

Monthly Update

February 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This Monthly Update contains information on different issues being considered for the 2020 General Conference (GC2020) to be held in Minneapolis starting May 5th. When I have spoken to groups on this subject, I make the observation that, “I have attended every General Conference since 1996: 1996 in Denver, 2000 in Cleveland, 2004 in Pittsburgh, 2008 in Ft. Worth, 2012 in Tampa, 2016 in Portland, and 2019 in St. Louis. Never have I experienced so much turbulence and uncertainty going into each one of these as I have in anticipation of the one that is looming in a very short time. It seems there is an unprecedented antipathy from those on the other sides of this issue and a strident anticipation of what might happen at what offers to be an event that will be pivotal to the future of our United Methodist Church.

Among the articles contained in this Update are different views of what needs to happen as we move out into the future for our beloved denomination. There is much talk about “7 Bishops urge split” and schism and methods of division. There is/was the “Indianapolis Plan” and now what is termed a “protocol” as to how we should separate and divide up our church’s assets. As I have posted on more than one occasion:

We in Concerned Methodists oppose any type of split or separation in the United Methodist Church. We promote a plan to resolve our problems without a split – and at the same time remain faithful to the Bible, morality, and our Orthodox Wesleyan Christian doctrine.

Be careful about some of the things you read about of what is going on in the United Methodist Church. It may or may not be true.

Be cautious when you read anything about plans for a split in the United Methodist Church. First of all, nothing – I repeat “nothing” – is official until after this whole issue has been discussed, finalized, and voted by delegates who come from all over the world and will be at the worldwide General Conference of the United Methodist Church to be held in Minneapolis, May 5-15. Whatever is decided at that conference by the delegates will be official. Until then, everything is speculative.

If you need information, go to our website: cmpage.org – or better yet send us your name and address (by Messenger or through snail mail) to put you on our mailing list for “The Christian Methodist Newsletter” (free of charge).

– Allen O. Morris, Concerned Methodists, POB 2864, Fayetteville NC 28302

One thing that you can do is to pray – for our United Methodist Church and for GC2020 that the Lord will move in the delegates to make a decision that will be best for the future of our beloved church but most of all that will benefit His kingdom.

I thank you for your continuing to stand with us by your gifts and your prayers. Both are very much needed at this time in the life of our church.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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February 2020 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

My unknown future is in the hands of the all-knowing God.

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The Good Stuff. *Trevor Lawrence.* Clemson's new starting quarterback, Trevor Lawrence, may appear he'd be better suited for the bright lights and big city atmosphere of Los Angeles, but his coaches say he's actually the opposite. "He is just laid back," Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney...Lawrence, a 6-foot-5 true freshman for the Tigers also is someone who is open about his Christian faith. "Football is important to me, obviously, but it is not my life," he said. "It is not like the biggest thing in my life. My faith is. That just comes from kind of knowing who I am outside of that. I just know, no matter how big the situation is, it is not really going to define me."

[Note: It's refreshing to see a prominent athlete who is a strong Christian, similar to Coach Tony Dungy. – AOM]

– Michael Foust, Christian Headlines.

Of Interest.

+ Membership in the United Methodist Church in the United States is 6,806,334 according to the latest figures available from the United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration.

+ ***Heather Edna: Doing Harm to the Gospel – A Response to the Just Resolution in the Case of Rev. Anna Blaedel.***

Seeing as the "just resolution" in the case of Rev. Anna Blaedel could not identify the harm caused by an ordained elder in the UMC unabashedly unrepentant for sexual immorality, I feel compelled to name the harm perpetuated by Rev. Blaedel: The "unrepentant queer" (Blaedel's own self-description) reverend preaches, in words and demonstration, a false gospel, the impact of which has eternal consequences and harms those who believe it.

