

# Monthly Update

November 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“It is Paul Revere Time,” so said Sandy Rios on American Family Radio. Indeed, it is. November is the month of Thanksgiving – and indeed we do have plenty for which to be thankful. Having served in the Army from the Vietnam War through Operation Desert Storm, I have also lived, traveled, and fought in other countries in the world. It is through these experiences that I have come to appreciate so much our country. One thing that I read recently reinforces that: “America is another name for opportunity. Our whole history appears like a last effort of Divine Providence in behalf of the human race” (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Our country didn’t come into being by accident; it was nothing short of a miracle. By the time that George Whitefield died in 1771, he had traveled throughout the American colonies preaching the Bible – bringing people to Christ. Even though he died before the Revolution began, his message had sown the seeds of liberty into the hearts of the people, just like seed that is planted in soil that has been prepared to receive it. Even so, when our country’s founders took the bold step of declaring our independence in 1776, the colonists understood that liberty is given by God, was their right – and they were prepared to defend it at all costs. This made them “instant soldiers” in that they knew why they were fighting. In studying the real history of the American Revolution, one also comes to understand that the many “coincidences” that seemed to favor the Americans were actually miracles given by God in response to the frequent calls for days of “prayer, humiliation, and fasting that a Divine Providence would look with favor on their cause”; this in turn led to this “rag tag” group of people defeating the mightiest army in the world at that time.

Indeed, we have good cause to be thankful. With this being said, we also must recognize where we are as a country at this time; it truly is “Paul Revere Time.”

I know that two years ago (before the 2016 elections) I had stated in my Monthly Update letter to you, “In a little over a week, we will have our elections that will determine who will lead our country. I firmly believe that this will be possibly the most important election in the last 150 years, if not the entire history of our nation. The American Family Association, founded by United Methodist pastor Don Wildmon, is calling for a day of prayer and fasting on Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup> for the voting in the next day’s election, especially for the next president of our country.” I believe that this mid-term election may be just as important. There is tremendous pressure (and money) being put into this process by those who are hostile to our country. The atheist “George Soros” with his Moveon.org, American Bridge 21<sup>st</sup> Century, ANTIFA and others would like to see our country fall. This Update is being sent to you early in the hopes that you will be encouraged to inform yourselves about good “Constitutionalist” candidates, educate others – then get out and vote. And don’t forget to pray. Pray for voters’ discernment. Pray our country’s enemies will be revealed, their efforts frustrated. Pray for our country.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris  
Executive Director

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## November 2018 Update

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

No amount of money can make a vile person honorable, and no level of poverty can make a person of integrity anything but honored. As it is said, “We name our dogs Nero, but our sons Paul.” – Dr. Charles Stanley’s commentary.

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#### **The Good Stuff**

+ ***The auctioneer in the hearing room.*** Congressman Billy H. Long from Missouri’s 7<sup>th</sup> District is also an experienced auctioneer who drowned out a loud female protester who was trying to disrupt the senatorial hearings for Brett Kavanaugh to be Supreme Court Justice. He kept it up until they forcibly removed her from the hearing room. He finished his auctioneering call with, “I yield to the chair.” He dealt with an ugly situation in a humorous way that helped to relieve some of the tension in the room during the deliberations (and turbulence) to see if he could be elected to the Supreme Court of the United States. We remember the ugliness in the room. He was confirmed. – Facebook post, Sep 26, 2018.

#### + ***United Methodists gear up for Michael relief.***

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (UMNS) – United Methodists across the southeastern U.S. are preparing to offer long-term relief after the most powerful hurricane ever to hit the Gulf Coast. Damage assessments are still coming in, but church members are gearing up for the long recovery.

– Heather Hahn & Jim Patterson, *United Methodist News Service* (UMNS); as reported in UMNS Weekly Digest, Oct 12.

#### **Of Interest.**

+ ***The values voter Coalition Conference in Washington, DC.*** The Concerned Methodists’ exhibit at the Values Voter Coalition Conference. We had a good location between the ones for Concerned Women for America and Christians United for Israel – Action and across from the American Family Association – Action. We have had lots of people stop by to include Omar Navarro who is running against Maxine Waters for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District. I was privileged to have someone take our picture in front of our exhibit.

