

Monthly Update

July 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Monthly Update covers the first of the annual conference reports from meetings across our Methodist connection. 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 during these turbulent times. Of especial interest are what we believe are attempts to undermine our country and our orthodox Wesleyan Christian faith. Here are just a few:

1. Over the matter of protecting our borders/unlimited immigration; the Old Testament in the Bible is replete about the need for Israel to protect its borders against its enemies. Some leaders in the United Methodist Church have filed “charges” against Attorney General Jeff Sessions for enforcing the law against illegal aliens. This is extreme with all the un-Christian actions our leadership has tolerated.
2. In reference to gun control and enacting stricter regulations, some of our church leaders are becoming active in pushing this issue. The reality is that mass shooters like “gun free zones” because they know that they will not meet armed resistance until the police arrive – and that would be too late for some people who have been killed. We need to remember, especially as we celebrate the 4th of July, that it was the attempt at “gun control” that started our fight for independence with the British on their way to seize the peoples’ weapons when they were confronted – and defeated with guns by the patriots.
3. Membership in the United Methodist Church is 6,951,278 – as of 12/2016 (GCFA).

It is unfortunate that our church has become so politicized that we have drifted far away from proclaiming the pure gospel of Jesus Christ as our Savior, that He died for our sins.

As we celebrate our independence this July, let us remember some of the past sacrifices:

- * It is 1953. Americans who had been held prisoner of war (POW) by communist North Koreans were being released. One emaciated POW slowly walked into the room where he would receive medical care. A tall husky MP (Military Police) started over to help him, but the former POW held up his hand to stop him. Slowly, step by painful step, he shuffled to an American flag on a pole in the room. He went up to it, took it in both hands, buried his face in it, fell to his knees and sobbed. After an emotional moment, the MP went over, picked him up in his arms, and carried him off to get medical help.
- * Marine John McCarthy (one of the four men who founded Concerned Methodists/CM) was wounded twice in three hours after he hit the beaches of Iwo Jima in World War II.
- * Martin Rasmussen’s (a Concerned Methodists stalwart) position was overrun by Chinese Communists.
- * It is 1950. Edward Morris was on a troopship bound for Japan when the communists swept across the border and invaded the South. Morris was outfitted for combat and sent into defend Pusan, on the southern end of South Korea. Fighting almost continuously for 89 days, he saw all of the men in his platoon around him either killed or wounded. He himself was evacuated with “combat fatigue” (PTSD) back to Brooke Army Medical Center and placed in the mental ward at the hospital.

As a little boy, I still remember going to visit my father – and saw how combat had changed him.

All of three of the four founders of Concerned Methodists are veterans, some of us having been through combat; I say this, not to brag, but to show that God is still calling us into His service today – to “contend for the faith” in our United Methodist Church – and to fight for the future of our country, the United States of America. We do this by speaking out and doing all that we humanly can, and on our knees praying for our country, to include its leadership. Will you do this? Yet again, I ask that you pray a Psalm 91 hedge of protection around the United States.

Finally, please remember the sacrifices of those who have served – and thank them.

In His service,
Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

July 2018 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

When defending the Holy Bible and speaking out against false teachings, I usually encounter someone telling me, “Only God can judge!”, or “JUDGE NOT!” However, this is Tupac theology, not Biblical theology. It’s time to set the record straight and clarify the true meaning of Matthew 7:1. This verse is not a warning about speaking out against others. We’re commanded in the Great Commission to make disciples, which includes helping others to be grounded in the Word and staying far away from sin. However, Matthew 7 is a warning against self-righteousness, hypocrisy and judging others unfairly. If we’re going to correct someone, then we must expect to be held to the same standard. Even though we remove the beam in our own eye, Jesus still says we must remove the mote in our brother’s. As Christians we must not have a naive mindset and a lack of discernment. Judge righteous judgment! – Steve L. Piotrowski

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Of Interest.