This false gospel explicitly contradicts the most basic statement of the way of salvation spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ: "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Blaedel's false gospel affirms sexual immorality with the excuse that those who identify as LGBTQ are born into homosexual attractions and that those attractions are somehow essential to their very being. Is homosexuality a special category of sin so different from the other struggles we face as fallen people? If we are all born inclined to sin, how are we to understand this exception? Jesus makes it clear that we are all born spiritually dead: "Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:6-7) The false gospel Rev. Blaedel promotes denies the power of the resurrection to bring life to the spiritually dead.

Who am I to call out the harm of Blaedel's false gospel? I am an individual who, if I bought into the philosophy of LGBTQ identity, would identify as queer. From a young age, I experienced same-sex attraction and followed my lust. As LGBTQ vocabulary emerged in our culture, I realized that my inclinations are more specifically described as "queer." I still face these attractions and determine daily, by God's grace, not to pursue lust – from remaining mentally faithful in marriage to my husband to saying "no" to media that would fuel unfaithful attractions. In following Christ and in defending the Gospel, I am acutely mindful of 1 Corinthians 6:11: "Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

I am an individual who recognizes the impact the false gospel Rev. Blaedel demonstrates would have had on me at a different stage in my life. It most certainly would have fostered confusion about the trustworthiness of Scripture. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things?" (John 3:10-12). If seemingly straightforward passages in Scripture addressing carnal issues

are muddy, how can we stake our eternal hopes on the radical vision and promise of Heaven described in Revelation 21?

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

This is my existential hope, that the power of Christ breaks the bondage of sin in me and all Creation. By denying this power in their own life, Rev. Blaedel preaches a different gospel and harms the witness of the trustworthy Gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ has power to make all things new. Rev. Blaedel harms those who identify as LGBTQ by denying the power of Christ available to them to be born again and reconciled to God. Rev. Blaedel's witness of unrepentance says one does not need to be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. That very much harms the souls who believe it.

[Note: We applaud Heather Edna's eloquent examination of these actions in light of what the Bible says. – AOM]

– By Heather Edna, UM Voices; November 14, 2019. Heather Edna is an ordination candidate in the UMC. UM Voices is a forum for different voices within the UMC on pressing issues of denominational concern. UM Voices contributors represent themselves and not IRD/UMAction.

+ **Battlefield faith – Timothy Alspach.** [Note: February is the month of "Love" and "Valentine's Day" – but with the greater military action necessitated in the situation with Iran, I felt compelled to include this description of the realities of combat from a soldier's perspective. It concerns someone I knew through a family member. – AOM, combat veteran.]

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." – John 15:13

For anyone attending religious services...exercising your constitutional rights to worship freely in your own way, put yourself in the combat boots of soldiers preparing to move from base camp to their attack positions while pilots from air bases and Navy carriers carry out daily bombing missions. No services other than Islam were openly allowed in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Muhammad the Prophet...U.S. Army chaplains were under orders not to be interviewed on the record by journalists, lest their comments offend Saudi sensibilities. But following Bedouin tradition, whatever happened "inside the tent" was permissible. Accordingly, Sunday services were held behind a wall of sand topped with razor wire on January 20 in Abqaiq, the desert home of the Second Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division. The patron saint of paratroopers is Saint Michael the Archangel, who descended from the heavens to fight Lucifer and his legions in Hell, because even the Almighty needs a contingency force. Here's an example:

An Arabian tent that doubled as a chow hall was converted into a chapel. Paratroopers brought their rifles and gas masks to the non-denominational service, taking seats on folding chairs that served as pews. The altar was a wooden table.

Staff Sergeant Timothy Alspach, 33, of Groveport, Ohio, the senior medic for the Second Brigade, assisted at the service. He said a steeple and other niceties weren't required for worship. "Christianity is not about being in a fancy church. Christianity is like having a personal relationship with God. My faith is a source of strength for me," Alspach said. "I've gone over my equipment a hundred times. I got a lot of quiet time to reflect, to think about what's going to happen, how it's going to go down. I wonder how I'm going to react to seeing one of my

best buddies dying. It's scary to think about. This isn't about the flag and apple pie anymore. What you think about is the buddy next to you."

