

Monthly Update

November 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This November Update contains different information to include Pastor Brunson’s prayer for President Trump (we should pray for our leaders – something I have done for over 25 years regardless who is sitting in the Oval Office). Much of the rest of this Update deals with the issues leading up to next year’s 2020 General Conference (GC2020) in Minneapolis. Assuredly, we have our work cut out for us. Those of us in Concerned Methodists are doing all that we can to bring about a favorable result at GC2020 – that will decide (we believe) once and for all the issue over homosexual normalization. As you will remember, GC2019 in St. Louis this past February was to have done that, since those on the “other side” of this issue believed that the results would be in their favor. They were very much mistaken. Make no mistake about it, it was a tough battle and they had a lot of the “power” on their side, but when the smoke had cleared, the Traditionalists had prevailed; that was, I believe, an answered prayer. Right now, we are on the razor’s edge of decision over this issue.

Although we don’t make our annual request for support until the December Update, I want to lay out our projected needs all the way up to GC2020. Then I would ask that you pray as to how you might be led to support our effort. For us, we are pulling out all stops – just as in 2009 when we fought the harmful “Separation Amendments” that came out of the disastrous 2008 General Conference in Ft. Worth. Remember, all of them went down in flames to defeat – despite the best efforts of our church leadership.

We plan to: send out at least two issues of The Christian Methodist Newsletter to approximately 17,000 people, churches, and conferences around the world; send out a special mailing that we Mbelieve will have a positive effect to all General Conference 2020 delegates around the world; and General Conference expenses in Minneapolis – in addition to maintaining our regular ministry that include operations/publishing our Monthly Updates. We estimate that these expenses will total approximately \$27,740 – with printing and postage to overseas delegates being considerable expenses.

We have stressed the importance of your help in the crises facing our United Methodist Church. I firmly believe that from now to May 5–15, 2020 is a “window of decision” that will determine the future of our church: will it remain an orthodox Christian church, or will it become like the other hierarchical Mainline denominations that have caved in to the homosexual agenda? Please pray as to how you might help.

At this time of Thanksgiving, I ask that you take stock of all the reasons we have to be grateful. Is it any coincidence that Thanksgiving Day falls a little over 14 days after Veterans’ Day? We should be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy – and remember those who make it possible. Find a veteran and thank him. Also, I ask that you keep our country in your prayers against all enemies – foreign and domestic, visible and hidden. Finally, I thank you for your support and prayers.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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November 2019 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

What was sin 100 years ago will still be send 1000 years from now. God never changes.

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The Good Stuff

+ ***Prayer by Pastor Brunson for President Trump.*** American Pastor Andrew Brunson spent two years in prison and under house arrest in Turkey, falsely accused of being a “terrorist” by the government of authoritarian Turkish President Erdogan. Now he’s in the headlines again for a different reason – praying for President Trump. On October 12, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) marked the one-year anniversary of Pastor Brunson's liberation from Turkish captivity. USCIRF Chair Tony Perkins said, “Today, we look back and honor Pastor Brunson’s remarkable resolve and steadfastness in the face of persecution, and we celebrate his release and return home. However, we also remember his terrible suffering at the hands of Turkish authorities who targeted him for the practice of his faith.”

Some Turkish leaders fear they could be next. Turkey’s church is very small. There are about 6,000 Muslim background believers in the nation of 80 million people. The USCIRF is concerned for their safety. “While Pastor Brunson's two-year ordeal has thankfully ended, we remain concerned for the state of religious freedom in Turkey, where numerous religious communities, such as the Alevis, Armenian Apostolic, Greek Orthodox, and others continue to face government interference and other restrictions,” said USCIRF Commissioner Kristina Arriaga. “The Turkish government must cease its meddling and work to ensure religious freedom for all its citizens.”

Pastor Brunson, honored at the Values Voters Summit in Washington, prayed for President Trump:

“Father God, I ask now for an impartation of your Holy Spirit, may the fullness of the spirit of Jesus rest upon President Trump that he be anointed with wisdom and understanding, with your counsel and might, with knowledge and fear of the Lord, and accordingly may President Trump not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears or lean on his own understanding but may he recognize your prompting and move according to your guidance.

I ask that you give the president supernatural discernment to know who is trustworthy and who is not. Bring into the light all deception and intrigue, expose and reverse the plans of those who would harm President Trump and this nation. In the name of Jesus, I break off all voices and influences that do not come from you father God. May your truth and peace surround and reign in the White House.