+ *Study seeks snapshot of Native American ministries.*

MUSKOGEE, Okla. – The Native American Comprehensive Plan, in partnership with Path One/New Church Starts of United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, has commissioned a research study on the state of Native American ministries and churches in the United States. – As reported in the UMNS Daily Digest; May 23, 2018.

+ NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – More than 600 United Methodist clergy and laity say they are bringing church law charges against U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a fellow United Methodist, over a zero-tolerance U.S. immigration policy – a policy that includes separating children from parents apprehended for crossing into the U.S. illegally.

[Note: This is the height of hypocrisy. This policy was enacted during the administration of Bill Clinton and enforced during the administration of Barack Obama, yet there was no protest from the UM clergy and other denominational laity. In addition, during Obama’s administration, there was at least one group of unaccompanied minors who came into the United States as a group – yet there was no expressions of concern about “separation” from their parents. In addition was there no protest about all of the “same-sex” weddings performed by UM clergy, nor the consecration of a lesbian as bishop in the Western Jurisdiction. This action testifies to the blatant political advocacy in which our denomination’s employees is engage – yet we continue to decline year after year. – AOM]

– Sam Hodges; United Methodist News Service (UMNS), Weekly Digest; Jun 22, 2018

+ **“Gun control”** [Information should be considered from] a nationally representative survey. ...when one does this, the results imply that U.S. civilians use guns to defend themselves and others from crime at least 990,000 times per year. This figure accounts only for “clear” cases of defensive gun use and is based upon a weighting calculation designed to minimize defensive gun uses.

Similarly, a 1994 survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] found that Americans use guns to frighten away intruders who are breaking into their homes about 498,000 times per year. In 2013, President Obama ordered the Department of Health and Human Services and CDC to “conduct or sponsor research into the causes of gun violence and the ways to prevent it.” In response, the CDC asked the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council to “convene a committee of experts to develop a potential research agenda focusing on the public health aspects of firearm-related violence....” This committee studied the issue of defensive gun use and reported:

“Defensive use of guns by crime victims is a common occurrence, although the exact number remains disputed....”

“Almost all national survey estimates indicate that defensive gun uses by victims are at least as common as offensive uses by criminals, with estimates of annual uses ranging from about 500,000 to more than 3 million....”

[S]ome scholars point to a radically lower estimate of only 108,000 annual defensive uses based on the National Crime Victimization Survey,” but this “estimate of 108,000 is difficult to interpret because respondents were not asked specifically about defensive gun use.”

– By James D. Agresti; February 23, 2018.

Islam. Muslims hate pork, dogs, beer, bikinis, Jesus and freedom of speech. My question is, “What in the world do they come to America for?” – posted on Facebook by The Reverend Ben McKee

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One time when Billy Graham and other Christians went to New York City, they were met by a Communist in the street protesting his visit. The guy said, “Communism can put a new suit of clothes on that man,” pointing to a homeless man. Then one of the Christians in Grahams’ entourage responded, “But Christianity can put a new man into those clothes.”

Global Outlook

If the Arabs lay down their weapons there is no more war. If Israel lays down its weapons there is no more Israel.

~ Prime Minister Golda Meir.

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Congo. *Youth leaders focus on guiding others to Jesus Christ.*

KINDU, Congo (UMNS) – Providing youth – and the adults who work with them – with basic skills to ensure effective and transforming leadership for the church and the community was the goal of two workshops offered here. More than 45 youth leaders participated in the training. Chadrack Tambwe Londe. – UMNS Daily Digest; Jun 21, 2018

Morocco. Morocco’s foreign minister has warned that Iran is seeking a foothold in North Africa through their proxy Hezbollah who is financing guerilla groups and laundering money in their nation, threatening Morocco’s security.