Our giveaway prize won by Ashley consisted of the four books: *We’ve a Story to Tell...*; *The Issues at Hand; Jude*; and *Islam Through the Years*. She is a recent graduate of American University in Washington, DC and wants to enter the Foreign Service. I had someone with the State Department stop by to talk about my book *Islam through the Years*. Since in talking with him I found out that he had been in the Foreign Service, I took him over to Ashley and introduced them; he gave her some good advice as to things she might do to enhance her chances of going into the diplomatic corps.

I met Joseph Nicolosi, the son of Dr. Joseph Nicolosi who has done such great work in the area of homosexuality and reparative therapy. It was interesting to talk with him.

As I had narrated in the October Update, among the news media who stopped by were the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN TV) and Al Jazeera TV; what piqued my interest with the latter team was the focus they had on the display of our book “Islam through the Years”! Last year I was interviewed by a reporter for a Japanese newspaper in Tokyo. I just finished an extended television interview with Masaki Arai, who is the chief producer for the NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation. He asked me all kinds of questions about the Values Voter Coalition Conference that is going on here in Washington, DC, what I thought of President Trump, and how things are in America. Two things that they seemed very focused on were: 1) did I think that there is more division in America now, and 2) what I thought the significance of this upcoming mid-term election was; he gave me his card. In researching the network, NHK (Japanese: Nippon Hoso Kyokai, official English name: Japan Broadcasting Corporation) is Japan’s national public broadcasting organization. NHK, which has always been known by this Romanized acronym in Japanese, is a publicly owned corporation funded

by viewers' payments of a television license fee and is Japan's only public broadcaster. NHK WORLD is the international service of NHK, Japan's largest broadcasting organization. Radio Japan broadcasts in 18 languages, was founded in 1925, and is based in Tokyo, Japan.

Other groups that were at the Conference were, among many, The American Family Association, The American Conservative Union, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vote (that researches how corporations spend their political support money), AMAC, Americans for Freedom of Religion, American Values, Americans for Truth about Homosexuality, Heartland – Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, Christian Healthcare Ministries, Concerned Women for America, Covenant Journey, Center for Christian Statesmanship, Family Research Council (FRC), Family Research Council – Action (the political advocacy arm of the FRC), Family Policy Council, Human Life International, iPray, Leadership Institute, Liberty Counsel, Liberty University, Modesty Matters (a group that encourages abstinence until marriage and is headed up by an associate of Concerned Methodists), the National Rifle Association, PFOX (Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays), Patriot Voices, Religious Freedom Coalition, Shepherd Hill Academy, Susan B. Anthony List (that advances pro-life leadership), The Center for Medical Progress (CMP), the Heritage Foundation, Timothy Partners LTD., Tradition Family Property (an activist Roman Catholic group that researches aspects of factors threatening American Society), Trail Life USA (the group that sprang up as a counterpart to the Boy Scouts after they became pro-homosexual), Watchmen on the Wall, and of course our ministry Concerned Methodists.

– AOM

+ ***Please pray.*** With all of the turbulence surrounding the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh for the Supreme Court and with the social animosity that some of our legislators encounter in public such as what happened to Senator Ted Cruz and his wife in a restaurant and other hostile actions perpetrated by those claiming affiliation with the “ANTIFA” group, it is obvious that our society is really in turmoil. Just this past week, two Republican candidates were physically assaulted in Minnesota and there have been other instances such as Sarah Huckabee Sanders and her husband being verbally accosted in a restaurant (and being asked to leave), I would ask for you all to pray a Psalm 91 hedge of protection around our country, around those in leadership, and around the issues surrounding our public political discourse. This is not the way that our country should function, and is far removed from what our founding fathers had envisioned for our Constitutional Republic. (Note: It is important to remember that we are a republic, not a democracy. One example of the latter form of government is it would be akin to two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner. – AOM)

I have just received this from Tim Wildmon with the American Family Association:

**A Personal Note from Tim Wildmon – AFA President (Concerning the hearings for Judge Kavanaugh):**

Dear Allen, ...Unfortunately, there are those who are showing no respect for the American process or the rule of law. Some on the Democrat side of the aisle are doing everything they can to stop a vote from taking place, while others are bringing unsubstantiated accusations against Judge Kavanaugh.