God, you have raised President Trump to govern at a time when there is a resurgence of oppression. Only you Lord Jesus Christ can anoint him to have victories over strongholds and to establish justice for the needy. Give him strength and courage to persevere in the constant battle that surrounds him and refresh him.

Father God, I see that you have such a tender heart for President Trump. Draw him close to you. I ask now for an impartation of hunger for you so that he may love you with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and delight in knowing you. And if he came and whispered your name, may he go forward shouting your name. In Jesus name, the name of my king, I bless you.”

– CBN News; 10-14-2019.

+ ***Answered prayer for Corrie ten Boom.*** There were times when even Corrie Ten Boom felt cut off from the Lord. In such a time of despair, she once said to the Lord, “Have you forgotten your Corrie?” In the following story Corrie tells about a time when she and her sister Betsie were in the concentration camp in Ravensbrück, and she had this terrible cold. She told her sister Betsie how much she just wished she had a handkerchief. Of course, handkerchiefs were impossible to find in that place. Betsie then suggested that Corrie pray for one, and Corrie just laughed at that ridiculous idea. So, Betsie prayed. She said, “Lord, you see my sister, Corrie, here, has a very bad cold, and in Jesus’ name, I ask you TODAY for a handkerchief for her. Amen.”

Corrie tells that, shortly after that, she heard someone call out her name. She went to stand near the window of the barracks, where she saw a friend of hers, also a prisoner, and who worked in the hospital in Ravensbrück. “Here,” her friend said. “Take this! I’m bringing you a little present.” She pressed it into Corrie’s hand. “I opened the little package,” said Corrie, “and it was a handkerchief!”

“How did you know I needed a handkerchief? Did you KNOW that I have a cold?” Corrie asked.

“No,” said her friend. “I was sewing handkerchiefs from an old piece of sheet, and there was a voice in my heart that said, ‘Bring a handkerchief to Corrie ten Boom!’”

“That little hanky, made from an old piece of a sheet, was a message out of the Heavens to me!” tells Corrie. “It told me that there is a Heavenly Father who hears, when on a tiny planet, the Earth, one of his children prays for an impossible, small thing; a handkerchief. And the Heavenly Father says to one of his other children, ‘Bring a handkerchief to Corrie ten Boom!’” Corrie continued, “That is something the Apostle Paul calls ‘The foolishness of God’... that is so much wiser than the wisdom of mankind. You can read it yourself at home. It’s found in 1st Corinthians, chapter 1 and 2.” “Does God answer all our prayers? Well, most of the time He does,” she continued. “Why? you might ask, not every request we make? Well, you see, because He knows what we do not know. He knows everything. Someday, when we are in Heaven, we will thank him for all the answered prayers, (where he gave us what we asked), and maybe even more for the unanswered prayers. Then we will see it from his point of view, and that God never made any mistakes.”

Of Interest.

+ *Global warming.*

600 BC: “Let’s kill your babies to change the weather.”

2019: “Let’s kill your babies to change the weather.”

“Exactly. The modern regressives are nothing more than polytheistic pagans. They may not use the names, but they’re all about worshipping Hadad, Moloch, Gaia, Bacchus and Astarte.” Jay Ramsey, in reference to vows by “climate change” activists to not have any children for fear of what it will do to increase global warming. – Jay Ramsey, Sep 25, 2019.

+ ***Zionism & Bolshevism.*** Last evening I attended a talk at the Israeli Embassy by the great Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky, who spent 9 years in the Gulag and Soviet prisons for his human rights activism. At the embassy he was interviewed by an Ethiopian Jew who’s producing a film on the exodus of Ethiopia’s Jews in the 1970s and 1980s from Mengistu’s horrific Marxist regime. As an eventual Israeli, Sharansky helped in later rescues of Ethiopian Jewry.

One of the Cold War’s great heroes, and an Israeli political leader over the last 30 years, Sharansky recalled this week was the 100th anniversary of both the Bolshevik Revolution and of the Balfour Declaration in which Britain pledged support for a Jewish state in Palestine. He noted that Russian Jews had divided over these events. Some had endorsed the promise of universal fraternity under Leninist Communism, in which national distinctions and religion would disappear. Others very differently looked to Zionism’s promise of Jewish return to the ancient homeland.

