

# Monthly Update

June 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This Monthly Update has more of what is happening in our United Methodist Church to include views from people and groups with which we disagree; we want to provide you with as complete of a picture of our denomination – and our country – as possible.

The American Family Association & others have designated Sunday, June 13<sup>th</sup> as “Law Enforcement Day” to recognize first responders. When I see a policeman or deputy, I often go up to him (or “her”) and thank him for his service. I then offer that I am retired Army and during the Vietnam war was involved in the “shadow war” with communist guerillas in our area; we did not always know who the true “friendlies” were or the enemy posing as friends. I then share with them that this is what they face when they walk out of the door for their day of work; they do not know what they are facing. I then finish with, “I stand with you. You are in our prayers; if it ever comes down to a tough situation and I am there, call on me. I will do all I can to help.” At times, when I am in a restaurant and see one start to pay for his food, I stop him with, “I have this.” I then pay it and narrate the words above. Again, have your church recognize our “first responders” on June 13<sup>th</sup> – especially with UM hierarchical support for “White Privilege”/BLM/ Critical Race studies, yet ignoring the ambush and murder of policemen who protect us.

In the June 2020 letter to you, I had included this paragraph:

Mother’s Day. Memorial Day. D-Day. Father’s Day. It is no mistake that all of them are close together on our calendar; they are intertwined. Good parenting makes good families which in turn produce good citizens. This is the “stuff” that we Americans have been made of in the past”; let us hope and pray that this “stuff” is permeated still in each citizen of our nation. I pray that the circumstances surrounding this Covid-19 “pandemic” will galvanize each of us to reclaim our individual Constitutional Rights.

I might add to “Good parenting makes good families which in turn produce good citizens” the phrase “...which in turn produce good fighting men.” Strident? Militaristic? That may be, but without good fighting men and an effective military force, we will cease to exist as a country. We must not forget that. Also, we must not forget to stand for our Constitutional Rights – and to remember the key role that fathers have in the place of our families and our country’s stability. This quote is for Father’s Day:

By profession I am a soldier and take pride in that fact.  
But I am prouder – infinitely prouder – to be a father.  
– Douglas MacArthur, American general in World War II

We thank you again for your prayerful and financial support as we continue to do what God has called us to – “contend for the faith.”

In His service,

Allen O. Morris  
Executive Director

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## June 2021 Update

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

“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” We openly rebuke those in the world for their sin because we love them and are concerned for their eternal welfare.

– Commentary on Proverbs 27:5, as quoted in the *Ray Comfort Study Bible*, p. 885

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#### **For Memorial Day:**

##### ***The Things You Didn't Do***

Remember the day I borrowed your brand-new car,  
And I dented it?  
I thought you'd kill me  
But you didn't.

And remember the time I dragged you to the beach,  
And you said it would rain, and it did?  
I thought you'd say, "I told you so,"  
But you didn't.

Do you remember the time I flirted with all the guys to make you jealous?  
And you were?  
I thought you'd leave me,  
But you didn't.

Do you remember the time I spilled strawberry pie all over the rug in your new car?  
I thought you'd hit me,  
But you didn't.

And remember the time I forgot to tell you the dance was formal,  
And you showed up in jeans?  
I thought you'd drop me,  
But you didn't.

Yes, there were lots of things you didn't do,  
But you put up with me, and you loved me, and you protected me.  
There were lots of things I wanted to make up to you  
When you returned from Vietnam,  
But you didn't.

– This originally appeared in a book entitled *Living, Loving and Learning* by Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D., Southern California. It was written by one of his students – who wished to remain anonymous.

**Speech before the Virginia Convention by Patrick Henry:** It is natural for man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the worst, and to provide for it....

They tell us that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? We are not weak, if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power.

Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, then brave. Besides, we have no election [i.e., choice]. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston!

The war is inevitable; and, let it come! I repeat, let it come!

It is in vain to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace; but there is no peace. The war is actually begun. The next gale that sweeps from the North, will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death.