We are Americans. And while we may not all agree on things, we should all agree to respect the process and allow it to move forward. But the left is becoming more and more open with their hatred for President Trump and anyone who is associated with his administration. Quite frankly, it's getting dangerous for these people and their families.

Please join me in praying...

Thank you,

Tim Wildmon, President, American Family Association, PO Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803; Sept. 26, 2018

**A Way Forward.**

+ ***Plan approved for GC2019 decision-making.***

St. SIMONS ISLAND, Ga. (UMNS) – The 864 delegates to next year's special General Conference face a large task and only a short time to do it. But whatever decisions the delegates make, the plan is for them to decide together – without the usual prologue of meeting in multiple legislative committees. The Commission on

General Conference, the international group of clergy and laity who plan the big meeting, has set the number of legislative committees at one. And all delegates will be on it. Commission members, meeting Oct. 3-5 at the United Methodist retreat center Epworth by the Sea, voted for the plan unanimously. The move does not require any changes to the General Conference rules that 2016 delegates approved. “Our guiding principles in creating this framework are transparency, fairness, full participation of delegates and stewardship of our limited time,” the commission’s Rules Committee said in its rationale for the decision. “Our hope is that Christian conferencing as a whole body will enable us to receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.”

While The United Methodist Church’s top legislative body typically meets for 10 days, the special session in St. Louis will be Feb. 23-26, 2019. Over those days, the delegates will work on determining what direction the church should take in its longstanding debate over homosexuality – an impasse that already has some congregations heading for the exits. Nothing less than the denomination’s future could be on the line.

The Commission on General Conference in many ways represents the denomination it serves. The members, most of whom will be 2019 delegates, have diverse theological perspectives regarding homosexuality and church unity. However, the plan for one legislative committee had broad support among commission members from the moment it was discussed.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s governing document, requires that all petitions properly submitted to General Conference “shall receive the vote of a legislative committee.” The Discipline also gives authority to the 25-member commission, in consultation with the secretary and the business manager of General Conference, to set the number of committees. Having only one committee brings the advantage of transparency, a number of commission members said. “I think there is a high level of mistrust in the body, and I think this particular approach lessens the mistrust because everybody hears what everybody else hears,” said the Rev. Lynn Hill, a commission member from the Tennessee Conference. In 2016, delegates took three days to debate the rules.

Under the schedule approved by the commission, Saturday, Feb. 23 will be a day of prayer and preparation. It will mark the culmination of the bishops’ “Praying Our Way Forward” campaign to seek God’s help for church unity. The first official day of the session will be Sunday, Feb. 24. Delegates will hear a presentation from the Commission on Way Forward – whose formation General Conference authorized in 2016 to help find ways to keep the church together. They will then spend the day in plenary discussion seeking to discern which of the multiple plans the majority of delegates want to refine. This is not a day for amending legislation but instead determining what general direction the delegates want to go in. Bishops, who have no vote at General Conference, will preside over the day’s discussions.

On Monday, Feb. 25, the delegates will meet in legislative committee to amend and vote on petitions. Delegates will elect the chair of the committee from a pool of delegates who have been trained and served as committee chairs in 2016.

The delegates will return to plenary on Tuesday, Feb. 26 for final voting and to consider what their actions mean for the future, including the next regularly scheduled General Conference in 2020. Again, bishops will preside.

Each day of the special session will begin with worship, with prayers and praise also woven throughout the process. The overarching theme will be “God is Able,” said Raymond Trapp, the special session’s worship and music director.