The first experiment of course ended disastrously after most of a century devoted to enslaving, impoverishing and murdering millions, in which Jews never found full acceptance, even when supportive. The Zionist project, with Israel now nearly as old as the Soviet Union lasted, has by contrast produced a robust democracy that offers haven to a long persecuted people. Sharansky emphasized Zionism as central to defense against pervasive anti-Semitism. And Israel’s right of return to all Jews globally, whether Russian or Ethiopian, helps ensure that Jews escaping persecution will always have a final home. But equally striking in Sharansky’s comments is that religious and national identity are far more persevering than utopian universalists, Bolshevik or otherwise, had ever conceived. Jews found little to no safety in the Soviet utopia and many renewed their Jewish commitment in revulsion against Marxist torment. Of course, many other nationalities emerged from the Soviet rubble to reclaim their own sense of distinct nationhood. Christianity and Islam, among other faiths, have resuscitated in lands once governed by atheist ideology.

Some of the revived post-Soviet nationalisms, chiefly Putin revanchist authoritarianism, are nasty. Others are more committed to human rights and harmony with others. Not just in formerly Soviet lands, but around the world, the vast majority of people still find primary identity in religion, nation and/or tribe. Marxism-Leninism was a sort of parody of Christianity, with the Communist Party substituting for the church as the primary mover of history towards a perfected human community. But its materialism could not replace spirituality and earthly fraternal loyalties.

Sharansky survived Marxist materialist oppression by recommitting to Judaism and to Zionism. As a committed Jew and Israeli he has been a potent voice for the urgency of human rights for all people of every faith and nationality. His example is instructive for Americans Christians, many of whom increasingly believe they must shed national and even religious identity to become more effective humanitarians.

But the opposite is true. We who are Christian and American best serve humanity when cleaving strongly to the particulars of our faith and leaning against the rock of our own special nationhood. We can't effectively love and serve others without first demonstrating love and service within our own faith and national communities.

– Mark Tooley, IRD, Washington, DC. <https://providencemag.com/> <https://providencemag.com/>

+ Why the Red Letter Christian Movement Is Not Growing.

[Note: I saw/ heard him in person over ten years ago and did not trust his theology: very problematic. It is one thing to deal with heresy in the United Methodist Church, but we need to remember that it is pervasive outside it as well. – AOM]

Tony Campolo called his Red Letter Christian (RLC) movement “embryonic” and assessed, “we just can't get this thing off the ground” during a gathering at Greenleaf Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Goldsboro, North Carolina on October 2, 2019. The gathering was part of RLC's #GoldsboroRevival, hosted alongside the Rev. William Barber II and Repairers of the Breach. During the revival, Campolo, who co-founded the RLC movement with Sojourners editor Jim Wallis fifteen years ago, offered a few interesting explanations for why he believes the RLC movement has yet to gain prominence in the United States. “We've got to start putting our money where our rhetoric is,” declared Campolo, who shared that for the first time, RLC recently broke even financially. He then bluntly urged his audience to donate funds to the movement. “If you're really with me, you'll give us the support that we need to keep going,” he said. “The money coming into the fundamentalist Evangelical community is huge, and we don't have it.” Money isn't the only reason for RLC's continued infancy, according to Campolo. During Q&A, he offered this insight: “One of the other things that the Religious Right has on people like us, is that they know the Bible better than us. I mean this very seriously. They have memorized Scripture. They can quote chapter and verse.”

The former spiritual advisor to U.S. President Bill Clinton then shared an anecdote about Jerry Falwell Sr., with whom he had a cordial relationship. The two would debate on the CNN political debate show Crossfire. According to Campolo, the late Falwell would easily defeat mainline Protestant pastors who argued from a philosophical perspective. Falwell, on the other hand, would simply quote Scripture. “We don't quote [Scripture] often enough,” Campolo continued. “We make all these philosophical arguments for justice. No book speaks to justice better than the Bible.”