### **The Good Stuff**

+ ***You too could stumble.*** Recognize Your Vulnerability. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Some Christians see a fellow believer fall into sin but fail to acknowledge that they, too, could stumble. That's dangerous. Satan has them right where he wants them: deceived by a false sense of confidence. Three enemies are constantly at work trying to bring us down: the Devil, his world system, and our own treacherous flesh...we must each, like Paul, acknowledge an internal problem: "sin which dwells in me" (Rom. 7:20). Satan takes full advantage of this weakness, luring us with fleshly and worldly temptations. He stokes our pride so we'll be blinded to our own vulnerability to stumbling. [Also, "pride goes before a fall..."] Christians need to be continually on guard. Since ignorance--of the nature of sin, the strategies of the Enemy, and our own areas of weakness--sets us up for failure, we cannot afford to be careless in our thinking. Anytime you find yourself excusing, redefining, or rationalizing sin, you've lost your sensitivity to the Lord. God's Word must always...direct our steps. If you've drifted from the Lord, turn back to Him by acknowledging your sin and accepting full responsibility for it. Respond with gratitude for the Lord's chastisement. Every time believers fall into sin, God lovingly works to bring them back into a fellowship with Him. His discipline may be painful, but it's always good because it brings us to our senses and reconnects us with our Father. – Christianity.com; May 23, 2021

+ ***Becka & Audrey.*** "Susie" (not her real name), I sent three copies of a book I'd put together entitled 'Kids, Kids, Kids!' It has the story of Becka, who is black and adopted at birth by white parents. She is comfortable with who she is and the way she was raised and is not focused on skin color. She is an executive for her company and doing very well.

I'm reminded of my first cousin Robert who lived in South Georgia and who had married a black lady with three kids. When Robert died, I talked in detail with the oldest, his step-daughter named Audrey. I could tell she loved Robert as much as any daughter could love her father and did not hesitate to show it in public. Audrey told me that Robert was the only father she ever knew, that her biological father had walked out on the family when she was still a very little girl. She does not focus on skin color but on being the best she can be; as a result, she has a very responsible position with a bank in Atlanta. I offer these positive examples to contrast with some things I have seen in life to include in the army, of those who saw life through the lens of "race." [They got sidetracked and often did not do well. It was disastrous for one lady.]

“Carolyn’s” (not her real name) desire to go into engineering may be to make a statement as “a minority female in a male-dominated field”; she may not enjoy the work. I knew of a lady who went into the mission field to make a “supreme sacrifice for the Lord”; she was not suited for that kind of work (like a square peg in a round hole), she suffered a nervous breakdown and was evacuated back to the States.

I suggest that Carolyn go online and take the “Strong Interest Inventory.” It costs about \$79 but is well worth it. I have found it to be effective in showing people what they would enjoy doing. It would make for a much happier life for her and increase her chances of making a positive mark on society. <https://careerassessmentsite.com/tests/strong-tests/>

– Allen Morris, message to a scholarship committee about a student applicant.

### **Of Interest.**

+ *Earth Day reminds us to be responsible stewards.*

WASHINGTON – Baltimore-Washington Conference. Though Earth Day is not a religious holiday, many churches plan activities or observances focusing on environmental awareness and care for the planet. Jones Memorial United Methodist Church spent a day collecting water bottles from the Anacostia River, picking up 475 pounds of single-use plastic.

– As reprinted from the United Methodist News Service Daily Digest - April 22, 2021

+ *Covid update. Son Takes His Own Life; Father Warns Against Extended Pandemic Lockdowns*

NORTHBROOK, Ill. – Chris Buckner, Dylan’s father, gestures to a large model of a fish, a life-sized replica of the first one he caught with Dylan. On Jan. 7, the 18-year-old took his own life due to depression exacerbated by the state’s pandemic lockdown measures. Dylan entered a hotel not far from his home and jumped to his death. His dad said there is “no doubt in his mind” that school closures and the state’s extended stay-at-home order worsened Dylan’s mental health.

