

Monthly Update

May 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Those who operate under the “secular progressive” umbrella embrace values that are very much at variance with those on which our country was founded. We are very much in a battle for our culture. Some of these values have crept into our United Methodist Church such as “human sexuality.” A great deal of the material in this edition of the Monthly Update addresses information from the committee on “A Way Forward” – and our church after the 2019 General Conference. They examine homosexual practice, but at the heart of the authority of the Bible. We zero in on this with laser-like focus and are criticized for it; we get constant opposition from those on “the other side” who want to normalize it, but also by some on “our side” for “spending too much time on it.” From Genesis to the book of Jude, every reference to this practice is negative or condemning. 2. We are concerned for the souls of people because of what the Bible teaches. 3. The practice is harmful to those who practice it as reflected in information we have amassed. 4. Some who radically push this agenda are out to “radically transform” America into what is very different from our Judeo-Christian morality. 5. This issue is the “key battle”; if we lose it, we will lose the United Methodist Church as far as being a Christian denomination centered on the Bible. Finally, such a change would undermine the nuclear family which would in turn bring about the collapse of the United States, since that is the building block for our country. Coupled with the threats from the “Red-Green” Axis of radical Islam, Russia, China, and other enemies, we face serious challenges. We rest on the Rock that is God.

Now to a special event that we celebrate – Mother’s Day. My older brother Smokey (yes, that is his real name) married Kay. He fit the image of his name standing over six feet tall and 1½ times my size; Kay was a little over five feet tall. His mother-in-law Roma Gary was the image of a Southern lady – tall, quiet, and with a “steel magnolia” personality. Often when my brother would be at work, Kay would go over to her mother’s home and pour her heart out about how my brother mistreated her and their two children David and Jenna. Mrs. Gary would quietly listen – but there would be an undefined point at which she would lean forward and say, “Kay, your husband has been hard at work making the best living he knows how for you and your family. Now, go home and cook him a good supper so that when he gets home he will have a good meal.” Kay would do it because once Mrs. Gary said that, all talk was ended. When I spoke at Mrs. Gary’s funeral, I narrated this – and there was laughter through the tears of her family. She was a real lady.

As we go into the summer months, please continue to think and pray about these very important times; I ask that you keep praying a “Psalm 91” hedge of protection around our country against all enemies foreign and domestic. In addition, I thank you for continuing to stand with us in your prayers and your finances.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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May 2018 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 [This has been included before but is especially applicable at this time. – AOM]

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The Good Stuff

+ **Bedtime Prayer:** [Note: This also has been included before but bears repeating. – AOM]

“Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. May angels watch me through the night and wake me with the morning light. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. If I shall live for other days, I pray the Lord would guide my ways. Amen” – A childhood prayer

+ **Southwest Airlines pilot who made emergency landing.** Tammie Jo Shults is a hero. She’s the Southwest Airlines pilot who made that incredible emergency landing yesterday [April 18th]. As a pilot, I can only imagine the difficulty of what she was dealing with – she did a masterful job of landing this airplane. Tammie Jo was one of the first female pilots to fly with the U.S. Navy, and she’s also a Christian. She said sitting in the captain’s chair gave her “the opportunity to witness for Christ on almost every flight.” We thank God with her that more people were not killed or injured, and let’s join in praying for the family whose loved one was lost. [Note: This was after one of the fans came off the engine and blew a hole in the cabin. One lady passenger was being sucked out of the plane, but a muscular guy pulled her back inside; unfortunately, she succumbed to her injuries. – AOM] – Facebook post, Apr 19, 2018.

+ **A walk up.** Today our students participated in a Walk Up instead of a Walk Out [i.e., on the day that students “chose” to walk out of class in support of gun control.] They were each given 17 sticky notes to symbolize the 17 lives lost in [the] Florida [shooting] and encouraged to leave 14 notes for students and 3 for adults that would brighten their day. As I walked the halls I was overcome with pride for these kids. Not a single locker was untouched and they took special care to ensure that everyone from admin to the tech guy and custodian received some love. #choosejoy #spreadlove #thefutureisbright @ Arbor Preparatory High School – Facebook post by Danielle Rae, Date: Apr 4, 2018.

Of Interest.

+ **13 Reasons Why.** I listened to a program on American Family Radio (88.7 FM, WRAE) this morning about a 14-year-old girl in Alabama who took her own life after having watched “13 Reasons Why” on Netflix. “13 Reasons Why” is about a girl who sends out a series of 13 tapes in which the girl tells 13 people why they are the “cause” of what she is about to do – kill herself. Then in “13 Reasons Why” there is a graphic depiction of the girl taking her own life.