At this point, delegates face 99 petitions. Of those, 48 are in the report by the Commission on Way Forward. The commission’s report put forward three plans for the church’s direction, each of which contains multiple petitions. In addition, 51 other petitions were submitted by deadline in the proper format. Many of those comprise alternative plans for the church’s future. The valid legislation will be made public in November, once translated into the official General Conference languages of English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili, and mailed to delegates. The Way Forward Commission report is already in all four languages. What remains to be seen is how many of those additional 51 petitions will be deemed “in harmony” with the bishops’ call to the special General Conference. In July, the bishops announced the session’s purpose “shall be limited to receiving

and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based upon the recommendations of the Council of the Bishops.”

Under a process approved by the Commission on General Conference, the 51 petitions outside the Way Forward report will be reviewed by the Committee on Reference. If the committee finds a petition not to be in harmony, it will be withdrawn. The actions of the Committee on Reference will be reported in the first daily edition of the Daily Christian Advocate, the official General Conference record.

Delegates can reinstate a petition ruled not in harmony by a two-thirds vote of General Conference delegates.

The Committee on Reference has five vacancies that need to be filled by the Council of Bishops. The group’s meeting will be scheduled after that. Another question mark heading into 2019 is how the Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court, will rule on the plans contained in the Commission on a Way Forward report. The bishops asked the Judicial Council to decide in advance whether petitions in the One Church, Traditional and Connectional Conference plans are in line with the church constitution. Changing the constitution requires a two-thirds vote of General Conference and two-thirds of the total annual conference votes.

Whatever the Committee on Reference or Judicial Council decides, General Conference planners hope they’ve provided a process for delegates to do their best work. “I think people are coming to St. Louis expecting this to be different,” said the Rev. Laura Merrill, a commission member from the Rio Texas Conference. “My prayer is that folks come with a spirit of expectancy.”

– By Heather Hahn, *UM News Service* (UMNS), Oct. 8, 2018. As reported in the Oct 12, 2018 *UM News Weekly Digest*.

#### + **Big crowds for meetings on denomination’s future.**

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (UMNS) – The 2016 pause button on the sexuality debate in The United Methodist Church is about to be released. And churchgoers are showing up in droves to learn what is coming in February. The special called 2019 General Conference is looming... The 864 global delegates will be tasked with addressing the church’s decades-long, split-threatening impasse over homosexuality. As decision time draws near, many United Methodist conferences in the United States, Africa, Philippines and Europe are holding meetings that are part tutorial, part focus group. People are coming with questions and opinions about the legislative options and processes – and with hopes their General Conference delegates and bishops can give them a glimpse of the denomination’s future. Crowds have been, by church-meeting standards, boffo. “The first three (sessions) we had, our attendance actually exceeded our registration,” said Bishop Bruce R. Ough, who is helping to lead 15 gatherings across the Dakotas and Minnesota conference.

In Montgomery, Alabama, folks packed the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church on Sept. 16 for one of eight town hall Q&A sessions being held in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. Bishop David Graves answered questions ranging from church pension concerns to defiance of the Book of Discipline. He emphasized that delegates elected by the conference will be making the final decision and encouraged people to communicate their views to those delegates. “This thing about the denomination and human sexuality – it’s a mess,” said Graves, talking to the gathering. “Friends, we have to get back to living out the truth wrapped in grace because we have to help the world not go to hell.” Eleanor Lucas, a member of First United Methodist Church, said she had been confused about the three proposals and wanted some clarity before she spoke to the delegates. She felt she had that after the two-hour meeting. And she appreciated Graves talking about measuring everything with grace. “Even if we don’t get our way, exercise grace throughout so we don’t start throwing things at each other,” she said, smiling.

Across the connection, many of the gatherings have offered video presentations and handout sheets on the One Church, Traditional Plan and Connectional Conference plans. The 3 legislative options emerged from the Commission on a Way Forward’s work with the Council of Bishops and are scheduled to be on the agenda as legislation in St. Louis.