COVID-19-related lockdowns enacted across the country and around the world have been linked to a rise in mental health issues particularly among youth, who have been robbed of in-person interactions, freedom to leave the home, and have been forced to attend online Zoom sessions for hours on end to continue their education. Medical and psychiatric experts are increasingly worried about the toll the pandemic has had on the next generation. Doctors have reported children – some as young as 8 – intentionally running into traffic, overdosing on pills, and self-harming amid the pandemic. A health care executive told *The Epoch Times* in August last year that the mental health crisis is “now an epidemic within a pandemic.” Over the course of a few hours, Chris Buckner talked about how his son showed no visible signs of depression and...lockdown measures and school closures need to be reexamined when it comes to the health of teens. Chris kept his emotions from visibly showing until he was asked about the memories of Dylan that particularly stood out. “Getting to watch him grow up and graduate from high school, go on to college, get married, and have grandkids – It’s all gone, and it’s not coming back.” The family is also worried about Dylan’s younger brother, Ethan, and the added struggles he has now. Chris said Dylan was “a great big brother” to his younger sibling.

While data linking teen suicides to the pandemic or school closures is scant..., there has been a clear rise in mental health problems. The New York Times reported in January that an early warning system among schools in Nevada had tracked 3,100 mental health episodes since March 2020 and by December, 18 students had taken their own lives, prompting schools in the area to push for reopening. Among 5,412 Americans surveyed at the end of June last year, 41% reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, according to an Aug. 14 Morbidity and Mortality report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The number is higher among young adults between the ages of 18 and 24, with 75% of respondents reporting experiencing at least one adverse mental health condition.

Chris says the pandemic and the government’s response to it greatly contributed to his son’s demise. Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, Dylan’s depression “was exacerbated by the pandemic and by the lockdown.” In March of last year, when the lockdown measures really started hitting Illinois, Dylan was getting ready to play spring seven-on-seven football. Before the pandemic, Dylan, who was very routine-oriented, typically got up early, went to school, then did something football-related. For the first 30 or 45 days, the shutdowns were just an inconvenience to many people, and Chris said he supported the initial measures. But

soon, as Dylan found himself with an abundance of unstructured time on his hands and without his normal outlets and social activities at school, it began taking its toll. As the summer hit, the pandemic was still going, and all summer football activities were canceled. Not long after that, Illinois officials made the decision that most sports, including football, wouldn't be played in the fall, unlike in other states in the country. Normally in early September, there would be formal football practices and games. "There were no signs [of depression] that you might see," Chris said. "But I think the pandemic, the shutdowns, the loss of structure, the inability to interact with his friends, and the inability to play football pushed him into that suicidal zone that came to pass in September."

Other stories like Dylan's have emerged in recent months. One mother in Illinois, Lisa Moore, is now suing Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, citing the state's restrictions as the "proximate cause" of her son's death.

Chris acknowledged that the pandemic is a complex issue and that he doesn't have all the answers. But he and his family believe had the pandemic not happened or had the Illinois government done a better job at handling it, their son would still be alive. "I think if the stricter lockdown portions of it would have been shorter ... and if kids had been allowed to play football like they were in so many other states, I think that Dylan would still be here," he said. Chris believes it's important to assess the lockdown measures in terms of how to respond over the course of time. He pointed out that treatments for the disease have improved and that a vaccine is now available. Lockdown measures need to "be appropriately changed in response to that," he said.

Mental illness, according to Chris, might be similar to substance abuse in that teens are going to try to hide it from their parents. Part of the symptoms of feeling depressed and suicidal is thinking that you're a burden. Hence, telling your parents about these troubles might exacerbate that feeling. Nicole Avena, assistant professor of neuroscience at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City and a visiting professor of health psychology at Princeton University, told *The Epoch Times* last year that mental health problems should "absolutely" be treated as a national health crisis.

On the matter of school closures, Chris said he believes children are "absolutely much better off in school." While there might be some students who for whatever reason might do better on Zoom or other remote learning, the issue is the choice as those children can make the decision to stay at home. But in many places, teens don't have the choice to be able to attend school. New York-based psychiatrist Dr. Zlatin Ivanov has witnessed firsthand a recent spike in clients suffering from anxiety... that "cases of depression went through the roof" last year. Ivanov said many are struggling from missing out on their daily routines and other seemingly small pleasures. While medical professionals agree that social distancing is crucial for mitigating the spread of COVID-19, "the psychiatrists are well aware of the psychological impact this will have on a person's life," he said. A person is considered to be experiencing a mental health issue when they struggle with day-to-day life, according to Ivanov. People often come to him because they don't feel like themselves, get angry easily, lack energy, feel restless, can't sleep, or experience panic attacks out of the blue. Before the pandemic, suicide was already a problem for youth. In 2018, it was the second-leading cause of death "among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That year, the suicide rate among males was nearly four times higher (22.8 per 100,000) than among females (6.2 per 100,000).