I want to alert all parents to see if your kid is watching this, because it seems to be pretty popular among teens.

Also, when the detective who had investigated the Alabama girl’s death was talking with the parents (who at first thought it was murder), he told them the ugly truth that she had killed herself. The parents had assumed that she had been murdered since they thought they had such a good, close relationship with her. This is a reason for parents to talk with their teens, find out what they are doing and what they are watching, make tough decisions if they’re watching some damaging videos – but most importantly to make sure that their kids know that they are very much loved. Anna Bright’s suicide took their parents completely by surprise, and this dark video was apparently a big factor in what had happened.

Two more teenaged girls took their own lives shortly after watching “13 Reasons Why” in separate families in California. In the case of the Alabama teen, in her suicide she mimicked what the girl did in the Netflix movie.

I was concerned enough about this to want to include it because of the epidemic of suicide across the country, and we don’t need to have anything make it worse. Any suicide is bad, but the suicide of a teenager is especially tragic.

The American Family Association is leading an effort to get Netflix to take down the series they have been airing and to not produce the second iteration for the upcoming season. —

Allen O. Morris

+ ***Kids using cell phones.*** [Note: This may be of interest to all of us, but should be especially so to parents. — AOM]

WALSH: How to Lose Your Influence over Your Child and Turn Him into an Unthinking Zombie

Spoiler: give him a smartphone with internet access. That’s the answer. And give it to him when he’s young. The average child receives his first smartphone when he’s 9 or 10, and getting younger. Soon we’ll have a nation full of Snapchatting toddlers, no doubt. And their parents will look on contentedly, feeling no regrets about depriving their children of an actual human childhood. It’s much more important, they figure, to stay up with the trends and keep their kids equipped with the latest tech gadgets.

I was thinking about this issue earlier in the week as controversy briefly raged over some guy named Logan Paul. Paul, if you recall, was so desperate for #content that he went into Japan’s “suicide forest” and filmed himself giggling over the corpse of a suicide victim. Paul eventually apologized and begged for forgiveness, and everyone has since moved on, but those of us above the age of 17 are left, still, asking one important question: Wait, who is Logan Paul?

As I discovered, Logan Paul is a “YouTube celebrity” with millions of young and devoted fans. He is one of many internet superstars who provide our children with hours of entertainment every day while we remain entirely oblivious of their existence. If Paul’s latest video hadn’t generated widespread outrage, your 11-year-old daughter may have spent 15 minutes watching a video featuring a dead man hanging from a tree in suicide forest without you ever finding out about it. Indeed, if your kid is like the statistically average kid, she spends about nine hours a day – nine hours – consuming media, mostly on the internet. And if you are anything like the statistically average parent, you have no clue about the nature of the images, sounds, and ideas she ingests during that span.

Naturally, we take this all for granted. We assume this dynamic is natural and normal and basically healthy. Our children are disciples in the cults of various idiots on YouTube and Snapchat, all of them obscure to us, and we imagine that this is how it must inevitably be. Our kids have their own culture, their own celebrities, their own world contained primarily on the internet, and all of it is foreign to us, and we think it's always been this way. It must be this way. There is no other feasible option.

We’re wrong, of course.

While it’s true that older generations have always worried about the younger, and the younger have always exhibited characteristics that the older generations find puzzling and troubling, it’s not true that young people have always existed in their own universe, with their own language, their own society, their own leaders and icons and prophets, their own religion, their own customs, all of it designed to be indecipherable and inaccessible to the older generations.

In fact, in the bad old days, kids were (if you can imagine) raised exclusively by their parents. Not by the internet, or TV, or even public school. Kids didn’t have a whole life set apart from their mothers and fathers. They may have had friends – a few, not 40 – but it was their parents who exerted the most influence over them; making and shaping and forming them, as parents are supposed to do.

Things started to change with modern schooling, which sent kids out of the home for most of their young lives and into the care of strangers. And then the divide between generations became even more vast with pop culture, as kids began to develop tastes that differed so dramatically from their parents. Yet, even then, it wasn’t like it is now. Yes, kids in the ‘60s worshiped the Beatles as gods, and their parents thought the Beatles were agents of Satan (their parents were much closer to the truth, by the way), but their parents at least knew who the

Beatles were. The Beatles were accessible, equally, to both parent and child. You saw them on TV, you heard them on the radio, you bought their records at the store, and that was about it. That's how you encountered them.

