Disease Control recently released encouraging results from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance study, a biennial survey that seeks to quantify teen behavior. The survey found that over 60% of students surveyed have not had sexual intercourse resulting in a decline, relative to recent years. The survey also found that drinking and drug use are on the decline.

– Abstinence Clearinghouse; Jul 25, 2018. They are located at 3405 S Kiwanis Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57105

### **Of Interest.**

+ Let's face it: no one really knows what is going to happen at The United Methodist Church's called General Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, February 23-26, 2019. Division? Restructuring? Fragmentation? Slow demise? Despite widespread conjecture and one or two wild conspiracy theories, your guess is as good as mine.

– By David Watson, WCA

+ ***Georgia candidate has deep United Methodist roots.*** [Note: This is subtle political advocacy. – AOM]

ATLANTA (UMNS) – Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, the daughter of retired United Methodist pastors, was raised to lead a life of service. Being the first black woman to be a major party nominee for governor is just the latest in her life of “firsts.” [Note: She is the Democratic candidate for governor. – AOM]

– Kathy L. Gilbert; as reported in UMNS Daily Digest - Jun 25, 2018

### **(UM) Judicial Council. Court docket details proposed plans for UMC.**

The first public details of proposed legislation setting out three proposals for resolving the denomination's differences over homosexuality are included in the United Methodist Judicial Council's October docket.

The special 2019 General Conference set for Feb. 23-26 in St. Louis will attempt to find a way forward for The United Methodist Church by considering the three different plans included in the report developed by the Commission on a Way Forward. The full report and all the legislation are part of the docket.

The Council of Bishops has asked the Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, to rule on whether the proposed legislation for the One Church, Connectional Conference and Traditional plans passes the constitutional test. The Judicial Council meets Oct. 23-26 in Zurich.

Included in the 231-page request from the bishops is the full Way Forward Commission report, 17 petitions related to implementation of the One Church Plan, 14 petitions for implementation of the Connectional Conference Plan and 17 petitions for implementation of the Traditional Plan. The bishops have requested an oral hearing on the plans during the meeting in Zurich.

The bishops, who appointed the 32-member Way Forward Commission, originally said the plans would be made public by July 8, but then delayed the release of the report because translation into the four official languages of General Conference was not complete. General Conference organizers then said they expect the translated report would be available by July 30. The Rev. Thomas M. Berlin, Patricia Miller and the Rev. Thomas Lambrecht were named as the respondents to the petition because they were asked by the council to

submit the proposed legislation on behalf of the commission. Berlin submitted for the One Church Plan, Miller for the Connectional Conferences Plan and Lambrecht for the Traditional Plan.

1. One Church Plan. “The One Church Plan gives churches the room they need to maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible,” says the opening statement on a report on the work of the Commission on a Way Forward. The report said the plan honors the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church and that no annual conferences, bishops, congregations or pastors are “compelled to act contrary to their convictions.”

Key issues of the legislation include eliminating the Book of Discipline language, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” Also deleted is the requirement that ordained clergy not be “self-avowed practicing homosexuals.”

Each annual conference board of ordained ministry and clergy session may determine standards for ordination or certification, including standards related to human sexuality. Where laws in civil society define marriage as union between two adults, no United Methodist elder or deacon is required to celebrate or bless a same-sex union. But a clergy person cannot be prohibited from performing same-sex marriages, unions or blessings. Clergy who cannot in good conscience continue to serve in a conference or church based on the standards for ordination regarding homosexuals may seek to transfer. All clergy with security of appointment shall continue under appointment by the bishop of the annual conference. Local church members can decide what is best for their congregational and missional context related to same-sex marriage on church property. Local churches must vote – in a church conference open to all members – to allow their property to be used for a same-sex ceremony.

These changes apply only to the jurisdictional conferences in the U.S., according to the report from the Commission on a Way Forward. “Central conferences, through the work of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, will have the authority to retain the present language regarding chargeable offenses of clergy and questions of ordination related to homosexuality found in the Book of Discipline (2016) or adopt working in these paragraphs that best serves their missional contexts.”

