

Monthly Update

March 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

While we have information on General Conference 2021, we want to offer thoughts on two personages – Rush Limbaugh and Ravi Zacharias – then “racism” in our nation and church. As far as Rush, love him or hate him, he affected thinking in our country. When I was still in the Army, a friend told me one day in 1988, “Al, you’ve got to hear this guy.” I did. Here is part of a statement released by Congressman Kevin McCarthy:

“Rush’s legacy...goes beyond being a conservative icon. It is about American greatness rightly understood: our freedoms, yes, but also our unique way of life -- our noble past, our habits of volunteerism and generosity, and our commitment to a better future.”

The second was summarized in a statement released by the Board of Directors of RZIM on the investigation of Ravi Zacharias about charges against him made in late August of 2020, that Ravi had engaged in sexual misconduct; they commissioned an independent agency to check out the allegations – and confirmed that there was substance to the charges. This is very disappointing; I enjoyed listening to Ravi and appreciated his razor-sharp apologetics defense of our Christian faith. This also exemplifies how all Christians, especially those in leadership positions, must be extremely careful to maintain a life above reproach – and to guard against those who might make baseless charges against us to discredit our ministry. In Ravi’s case, unfortunately it was verified. In Concerned Methodists, we have adopted the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association policy of a man never being alone in a room with a female who is not related to him in some way. We strive to keep our actions completely above reproach.

The third issue, and one affecting our beloved church and American society at large, is the propounding of “Critical Race Theory” and the issue of “white privilege” in all of its aspects. I first encountered the latter term at a meeting of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference a few years back at Lake Junaluska during the election of bishops when delegates did not elect a black female (even after another guy had been elected). I very much dislike using terms denoting race, but need to do so for our discussion. “Critical Race Theory” contends that our society is incurably racist so much so that it cannot be redeemed and needs to be “torn down” in order to rebuild it. Racist? How is it that hundreds of “white” patrons cheer a golf pro who is black, Tiger Woods? Or one of the wealthiest women in America is – TV personality Oprah Winfrey? Or even president of the United States Barack Obama? This is anarchist and used to try to divide our country.

“Slave owners & slave traders should make reparations to those whom they enslaved. The problem, of course, is that slaves, slave owners & slave traders are all dead.” – Walter Williams

Be assured that we will tirelessly research issues in our denomination, fearlessly speak out, and stand for truth both in our church and in America.

Ever in His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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March 2021 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

You will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

~ Psalm 91, Verse 5

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The Good Stuff

+ Churches serve as warming centers, shelters.

DALLAS – United Methodist churches scrambled to open as warming centers and overnight shelters with historic winter storms having left nearly 3 million homes in Texas without electricity. Other states have been hit hard as well.

– Sam Hodges, as reported in the United Methodist News Service (UMNS), Daily Digest; February 17, 2021.

+ *Taking up, not giving up, for Lent.*

LAKELAND, Fla. – This year for Lent, why not focus on making a positive contribution instead of giving up something? The Rev. Mark Becker, president of the Florida United Methodist Foundation, suggests committing to reading the Bible every day or volunteering in your community. “Make Lent a time when you grow closer to God by growing closer to your neighbors,” he writes. – As reported in the Daily Digest; February 17, 2021.

Of Interest.

+ ***COVID Vaccine.*** 653 Deaths + 12,044 Other Injuries Reported Following COVID Vaccine, Latest CDC Data Show. These numbers reflect the latest data available as of Feb. 4 from the CDC’s Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System website. Of the 653 reported deaths, 602 were from the U.S. The average age of those who died was 77, the youngest was 23. A 36-year-old doctor died after receiving the second dose of COVID vaccine. Dr. Barton Williams’ death was attributed to multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-A) caused by asymptomatic COVID, though he [had] never tested positive ... – The Children’s Health Defense Team.