Then, the Internet. Now kids have their own version of the Beatles – they have, in fact, a lot of Beatles – a lot of little Beatles that they follow and worship and imitate, just as kids of the '60s did. But they encounter these new icons in the void of the cyberspace, mostly on their phones, out of sight. And there aren't four Beatles but 400 hundred, and they pop up and fade away and change on a dime. The trends move at the speed of light and the only way to follow along is to be totally immersed in it and surrender to it.

So, our kids are pulled along by the tides, shaped and molded by forces we don't see or understand. And we are rendered irrelevant. Indeed, if your child is on her phone nine hours a day, it's the phone – and the people she interacts with and watches when she uses it – that will form her. It's the phone that parents her. You're second fiddle at best, and she won't hear your tune when you play it because she'll be on her phone anyway.

This is not normal. Not healthy. Not natural. Not how it's always been. There is nothing analogous to this in the history of human society. Our kids are being destroyed by these gadgets that we spend exorbitant amounts of money to provide to them. And we have no idea how bad it will get, as our lives migrate more and more into our phones and our children are resigned to an existence that can barely be called human.

So what do we do about it?

Well, I think there are two possible paths forward:

1) The path most parents take: just go with it. Hand your child a smartphone with internet access when he's 9 or 10 or whenever most of his friends get one, and trust that it will all work out okay. Sure, he's 100% guaranteed to develop a porn habit. Sure, he'll spend all day absorbing messages and ideas that are anathema to his intellectual and spiritual development. Sure, he'll probably be sexting by his 12th birthday. Sure, his entire life will now revolve around this [infernal] thing. Sure, all of that.

But what's the other option? To deprive him of this technology that everyone else uses? Why, that might make him look uncool! Worse, it will make you, the parent, look uncool! People might think you're poor and can't afford one! And the trends! How can your family keep up with the trends without a smartphone! You can't be untrendy! Anything but untrendiness!

2) The path less traveled. The path some people – because they are shallow and silly and weak – would consider “extreme”: keep your kid away from the internet as much as humanly possible. Do not let him have the internet on his phone. Do not let him access the internet in his room. Give him access to one computer, strictly controlled, in a visible area of the house, which he can use with your permission, for a limited amount of time, with the knowledge that you, the parent, will review his internet history after he is finished, and go back and watch any videos he watched, and click on the links he clicked, and read every message he received. Give him no privacy on the internet. None. Do not “trust” him with the internet. Treat the internet like a very powerful and potentially dangerous tool, which it is, and treat him like a child who can't be allowed to use it unsupervised, which he is.

I think the second option is probably best. And I say that as someone who makes a living on the internet.

– Matt Walsh, January 5th, 2018.

+ **Mississippi Congregation Votes 175-6 To Leave “United Methodist Church”**. On March 25, the First United Methodist Church of Louisville, Mississippi voted 175-6 to leave the “United Methodist” organization. Going forward, they hope to be known simply as the First Methodist Church of Louisville. Rev. Mike Childs [said] that the departure has “really been a long time coming” and cites an increasing “non-Biblical worldview” as some of the reasons.

Specifically, Childs feels the United Methodist Church (UMC) has failed to correct major failings in the UMC, such as the election of a lesbian bishop – something both anti-scriptural and against the rules of the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*. Our church law says that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, yet we have a gay bishop, and a whole jurisdiction of our church in the United States (the Western Jurisdiction) will not enforce that. The refusal in some Methodist circles to follow biblical teachings on sexuality troubles Childs. There are other issues he finds even more serious, including prominent Bishop Karen

Oliveto allegedly denying the deity of Christ, “calling us not to make Jesus an idol,” and Bishop Joseph Sprague, who has retired but apparently retains a voting seat on the Council of Bishops, “denying the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.” – *Daily Wire*, a summary; April 2, 2018

+ **Taxpayers.** One of the least discussed parts of America’s income tax is how progressive it is, and the tax overhaul didn’t change that fact. In 2018, top earners will pay a higher share of income taxes. The top 20% of Americans will pay 87% of Income Tax; households with \$150,000 or more in income make up 52% of total income nationally but pay a large portion of total taxes. The individual income tax matters—a lot—because it is the largest single source of U.S. revenue, and its share has risen in recent years. For 2018, it could raise 50% of total federal revenue, according to estimates from Congress’s Joint Committee on Taxation, up from about 48% last year.