The One Church Plan ends the threat of church trials over same-gender weddings. Local churches already have the authority to establish wedding policies, and pastors already discern whom they will or will not marry.

The Way Forward report also asks the General Council of Finance and Administration to find means consistent with the Book of Discipline to ensure each jurisdictional conference or area supports the costs of its own episcopal leader and office.

Under the heading “Theological and Biblical Foundations,” the report said the One Church Plan offers more space for both traditionalists and progressives. “United Methodists in central conferences want space to shape conversations about sexuality according to their national context and without replicating whatever practices shape churches in the United States. “Other United Methodists want to give space as generously as possible without compromising core identity and mission.”

The One Church Plan honors United Methodists who believe that the denomination’s impasse over marriage and ordination of homosexual individuals “does not rise to the level of a church dividing.”

The report spells out the effects of the One Church Plan on each segment of The United Methodist Church. “This plan minimizes disruption in the local church (in most cases) and gives freedom to churches to adapt in order to minister to the LGBTQ community in their context. It allows for independence as well as interdependence and creates a contextual church for the next generation.”

The plan allows clergy to remain or leave the church because of a change in language of the Book of Discipline. Their vested pension will be protected at the time of their departure. It also allows clergy to transfer to another annual conference.

According to the commission, no amendments will need to be made to the constitution. If passed at the 2019 General Conference, the One Church Plan could take effect on Jan. 1, 2020. However it is recommended that the church take until Dec. 31, 2020, to fully implement the plan to give everyone time to acclimate.

All three plans contain provisions for handling pension funds, but the One Church and Connectional plans contain no provisions for churches that want to change their relationship with The United Methodist Church.

According to the Way Forward report, the Council of Bishops indicated that there were already provisions in place for a church that might want to leave.

“The language of ‘exit’ should be used carefully so as not to encourage people to look for an ‘exit’ but rather to help The United Methodist Church focus on unity,” the Council of Bishops said in the Way Forward report.

The Traditional Plan does include provisions for self-governing churches and annual conferences as well as dealing with church property.

2. Traditional Plan. The Traditional Plan would affirm current language in the Book of Discipline, which bans “self-avowed and practicing” gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex unions. It would also enforce those bans swiftly and strictly. The plan’s legislative petitions also provide a way for churches and annual conferences that disagree with strict enforcement to set up self-governing or “autonomous, affiliated or concordant” churches or conferences. According to the Way Forward report, a “Traditional Model” was prepared by a few members of the Council of Bishops and was not the work of commission. Support for this plan on both the commission and council was “modest enough” that earlier work on the model was discontinued, then resumed in May at the request of the Council of Bishops that a traditional plan be developed, the report said.

Other provisions include: Broadening the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” to include anyone living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or who publicly states that he or she is a homosexual.

Setting minimum penalties and quicker expulsion after conviction of violations. Requiring bishops and annual conferences to certify that they would uphold, enforce and maintain Disciplinary standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination. Bishops who could not do so would not be eligible for compensation for expenses after 2021 and would be urged to join the self-governing churches. Preventing bishops from consecrating, ordaining or commissioning a “self-avowed homosexual” even if that person had been elected or approved by the relevant jurisdictional conference or clergy session. That petition does not include the term “practicing” as part of the ban.

Reviewing the status of bishops who could not certify they would uphold the Discipline through a newly created Council of Bishops’ Council Relations Committee for possible action. Handling complaints against bishops under new provisions set out in a constitutional amendment that was ratified in May and aimed at requiring the Council of Bishops to hold its members accountable. Setting a strict timeline for new provisions for handling complaints and making dismissal of complaints more difficult. Allowing local churches that disagree with a conference decision not to enforce the Discipline to remain with The United Methodist Church.

Allowing local churches in a conference that plans to enforce the bans to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordant” church if they disagree with their conference. Groups of 50 or more churches could form new denominations.

Encouraging clergy who could not maintain the ban on LGBTQ marriage and ordination to leave the denomination and join the affiliated churches.

Requiring any just resolution of a complaint to contain a commitment not to repeat the offense.

Requiring every annual conference to certify that they would maintain the bans and conferences that did not “would be encouraged” to form self-governing bodies.