<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/vaers-injuries-covid-vaccine-cdc-data/>

+ *On intersectionality and the Family by Dr. Riley B. Case.*

There is a new word entering the United Methodist institutional vocabulary these days, the word intersectionality. One general agency definition is that intersectionality is a “paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality (such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism and classism).” Clear as a bell, right? On the web page of the General Commission of Religion and Race we read, “while racism remains our primary focus, our perspective and partnerships reflect a broader context, which includes poverty, nationalism, tribal conflicts, gender discrimination, homophobic, disability and generational bias – because we know that all forms of bias are connected, and they cannot be dismantled in isolation.”

I checked with a number of lay persons I know to see how they are responding to “intersectionality.” Of those I spoke to not a single person had even heard of the word. But of course. United Methodist lay persons live in an ordinary world. They are concerned about keeping their jobs, caring for their aged parents, paying the bills, taking care of the family and participating in their church activities. They are not moving in the right circles to understand intersectionality, the right circles being gender studies departments in universities, progressive social media, the LGBTQ advocacy groups and, in the case of United Methodism, church bureaucracies and institutional seminaries.

In late October the General Commission on Religion and Race, the Council of Bishops, the United Methodist Women, the General Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Communications (quite a line-up) worked in partnership to develop some videos to address the problem of racism. One video was entitled

“Racial and Sexual Parity Linked” and featured Rev. Traci West of Drew Seminary and Miguel A De La Torea of Iliff Seminary. These presented a strong message that there will be no progress in dismantling racism until we first achieve LGBTQ and transgender acceptance.

Does that part of United Methodism that lives in Africa know about this?

Persons who want to dismantle racism, famine, guns, poverty, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, ageism and genocide are really dreaming of nothing less than utopia. Not all with this goal are Christian, or even religious. The word intersectionality originated 30 years or so ago out of the secular academic world. The Christian version seems an updating of modernism’s Kingdom of God dream. (Today it is the Realm of God since Kingdom of God is offensive to some feminists). Neither the secularists nor the religious folk refer to “sin” as a barrier to achieve this goal. The Christian’s doctrine of Original Sin teaches that human beings by nature are subject to prejudice, hunger for power, and the disposition not to love the neighbor as the self. This has infected us all, black and white, rich and poor, privileged and not privileged, male and female, old and young and must be addressed before reaching utopia or any kind of human betterment. This part is passed over by the progressives who seem to believe that we should be able to dismantle racism and bring about a just society by good laws, the application of social engineering and an appeal to humankind’s better nature.

Many of us are not fans of the word intersectionality. On the other hand, there is something to be learned from the concept that many of society’s social ills are connected. However, the Christian, at least the evangelical Christian, would explain and analyze these differently from the secularists and the progressive church bureaucrats. Those of us from the evangelical perspective also see oppressive structures and forces in society. We believe this has a spiritual basis: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and rulers of the present age” (Eph. 6:12). We are in battle against sin. Sin affects us all and is the source of the ills of society: poverty, misuse of alcohol, mental health, drug addiction, classism, racism, violence, income inequality, family disintegration, marriage disintegration, loss of shared community, and loss of institutional loyalty. And, to use the idea of intersectionality, these problems are interrelated and connected.

But for the evangelical Christian, the place to start in dealing with these social ills is not with bringing our teachings about human sexuality in line with secular culture, but with the Bible and historic church teachings about such things as marriage, family, covenant making and orders of creation. This, admittedly, puts us in direct conflict with the intersectionality folk for whom traditional understandings of marriage and family appear to be part of the problem and not the solution.

We live in a time when we are bearing the fruits of the sexual revolution, a cultural shift which might be dated from the late 1960s (if not before). This revolution led to a liberalization of established moral understandings regarding sexual standards including gender and same-sex sexual relationships as well as redefinitions of the family and greater experimentation with sex, especially outside of marriage.

What is the result? How about broken homes, broken marriages, broken people, out-of-wedlock births, sexual addictions, sexually transmitted diseases, sex trafficking, poverty, co-habitation outside of marriage, higher incidents of sexual predators, sexual confusion, poverty and suicide.

Today for the first time ever in America, married households are a minority among the nation’s households (49.7% of the nation’s 111 million households). While 34% of American women’s first sexual union was outside of marriage in 1995 today the figure is 48%. 40% of the children born today in America are born outside of marriage. 25 million porn sites operate globally.