When asked by an audience member what the disconnect might be between Europe and the U.S., Campolo blamed geography, in part. “Here in the United States, the country is so large, it's hard to get a national movement going when the country is as big as this one.” [Note: On this comment 1 person offered a single example – “McDonald's”? – AOM]

Another problem for RLC, observed Campolo, is the lack of progressive media networks on the airwaves. “The reality is there's a whole network of radio stations, 1500 radio stations, that are broadcasting Religious Right ideology twenty-four hours a day.” [Note: In reference to this, I would respond that the media are overwhelmingly liberal. – AOM]

In April 2018, RLC garnered considerable attention for hosting its “Lynchburg Revival” in protest of Liberty University's Jerry Falwell Jr. and other pro-Trump Evangelicals. I attended the Lynchburg Revival and wrote that the gathering resembled more of a left-wing political rally than a revival. I also expressed my frustration with some of the speaker's disrespectful rhetoric aimed at military men and women.

This year's Goldsboro event more closely resembled a revival...Scripture was read by several speakers. Songs were sung by a fantastic local choir whose lyrics acknowledged Christ's forgiveness of sins and lost souls delivered out of the darkness. Even so, I was not surprised when left-wing political rhetoric crept its way into Tuesday evening's sermon. While teaching on Exodus 1:15-22, where two Egyptian midwives disobeyed Pharaoh to save the lives of Hebrew babies, the Rev. Traci Blackmon praised a list of President Barack Obama's policy achievements. The United Church of Christ (UCC) official didn't mention that Obama is the nation's most vocally pro-abortion president in history.

I can appreciate Campolo's ability to examine his movement's shortcomings and urge his followers to do better. He's at least honest when he says they've yet to achieve a Red Letter Revolution. I do believe, however, there is one glaring problem with his movement that he failed to consider, at least in Goldsboro. Liberal mainline Protestantism is declining drastically across this country. And the RLC movement will not be revolutionary so long as it continues recycling liberal mainline Protestantism. What I heard in Goldsboro sounded very similar to so many of the liberal mainline Protestant events that I've attended over the past six years. A heavy concentration on identity politics and less focus on the Gospel's call for salvation, repentance, and soul-winning. The crowd looked the same too: overwhelmingly Caucasian, gray-haired mainline Protestants. United Methodist Bishop Hope Morgan Ward of North Carolina even offered a welcoming prayer. Sure there were a few young people like myself sprinkled in the mix, but they too were mostly white.

RLC seeks to achieve diversity and attract young people disenchanted with Evangelicalism by amplifying Jesus's words. But a repackaged version of liberal mainline Protestantism will likely have the same declining fate.

– By Chelsen Vicari;

A Way Forward.

+ *N.E.W. Plan would create 4 denominations.* [Note: And yet another plan – one that we very much oppose. – AOM]

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UM News) – The advocacy group UM-Forward is proposing legislation to General Conference that would dissolve The United Methodist Church and form four new denominations. The group identifies the new churches as traditionalist, moderate, progressive and liberationist. N.E.W. Plan would create 4 denominations

A United Methodist group has submitted legislation that would dissolve The United Methodist Church and form four new global denominations instead. The legislation says the new Methodist expressions would be traditionalist, moderate, progressive and liberationist in orientation. The New Expressions Worldwide, or N.E.W., Plan is the work of UM-Forward, a group that identifies as a collective of United Methodist liberationists. By that, group members mean that they seek to advance the liberation of the marginalized – namely people of color and LGBTQ individuals. “Our plan is not the panacea, but it makes it possible for each denomination to fulfill their mission as they feel called,” said the Rev. Alex da Silva Souto, a UM-Forward leader and General Conference reserve delegate. The N.E.W. Plan is among multiple proposals heading to the 2020 General Conference that aim to address the denomination's longstanding division over the status of LGBTQ people. The denomination's multinational top lawmaking body will meet May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis. Like the N.E.W. Plan, a number of other proposals seek to dramatically reshape or divide the denomination over what drafters see as irreconcilable differences. However, the N.E.W. Plan differs from other publicized proposals in envisioning The United Methodist Church giving rise to four separate Methodist expressions, adding liberationists to a mix that usually includes traditionalists and some combination of moderates and progressives. “While Progressives may be defined by a desire to include all people in the church's current form, Liberationists are interested in radically reimagining the ways we relate to one another and the world,” explains UM-Forward in its Frequently Asked Questions site. “We desire to be a church where the marginalized are centered, power is redistributed, and we are free to en flesh radical actions of prophetic love in solidarity with movements for justice taking place globally.”