– The Presidential Prayer Team. Week of 5/24/2018 - 5/30/2018

Nigeria. Please pray for Leah Sharibu who was kidnapped by Boko Haram on Feb. 19 along with 109 other school girls in Nigeria. Most of the girls were returned about four weeks after the kidnapping, but five were reportedly killed and Leah is still being held. She is believed to be the only Christian among those kidnapped. One of the released girls said that Leah hasn’t been released because she refuses to deny Jesus. Pray for Leah’s family, that she will be released soon, and above all, that she will remain strong in her faith in Christ! – From Voice of the Martyrs; posted Jun 21, 2018

North Korea. President Donald Trump met with North Korea Leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday, June 12. This meeting was the first face-to-face meeting between the leadership of North Korea and the United States and has the potential to reshape the geo-political landscape. – Presidential Prayer Team

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The faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. ~ Adrian Rogers

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Annual Conference Reports

Below are very brief summaries from this year's annual conference sessions around the connection. Again, if you want a 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. Because there is so much compelling information that needs to be included in this Update, we have reduced to the bare minimum information from these gatherings.

In a "historic" vote, the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone conferences agreed on June 9 to become the new Mountain Sky Conference. The vote followed a full day of debate and amendments, in which the delegates approved a six-section plan of union. Also, the Tennessee and the Memphis conferences intend to join. Nashville Area Bishop Bill McAlilly announced that voters in the Memphis and Tennessee conferences, by more than 87 percent, endorsed an intent to join into a new conference. He outlines the next steps of a process still in its early stages. The Detroit Conference & the West Michigan Conference are in the process of merging. [Note: This called "historic" but in reality it reflects a reorganization based on the continuing loss of members. – AOM]

– United Methodist News Service (UMNS) Daily Digest; Jun 20, 2018

Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. Met June 3-6 in Montgomery, Alabama. The conference established a \$10,673,705 million budget for ministry for 2019, a 3.17 percent decrease from 2018. The 2019 budget is the lowest in 20 years. The recommended district superintendent salary for 2019 is \$120,475, or no increase from the previous year.

Mickey Wilson reported that membership stands at 133,696 and worship attendance stands at 58,923.

– Mary Catherine Phillips, conference director of communications

Alaska Annual Conference. Met May 31-June 2, 2018 in Seward, Alaska. Officiating bishop: Bishop Elaine Stanovsky.

Membership stands at 3153, down 105 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 1810, down 32.

– Submitted by the Rev. Jim Doepken

Austria Provisional Annual Conference. Met June 7-10, 2018, at the English Speaking United Methodist Church of Vienna with the theme "Building Bridges in multicultural congregations."

The United Methodist Church in Austria consists of people of very different cultural backgrounds. To focus on a uniting foundation and to actively build bridges – that was the aim of the Annual Conference which took place from June 7-10, 2018, at the English Speaking United Methodist Church of Vienna. The theme "Building Bridges" offered various topics of conversation – that became obvious at the four-day conference: while discussing the good and evolved relationship of the Protestant churches within the country, for instance, or while remembering the dispute on human sexuality, which is endangering the unity of the global church. But also in the specific issues of the agenda: such as the role of the church in social and other media and the associated challenges or the newly developed training course with a focus on pastoral care and communication. The basic modules of this training course with the title "Accompanying People Well" cover the topics communication, mindset, I as a helping person, age and sickness as well as dying, death, grieve, and life. Part of the domain "Adult Education" are also three study days on an elemental order of worship service, which will take place in fall 2018. Here, one can find bridge building potential, as well. That the image of building bridges does not only include opportunities but also limitations, can be found in the assessment that a bridge also implies ditches or trenches, which might actually not exist. Beyond debate, however, is the vigilant and cautious commitment of the church in times where enemy stereotypes are searched for and created and society's solidarity with the weaker one is put to the test, as Superintendent Stefan Schröckenfuchs stated. Michael Chalupka, the departing director of Diaconia Austria, took up that thought and not only thanked The United Methodist Church for the longstanding and good cooperation but also for not being a national church and that a pleasant diversity can be seen in its congregations.