George Will in a recent column wrote about the direct link between poverty and sexual permissiveness. According to studies only 3% of families live in poverty when the father and mother first received at least a high school diploma, then got a job, then got married and only then had children. Contrast this to the statistic that 71% of low-income families are headed by single parents.

As of the 1950s fewer than 1 in 20 children were born to an unmarried mother. Today it is 40%. In another study 44% of black men, about 34% of Hispanics and 18% of white men were unmarried when their first child was born. To put it another way, 72% of black children, 52% of Hispanic children and 27% of non-Hispanic white children were born to unmarried parents (from an article in the Indianapolis Star by Michael Hicks of Ball State University).

There is not the first notice of any of this in the UM general agencies’ web pages nor in any of the strategies meant to combat racism and poverty. Shall we not conclude that progressive ideology, whether religious or non-

religious, is not good for families and because societal health is to a large extent based on family health, it is not good for society? And in the Christian world, it is not good for church health. At one time General Conferences and bishops regularly passed resolutions on the family altar and the sanctity of marriage and the family. No more. I cannot remember the last time a UM bishop expressed concern for the break-up of the modern family. In 1976 Good News advocated for Family as the church's missional priority for the quadrennium. The effort failed spectacularly. The present web page of the General Board of Church and Society lists 30 areas of the board's advocacy. Not one is related to family, or to marriage.

The first Methodists in America were instructed by John Wesley that they had "nothing to do but save souls." They also had as a mission to reform the nation. Our UM mission statement says we are to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. For evangelicals making disciples means saving souls. It is unsure what it means for others. The winning of persons to Jesus Christ is key to the goal of transforming the world. How the idea of intersectionality as an approach to social ills relates to this is hard to understand.

– Dr. Riley B. Case, Happenings Around the Church; Dec. 1, 2020. The Confessing Movement

+ ***General agencies cutting back.*** Amid the uncertainty around the coronavirus pandemic and potential split in The United Methodist Church in 2021, the 13 general agencies that serve the denomination are cutting budgets, implementing new strategies and pledging to stay true to their missions. "We will continue to work to help church leaders and annual conferences make disciples of Jesus Christ," said the Rev. Junius B. Dotson, top executive of Discipleship Ministries, in response to questions posed by United Methodist News to agency officials. "We do not plan to waver from that mission."

Ten general agencies rely on church giving for their funding. For those agencies, the total planned expenditures for 2021 is \$136.5 million, a reduction from \$159.4 million in 2020. That's a 14.3% decrease. There is a wide variance in the amount of cuts at each agency, and some with deep reserve funds are making up part of the difference themselves. From developing new revenue sources to sharing office space, the 13 general agencies that serve The United Methodist Church continue to look for creative ways to adapt to denominational budget cuts made worse by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The General Council on Finance and Administration board is proposing a 2021-2024 general church budget with the bottom line of about \$413.4 million – about a 31% decrease from the previous four years. The budget includes bishops and other denomination-wide ministries beyond agencies. Ultimately, General Conference – now postponed to Aug. 29-Sept. 7 – sets the general church budget.

Church and Society. The Board of Church and Society reduced staff from 21 full-time positions at the beginning of 2020 to 17 now. "I hope that we have right-sized for 2021 and until General Conference," said the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, top staff executive. Since 2016, the agency has been working to align staffing, budget and priorities, she said. It has consolidated some work areas and put more emphasis on others, but it has not had to discontinue any major initiatives or programs. The General Council on Finance and Administration has helped the board streamline its administrative work.

The agency's priorities are climate, health, immigration, peace and poverty, with a focus on dismantling racism and colonialism, she said. For staff morale, Henry-Crowe said, "2020 was very up and down." The staff had to adjust to working remotely because of the pandemic, and then the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others gained international attention. "That was devastating to us. We had such a long history of working on racial justice..." The United Methodist Building in Washington, where the agency is based, is home to 40 faith communities, Henry-Crowe said. Though activity at the building has been down due to the pandemic and the Jan. 6 violence at the Capitol, the agency has continued engaging with constituents and ecumenical partners through online conferences.