The Rev. Alka Lyall, a General Conference delegate and UM-Forward leader, said the N.E.W. Plan is grounded in the liberation of those she believes have long been oppressed by the church institution. “We have

invested a lot of time, energy and resources in maintaining the institution and have lost our focus on the mission of our church,” said Lyall, who is also senior pastor of Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago. “Freeing ourselves from maintaining what is already dead, will free us to do the work that God has called us to.”

[Note: In looking at the provisions of this plan, I doubt very seriously that the Lord spoke to them about it. – AOM]

The plan calls for:

- + A Transitional Council to draft a plan of separation. Each of the four new denominations will name five individuals to the council, including at least two lay people from each denomination.
- + Consultation with the Council of Bishops, other church leadership bodies, agencies and a professional mediator in drafting the plan of separation. The plan “shall be governed by the principles of self-determination, equitable distribution of general church assets, restorative justice, and reparations.”
- + A special General Conference before 2024 that would take up the plan of separation.
- + A moratorium on complaints, charges and church trials related to the church’s restrictions around homosexuality until separation occurs.

The group UM-Forward formed in 2018 to back the Simple Plan at February’s special General Conference. That plan would have removed all church restrictions related to homosexuality. Instead, a majority of delegates at the lawmaking assembly adopted the Traditional Plan, legislation that maintains the policy that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and strengthens enforcement of bans on same-gender weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy. However, immediately after the special General Conference, the plan faced resistance from people who see the measures as discriminatory against LGBTQ churchgoers. In May, UM-Forward held the Our Movement Forward summit at Lake Harriet United Methodist Church in Minneapolis to consider next steps. That gathering, which drew some 350 U.S. United Methodists, contributed to the plan. The UM-Forward leadership team does not include any members in the central conferences — church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. However, it does include members from outside the United States, including da Silva Souto, a native of Brazil. The Rev. Jay Williams, a General Conference delegate who helped draft the plan, said he sees the plan as empowering to churches like the one he pastors. Union Church in Boston, which is today multiethnic, was the first predominantly African American United Methodist congregation to identify as reconciling – meaning it explicitly advocated for LGBTQ equality. “Black people were largely enslaved in the USA when Methodism was formed at the Christmas Conference of 1784,” he said. “And black Methodists have spent the better part of our existence faithfully reforming Methodism and its sins of white supremacy, institutional racism and patriarchy. This plan imagines otherwise. The N.E.W. Plan says, ‘Let’s start from a place of shared commitment to equity, justice and liberation for all — the true core of grace and holiness.’”

Joy Butler, a lay member of St. John’s United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas, said she sees the plan as empowering crucial regional ministries such as the work the Rio Texas Conference does with immigrant families. “The Holy Spirit is calling us to something new,” she said, “a chance to minister more fully with and to the world.”

[Note: The Methodist Church was in the forefront of ministering to Blacks before and after slavery. Observe Jay Williams’ references to “white supremacy, institutional racism and patriarchy”; Joy Butler refers to “immigrant families” when the reality is she is talking about “illegal aliens” and means “organized disobedience” to the law. – AOM]

– By Heather Hahn, UM News; Sept. 25, 2019.

+ ***Apportionment Giving in UMC’s Desert Southwest Conference is Drying Up***, by Dan Moran

[Note: Commentary by L. D. Cary, “...Typical liberal progressive behavior. Blame those who don’t support their beliefs for their difficulties. It’s what all immature children do.” I agree. They are the cause of their own problems. – AOM]

Membership decline combined with denominational discontent has brought the Desert Southwest Annual Conference (DSC) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) to a precarious financial situation. If unresolved, the steep drop in apportionment giving that has become the norm in recent months could pose major financial challenges to the numerically small annual conference, which recently denounced the IRD and other reform groups by name. The causes and consequences of Desert Southwest's situation were recently laid out in an article written by Randy Bowman, conference treasurer. Including August, the conference has seen apportionment receipts drop for six of the past seven months. This includes all money collected in various offerings that pays for the denominational structure and programs across the district, annual conference, jurisdiction, and denomination. At the current rate of giving, the Desert Southwest Council on Finance & Administration (DSCFA) projects that by the end of the year DSC would only meet 80 percent of its apportionment contribution goal. "That would be the worst year by far in our Conference's history," Bowman writes. According to reports by the General Council on Finance and Administration, last year the annual conference paid 100 percent of its apportionments, which would make a decline to 80 percent all the more dramatic.