[Note: Even though this was reviewed before, it bears repeating. It debunks the mantra that the “rich don’t pay their fair share of taxes” when it comes to the overall budget. – AOM] – Laura Saunders, *The Wall Street Journal*; Apr 6, 2018.

+ **U.S. losing its National Identity.** An Associated Press poll finds Americans worried the nation is losing its national identity. “Seven out of 10 Americans think the United States is losing its national identity, while just 3 in 10 regard the country’s identity as secure, and these attitudes are related to threats to that identity and pride in several aspects of the country,” reports an Associated Press survey, which cites three points in particular:

“47 percent say illegal immigration is threatening to the American way of life, and 15 percent think legal immigration threatens it. 71 percent say the United States is losing its national identity – that is the beliefs and values the country represents,” the AP advised. “57 percent say the United States should be a country with an essential culture that immigrants adopt when they arrive, and 42% think the culture of the country should change when new people arrive.”

The research found that respondents valued a fair judicial system and rule of law the most – cited by 88 percent – followed by individual freedoms defined by the Constitution, cited by 84 percent. The “shared use of the English language” was in third place, cited by 73 percent.

- 76 percent of Americans say the nation has a “unique character” which makes the U.S. the greatest country in the world.
- 71 percent are afraid America is “losing its national identity.”
- 57 percent say the U.S. should have an “essential American culture and values” that immigrants take on when they arrive here.
- 57 percent believe immigrants in the past decade have “mostly retained their own cultures and values.”
- 47 percent say illegal immigration is “very threatening” to the U.S.; 25 percent say it is moderately threatening.
- 42 percent say America should “be made up of many cultures and values that change as new people arrive.”

– “U.S. losing its National Identity” as reported in *The Washington Times*, Apr 19, 2018.

A Way Forward.

+ **Bishop urges new mindset for way forward.** “To find a way forward through its impasse around homosexuality, The United Methodist Church will need a new approach to its top policymaking body – General Conference.” That’s what Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball told members of the Connectional Table, a 64-member leadership body that brings together laity and clergy to coordinate the denomination’s ministries, mission and resources. The group met April 4-7 at the offices of Wespath, the denomination’s pension and benefits agency. “Think about what the experience has been for getting ready for coming to General Conference,” said Steiner Ball, who leads the West Virginia Conference. “When I ask that question of people across the globe, they begin to talk about preparing for General Conference like they are preparing for war.” She urged the Connectional Table, whose membership includes some General Conference delegates, to help turn hearts ready for war into hearts at peace. “Your purpose is to discern and articulate a vision for the church. You have responsibility for the stewardship for the mission, ministry and resources,” she told the group. “That puts you in the perfect position to help things go well.”

Steiner Ball is one of three bishops who moderate the Commission on a Way Forward, which has the task of advising bishops on possible ways through decades-long divisions around how the church ministers with LGBTQ people. The commission is developing a final report for the bishops to use when they meet April 29-May 4. That report is not yet public. The denomination's Council of Bishops has called a special 2019 General Conference in St. Louis to take up legislation based on the Way Forward Commission's recommendations. The delegates will be able to refine whatever the bishops propose or possibly work on substitute legislation.

Fierce and at-times hurtful debate about how the church includes LGBTQ individuals has erupted at each General Conference since 1972.

Steiner Ball made clear that the church would not get anywhere if people came to the big meeting girded for spiritual battle. "When we see other people as objects, we give ourselves permission to horrible-ize them," she said. "We set the stage for war when we exaggerate our difference." Ultimately, she said, United Methodists have common interests even if they have different positions around homosexuality. She hopes delegates will come to General Conference recognizing that their fellow United Methodists have "the same love of God, the same love of Christ, the same love of the church, the same passion for making disciples, the same passion for wanting this world to be transformed."

She suggested United Methodists might help build relationships across differing views if they followed the covenant used by the Way Forward Commission. Specifically, she pointed to the members' covenant "to treat one another with respect, to assume the best in others, to represent one another in the best possible light, to speak the truth with love, and to practice and expect trustworthiness."

The commission's report to the bishops, she said, will include three sketches for the church's future. In recent meetings, the commission has focused on the last two, but all three remain on the table.