Chris has a message for other teens suffering mentally: It's OK not to be OK, and things will get better. What these teens are feeling "is not unique to you" and that parents "will love you unconditionally." He encourages any children who are struggling to talk with their parents or some other trusted adult. "Don't be embarrassed by it," he said. "You didn't do anything wrong. ... So get help." More resources need to be invested into treating mental illness and depression, he said. Talking about these conditions also needs to be normalized in order to eliminate any associated stigma.

Three months have passed since his son's death, but Chris said the pain the family feels is constant. The day before the interview, Chris had attended a Zoom meeting with other parents who had lost their children, and someone on the group was still battling grief 20 years after losing their child to suicide. "It's just very hard to imagine a pain worse than the loss of a child through suicide," he said. "The person that commits suicide only dies once but the survivors die 1,000 deaths reliving it, wondering why and what they could have done differently or what caused it."

As Chris got ready to drop his son Ethan off at football practice, he said he was lucky to have Dylan for 18 years and said he will try to live his life like he would have wanted them to.

If you or someone you know in the United States is considering suicide, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or go to [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

[Note: I lost a girl who was like a daughter to me from our youth group with a brain aneurism, I can tell you that the pain never goes away. Portia was the sweetest girl you could imagine. Yet, a death through suicide is so much worse. – AOM]

– Excerpted from an article by Bowen Xiao in The Epoch Times, April 21, 2021.

### **A Way Forward/“General Conference 2021” (now GC2022).**

+ ***WCA Global Legislative Assembly Supports Protocol, Not Premature Quitting***, By John Lomperis

[Note: We don’t believe this is the best solution nor the final result, but offer it to you for your information. – AOM]

On Friday, April 30, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) held its Global Legislative Assembly (GLA). Among other things, the assembled orthodox United Methodist leaders from around the world strongly supported the emerging Global Methodist Church while overwhelmingly rejecting a proposal to commit to launching our new denomination with or without adoption of “the Protocol” peace treaty. We also issued an important challenge to fellow United Methodists for this transitional time. What follows are some of the biggest highlights for me, as one delegate of more than 250.

To be sure, we had vigorous disagreements about several important if ultimately non-essential questions. Since the last GLA, the big denominational news was the unveiling of the flawed but widely supported “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation” proposal to divide the UMC in two. I had heard murmuring that some may try to make “the WCA pull the trigger” by starting its own denomination right away, without the Protocol. That did not happen...

Many liberal United Methodists tell themselves self-comforting myths about the Global Methodist Church’s constituency being just “who are going to leave the UMC no matter what.” But there are so many reasons why this makes little to no sense. As a matter of principle, theologically traditionalist United Methodists are, by definition, those who adhere to the UMC’s own historic, official doctrinal and moral standards. Why should we be the ones who “just leave” our own denomination, and abandon it to a liberal faction that, by definition, rejects the UMC’s standards? Many of us eventually came around to supporting the Protocol, very reluctantly, only after seeing how in key ways, it really provides for birthing two fundamentally new denominations, rather than just one faction leaving. Then in very practical terms, current church law makes it prohibitively difficult for congregations to separate from the UMC, and has no provision for an entire U.S. annual conference to separate. [Note: We still see this as being very problematic. – AOM]

The 2021 WCA Global Legislative Assembly did pass one motion related to such concerns, but defeated another. This requires some unpacking. Earlier, the assembly did adopt, in one of the narrowest votes all day (with about a 58 percent majority) an amendment from a Missouri delegate to add the following sentence to a resolution endorsing the Protocol: “Finally if the General Conference does not happen or otherwise fails to implement the Protocol in 2022 the assembly encourages the Global Methodist Church to move forward without the Protocol and we urge the central and annual conferences to establish their own gracious arrangements for disaffiliation and transfers to new denominations.”