The conference ended with a festive worship service on Sunday. Once again, various instruments, a multicultural choir, and an African choir as well as the English sermon of Bishop Patrick Streiff emphasized the topic of the conference. So not only was the newly appointed local pastor Frank Moritz-Jauk sent out to be a bridge builder, but also all members and friends of The United Methodist Church in Austria. – Urs Schweizer, assistant to Bishop Patrick Streiff

Baltimore-Washington Conference Annual Conference. Met May 30-June 1, Baltimore, Maryland. As a part of their holy conferencing, members also passed a budget of \$18,730,264. This is the seventh year that apportionment spending in the conference has remained flat, hovering between \$14.1 and \$14.3 million, said Phil Potter, chair of the Conference Council of Finance and Administration. Membership stands at 157,060 for 2017, down 1,988 from 159,048 in 2016.

– Melissa Lauber, Baltimore-Washington Conference, director of communications; as reported by the UMNS.

Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Conference. Met March 22-25 in Varna, Bulgaria. The first ordination of a Romanian United Methodist pastor was one of the highlights of Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Conference, held March 22-25 in Varna, Bulgaria. An elder from Bulgaria was also ordained. The Rev. Rares Calugar was pastor of an independent congregation in Cluj-Napoca which joined The United Methodist Church in 2011. Calugar then started his theological education in English with the distance learning program of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Tallinn, Estonia. He also completed the courses of the Methodist e-Academy, an online theological program in Europe. Calugar was a provisional member of the Bulgaria-Romania Conference for three years before his ordination on March 25. The admission of the church to the denomination began with a visit by Central and Southern Europe Area Bishop Patrick Streiff. The members of Cluj-Napoca, then an independent congregation, had a different understanding of their ministry than most of the other Protestant congregations had. They called themselves “born-again Orthodox.” They told Streiff they wanted to put their faith into action and care for elderly and lonely people in the villages surrounding Cluj-Napoca.

The young Romanian adults who led the congregation said, “Bishop, we have the fire of the Holy Spirit, but we need a spiritual supervision and a transparent church order, because we want this church to be still alive when our children are in our age.” They had experienced too many disappointments with new Protestant congregations that came into being shortly after the political upheaval of 1989 and the end of 42 years of Communism in Romania. But those congregations disintegrated or were dissolved after a relatively short period of time. After this first visit of the bishop, the Romanians spent about three months praying and getting to know the doctrine and the order of The United Methodist Church, before unanimously deciding to join the denomination in the summer of 2011.

The Rev. Jessica Morris-Ivanova from Bulgaria was admitted as a full clergy member and ordained on March 25 as well. She had come to Bulgaria as a missionary of the Church of the Nazarene, had got to know her future husband and joined The United Methodist Church after her marriage. Her ordination as elder was recognized in the Sunday worship service that concluded the 2018 session of the Bulgaria-Romania Conference. Her husband, Ivajlo Ivanov, and another pastor, Krassimir Madzharov from the Turkish-speaking congregation in Burgas, were admitted as provisional members during the conference session. The conference had started with a “theme day” focusing on unity. Various lectures and a time for conversations and discussion had helped to highlight different aspects of the theme: biblical foundation, Methodist emphases and missional orientation. The day was organized against the background of questions regarding the understanding of homosexuality and the upcoming special called General Conference in February 2019.

Membership at the end of 2017 was at 1,196, down 38. The next session of the Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Conference will be held from April 4 to 7, 2019. The place has not yet been decided upon. – Bishop Patrick Streiff.

Desert Southwest Annual Conference. Met June 14-17 in Glendale, Arizona with Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata officiating. The Desert Southwest Annual Conference membership stands at 29,255, down 1,693 from the previous year.

– Submitted by Christina Dillabough, director of Communications, Desert Southwest Conference

East Ohio Annual Conference. Met June 11-13 at Lakeside Chautauqua on the shore of Lake Erie with Bishop Tracy S. Malone presiding. Membership continues to decrease, decreasing 4.7 percent in 2017 to 137,376.

– Rick Wolcott, director of communications for the East Ohio Conference.