The three models are roughly as follows:

1. The traditional model would affirm the current language in the denomination's Book of Discipline, the denomination's governing document, and seek to strengthen enforcement. The church policy book 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.
2. The one-church model would remove the Book of Discipline' restrictive language and leave decision-making around LGBTQ ordination closer to the conference and local-church levels. Steiner Ball said the bishops have yet to recommend which level of the church would vote on questions of marriage or ordination. However, the model specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same-gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ people. She called it the most decentralized model because it puts decision-making closest to the ground. It also is similar to a plan the Connectional Table itself proposed to the 2016 General Conference.
3. The multi-branch model would replace the five U.S. jurisdictions with three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry – progressive, contextual and traditional branches. In this case, contextual means allowing churches flexibility in ministry with LGBTQ people as best fits their mission field. Central conferences – church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe – would remain as they are now. This plan would require amending the denomination's constitution.

Under consideration in each of the sketches, Steiner Ball said, are different ways for handling funding matters such as bishops' pay. For example, under the one-church model, bishops' compensation might be funded by their episcopal areas rather than by the whole denomination as part of a shared Episcopal Fund. "Please be respectful when you discuss these sketches," Steiner Ball cautioned. "They represent the people who are in our churches. They also represent the people God has called us to reach."

Germain Mupasa, a Connectional Table member from the Democratic Republic of Congo, said through an interpreter that he was struck by Steiner Ball urging people to listen without trying to convince others of their perspective. "In a roundabout way, I think we will fail," he said, "because then how do we convince people?" Steiner Ball answered that United Methodists likely won't succeed in changing each other's stances but they can find common ground in the shared interests that lie underneath. "There are ways we can work together even if

we have different positions on homosexuality,” she said. “Our local churches are working with people who have different positions on human sexuality, and they are still feeding people and clothing people and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.”

After Steiner Ball’s presentation, Connectional Table members engaged in small-group discussions. Several spoke of how even during this time of uncertainty, they wanted to help the denomination continue to focus outward on its mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world.

In her presentation, Steiner Ball had another piece of advice for church leaders: Trust God. “If we trust that God will be the final judge and understand that we don’t have to be, if we understand that God gives the healing and we are called to be the caregivers, and if we care for people just as hard and as passionately as we can,” she said, “we can trust that God is going to do God’s work.”

[Note: Mupasa’s is an astute observation. With the bishop’s suggestion, only talk would ensue. This would be ineffective and might serve to provide a smoke-screen for those with an underlying agenda to push through their solution. It was also reported that “Several spoke of how even during this time of uncertainty, they wanted to help the denomination continue to focus outward on its mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world.” In reality, the issue over sexuality is rooted in one’s view of Scripture – is it normative for what God calls “sin”? Until the denomination gets that right, we have no basis for “making disciples for the transformation of the world” and are engaged in meaningless rhetoric and action. That goes into the heart of what it means to be Christian. Mupasa is right. – AOM]

– By Heather Hahn, United Methodist News Service Chicago (UMNS), April 9, 2018.

+ ***Planning for post-General Conference church.*** No matter what happens at the special General Conference next year, United Methodists will wake the next day and still have work to do. That was a frequent refrain at the April 4-7 meeting of the Connectional Table, a leadership body of 64 lay and clergy members who act as a sort of denomination-wide church council coordinating ministry. The Connectional Table devoted most of its discussions to how it can help the church fulfill its calling during this time of uncertainty and beyond the 2019 policymaking assembly, which will deal with the denomination’s decades-long divisions over homosexuality. “We might not know what it will look like, but we can be sure that there will still be a United Methodist Church,” preached the Rev. Kennetha J. Bigham-Tsai in her opening sermon. “And there will still be God calling our church to be in mission in the world.” Bigham-Tsai is a former Connectional Table member who is now the body’s new chief connectional ministries officer.

At the end of its meeting, the Connectional Table also worked on and subsequently released the same message to the wider church. “The world is in need of the saving love of Jesus Christ, and The United Methodist Church has always been an effective witness of Christ’s love,” the letter said. “It is vitally important that we continue to be so now. Therefore, today and every day, the mission is yet alive.” The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s governing document, describes the Connectional Table’s purpose as “the discernment and articulation of the vision for the church and the stewardship of the mission, ministries and resources of The United Methodist Church.” Signs printed with that purpose surrounded the Connectional Table members as they worked.