Different delegates may have conflicting interpretations of these words. One possible way to understand this non-binding encouragement is in light of how there has recently been some talk of annual conferences adopting a “comity agreement” to allow congregations to leave their conferences on less oppressive terms than the congregational exit plan

adopted by the 2019 General Conference, and without waiting for the ever-delayed next General Conference to finally meet. I could see some overwhelmingly liberal annual conferences where such an agreement might be helpful for all sides. But such arrangements require liberal bishops seeking to be more gracious to separating orthodox congregations than current church law absolutely forces them to be. I am not sure how many such bishops exist, if any. In such scenarios, the Global Methodist Church may potentially play a role in helping such

congregations stand by while we wait for General Conference to sort separation out for the rest of us. Such “gracious arrangements” may also potentially apply to liberal congregations in conservative conferences. In any case, it is ultimately up to each annual conference and bishop to decide whether or not to adopt a conference-level comity agreement. This seems unlikely to ever happen in more than a very incomplete patchwork of a few limited places....most of those at the WCA Global Legislative Assembly, like the overwhelming majority of those inclined to be part of the Global Methodist Church, appear to remain committed to waiting on General Conference for the Protocol, as flawed as it is.

We voted 251 to 2 to adopt a resolution standing in solidarity with the victims of apparent bullying by some liberal bishops and calling on our bishops “to maintain a spirit of peace and goodwill toward those of differing theological and ethical perspectives”. Will bishops, caucuses, and others who have not identified with WCA or other renewal caucuses be willing to at least join us in our commitments to the values of self-determination and freedom from bullying?

– John Lomperis on May 21, 2021

### **(UM) Bishops.**

[Note: The article below is not surprising. Since its inception, Concerned Methodists has found that some United Methodist bishops are not always open and honest with the truth – as I had said in a speech at Simpsonwood. – AOM]

+ ***North Georgia UMC Laity Challenge Liberal Bishop.*** On May 9, a group of concerned lay persons in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC) released an open letter to their liberal Bishop, Sue Hauptert-Johnson. The group calls itself United Methodist Laity for Openness and Transparency. With nearly 350,000 members, this bishop’s North Georgia Area is numerically the largest annual UMC conference in America. It includes more United Methodists than the geographically huge U.S. Western Jurisdiction. In 2018, a survey of clergy and lay members present at that year’s North Georgia Annual Conference session (conducted at a time some believe made the results skew more liberal) found 59% supporting the denomination’s biblical standard of viewing homosexual practice as “incompatible with Christian teaching.” 25% said that they would leave the denomination if this stance was ever officially changed.

A bishop since 2016, Sue Hauptert-Johnson has done several things that have caused a stir in this part of the UMC. As North Georgia’s bishop, she joined the national leadership team of the aggressively liberal UMC Next caucus group. This degree of “partisanship” is very unusual for active bishops, who are supposed to be the bishops for everybody in their conferences. She and her deputies are now heavily promoting a liberal vision for the annual conference. There has been much outrage over the bishop’s apparently punitive mistreatment of the conference’s largest congregation.

UMAction reached out directly to Bishop Hauptert-Johnson several days ago to give her a chance to tell her side of the story of the situation in the UMC’s North Georgia Conference, and will post more when we receive her response.

### **United Methodist Laity for Openness and Transparency**

#### **An Open Letter to Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson:**

As the laity of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church (NGUMC), we have received your message of “Come to the Table.” In that spirit, we are extending an invitation to you to please come to the table with your laity. We are seeking an open forum to ask our bishop some pressing questions that have yet to be answered.

The laity of the NGUMC are frustrated that, for the most part, our clergy have not been communicating with us on vital issues. People of the Light should not be left in darkness. The longer these questions go unaddressed, the more confusion and frustration grows among the laity.

We are seeking answers, openness and transparency from our leadership. Recent events, and the public airing of them, have shaken our confidence. So, we are turning to you for help.