At the service, paratroopers sang hymns and bowed their heads in prayer while armed guards in Humvees patrolled the camp perimeter and mechanics readied vehicles for the move north. In a sign that things were coming to a head, attendance at such services had peaked. Just like their fathers and grandfathers before them, the infantrymen were making inner preparations. Protestants, Catholics and Jews attended. Some gathered in tight clusters to read and discuss Scripture. Others read Bibles in silence. They were even mindful of what the guys on the other side would be up against. "I've said prayers for the Iraqi soldiers. When you come right down it, their plight isn't much different from ours," said Major Baxter Ennis, the officer in charge....

Alspach was killed in 1997 while serving with the 82nd Aviation Brigade (Airborne). He was [the] medic who [gave] me a shot of gamma globulin in preparation for the move north. He welcomed me as a brother, and brothers don't always have the same last name, and brothers don't forget. Rest in peace, Airborne. You are remembered. – A combat buddy

A Way Forward/General Conference 2020 (GC2020).

+ ***UMC Next Plan: Liberalize Church, Protect Abusive Clergy, Crush Out Traditionalists.***

Talk about overkill! The ultra-liberal UMC Next caucus has released its "Next Generation UMC" proposal for the 2020 General Conference, consisting of 23 petitions across 33 pages.

UMC Next's Convening Team includes celebrity pastor Adam Hamilton, Tom Berlin (lead submitter of the misleadingly named "One Church Plan" [OCP] to the 2019 General Conference), Jasmine Smothers (another Commission on a Way Forward member and "One Church Plan" sponsor), Jan Lawrence (CEO of the LGBTQ liberationist Reconciling Ministries Network), Randall Miller (former head of RMN), Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson of North Georgia, Bishop Mike McKee of North Texas, Junius Dotson (CEO of our denomination's official "Discipleship Ministries" agency), and key deputies of Chicago Bishop Sally Dyck and Florida Bishop Ken Carter.

This group largely consists of some of the most prominent advocates of the so-called "One Church Plan" (OCP). There seemed to be a lot of hubris among many liberals of being confident that their OCP would pass, because they evidently had not bothered to listen much to its traditionalist and genuine-centrist critics.

In response to our denomination's highest representative body making clear that the OCP was a bridge too far, the UMC Next proposal represents leading OCP supporters refusing to make any compromises, but instead asking for something even more radical.

Here are key component of UMC Next's "Next Generation UMC" proposal:

- Dramatically liberalize church standards on sexual morality while stifling any room for dissent.
- Dramatically erode accountability for clergy misconduct on all other standards.
- Have traditionalist believers leave.
- Repeat the "Way Forward" process.
- Potentially dramatically change core doctrine.
- Dramatically liberalize church standards on sexual morality while stifling any room for dissent.

As I have explained earlier, the OCP would have effectively purged theologically traditionalist believers from key denominational leadership positions. But at the local level, the OCP paid lip service, however limited, to including and respecting us. For United Methodists who follow Scripture and 2,000 years of consistent global church teaching on sexual morality, the OCP would have at least:

- Affirmed "that their conscience should be protected in the Church and throughout society under basic principles of religious liberty";
- Established a right in church law so that no minister would "at any time be required or compelled to perform...any marriage, union, or blessing of same-sex couples" and that district superintendents would not be

allowed to “coerce, threaten, or retaliate against any pastor who exercises his or her conscience to perform or refuse to perform a same-sex marriage”;

- Provided at least a partial mechanism for a pastor who performs same-sex unions or engages in homosexual activity to be moved away from traditionalist congregations in which this was disruptive; and
- Only allowed same-sex union ceremonies in a church sanctuary if a majority of local church members voted to approve having them.