Continuing the current general agencies that could negotiate their services with churches and conferences that leave the UMC.

Requiring the conference Board of Ordained Ministry to conduct an examination to ascertain whether a candidate was a practicing homosexual, including looking at information on social media.

The Traditional Plan recognizes that “because of the current deep conflict over The United Methodist Church’s position on marriage and sexuality,” a church or conference may want to form a self-governing church,” the Way Forward report said. The plan sets out a timeline for conferences to vote on that issue and detailed procedures for how funds will be handled, including pensions.

The implementation timeline would have the Traditional Plan in place by Jan. 1, 2021.

3. Connectional Conference Plan. The Connectional Conference plan would simplify the general church structure and provide “both space and connection between those parts of the church currently in deep conflict,” the Way Forward Commission report says. The plan would replace the five U.S. jurisdictions with three connectional conferences that are “values-based” rather than geographic in nature. The denomination’s current central conferences, which are outside the U.S., could join one of the three U.S. conferences to form a global conference or create their own connectional conference. However, the individual annual conferences that disagree with the decision of their central conference have the option of voting to join a different connectional conference.

Each connectional conference would create its own Book of Discipline that includes items “commonly agreed upon by United Methodists,” with the authority to adapt other items not included in a General Book of Discipline.

Each connectional conference’s College of Bishops would provide episcopal oversight and accountability and would handle elections, assignments and funding. U.S. conferences would pay for their own bishops, with all U.S. conferences continuing to support bishops outside the U.S.

The larger Council of Bishops would focus on ecumenical relations and shared learning. Each connectional conference would have its own administration and financing; its own policies regarding LGBTQ weddings and ordination and its own standards for clergy. Justice ministries related to racism and sexism would be organized at the connectional conference level and held accountable by the general church. Cross-connectional conference cooperation and partnerships would remain the same and all connectional conferences would continue to support mission work and ministry outside the U.S.

A shortened General Conference would retain authority over the church’s shared doctrine and the services of continuing general agencies. As a venue, General Conference would serve as a gathering place for worship, inspiration and the sharing of best practices.

The commission’s report specifies Wespeth, the Publishing House, the General Council on Finance and Administration, the Commission on Archives and History and parts of the Board of Global Ministries, including the United Methodist Committee on Relief, as “continuing general agencies,” with the future structure of other agencies to be determined “by which connectional conferences desire to participate in them.” The Judicial Council, whose membership would include two persons elected by each connectional conference, would have authority over all judicial matters based on the respective connectional conference Books of Discipline. But conferences also could have their own separate courts.

Included in the procedure and timeline for the Connectional Conference plan:

- The first level of connectional conference affiliation would be at the jurisdictional level. Annual conferences that disagree can choose a different conference, and no local church is required to take a vote unless the choice is different than its annual conference.
- Jurisdictional property would belong to the affiliated connectional conference. Church-owned or church-related entities could make their own affiliation decisions.
- Unless determined otherwise, central conferences would be authorized to elect bishops in 2020, as scheduled. Regions not electing bishops in 2020 would have the mandatory retirement age of bishops waived until 2022.
- A Standing Committee on Connectional Conferences would be established by the 2020 General Conference to help the Council of Bishops facilitate cross-conference connections and cooperative ministry.
- General Conference 2024 would be postponed to 2025 to allow time for the transition and to “disconnect succeeding General Conferences from the U.S. election cycle.”

[Note: The Traditional Plan is the only viable plan that would maintain our doctrinal integrity. – AOM]

– By Linda Bloom, Kathy L. Gilbert and Vicki Brown; July 18, 2018. As reported in the UMNS Weekly Digest, Jul 20, 2018.

**(UM) Women/Women's Issues. UMW initiates plan to reduce staff size.**

NEW YORK – UMW has announced plans to reduce the size of its national staff through a voluntary severance offering. “The work toward building out our new operational structure is coinciding with market volatility and declines in other sources of income,” said Harriett Jane Olson, chief executive officer. – As reported in the UMNS Weekly Digest.