**Our questions for you include:**

- Will you agree to meet with the laity to answer questions directly, rather than selectively screened questions on Zoom conferences?
- Why are so many clergy unwilling to hold open discussions with laity about the future of the UMC? Do they have reasons to fear retribution?
- Why have pastors been verbally reprimanded for hosting Wesleyan Covenant Association events in their churches?
- Why are open discussions not allowed to occur in our churches, where all perspectives may be voiced, without the clergy hosting these meetings being fearful of retribution during the appointment process? This is provided for in the Protocol, which you publicly endorsed. Why are traditionalists forced to host events in civic centers and other places due to those concerns?
- The 2019 General Conference was called by the Council of Bishops to resolve our long-running dispute regarding human sexuality once and for all. There were widespread calls to prayer by all parties, including the Council of Bishops, for many weeks and months in advance of that event. Have you considered the possibility that the 2019 result, affirming the UMC traditional stance on marriage, was an answer to those prayers? And if not, why not?
- In your recent webinar, “Reclaiming the Welcoming Table,” you made a passionate case for the One Church Plan, which was enthusiastically and effectively presented at General Conference in 2019 – and rejected, as it was in 2016. Was anything you said different than what had been previously proposed? Why are you advocating for a policy that our denomination has consistently voted down?
- The “Reclaiming the Welcoming Table” document states: “Clergy have always had discretion about which couples they will agree to marry, and no clergy will be asked to do anything against their conscience.” Does this mean your new policy is to support any clergy who, following their conscience, perform a same-sex ceremony?
- If all viewpoints are welcome at the table, why was there not a single voice expressed in your webinar opposing the new direction you see for the UMC? You stated your cabinet unanimously shared your new vision for the UMC. Where are the traditional voices in your cabinet?
- In your webinar, you made mention that the fastest growing churches in the U.S. are those that are the most diverse, which is certainly the case in areas of race, national origin and age. Can you identify a single one of those fastest-growing churches that performs same-sex weddings or ordains LGBTQ+ persons?
- You have said on multiple occasions that you are supporting full-inclusion for LGBTQ+ persons, meaning not just membership – but ordination. In that regard, is it correct to assume that ordination would not be limited to same-sex monogamous couples but to all LGBTQ+ persons?
- During your recent webinar, you refer to the pastors and laity who support the long-established UMC doctrine and polity as a “splinter group.” What makes you believe the majority of 300,000 UMC members in North Georgia do not hold traditional views? Have you commissioned surveys of the membership to find out?
- How can we, as UMC laity, trust that we are being properly informed when the news of Mt. Bethel’s disaffiliation – a national news story, appearing in various religious and secular publications – does not appear anywhere on our conference website (ngumc.org)? Is that not important news for our laity? Yet, your response to the (unreported) news was given prominent display. If we are not being notified by our clergy or the conference office, how are we supposed to be informed?
- Your written response to Mt. Bethel’s decision included a reference to the Book of Discipline’s guidelines on making appointments, a consultation process including the bishop, district superintendent, pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC). Your written response made no mention of consulting the pastor or staff-parish committee during an “extensive period of discernment.” Dr. Ray and the SPRC at Mt. Bethel have stated publicly no such consultation occurred before they were informed of the pastoral change. Could you provide some explanation to clear up the confusion?
- Bishop, in 2017 you released a video detailing what “consultation” means in the context of the appointment process. Why was this process not followed regarding Mt. Bethel and Dr. Jody Ray? <https://bit.ly/3xRWhcT>
- Appointment changes without consultation, similar to Mt. Bethel, recently occurred in New Jersey and California. Are these events part of a pattern within the Council of Bishops to marginalize traditional pastors and churches?



- Please explain how you can fulfill your vow before God to “support and maintain” the doctrine and discipline of the church established by General Conference while at the same time working hard to change it?
  - Paragraph 2553, known as the “Taylor Exit Plan,” was passed at the 2019 General Conference. It releases the Trust Clause and provides progressive and traditional churches an avenue to exit the denomination. Annual Conferences across the U.S., including our neighbors in the South Georgia Annual Conference – without a traditional bishop – have been allowing this provision, which many churches have used to exit. Why has the North Georgia Annual Conference refused for two years to allow this provision to be implemented?
  - Are you willing to post the formula used to calculate the cost to disaffiliate so that churches contemplating this are not targeted or fearful of reprisal?
- UMVoices on May 18, 2021, as posted in Juicy Ecumenism, IRD blog. UM Voices is a forum for different voices within the United Methodist Church on pressing issues of denominational and/or social concern. UM Voices contributors represent only themselves and not IRD/UMAction.

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Be slow to speak your personal opinions, and save yourself a great deal of trouble. – Ray Comfort Study Bible,  
p. 874