Discipleship Ministries. Discipleship Ministries reorganized its staff structure in 2017-18 in anticipation of looming budget cuts, Dotson said. "Morale is actually higher than anticipated," Dotson said. "The pandemic forced us to work from home beginning in March 2020 and during that time, we have discovered that we became even more productive and more focused on our mission." The 110 Discipleship Ministries staffers save an average of 54 minutes a day and \$625 in gas expenses annually by eliminating the daily commute, Dotson said. "This equates to each of us spending 235 fewer hours annually on commuting, which will provide a much

healthier work-life balance for our staff,” he said. The Discipleship Ministries office in the Denman Building near Vanderbilt University is being renovated to be better equipped for use post-COVID-19. Although the staff is primarily working at home, the building is being used for small staff meetings as well as a daily prayer broadcast from the Upper Room Chapel.

Finance and Administration. A 19% staff reduction in 2019 prepared the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) for the budget realities forecast for the coming four years, said Sharon Dean, chief officer of communications, marketing and connectional relations. “We communicated with our staff when we made the decisions in 2019,” Dean said. GCFA has 55 employees, Dean said, down from 77 at the beginning of 2019. GCFA is responsible for putting together the denomination’s financial plan with fiscal integrity, strategic-alliance building and steadfastness to historic United Methodist traditions and disciplines.

Global Ministries and UMCOR. The denomination’s largest agency has been cutting its operating budget significantly over the past few years. The budget for the Board of Global Ministries shrank from \$55 million to \$33 million since 2018. The agency cut 68 positions in the past 18 months, said its top executive, Roland Fernandes. Retirement incentives couldn’t be used to encourage voluntary departures, he said, because many of the staff are new, having come aboard since the office’s 2016 move to Atlanta. The agency now has about 100 employees, which includes United Methodist Committee on Relief staff. Global Ministries is the parent agency of UMCOR. Fernandes is focusing on five principles: narrowing the agency’s focus, intentional collaborations internally and externally, greater accountability, measuring impact and increasing communication internally and externally.

Higher Education and Ministry. The economic realities of the church have resulted in a reimagining of how the Board of Higher Education and Ministry does its work to be more nimble and sustainable, said Greg Bergquist, its top executive, in a Jan. 15 news release. The agency that supports the development of lay and clergy leaders has completed a 25% reduction in staff, Bergquist said. The reduction encompasses 12 full-time and one part-time position. “This was an extremely difficult decision,” Bergquist said. The agency is now structured under three primary areas of focus. Those are constituent relations and services; product innovation and implementation; and administrative relations and services, headed by the Rev. Shannon Conklin-Miller, Janet Jones and Karen Ward, respectively.

Publishing House. While COVID-19 was closing church buildings, it also was sabotaging the Publishing House’s sales revenue, prompting leaders to lay off more than a hundred employees and put the Nashville, Tennessee, headquarters up for sale. After the most recent reduction, which was announced in January, the agency will have 161 staff, down from about 300 at the beginning of 2020. The Publishing House, unlike other key United Methodist agencies, gets no apportionment dollars – that is, shares of church giving. Sales are running about 57% under pre-pandemic levels. “The consequences of depressed sales make it imperative that we lower costs,” said the Rev. Brian Milford, the Publishing House’s president and publisher. The Publishing House provides United Methodists (and other mainline Protestants) with Wesleyan-focused Sunday school and vacation Bible school materials, an array of Bible translations and editions (including its own recent Common English Bible), books on Christian faith and church leadership, the online magazine Ministry Matters, the United Methodist Hymnal and the Book of Discipline. It also sells church supplies – everything from clergy robes to pre-packaged communion elements, which have been in demand during the pandemic.