In the UMC Next plan, leading OCP promoters have now dropped all of the above protections. These omissions would seem to convey a strong message about what UMC Next truly believes and wants for our denomination:

- They do not believe that the consciences of traditional Christian believers should be protected in either the church or the wider society.
- They would not object if there were some situations in which United Methodist pastors were commanded to officiate at same-sex unions, and faced coercion, threats, and retaliation if they refused.
- They do not want any of our congregations tens of thousands of congregations to be allowed to decline to celebrate same-sex unions.

Before February, several questioned how sincerely the OCP’s sponsors truly believed in even the OCP’s very incomplete conscience protections, and how long it would have been before they would seek to repeal such protections at a future General Conference. By now dropping any pretense, Hamilton, Berlin, and other UMC Next leaders appear to be offering an answer. Anyone remaining in the UMC would be required to pay a heavy price at the altar of LGBTQ liberationist ideology. Annual conferences could not refuse to submit to a partnered gay bishop, and would not have the same right as under the OCP to even temporarily continue orthodox ordination standards. Congregations could expect official repression if they attempted to resist their bishop’s efforts to impose a partnered gay pastor or have same-sex union celebrations in their sanctuary. Petitions #12 and #13 would effectively require all UMC congregations to pay, through their annual conference and denomination-wide apportionments taken from their offering plates, for efforts “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.”

Furthermore, Petition #2 in UMC Next’s plan would change our denomination’s governing Discipline to establish a new, official value for our denomination of viewing disapproval of homosexual practice as an evil to be combatted alongside racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Notably, this change would come in a section of the Discipline to which, per Discipline ¶101, all United Methodists around the globe must submit, with no allowance for regional variation. Combined with Discipline ¶336, all future ordination candidates would be screened on whether or not they “approve” and agree to “support and maintain” these new liberal values and policies. Not even earlier Simple Plan of the “Queer Clergy Caucus” went that far!

Two petitions in this plan (#9 and #19) would establish an indefinite moratorium on the processing of all complaints for clergy accused of violating any of our denomination’s current homosexuality-related standards, to take effect immediately in May 2020. This goes further than simply liberalizing church standards for the future. UMC Next reveals a great deal about its attitude towards clergy’s covenantal obligations to the church when they try to make all clergy who knowingly violated the church standards they vowed to uphold become entitled to a no-questions-asked free pass, regardless of how harmful and disruptive their unforced covenant-breaking behavior has been.

Furthermore, while it is a bit unclear, these two UMC Next petitions could arguably prevent clergy from being held accountable for engaging in homosexual practice even if they did so outside of the context of a monogamous, civilly affirmed same-sex marriage. Both petitions explicitly grant protection not only to clergy living in same-sex marriages, but also, “without limitation” those living in homosexual civil unions or domestic partnerships. And what if a minister’s homosexual practice, for which s/he faces a complaint, was pursued outside of any such committed relationship, or as a form of adultery? UMC Next’s plan says that their broad ban on accountability for LGBTQ clergy “applies not merely to charges that are explicitly based on ¶ 2702.1(b), but also to any charge that the same alleged conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision

of the Discipline, including (without limitation) ‘immorality’ under ¶ 2702.1(a). For readers without a copy of the Discipline handy, ¶ 2702.1(a) is the precise provision making it a chargeable offense for clergy to be sexually active outside the boundaries of being celibate in singleness or faithful in marriage.

Leading up to February 2019, the OCP’s leading promoters assured us that they could be trusted to keep non-celibate gay clergy accountable to the same celibacy-in-singleness-and-faithfulness-in-marriage standard expected of heterosexuals. Yet between this and the fact that over five out of six OCP-supporting delegates also supported the pro-adultery Simple Plan, it would seem that the long-term revision of the church’s sexual ethics would end up being much more ambitious.

Dramatically erode accountability for clergy misconduct on all other standards.