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You are not only held responsible for what you say, but also what you do not say. ~ Martin Luther

**Global Outlook**

Praise the Lord – and pass the ammunition. – Phrase that was used in WW II. Compare it to the words in Nehemiah 4:14

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**Zimbabwe. Rural pastors gain reliable transportation.**

HARARE, Zimbabwe (UMNS) – Transportation is a challenge for pastors serving rural churches in the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area, but lay leaders here have spearheaded a fund to buy cars for the pastors. The Rural Pastors Transport Initiative has, to date, purchased 12 vehicles. – Eveline Chikwanah, as reported by UMNS Weekly Digest; Jul 13, 2018.

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**2018 Annual Conference Reports**

**Arkansas Annual Conference.** Location of conference gathering: Bank of the Ozarks Arena, Hot Springs Convention Center, Hot Springs, Arkansas; date: June 17-20; officiating bishop: Gary E. Mueller. Membership is 127,815, down 915. Worship attendance is 45,632, down 1,702. – Jane Dennis, Arkansas United Methodist interim editor (UMNS).

**California-Nevada Annual Conference.** Officiating bishop: Minerva G. Carcaño. Met in Modesto, California. Membership stands at 71,004, down 1,262 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 27,622, down 1,285.

– Larry R. Hygh, Jr., director of communications for the California-Nevada Annual Conference

**California-Pacific Annual Conference.** Met at the University of Redlands in Redlands, California. Officiating bishop: Grant J. Hagiya. Florida Area Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, shared with us insight into the origins of the Fresh Expressions movement and delivered a touching message in the memorial service. No statistics were provided on membership and church attendance. However, statistics were “presented which showed how men, predominantly, are appointed to the largest churches and are, in general, paid more compared to women clergy. Such statistics also included the fact that some 66 churches in our conference have yet to receive a female pastor appointed to their community. At the end, clergywomen were invited to be recognized by those gathered. Later in the day, clergywomen gathered at the steps of the chapel to take a powerful group photo.”

– James Kang, director of communications, California-Pacific Conference.

**Dakotas Annual Conference.** Met in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Officiating bishop: Bishop Bruce R. Ough. Membership stands at 36,577, up 860. Average weekly worship attendance stands at 23,657, up 4.65.

– Melissa Doreen Gosmire, director of communications, Dakotas Conference

**Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.** Met June 14-16, 2018, at the Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, Pennsylvania. Bishop Peggy Johnson presided. Membership stands at 96,120, down 4,028. Worship attendance stands at 34,325 down 1,264.

– John Coleman, conference communications director.

**Estonia Annual Conference.** The United Methodist Church in Estonia gathered for the 2018 Annual Conference in Tallinn United Methodist Church (Baltic Mission Center) on June 15-17, 2018.

Clergy, lay and guests were gathered for the discussions, reports and worship. Two new local pastors – 1 male, 1 female – were accepted among the clergy and one deacon was ordained. We are grateful to God for the growth in the membership last year. During the annual conference, the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary graduation service was held where 13 students graduated from the three-year theology program. Annual conference members celebrated nine years of Meeli Tankler’s ministry as rector of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary. Starting Aug. 1, the new rector will be Külli Tõniste. Also, 13 years of the Rev. Taavi Hollman’s ministry as district superintendent was celebrated. The new district superintendent for Estonia starting July 1 is The Rev. Robert Tšerenkov. During the session, the Way Forward plans were presented by Bishop Christian Alsted. After the discussions, annual conference voters decided to express its favor to the current Book of Discipline and current theological views by voting for the support to the Traditionalist Plan.

– Dr. Christian Alsted Taavi Hollman, The Nordic & Baltic Area district superintendent  
Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference United Methodist Church in Estonia.