In the Holston Conference (east Tennessee, southwest Virginia and northern Georgia), delegates speaking at listening sessions emphasized that “Bible-believing, Jesus-loving” United Methodists can and do interpret Scripture differently. They also encouraged local churches to have their own candid discussions about the possible outcomes and aftermath of the special General Conference. “Churches that talk about this ahead of time are much more prepared for what happens than those who wait,” said the Rev. Will Cantrell. Cantrell led a Holston Conference discussion at First United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tennessee, and the Rev. Kim Goddard led one at Gate City United Methodist Church in Gate City, Virginia. “No matter what we do at General Conference, we’re going to lose people,” Goddard said. “What we’re trying to figure out is if there is a way, given our differences, that we can live together.”

In the Great Plains Conference – Kansas and Nebraska – more than 800 people came out for meetings with Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. “We’re not here to debate. We’re here to dialogue,” Saenz said at Olathe Grace United Methodist Church in late August. Brett Horton, a member at Olathe Grace, appreciated the conversations. “It gave me hope that we would continue to have dialogue,” Horton said.

Even with the Minnesota Vikings playing a Thursday night TV game, about 120 people gathered Sept. 27 at Normandale Hylands United Methodist Church in Bloomington, Minnesota, near Minneapolis. That was nearly triple the number who signed up in advance. The crowd included many pastors as well as lay leaders of local churches. They sang the hymn “Sweet, Sweet Spirit,” and heard a closing homily from Ough. But most of the evening went to detailed presentations of the plans by Dave Nuckols, a member of the Commission on a Way Forward, and to small group discussion. The Rev. Gerry Vuchetich, recently retired, came “to see where the future of The United Methodist Church is going.” He’s a self-described conservative evangelical, and favors the Traditional Plan, which would require stricter enforcement of church law restrictions against ordination of gay clergy and same-sex unions. “I’m just concerned that The United Methodist Church follow Jesus and not the culture,” Vuchetich said.

Seated nearby was Lona Dallessandro, of Minneapolis’ Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church. “I’m gay, so this is impactful directly to me,” she said of the church’s homosexuality debate. Dallessandro favors the One Church Plan, which would give U.S. pastors, churches and conferences leeway in deciding such issues as gay ordination and whether to officiate and host same-sex weddings. She acknowledged that some progressive friends see that as too much of a compromise, since it does not eliminate the restrictions altogether. But her awareness for United Methodist mission work around the globe shaped her support for One Church. “I felt pride in knowing that mission is there serving people in that community,” Dallessandro said. “I don’t want to see those things get harmed by doctrine or dogma.”

Listening sessions are also happening in the central conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe. Retired Filipino Bishop Daniel Arichea Jr. led one in Manila on Sept. 27, with most participants expressing support for the One Church Plan. The national United Methodist Women Society of Christian Service held its own study session on the three plans at the United Methodist Church at Decker Homes in the Philippines on Sept. 29. Manila Area Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco led discussion of the three plans, and the Rev. Helen Mañalac-Cunanan shared information about the Commission on a Way Forward, on which she served. At this meeting, some favored One Church and others the Traditional Plan. At yet another gathering, about 80 people from different churches in the East Mindanao (Philippines) Conference attended, said the Rev. Jaynard Llanillo. Davao Episcopal Area Bishop Rodolfo Juan and retired Bishop Leo Soriano presented the three plans and answered questions.

The North Katanga Conference will have a listening session at the end of October, said the Rev. Betty Kazadi Musau, secretary of the Central Congo Conference and health board chair of the North Katanga Conference. “People are really anxious about what will happen in February and they want to know the specifics of each plan,” she said. She added she knows a lot is being said about how Africans will vote. “It is disrespectful to imply they (Africans) will do what their bishops tells them or what someone else says they should do. Bishops don’t vote, delegates vote. ... Our hope is to see the church united,” she said.

Discussions have been held in the East Germany and South Germany conferences, and Germany Area Bishop Harald Rückert plans more meetings. Many churches are having their own meetings, and at Normandale

Hylands United Methodist Church a “Wesley Wall” has been devoted to sharing information and posing questions about the Way Forward process and special General Conference.