In April, resident Bishop Robert Hoshibata and Rev. Matthew Ashley, Chairperson of DSCFA wrote to conference members, urging their churches to continue to paying apportionments. They appealed to the fact that 82% of apportionment giving stays within the annual conference and named how that money is used. Apparently, many have been ignoring their request. The DSCFA is enacting some significant cuts to ministry spending right away. These include but are not limited to paying "general church apportionments" (which refers to the global, denomination-wide funding streams all US congregations are required to support) at an 80 percent level, instead of 100 percent as originally planned, reducing additional funding the conference has given to Claremont School of Theology by 25 percent, and reducing funding for Equitable Compensation subsidies by 30% starting next year. Desert Southwest's contributions to the Episcopal Fund say a lot about the conference's financial past and present. The average estimated annual cost of each active bishop in the US from 2016-2020 is \$329,750, according to financial reports shared at the 2016 General Conference (p.618). The DSC's apportionment to the Episcopal Fund in 2018 was just over half of that, at \$166,983, which they paid 100 percent. In practical terms, this means even before these recent stark financial woes, this annual conference could not afford to independently pay for its own bishop, who exclusively serves the Desert Southwest, relying on funding from other US annual conferences. This also means that unlike most other US annual conferences, they have been contributing nothing to the funding of central conference bishops overseas. By choosing to target their general-church apportionments for these steep cuts, the Desert-Southwest Conference is effectively demanding that United Methodists outside of the Western Jurisdiction pay even more heavily to subsidize the Desert-Southwest bishop. The cuts to Claremont School of Theology, located less than an hour east of Los Angeles, may be especially significant because the seminary is already facing major financial struggles. Claremont's president told United Methodist News Service (UMNS) this year that the schools debts are \$6.9 million and operating deficits have been over \$2 million each of the past two years. The school is currently pursuing a move to Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, hoping that the sale of the valuable property it currently occupies will right the institution financially. This sudden decrease in support from DSC would add another layer of difficulty. The cut to equitable compensation subsidies is also significant and is likely not sustainable. These...are funds provided from the annual conference to local churches that are not able to pay the full amount of the equitable or minimum salary for pastors. Small churches that are already struggling to pay for their pastor may find themselves in even tougher situations, and the cuts are likely indiscriminate in terms of whether that church paid its apportionments or not, potentially penalizing churches that give. Furthermore, pastors are less likely to seek or continue in appointments there if they cannot be sure they will make an honest salary.

Desert Southwest's financial struggles can in part be traced to its continued numerical decline, which is affecting a majority of annual conferences across the US. UMNS reports that membership for 2018 stood at 27,972, down 4.4 percent from the previous year, and worship attendance declined even more, down 6 percent to 18,361.

The longtime liberal-leaning conference has directly criticized the IRD in the past. In April 2007, the conference “enacted a resolution calling on United Methodists to consider withdrawing all support from IRD because of its efforts.” The efforts they opposed included building direct connections with orthodox United Methodists in Africa as well as exposing liberal biases in mainline church agencies. The marginalization of evangelical pastors, laypeople, and congregations within liberal-dominated annual conferences, particularly in the Western Jurisdiction, has exacerbated the financial struggles that declining membership and losses of major givers have brought. A prime example was Yellowstone Annual Conference, which experienced a financial crisis several months after the election of openly partnered lesbian bishop Karen Oliveto to the Mountain Sky Episcopal Area, of which Yellowstone was a part. Yellowstone soon after merged with the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference to form the Mountain Sky Annual Conference, which is still under Oliveto, although her leadership remains contested.

In their regular annual conference gathering this past June, Desert Southwest approved legislation disavowing the Traditional Plan passed at the 2019 special session of the General Conference in St. Louis. As a result of the very large number of resolutions and petitions submitted in response to General Conference 2019 and the future of the conference, the conference held a special session of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference on September 14....

At present speculation on the exact financial future of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference is not worthwhile because of the strong potential of foundational denominational change coming from the next General Conference in May. This much is certain, however: churches in the southwest and across the country and globe need to be a part of a denomination and denominational structure with which they are of one accord. Otherwise, such a connectional model will continue to struggle mightily.

– The Institute on Religion & Democracy, 1023 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005; October 9, 2019.