**Finland Provisional Conference.** The theme for the Finnish annual conference this year was: ”Before Your Eyes.” The annual conference of the Finland Provisional Conference had a group visiting from Aldersgate Renewal Ministries. The group had members from the United Kingdom and Estonia. They prayed for the provisional conference and taught about the work of Holy Spirit. This year annual conference was again in a new place. This time, the place was beautiful elementary school campus near Turku. Students are in their summer vacation, and the school rents the place for various events. The school is owned by Adventist church in Finland and is one of 16 Christian private elementary schools in Finland. During the annual conference session, Nordic-Baltic Episcopal Area Bishop Christian Alsted informed us about the special General Conference next February and also talked about the work of Way Forward commission. The annual conference also decided to choose new delegates for special General Conference. The bishop presided over licensing a one new local pastor. He was appointed to special ministry into a Finnish Christian motorcycle club MC Preacher, which works among motorcyclists.

– Submitted by the Veli

Loponen.

**Great Plains Annual Conference.** Met June 13-16 in Wichita, Kansas, Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr., presiding. Membership stands at 209,554, down 2,759 (1.3 percent). Worship attendance stands at 77,696, down 4,572 (5.56 percent).

– Todd Seifert, director of communications, Great Plains Conference.

**Greater New Jersey Conference.** Met May 20-22 in the Wildwood Convention Center, Wildwood, New Jersey, with Bishop John Schol presiding. Membership is 86,810, down 882; worship attendance is 43,307, up from the previous year.

– Josh Kinney, editorial manager, Greater New Jersey Conference.

**Indiana Annual Conference.** Met June 7 - 9 in Indianapolis. Bishop Julius C. Trimble presided. Membership at the close of 2017 was 184,513, down 2%; average worship attendance stands at 92,523, down 4%.

– Chassity Neckers.

**Kentucky Annual Conference.** Met June 11-13 at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center, Covington, KY, with Bishop Leonard Fairley presiding. Membership stands at 149,803, down 853; worship attendance is 49,391, down 1,091.

– Cathy Bruce.

**Kivu Annual Conference.** [Note: Minimal editing here to show you the “prescribed” format and language. – AOM] Met at Amani local church in Goma District, June 22-27; Officiating bishop: Unda Yemba Gabriel. Guest speakers and memorable stories or quotes by speakers:

We received three guests: the missionary Frido N. Kinkolenga of GBGM, Germain MUPASI who is the representative of the youth of Congo to the World Division of Youth, and the Rev. LANA ROBYNE from Wesley Foundation from the United States. Frido came to participate in the annual Kivu Conference and also to be aware of all the major problems that the church knows in this part of the country, namely the sexual violence suffered by women, the major problems of street children and youth, orphans. Frido says that there are several problems in this part of the country and that rapid intervention is needed, especially for the mentoring of poor and marginalized women. Frido promises to work with young people so that they can begin to promote it in all orientations on school, moral.

Marie Claire Manafundu took the opportunity to meet and talk with all the women's groups in Kivu and show them the involvement of the Church in women's works, she modeled herself by bringing clothes with the emblem of the United Methodist Church in Eastern Congo; this to motivate moms in the context of self-care according to the slogan in East Congo: "Let's get up and build"; Manafundu says "already we are in the registration phase of all the raped women in our episcopal region and this will have to be the work of every woman in her local church to identify anyone raped near the administration of either her church or district.

For Germain Mupasi who is at the same time president of the young people at the Church of Christ in Congo throughout the Republic took advantage during the sessions to show young people the opportunities to obtain scholarships and also to have support in small projects.

Mupasi says: "I will work with young people in this area of scholarship finally that young people in Kivu can start benefiting from national and international scholarships." Main actions put in place by the Kivu conference:

In relation to human sexuality, the lecturers of Kivu rejected the homosexual marriage in block and asked the pastors to multiply the teachings so that the faithful can continue to observe the heterogeneous marriages that is to say two opposite sexes which is even the recommendation of the Bible. The conference recommends that the Church truly respect the genre since it was created by God, who originally distinguished two beings: the man and the woman. But, what is wrong is homosexuality, which is naturally a phenomenon incompatible with the biblical teaching, strange and even unusual in our African culture. That is why the only convenient attitude towards our brothers and sisters who come from a culture different from ours is to show them that their option is not at all consistent with Bible teaching.

Moreover, we are totally concerned with the sacred unity of our Church on a universal scale.