Obviously, the 2019 General Conference was shaped by our disagreements about sexual morality and underlying theologies. But it was also shaped just as much by concerns about denominational governance, namely, the degree to which our clergy should be held firmly accountable to the church’s moral standards (in line with our Wesleyan tradition), and how much we should have constitutional checks and balances to protect against bishops acting dictatorially.

Apparently, UMC Next wants much less of both, even aside from homosexuality matters.

UMC Next’s plan would rather recklessly, in multiple different petitions, remove standards and policies from the Discipline that are key for ensuring accountability to ALL clergy standards. Other “chargeable offenses” for which UMC clergy may currently be disciplined include adultery, pre-marital sex, crime, spreading heretically false teachings, undermining the ministry of other pastors, child abuse, sexual abuse, using pornography, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and embezzling. Apparently, UMC Next leaders are willing to sacrifice victims of these other forms of clergy misconduct under the banner of LGBTQ liberation.

In other words, UMC Next’s plan would make it much easier for bishops and others to dismiss and cover-up the complaints and further [the] hurt of victims of all forms of clergy misconduct....

– “UMC Next” an excellent analysis by John Lomperis; Jan 13, 2020. John Lomperis is with UMAAction/IRD.

+ *Happenings Around the Church – Making the Main Thing the Main [Thing]*

[Note: We in Concerned Methodists do not support separation in the UMC but believe that we have a plan that can retain our orthodox Christian doctrine without separating our church. In the interest of analysis, I want to offer a view supporting schism. Dr. Riley Case is a cherished friend with an incisive mind whom I respect tremendously. – AOM]

Shortly after the 2019 General Conference an American UM bishop wrote a letter to his churches which included these words: Our concern and conversation about the LGBTQ community should not lessen our commitment to change hearts and minds so that we end prejudice, oppression, sexism, racism and privilege.

So this is what the church’s end goal is: ending prejudice, oppression, sexism, racism and privilege? Here all these years most of us thought it had to do with lifting up Jesus Christ. Perhaps the bishop was quoted out of context, or meant something different from what the words suggest. In any case, no matter how explained, the words reflect the serious differences that are presently a part of United Methodism. Is it not time for different groups to pursue their own understanding of the mission of the church?

We at The Confessing Movement believe that there are many dedicated, evangelical God-honoring UMs that would welcome the opportunity for a fresh start. We do not wish to update, modernize, or propose new truths that have supposedly been revealed to progressives through modern learning and culture. We only wish a renewed commitment to the historic faith revealed in the acts of God interpreted by Scripture which have been passed down through the church and particularly through John Wesley and our Methodist heritage. We want the main things to be what the church has always understood to be the main things. Here are three of those “the main things.”

The Doctrine of Original Sin. There is a Wesley hymn we sang from time to time in churches I have attended or pastored:

I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear, a sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near... (410)

The hymn on several occasions, as I remember, precipitated some theological discussion, or at least comment. For example: “This hymn is a downer. We come to church to get a spiritual boost, not to obsess with sin.”

A good point. In the creation account of early Genesis we are taught that man and woman, as the crowning achievement of God’s creation, were made to reflect the image of God in order to reflect the glory and the righteousness of God.

However, because of what we know as The Fall, we are faced with some sobering news: we are sinners. We are not what we were meant to be. We are separated from a loving God. The word we use is sin. Wesley used strong language to describe it. Wesley, and the Articles of Religion of our church, speak of Original Sin. We are very far gone from original righteousness and of our own nature “inclined to evil, and that continually.”

This is one of the great areas of division between progressives and evangelicals. English dictionaries, at least until very recently, defined “evangelical” as “Pertaining to or designating any school of Protestants which holds that the essence of the gospel consists mainly in its doctrines of man’s sinful condition and need of salvation...” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1961)

The first Methodist hymnals carried a section on Total Depravity. But progressives (called modernists in early years) thought that too negative. Secular educational theory believed humans were neither good nor bad and could be educated into moral life. Religious modernists agreed. If we just put our minds to it, we wouldn’t need revivals and preaching about judgment. We could simply do good things and bring in the Kingdom of God.