Florida Annual Conference. Met June 7-9, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Florida. Officiating bishop: Bishop Ken Carter. Membership stands at 228,700, down 4.3 percent from the previous year.

– Gretchen Hastings, director, connectional relations, Florida Conference

Holston Annual Conference. Met June 10-13, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina with Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor presiding. Membership stands at 160,563, down 1,725 from the previous year.

– Annette Spence, editor of “The Call”

Hungary Provisional Conference. Met April 5-7 in Szolnok, Hungary. The Hungary Conference concluded earlier than usual because of the Hungarian parliamentary election. Five years ago, The United Methodist Church took the Forrai School in Budapest under its auspices. Over the last year, a second school, Schola Europa, approached the denomination to explore the church’s willingness to take over this school, as well. The school is near the oldest United Methodist congregation in Hungary on Budapest Felsőerdősor Street on the Pest side of Budapest, the Hungarian capital. This local church had already positively responded to this request and had considered it a positive challenge to be a missional church. After a thorough discussion, the conference agreed to take Schola Europa under its auspices. This actually means that the number of students in the two schools is higher than the professing members of the whole church in Hungary.

One day of the conference meeting was devoted largely to the theme of revival and renewal. There was a lecture on John Wesley and revival and another section where members focused on questions of the present age. The number of professing members remained stable, 478 in 2018 compared to 479 in 2017.

– Bishop Patrick Streiff

Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference. Met June 7-9, 2018, Peoria Civic Center.

Membership stands at 122,522 in 2017, down 1,288 from 2016. Worship attendance is 53,295, down 265.

– Paul E. Black, director of communication ministries, Illinois Great Rivers Conference

Iowa Annual Conference. Met June 8-11, 2018, Des Moines, Iowa with Bishop Laurie Haller presiding.

Membership stands at 158,049, down .4% from 2016. Worship attendance is an average of 47,080 weekly, down 1%.

– Courtney Glienke, Staff Writer/Social Media Coordinator, Iowa Conference

Liberia Annual Conference. Met March 12-18 in Harper City, Liberia.

[Note: I am thankful for this and the other African conferences. They see beyond the effort by the Council of Bishops to sway the decision-making process to support actions that would lead to homosexual practice in the church. – AOM]

Samuel J. Quire Jr. briefed both the clergy session and the lay session about options being considered by the Commission on a Way Forward and the Council of Bishops to keep The United Methodist Church together

amid longstanding division over homosexuality. Quire had just returned from the Council of Bishops. In separate briefings to the clergy and laity sessions, he detailed two options that are under consideration.

The one-church model: This plan would remove from church law the statement that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and let churches decide whether to host same-sex weddings and conferences (through their boards of ordained ministry) whether to ordain LGBTQ clergy. Central conferences — church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines – could maintain their own standards on ordination and marriage. The model would essentially make legal what is already happening in some parts of the connection.

The multi-branch model: The plan would replace the five current U.S. jurisdictions with three “connectional conferences,” that annual conferences could choose among for affiliation. The connectional conferences would align based on theology or perspective on LGBTQ ministry – be it traditionalist, progressive or allowing for a variety of approaches. Central conferences would remain as they are or could choose to affiliate with one of the three connectional conferences. This model would require amendments to the denomination’s constitution.

Delegates gathered for the 185th Annual Session of the United Methodist Church in Liberia did not take a vote on the options. Clergy and lay members who spoke to United Methodist News Service indicated they favor a third option of affirming the current language in the denomination’s Book of Discipline, the denomination’s governing document, and seeking to strengthen enforcement of both tradition and Scripture. They said that option needs to be included in any proposal the bishops send to the February 2019 Special General Conference. The Discipline says the practice of homosexuality “is incompatible with Christian teaching” and lists officiating at a same-gender union or being a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member as chargeable offenses under church law.