Number of persons ordered: 86, ordered or received as associate members: 10, and average age: 32 years

The Kivu Conference elected new delegates for the 2019 Special General Conference which are:

1. Clergy: Rev KOMBI RAMAZANI Simon with Alternate Rev MILENGE BASILWANGO Alexandre
2. Laity: Mrs OMBA NDJOVU Therese with as substitute TSHOMBA NGOY Adalbert

Number of retired people: 06. The membership is at 22,021 faithful for this year 2018 which is at the top compared to the previous year.

Attendance at worship is 17,680 people present on average each week at the cult, which is higher than the previous year.

School attendance at the church stands at 3,556, up from the previous year, which was 2,850

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2017: 429, up from 2016 which had 325.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2017: 32, up from 2016 who had 26

The faithful committed on mission for 2017: 2,578, up from 2016 which had 1,870

To strengthen the four areas of interest, Kivu's annual conference has made a commitment to:

Capacity building of pastors and evangelists and sends different commissions in the circles to evangelize such as KAMITUGA, MWENGA; Construction in the future days of new health and maternity centers and also a care center for poor nutrition in Bukavu; Fight against malaria in the Kivu conference; Elaboration of projects on the protection of the environment; Send young people for university studies at Methodist University in Kindu, Zimbabwe and overseas countries. Officiating bishop: Peggy Johnson 12,145 in 2014; Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2015 were 1,588, down from 1,935 in 2014.

– Philippe KITUKA LOLONGA, communicator in the Kivu Conference.

**Louisiana Annual Conference.** Met June 6-9, 2018 in Shreveport/Bossier, Louisiana; Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey officiated. Membership at the end of 2017 was 114,626, down 2,500; worship attendance was 36,172, down 1,485.

– Rev. Todd Rossnagel, director of communication strategies

**Mississippi Annual Conference.** Convened at the Jackson Convention Complex from May 31-June 2. Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. officiated. Membership is 165,150, down 7,142; worship attendance is 62,854, down 964.

– Conference communicator.

**Missouri Annual Conference.** Bishop Bob Farr presided. Membership stands at 152,285, down 2,877 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 70,261, down 2,620. – Fred Koenig, editor, The Missouri Conference

**Mountain Sky Annual Conference.** Met June 7-10, 2018 at the Eccles Conference Center in Ogden, Utah; “Bishop” Karen Oliveto presided. Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference statistics: Membership stood at 55,196 at the end of 2017, down 1,921 (3%) from 57,117 in 2016, while worship attendance was 25,062, down 1,155 (4%) from 26,217 in 2016. Statistics for the Yellowstone Legacy Conference are “being calculated.” Both will form the Mountain Sky Conference.

– Charmaine Robledo, director of communications, Mountain Sky Conference

**New England Annual Conference.** Met June 16 with Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar officiating [possibly at Boston University, since it was not specifically stated in the report – AOM]. Membership stands at 78,982, down 2.8%. Worship attendance stands at 26,113, down 3.9%. – Beth DiCocco, director of communications, New England Conference.

**New Mexico Annual Conference.** Met in Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 13–15 at the Albuquerque Marriott, with Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe presiding. Membership is 28,942, a decrease of 2,252; worship attendance is 10,806, down 928.

– Submitted by Alli Newsom, NMAC communications director.

**North Carolina Conference.** Met at the Greenville Convention Center from June 14-16 with Bishop Hope Morgan Ward presiding. Membership is 226,310, down 13 from 2016; worship attendance in 2017 was 70,054, a decrease of 3,102.

– Submitted by Derek Leek, director of communications, North Carolina Conference.

**North Georgia Annual Conference.** Met June 12-14 at The Classic Center in Athens, Georgia with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson presiding. Membership is 357,015, a 1% decline from 2016; worship attendance for 2017: 107,000. – Sybil Davidson.

**Pacific Northwest Annual Conference.** Met at Washington State Fairgrounds, June 22-24; Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky presided. Membership is 37,743, down 1,361; worship attendance 16,785 down 531. – Patrick Scriven, Dir. of Communications, Pacific NW Conf.

**South Carolina Annual Conference.** Bishop L. Jonathan Holston presided over the SC Conference at the TD Convention Center. Membership: 222,813 in 2017, down 3,457. – Dan O’Mara, communications coordinator South Carolina Annual Conference.