Though the listening sessions have mainly been about imparting information, General Conference delegates are also seeking input from rank-and-file United Methodists before heading to what’s sure to be a legislative scramble in St. Louis. “I want to hear the responses, opinions and thoughts, from the rural areas to the urban areas,” said the Rev. Woojjae Im, a Minnesota Conference delegate.

The meetings have been serious, given the high stakes. But humor has found its way into many of them, including the Sept. 25 session at First United Methodist Church in Duluth, Minnesota. There, Ough and other leaders asked participants to complete the sentence “I hope the United Methodist Church will find a way forward by \_\_\_\_.” The first person to respond said, “Tomorrow!”

– By Kathy L. Gilbert and Sam Hodges; Oct. 10, 2018. As reported in the Oct 12, 2018 *UM News Weekly Digest*.

**(UM) General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Don’t reduce U.S. refugee admissions.**

[Note: This is an example of blatant activism. We need to secure our borders and protect our nation. Political activism such as this exemplify why the GBGM is irrelevant, a waste of money to sustain it, and needs to be dissolved. – AOM]

ATLANTA – With more than 68 million people forcibly displaced from their homes, the U.S. government’s proposal to cut refugee admissions from a typical annual figure of 90,000 to 30,000 in 2019 – a new historic low – is immoral and “unacceptable from a humanitarian perspective,” writes Thomas Kemper, top executive, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. “We encourage United Methodists and others to oppose the current policy and to welcome sojourners from everywhere to everywhere.” – As reported in the *UM News Weekly Digest*; Sep 28, 2018.

**(UM) General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. Pension staff plans for possible ways forward.**

GLENVIEW, Ill. (UMNS) – Whatever delegates decide at the 2019 General Conference, the denomination’s pension agency wants United Methodist clergy and lay workers to know their accrued benefits are safe. However, Wespath is looking at ways to deal with the uncertainty ahead. – Heather Hahn, UMNS; Oct 05, 2018.

**(UM) Judicial Council. Top court plays decision-making role.** [Note: As of this report, the JD hadn’t met. – AOM]

The United Methodist Church’s top court is continuing to play a key role as the denomination prepares for the legislative meeting that will help decide its future. When the United Methodist Judicial Council convenes Oct. 23-26 in Zurich, its fall session will open with a three-part oral hearing related to a request for a “declaratory decision” on the three plans created by a special task force, the Commission on a Way Forward.

The request by the Council of Bishops asks whether the proposed legislation for the One Church, Connectional Conference and Traditional plans for the 2019 Special General Conference is constitutional.

The Council of Bishops, General Conference and Judicial Council are the constitutional bodies of the church, representing its executive, legislative and judicial powers; the Judicial Council “determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences” and “rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the denomination conform to The Book of Discipline.” General Conference elects nine members, as well as alternates, to eight-year terms on the Judicial Council.

The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, currently the top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, served on the Judicial Council from 1992-2000 and 2004-2012 and was its president from 2008-2012. Although the top court’s decisions can sometimes have political ramifications, she pointed out that “of all the jobs I’ve held in the church, the Judicial Council was actually the least political in the time in which I served.” Henry-Crowe believes the expectation has grown that Judicial Council will resolve conflicts within the church,

but that is not its function. The council’s job, she stressed, is to articulate the constitution and the law of the church. “What is in the constitution is more binding,” Henry-Crowe said. “It’s the constitutional principles that hold us together.”

The Rev. Ted Walter of Columbia, South Carolina, who was a Judicial Council member from 1992-2000, believes it is important “for the average lay person in the local church” to understand how Judicial Council operates. General Conference, the denomination’s top legislative body, is the only entity that has the authority to speak on behalf of The United Methodist Church. But any uncertainties raised about church law are referred to Judicial Council for review and a final decision. “Once the Judicial Council deals with a matter, as far as the council is concerned that becomes the law of the church,” Walter said. While the top court rules on the constitutionality and legality of any action taken by a body created or authorized by General Conference or a jurisdiction or central conference, it does not create laws or standards on its own. As an example, Walter pointed to his experience on the council with annual conferences that tried to design a new plan of structure. “The council did not assume the responsibility, nor should it, to create a structure plan to send out to annual conferences to become their structure guide,” he explained. Instead, the court would review the structure plans “and indicate where it was OK and not OK” in accordance with the Book of Discipline, he said.