+ *Wesleyan Covenant Association Council Endorses Indianapolis Plan for Amicable Separation.*

After a time of serious reflection and spirited debate, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) Council voted to endorse the Indianapolis Plan for Amicable Separation during one of its regularly scheduled monthly teleconference calls.

The council settled on the following resolution: “We regretfully support the separation of The United Methodist Church, and in doing so, we support the principles outlined in the Indianapolis Plan for Amicable Separation. If a mutually agreeable plan of separation does not occur, we support the full implementation of the Traditional Plan.”

As a way of resolving the present conflict in the UM Church, the Indianapolis Plan’s chief aim is essentially two-fold: to allow for the creation of two or perhaps three entirely separate and new churches, yet also allow for the continuation of the UM Church. The new churches proposed are a Traditionalist Methodist Church, a Centrist/Progressive Methodist Church, and potentially a stand-alone Progressive Methodist Church (the names are all place holders for now). The continuation of the UM Church would go with the Centrist denomination. The two or three new churches could, if they wish, continue to use the name “United Methodist” and the cross and flame logo, both with modifications to ensure that the new churches are distinguished from one another. If the churches chose to do so they would have to include a moniker that clearly differentiated its denomination from the others. “It was at times a tense debate for the council, but always a respectful one,” said the Rev. Dr. Jeff Greenway, Senior Pastor at Reynoldsburg United Methodist Church in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, and the chairman of the WCA Council. “All the members of our council, both laity and clergy, have given years of service to The United Methodist Church; they have faithfully supported it with their talents, their time, and their service. So it was obviously a very hard and painful decision to conclude some form of separation is the only viable way forward given the great impasse that threatens the denomination and its local churches.”

The Indianapolis Plan was hammered out by a prominent group of United Methodists that included clergy and laity. Five members identified as Centrists, two as Progressives, and five as Traditionalists. While all the members have aligned with various advocacy groups over the years, when they started meeting this summer, they made clear they did so as individual United Methodists. The Rev. Dr. Kent Millard, a Centrist, the Rev. Keith Boyette, a Traditionalist, and the Rev. Darren Cushman Wood, a Progressive, convened the group.

“Not surprisingly, given the sincere commitments and intense feelings of the people in the room, our meetings were difficult,” said Boyette, who is also the WCA’s president. “On at least two or three occasions over the course of several meetings, it seemed like our efforts to reach an agreement were going to fall apart. However, despite major differences, we returned to the table and found ways to work through significant obstacles. There is no doubt that the plan includes serious compromises by all the parties. No one is entirely satisfied with it, but every one agreed it is preferable to the long and acrimonious debate that is inflicting major damage on the church, its people, and its witness.”

– WCA news release.

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We cannot give our hearts to God and keep our bodies for our selves. ~ Elisabeth Elliott

Global Outlook

I believe the time is coming when we will not be able to take our Christianity as casually as we do now.

~ A. W. Tozer

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Cambodia. Seeking solutions for human trafficking.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (UM News) – A floating village that is home to “boat people” who fled Vietnam vividly illustrated for a United Methodist group the economic hardships that have made Cambodia one of the worst countries for human trafficking. The Rev. Thomas Kim reported on the visit of a mission team that included Korean American United Methodists and United Methodist Board of Global Ministries staff members. – UM News Daily Digest; Sep 23, 2019.

World Methodist Council. The World Methodist Conference is a global gathering of the Methodist-Wesleyan family held every five years in a different part of the world. The 22nd World Methodist Conference will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden from 19-22 August 2021.

By way of information, the WMC General Secretary is Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Ivan has served as a minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MSCA) since 1977. He holds the distinction of being the youngest Superintendent Minister and Bishop in the MCSA. He has served as chairperson of many civic and ecumenical organizations, amongst others, The South African Church Leaders Forum, Executive Committees of The South African Council of Churches, The Namibian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. From 2003-2012, Bishop Abrahams served as Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern [Africa]. His capstone achievement was the formation and successful completion of the multimillion rand legacy project, the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. He is a graduate of Rhodes University, The University of Cape Town, The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Pacific School of Religion.

– WMC news release, Oct 3, 2019.

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In the natural life our ambitions alter as we develop; in the Christian life the goal is given at the beginning, the beginning and the end are the same...We start with Christ and we end with Him – “until we all attain to the stature of the manhood of Christ Jesus.” ~ Oswald Chambers