**Susquehanna Annual Conference.** Bishop Jeremiah Park presided over the conference at the Hershey Convention Center in Hershey, PA, May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup> . Membership is 141,606, down 1,891 from 2016. – Shawn Gilgore, dir. of comms, Susquehanna Conference.

**Tanzania Annual Conference.** Location: Coast Region, Tanzania. Date: June 7, 2018. Officiating bishop: Bishop Mande Muyombo. Guest speaker: Bishop Mande Muyombo. Memorable points or quotes by speakers: The memorable verse was from Luke 6:38.

Main actions enacted by the conference: The district of Dar es Salaam was divided. We now have a new Coast Region district. Resolutions adopted by the conference: Delegates who went to the 2016 General Conference are the same who will go for the special session of General Conference in St. Louis in February 2019. Number of people ordained, commissioned or received into associate membership, and average age: Three. Average age: 32. Membership stands at 8,371. Worship attendance stands at 5,398. Church school attendance stands at 1,169. Adults and young adults in small groups in 2017: 2,180. Worshippers engaged in mission in 2017: 1,679. What did your annual conference do to reinforce the Four Areas of Focus, and what commitments has the conference made for the coming year? Church planting to the northern and southern part of Tanzania. The target is to have United Methodist churches in every political district of the country. – Asaph Sungura Ally, Tanzania Annual Conference communicator.

**Tennessee Annual Conference.** Met at Brentwood UMC, Brentwood, Tennessee, on June 13-15, 2018; Bishop William T. McAlilly presided. Membership is 115,063, down 1,677; worship attendance is 45,374, up 1,117. – Mary Catherine Phillips, Alabama-West Florida director of communications; as reported by the UMNS.

**Western North Carolina Conference.** Met June 22-24 at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; Bishop Paul L. Leeland presided. Some of the main business items of the conference included:

The 2019 Budget was adopted for a total of \$16,166,481 dollars, a small decrease from 2018. Percentage of apportionments paid has grown from the previous year, and more churches are paying 100 percent than the year before.

The conference heard reports the connected ministries of the conference. The Justice and Reconciliation Team is working across many constituencies of the conference to promote programs and initiatives for a more just world and church. Received an offering for Bennett College, a historic black, women’s college in Greensboro College of \$20,902.15 dollars during opening worship. Received an offering for the Lake Junaluska Bridge Restoration fund at closing worship. The total was \$14,450.53 dollars. Resolutions discussed by the conference, included: Petition 19- Change in percentages of proceeds from sales of closed church properties was adopted by the conference. Since 2003, funds from closed churches were shared 75% with the district and 25% with the conference. With the passing of this resolution, the percentages are now, 25% staying with the district and 75% going to the conference Church Vitality Team for new churches, new faith communities and revitalization initiatives.

Petition 21- “Just Policy for Local Church Employees” was adopted by the conference. This states that the conference is committed to employment practices aligned with the Social Principles and supports local church policies in which laity called to serve “are employed and dismissed solely on their gifts and graces without regard for sexual orientation or gender identity.”

A petition was brought late to the floor of the conference, entitled: “Reunite Immigrant Families.” The petition was adopted instructing the conference secretary to request the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Justice to “reunite children with their families who had been previously separated by the U.S. government due to the ‘zero tolerance’ policy in an expedient, humane and compassionate manner.”

Worship attendance stands at 100,839 down 3718 from 2016. Membership is 279,996 down 2622; worship attendance is 100,839 down 3718 from 2016. [Note: Both Petition 21 and the “Immigrant Families” one are very problematic. – AOM] – Chris Hampton, WNCC webmaster.

**Wisconsin Annual Conference.** from June 15-18 at the Madison Marriott West; Bishop Hee-Soo Jung presided. Membership and worship attendance statistics were not available. – Submitted by Michele Virnig, & Chrissy Graham, Wisconsin Conference.

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If your knowledge of doctrine does not make you a great man of prayer, you had better examine yourself again.  
~ Martyn Lloyd-Jones