So we can trace the regression in institutional Methodism on the understanding of sin. In 1848 (during the Second Great Awakening, at a time when Methodists could claim one-third of America’s religious population) the first “official” M.E. hymnal included, with Wesley, a section on “Depravity,” heavily dependent on Charles Wesley hymns. In the 1878 hymnal “Depravity” was omitted but there were 115 hymns on “The Sinner.” The baptismal ritual, which went back to Wesley days, still started with “forasmuch as all are conceived and born in sin...” The 1905 hymnal in the table of contents omitted “sin” and “sinner” but at least mentioned “The Need for Salvation” (5 hymns). By the 1935 hymnal, sin was pretty much gone, though there was a section on “repentance” (4 hymns) and another section on “Songs of Salvation.” The baptismal ritual for children, however, wiped sin out altogether with the opening statement that read: “forasmuch as all...are heirs of life eternal and subjects of the saving grace of the Holy Spirit...” Someone commented: if we were already heirs of life eternal why bother with baptism?”

Years ago when I was a member of the Curriculum Resources Committee, we were setting up lesson plans for a study of Romans for senior high youth. The committee was identifying key ideas in Romans. I suggested a key idea was “the wrath of God” (Rom. 1:18). It was not received well. As one person said, “We are concerned about the love of God, not the wrath of God.”

The good news of the gospel is not that sin doesn’t exist; it does. The good news is that God has intervened in Christ to deal with our sin.

Christ’s sacrificial death as the atonement for sin. I remember a phrase from seminary: “Jesus is appealing but Paul is appalling.” That sentiment is still around; “we don’t need bloody crosses; all we need is Jesus.” So progressives have a hard time with our Articles of Religion which state: “Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of man.” One progressive, Christ Kratzer, speaking to evangelicals, blogged recently: “Why isn’t Jesus enough for you”? The Kingdom is about love. By love we can create a world where everyone is seen as valuable, blessed, and empowered. This is “Red-letter Christianity” (only the words of Jesus matter). Skip the cross; just follow Jesus’ teachings.

It sounds nice, but it doesn’t work. It hasn’t worked, even for 4,000 years. It is religion by good works. It assumes that loving is just a matter of doing better and trying harder. Have we not been aware of suffering, violence, hatred, prejudice, injustice, corruption, and war? Jesus came to bring good news of great joy, but made the Kingdom life not easier but harder to attain: “You have heard that it was said...but I say unto you...” The cross is still the center of Christian faith, not the cross as a symbol of self-sacrifice, but the cross as the offering of the Lamb of God to reconcile the Father to us and to empower us to live holy lives.

Again, the English dictionaries and their definition of “evangelical”: Of or having to do with the Protestant churches that emphasize Christ’s atonement and salvation by faith as the most important parts of Christianity, as the Methodists and Baptists” (Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary, 1958).

Methodists and Baptists? Of course. The most successful of the Protestant groups in America. The groups that gave altar calls and spoke of the blood of Jesus. And for Wesley the atonement meant more than simply justifying grace. It was more than “imputed righteousness” (as in Calvinism—we are forgiven but not necessarily changed). Methodists spoke of “imparted righteousness”; we are changed and made righteous.

Sanctification and Holy Living. I want the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire, to catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire. (#410)

With the justifying grace bestowed through faith in the shed blood of Christ comes the desire to offer everything back to the God who has been gracious. At this point we can speak of “privilege,” a label used mostly in a pejorative sense for those who by race or gender or other privilege have an advantage over others. Christians should think of privilege as blessing. For reasons not understood by us, we have been blessed, not because we deserved it or earned it, (our strong belief in sin – I want the first approach to feel of pride...) but by grace and so we might bless others.