Former Judicial Council member Sally AsKew of Greensboro, North Carolina, also stressed the court’s oversight role. “The Judicial Council can say whether something is constitutional or not, but it cannot write the legislation,” she said. She did note that it is helpful when the council receives guidance from the petitioners about which parts of legislation may need to pass the constitutional test. AsKew served from 1988-1996 and 1996-2004. She was the council’s vice president from 1992-1996 and secretary from 1996-2004. From 2008-2016, she was the council’s first clerk. Given the limited time that Judicial Council has at its meeting in Zurich and the hundreds of pages of paperwork involved, she thinks it will be a challenge for the court to review all three proposals in the Way Forward report.

AsKew remembers how the Judicial Council struggled with a denominational restructuring plan called “Plan UMC” during the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Florida, “because they weren’t given specific (constitutional) things in the plan to discuss.” Faced with a limited amount of time before the conclusion of the 2012 General Conference, she said, Judicial Council members cited the most obvious constitutional issues hindering the plan and pointed out that it was not an exhaustive list. In its 2012 ruling, the court unanimously declared Plan UMC “unconstitutional,” noting that legislative functions related to the creation and establishment of general church boards and agencies reserved to the General Conference “may not be delegated.” The court also said the establishment of a “General Council for Strategy and Oversight” under the plan intruded into the constitutional authority of the Council of Bishops. Whatever the ruling – or even a decision not to rule – made by this Judicial Council at the conclusion of its Zurich meeting, the court’s role will not be finished. When the special General Conference meets Feb. 23-26 in St. Louis, the Judicial Council’s continuing job will be “to answer questions of constitutionality that are posed by that body itself,” AsKew said.

Members of the 2016-2020 Judicial Council are: Deanell Reece Tacha, N. Oswald Tweh Sr., the Rev. Luan-Vu Tran., Lydia Romão Gulele, Ruben T. Reyes, the Rev. Øyvind Helliesen, the Rev. Dennis Blackwell, Beth Capen, and the Rev. J. Kabamba Kiboko. [Kathleen Barry, United Methodist Communications.]

– By Linda Bloom, UMNS; Oct. 11, 2018. Bloom is the assistant news editor for UMNS and is based in New York.

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If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, we will be a nation gone under. – The late President Ronald Reagan

## Global Outlook

God doesn’t care about your ability; He wants your availability. – As quoted by Edgar, Men’s Promise Keeper’s Group

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**Congo. Congo hospitals feed malnourished children.**

BUKAVU, Congo (UMNS) – Malnourished children are being fed every day at three United Methodist hospitals as the church continues its focus on global health. More than 6 million children under age 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of Congo. – Philippe Kituka, as reported in the UM News Weekly Digest; Oct 05, 2018.

**The National Council of Churches (NCC). NCC calls for Kavanaugh's withdrawal.**

[Note: This is another example of blatant political activism in an area for which it is totally unqualified. Political pronouncements such as this exemplify why the NCC is a detriment to our Christian witness, a waste of money to sustain, an organization that has long out-lived any usefulness it might have had, and needs to be dissolved. – AOM]

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – The National Council of Churches, whose membership includes The United Methodist Church, issued a statement calling for the withdrawal of Judge Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination for the Supreme Court.

– Kathy L. Gilbert, as reported in the UM News Weekly Digest; Oct 05, 2018.

**Sierra Leone. Bishop re-elected to ecumenical leadership.**

KABALA, Sierra Leone (UMNS) – Bishop John Yambasu, who leads The United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone, will continue to head the ecumenical Council of Churches in Sierra Leone for the next three years. He said the group remains committed to advocacy and addressing social ills in the country.

– Phileas Jusu, as reported in UM News Weekly Digest; Oct 12, 2018.

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Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich. – Proverbs 28:6