The Rev. Julius YZK Williams, pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Monrovia said the one-church and multi-branch options Quire outlined do not represent The United Methodist Church heritage. “The Holy Scripture is crucial to our unity in this ministry,” he said, adding that as a church, our diversity is guided by the Holy Bible.

The conference, which met at the Mount Scott United Methodist Church, had the theme of “A Future With Hope,” with texts taken from Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 5:1-6. Bishop Quire presided.

The clergy and lay deliberated on several issues in separate sessions on March 12-13, prior to the official opening activities on March 14, 2018 and the joint session which lasted for five days.

Membership stands at 283,980. According to the Department of Evangelism, 900 converts were added to the church, 500 people rededicated their lives to the ministry of the church, and 327 people were baptized by the department from March 2017 to February 2018. A total of 5,000 people participated in department’s ministry dubbed Jesus Film Crusade and Revival Services held during the conference year and in various parts of the country.

The department trained 1,311 persons (pastors and laity) in evangelism and mission techniques in 17 districts of the 21 districts of the conference. – E. Julu Swen, United Methodist News Service.

Memphis Annual Conference. Met June 3-5, in Paducah, Kentucky with Bishop William T. (Bill) McAlilly presiding. A total of 601 delegates registered and attended, according to conference secretary David Russell. Bishop McAlilly made time on the agenda to talk about the called General Conference of The United Methodist Church, set for Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri, that will be limited to acting on a report by the Council of Bishops based on proposals from the Commission on a Way Forward. [Membership statistics were not readily available. – AOM]

– Compiled by Lane Gardner Camp, Memphis Conference Director of Communications

Michigan Annual Conference. Met May 30-June 2, Acme, Michigan with Bishop David A. Bard presiding.

<u>Statistics: 2017-2016</u>	<u>Detroit Conference</u>	<u>West Michigan Conference</u>
Membership	75,351 (down 2%, -2119)	51,705 (3% down, -1,688)

Minnesota Annual Conference. May 30-June 1 in St. Cloud, Minnesota with Bishop Bruce R. Ough presiding. The number of professing church members within the Minnesota Conference as of the end of 2017 was 60,592, down 3.3%.

– Christa Meland, director of Communications, Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

New York Conference. Met June 7-10 in Long Island, New York with Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton presiding. Membership for 2017: 96,425; down 2,001 or 2 percent from 2016. – Submitted by the Rev. Joanne S. Utley

North Alabama Annual Conference. Met June 3-5, Huntsville, Alabama with Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett presiding. Membership stands at 129,658, down 335 from the previous year. – Submitted by Danette Clifton, Dir of Communication

Northern Illinois Annual Conference (IGR). Met June 3-5, St. Charles, Illinois with Bishop Sally Dyck presiding. Membership in the Northern Illinois Conference stands at 82,003, down 3,347. – Anne Marie Gerhardt, director of IGR Communications

Oklahoma Annual Conference. Met May 29-31, Oklahoma City with Bishop James Nunn presiding. Membership statistics were not readily available. – Holly McCray, Conference Communications Ministry editor

Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. Met June 13-16 in Boise, Idaho with Bishop Elaine Stanovsky presiding. Oregon-Idaho Conference membership stands at 23,920, down 714. – Submitted by Greg Nelson, Director of Communication

Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference. Met May 31-June 2 in Princess Anne, Maryland... We finished up by debating and voting on a resolution to urge unity in the face of schism; an amendment was made and ultimately passed. Membership statistics were not readily available. – Doug Lanter, Communications Coordinator

Poland Annual Conference. Met June 14-17, 2018, in Kraplewo, Poland. It was the first time in history that the 60 members and guests of Poland Annual Conference gathered in the northeastern Polish village of Kraplewo. A challenge, , is the generational change. Sometimes, there are tensions between those who would like to preserve the tradition and those who would like to introduce new things. On the other hand, some congregations grew small because younger generations are simply no longer around. As far as the discussions on human sexuality are concerned, The United Methodist Church in Poland mainly has a traditional focus and therefore awaits the upcoming decisions in this regard with concern. – The Rev. Jean-Marc Bittner, Montélimar (France) / Office of the Bishop, Zurich

Serbia-Macedonia Provisional Conference. Met April 12-15 in Kisa, Serbia. The Rev. Daniel Sjanta was appointed as the new superintendent of The United Methodist Church in the Serbian District during the Serbia-Macedonia Provisional Conference, which was held April 12-15 in Kisa, Serbia. Sjanta follows the Rev. Ana Palik-Kunak in this position.