Wespath. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused the agency that manages pension and health benefits for The United Methodist Church to prioritize coronavirus-related federal legislation that affected health and retirement plans. The U.S. CARES Act and Payroll Protection Program, which required minimum distributions and loan changes, all required significant attention from Wespath Benefits and Investments, said Eileen Kane, chief financial and information officer. “Our immediate goal was to be a resource and non-anxious presence for constituents, helping them manage through the health and financial upheaval caused by the pandemic,” Kane said. Like the Publishing House, Wespath also does not receive funding through apportionments. However, it is affected by significant shifts in financial markets. When financial markets fell dramatically in 2020, the Wespath senior leadership team curtailed travel, meeting and other non-essential expenses; froze all job openings, which affected 30 new and vacant positions; developed contingency plans for depression-type disruption in the economy and financial markets; and undertook rigorous ongoing communication with participants, plan sponsors and investors. The agency has 266 employees. Wespath has prioritized projects that

support significant changes to be considered by the General Conference. Those include the proposed Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation that would split the church, and Compass, the new clergy retirement plan.

Archives and History. The United Methodist Commission on Archives and History located in Madison, N.J. is looking to develop new revenue streams, including foundation grants and increased donations from individuals and families, said Ashley Boggan Dreff, the top executive there. “We are beginning the process of reaching out to fellow institutions and archives to work together to protect and utilize our common Wesleyan DNA to ensure our stories are preserved,” Boggan Dreff said. Archives and History gathers, preserves and disseminates materials on the history of The United Methodist Church and its antecedents. The staff now has four full-time workers and one part-time employee. Some grants and research awards not supported by a specified endowment fund have been eliminated, as have training sessions for archivists. Also, the capacity for archiving digital files is not able to be expanded at present and the library’s reading room is closed. “The staff feels very stretched having to do more work with less resources,” Boggan Dreff said. “The prolonged uncertainty of how we will look post-General Conference and the delays also adds a layer of anxiety for security of work.” A professor at United Methodist-related High Point University, she is the author of two books on United Methodist history and issues, and succeeded the Rev. Alfred “Fred” T. Day III, who retired at the end of 2020.

[Note: A copy of everything that we publish in Concerned Methodists is sent to Archives and History. – AOM]

United Methodist Communications. United Methodist Communications is developing a strategy for the next five years to reflect the largest proposed budget cut to any agency over the next four years – 35%. “UMCom has maintained its current ministry and service offerings through 2021, after restructuring and changes in recent years,” said Dan Krause, chief executive. “We anticipate reducing the ministries we offer over the next several years and will have more details as the plan is finalized this spring.” United Methodist Communications, which increases the awareness and visibility of the denomination and includes United Methodist News, is budgeted to spend \$7.4 million of its cash reserves in 2021. The agency has reduced its staff by 18% since October 2019. There were 82 employees at the end of January, down from 100 at the end of 2019. The departures have been “driven almost entirely by voluntary departures caused by either uncertainty in the church or changes to upcoming retirement benefits imposed by the United Methodist Council on Finance and Administration,” Krause said. Because of the changes, United Methodist Communications made an offer to employees who might choose to leave while certain benefits could be grandfathered into their retirement package.

Religion and Race. A woman holds a sign during an April 4, 2018, peace and unity rally. The rally followed the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race’s participation in the United to End Racism Prayer Walk in Washington. Annual conferences, seminaries, districts and congregations are now charged for use of some resources from the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, one way the agency is making up for budget cuts. Religion and Race is dedicated to the naming, confronting, repenting and dismantling of institutional racism. “We are more selective about sending staff to do in-person training or coaching on dismantling racism,” said M. Garlinda Burton, the interim top executive. “During the pandemic, we have saved money by conducting our board meetings and training via Zoom, which has saved us on travel and lodging costs.” Since January 2020, Religion and Race now has seven employees.

Status and Role of Women. The agency that champions the inclusion of women in The United Methodist Church now has a smaller office space in Chicago and is leaving unresolved for the time being whether to replace a staff person who left last year for another job. “We reached a work-share agreement with the Northern Illinois Annual Conference and are thrilled to be moving into a much smaller set of offices within our same location (The Chicago Temple) and to be sharing the cost of equipment and services with our United Methodist Church neighbors,” said Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women. They have five employees.