Now the teachings of Jesus are in proper perspective as well as all Scripture admonitions, as well as Christian teachings passed down through church and family, not the least of which would be our General Rules of the UM Church. Our ethic is personal and social. Our first call is to serve the poor and the homeless and those who have no hope. It is to resist sin, whether personal sin or the permissive standards of secular culture around us. And when our ardor ebbs...

And drive me to that blood again, which makes the wounded whole. (#410)

– By Riley B. Case, The Confessing Movement.

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

+ Here’s what separates the March for Life [held on January 24th of this year]; nobody in attendance is marching for themselves. Nobody is demanding rights or privileges for themselves. Everyone is marching on behalf of those who cannot march. – Matt Walsh, January 18, 2019

+ 61,628,584 babies have been killed in abortions since Roe V. Wade in 1973. It is also interesting that the subject in this case, Norma McCorvey for whom the case was filed seeking to claim that women had a “constitutional right” to abortion did not get one but delivered her baby. Afterwards, when she found out the reality of what abortion was, she spent the rest of her life opposing it and trying to get that decision reversed.

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If we are to guard against ignorance and remain free, it is the responsibility of every American to be informed.

~ Thomas Jefferson

Global Outlook

Never let a temporary problem become a permanent solution.

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Annual Conference Reports

Burundi Special Annual Conference. The 2019 Burundi Special Annual Conference met in Gitega, Burundi with Bishop Daniel Wandabula officiating. The legal representative and dean of superintendents of the Burundi Annual Conference took the opportunity to welcome delegates from the 13 districts. 2020 General Conference clergy delegates:

The Rev. Jean Ntahoturi, head of the delegation, The Rev. Lazaro Bankurunaze, The Rev. Emmanuel Sinzohagera; lay delegates: Zéphirin Ndikumana, Silas Habonimana, Godelieve Manirakiza. [Reserve delegates not listed in Update]

– Pepi Mbabaye, Conference Coordinator, Burundi Annual conference

Rwanda Provisional Special Annual Conference. The 2019 Rwanda Provisional Special Annual Conference met at Gisozi United Methodist Church in Kigali, Rwanda. Two GC-2020 delegates elected: The Rev. Marc Baliyanga (clergy) and Adeline Nyiramahirwe (laity). Five alternate elected: Rev. Alexis Nzabonimpa, + Revs. Augustin Bahati, Françoise Kankindi, Felicien Dusengimana and Innocent Gisimba. Five alternative laity delegates elected: Gorette Bayavuge, Scovia Murungi, Pelagie Dusabemariya, Zachee Bideli and Pacifique Byicaza.

– Alexis Nzabonimpa, Conference Secretary for the Rwanda Provisional Conference.

Uganda-South Sudan Annual Conference. The 2019 Uganda-South Sudan Annual Conference met in Jinja, Uganda. The Conference elected delegates to General Conference 2020: Joyce Jaka was elected lay delegate and head of the delegation and the Rev. Isaac Kyambadde is the clergy delegate. Also elected were reserve delegates.

– Vivian Agaba, communications officer for the East Africa Episcopal Office of The UMC in Kampala, Uganda.

Zambia Annual Conference. The 2019 Zambia Conference met with Bishop Owan Kasap Tshibang officiating.

Delegates for 2020 General Conference: The Rev. Kenneth Kalichi, The Rev. Bwalya Laishi, Jonah Nkanza, Matildah Musonda Chishimba, and Justine Kaluwaji.

– John Chikuta, United Methodist

communicator in Zambia

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Billy Graham wisely warned against linking the gospel message to the religious right. Sadly, both the religious right and religious left miss that vital point. While it is important that Christians take stands on social justice issues such as abortion, racial justice, freedom of religion, compassion for refugees, etc., it should not extend to endorsing politicians...

Our primary focus is to preach the transforming love of Jesus Christ, of repentance, grace, and new life, not to drive away our political opponents. We also need to stop angrily judging another's Christianity based on their political views. The religious right and left need to recalibrate their approach to transforming individuals and society.

~ Lawrence Kreh