The meeting was more about discussion and discernment than any action. In small groups, members conversed about ways of strengthening the worldwide connection of the multinational 12.5 million-member denomination. They also talked about ways to boost the denomination’s four areas of ministry focus. Those areas are:

- Engaging in ministry with the poor
- Improving global health
- Developing principled Christian leaders
- Creating new and renewed congregations

Members also heard various presentations that looked to the church’s future as well as its past. The Rev. Alfred T. Day III, the top executive of the UM Commission on Archives and History, offered an overview of how Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist churches joined to form The United Methodist Church 50 years ago.

He noted that 1968 was a time of division, just as today is. He held out hope The United Methodist Church might still be a countercultural witness of unity amid difficult times just as it was a half-century ago. “Times of uncertainty, upheaval and chaos are not only times to reach for order, not only times to reach backwards, but they are also times for new order and organization,” Day said. “They are also times for being open to one of the Holy Spirit’s greatest gifts observable in history – creativity.”

The Connectional Table also heard from Hendrik R. Pieterse, associate professor of global Christianity and world religions at United Methodist Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in nearby Evanston, Illinois. Pieterse reminded the leaders that struggle within the church is nothing new. “Strictly speaking one ought to say that the church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it,” he said, quoting the Dutch theologian Hendrik Kraemer. One challenge facing The United Methodist Church that both Pieterse and Connectional Table members pointed to is the need to live into its connectional covenant outlined in the Book of Discipline’s section on mission. “Integrally holding connectional unity and local freedom,” that section says, “we seek to proclaim and embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining ‘a vital web of interactive relationships.’” To address the church’s current challenges of living into its global nature, Pieterse encouraged his fellow United Methodists to view God – not any single part of the church – as the center of mission. “God is working in mission whether or not we are there,” he said. “To be sent, theologically speaking, is to be beckoned from the future where God is already at work.”

After each presentation, Connectional Table members took time to converse and reflect on the material. Nordic-Baltic Area Bishop Christian Alsted, chair of the Connectional Table, said near the meeting’s conclusion that the leadership body’s work can benefit from taking time for such conversations. “As United Methodists, we are often very preoccupied with the end product, but there is something of value to be said about the conferencing process, particularly when it comes to discerning and articulating vision,” Alsted said. “It takes time. It takes...prayer. It takes much conversation.”

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WHO IS ON THE CONNECTIONAL TABLE? The Connectional Table’s membership includes representatives from each of the 5 U.S. jurisdictions and each of the 7 central conferences (church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines). Representatives from each of the denomination’s 5 racial and ethnic caucuses serve, as well as one youth and one young adult from the United Methodist Division on Ministries with Young People. In addition, the body brings together other denominational leaders, including the presidents and top executives of the denomination’s 13 general agencies and General Conference. The executives have voice but no vote. Connectional Table Members: 2017-2020 are:

Chairperson: Bishop Christian Alsted, Council of Bishops.

Staff: The Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, Chief Connectional Ministries Officer; Cynthia Dopke, Assistant Connectional Ministries Officer; The Rev. Dr. Meredith Hoxie Schol, Director of Communication and Research; and The Rev. Adrienne Trevathan, Administrative Coordinator.

Members of the Connectional Table: Pete Aguila, South Central Jurisdiction; The Rev. Ole Birch, Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference; Bishop Earl Bledsoe, President, General Commission on Religion and Race; Barbara A. Boigegrain, General Secretary, General Board of Pension and Health Benefits; The Rev. Brad Brady, Southeastern Jurisdiction; Fred Brewington, Northeastern Jurisdiction; The Rev. Dr. Kim Cape, General Secretary, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry; The Rev. Dr. Emanuel Cleaver, III, South Central Jurisdiction; The Rev. Amy Coles, Southeastern Jurisdiction; Alfred T. Day, III, General Secretary, General Commission on Archives and History; Josephine Deere, South Central Jurisdiction; The Rev. Jerome DeVine, North Central Jurisdiction; The Rev. Jacob Dharmaraj, National Federation of Asian American United Methodists; The Rev. Dr. Junius Dotson, General Secretary, Discipleship Ministries; Bishop Sally Dyck, President, General Board of Church and Society; Cashar Evans, President, United Methodist Communications; Bishop Ciriaco Francisco, President, Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters; Venus Mae Gatdula, Division on Ministries with Young People / Philippines; Kelley Gifford, North Central Jurisdiction; The Rev. Gary Graves, Secretary, Commission on General Conference; Gil Hanke, General Secretary, General Commission on United Methodist Men; Dawn Wiggins Hare, General Secretary, General Commission on the

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– By Heather Hahn, Chicago (UMNS); April 11, 2018.