Palik-Kunak has been leading witness and service of The United Methodist Church in Serbia since her appointment as superintendent by Bishop Heinrich Bolleter in 2003. A woman superintendent was unusual in the Balkans at that time.

However, in the years after World War II, the church could only survive thanks to the strong leadership of women, said Central and Southern Europe Area Bishop Patrick Streiff, a former historian. Palik-Kunak has also led the largest congregation in the district during the 15 years she has been superintendent. Streiff said Palik-Kunak had accomplished both tasks calmly and faithfully. “Over the course of these years she has accompanied a younger generation entering the pastoral ministry of the church. But she also had to experience – and sometimes to take painful decisions in this regard – that the church can only support and further develop those who are willing to agree with its spiritual principles and polity, and that in some cases the church had to part with candidates for ordained ministry,” the bishop said. On the closing Sunday, Pastor Daniel Sjanta, 33, was appointed as the new superintendent of The United Methodist Church in Serbia.

In addition to his new leadership position, he will also continue to serve Kovaica United Methodist Church, a Slovak-speaking church about 40 kilometers north of Serbia’s capital, Belgrade. During the official celebration of the change, Streiff said it was encouraging sign for The United Methodist Church in Serbia “that there are people of a younger generation who do not emigrate but who stay in the country and serve the church.” However, the statistics nevertheless show that the church is affected by a general development in society, as well: many people leave Serbia in order to find a job in a neighboring country of the European Union and make a better living there. This is also true for Macedonia.

The Rev. Wilfried Nausner, superintendent of The United Methodist Church in Macedonia, said in his report that people leaving is and will remain a huge challenge in the Balkans. “The United Methodist Church in Macedonia is affected, as well.

– Central and Southern Europe Area

Bishop Patrick Streiff

South Georgia Annual Conference. Met June 3-5, 2018, Jekyll Island, Georgia with Bishop Lawson Bryan, presiding. Membership stands at 110,926, down 2,520 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 45,862, down 2,165. Church school attendance stands at 19,839, up 877 from 2017. –

Kara Witherow, Kelly Roberson

Texas Annual Conference. Met May 27-30, at The Woodlands United Methodist Church with Bishop Scott J. Jones officiating. Membership stands at 278,248, down 3,793 from the previous year.

“Did your clergy session approve any openly gay candidates for ministry? If so, how many? No.” [Note: This was an interesting question. – AOM]

– Submitted by Shannon Martin,

communications director

Upper New York Annual Conference. Met May 30-June 2, in Syracuse, New York with Bishop Mark J. Webb officiating. Membership stands at 149,752, down 2% from the previous year. – Steve Hustedt, director of communications

Virginia Annual Conference. Met June 15-17, Hampton, Virginia with Bishop Sharma Lewis officiating. Membership stood at 320,000; worship attendance stood at 100,000. – Madeline Pillow, dir. of communications, Virginia Conference.

West Ohio Annual Conference. Met June 3-6 at Lakeside Chautauqua with Bishop Gregory V. Palmer presiding. Membership – 155,691, down 4%; worship attendance – 96,717, down 3%. – Kay Panovec & Mariellyn Grace, reporting

Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference. Met June 7-9, Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania with Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi presiding. Membership stands at 158, 728, down 2,817 from the previous year's 161,545.

– Jackie Campbell, communications director, Western Pennsylvania Conference

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Always remember, we reap what we sow, more than we sow, and later than we sow. ~ As quoted by Dr.

Charles Stanley

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