United Methodist Men (UMM). UMM is seeking to tap a new funding source. “Our staff are finding (that) some men and women whose major link with us is Scouting ministries have not always been included in our funding efforts,” said Gilbert C. Hanke, the top executive for United Methodist Men. “Additional work in that area is being expanded immediately.” UMM coordinates men’s ministry efforts. It is responsible for raising 75% of its own budget, with 25% coming from the World Service Fund, one of seven apportioned funds of The United Methodist Church. That funding decreased by 30% last year. “There will be some cost reductions in the

next 12 months with projected retirements,” Hanke said. “We continue to work on our working-from-home procedures and for some staff, working from home may continue for some time. We do expect to have a blended mix of persons who mostly work from home and some who mostly work from the office after vaccinations are available.”

United Methodist Women (UMW). UMW has developed a strategic plan that is helping the 150-year-old organization remain flexible during the economic uncertainty faced by the denomination. Harriett Jane Olson, top executive, said despite the challenges right now, God is calling United Methodist Women to focus on the needs of women, children, youth and marginalized communities. The agency does not receive funding through apportionments. The organization has had two retirements, but no involuntary terminations have been made, she said. Those two positions will not be filled. Olson said the organization keeps “a close eye on our expenses.”

– By Kathy Gilbert, Jim Patterson, Sam Hodges and Tim Tanton; UMNS Weekly Digest, Nov. 13, 2020; UMNS, Feb. 9 & 10, 2021.

A Way Forward/General Conference 2021 (GC2021). African group opposes denomination split.

[Note: This “plan” is problematic and designed (we believe) to normalize homosexual practice in the UMC. – AOM]

JALINGO, Nigeria – Africa Voice of Unity, a group of United Methodist clergy and laity from different annual conferences in Africa, has issued a statement opposing any breakup of The United Methodist Church.

“May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ be with you our fellow United Methodists around the world. We pray that you had a joyful Christmas celebration and extend to you a hopeful new year’s greeting. We are members of the United Methodist Church from conferences across Africa. We are clergy and laity, including our youth, serving our denomination in different capacities: delegates from the past as well as the upcoming 2021 General Conference, and leaders in our conferences, districts, and congregations. We join together seeking a successful future for our beloved church.

This statement emanates out of the passionate and deep love we have for our beloved United Methodist Church. We are very concerned about the latest developments in our denomination which range from the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, racism/tribalism, and the uncertainties of the 2021 General Conference. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is clear in instructing us to be “light” and “salt” to the world and commit to love our neighbors(Matthew 5:14-16, 22:37-39). Rooted in this scriptural mandate, we are sharing this statement of unity to fellow United Methodists in our global connection.

1. We mourn the sudden death of Bishop John K. Yambasu. His tragic death took place on August 16th, 2020 in a ghastly road accident while on his way to attend to his official duties. We send our condolences to the wife, children, and members of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference, West Africa College of Bishops, Africa College of Bishops, the Council of Bishops and the entire United Methodist Church. His death was a great loss to every one of us. Bishop Yambasu was deeply committed to the unity of the United Methodist Church in Africa and the rest of the world beyond the 2021 General Conference. Therefore, we vow to take up the legacy of Bishop Yambasu. We will make every effort to ensure that his vision of a thriving United Methodist Church in Africa is upheld, despite the uncertainties facing our denomination in 2021.

2. We applaud the tremendous efforts made by United Methodists all over the world in the fight against the Covid-19 virus. We mourn the millions who have died and pray for those who continue to suffer during this pandemic, both in body and spirit, alongside their loved ones and families. We feel and see their suffering, including many whose economic resources have been impacted by this pandemic. We have also seen clearly how this pandemic has united us as a denomination across our different theological divisions in the fight against Covid-19. We call on all United Methodists to walk toward the path of love, justice and compassion as we head to the 2021 General Conference. Our mission to a suffering world unites us.

3. We equally applaud United Methodists all over the world for standing up against racism and white supremacy. We lament the sin of racism and white supremacy, and its vicious impact in the United States of America seen in the callous murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others

including those not report by the press. We understand the evils of racism because we experience it through ethnic tribalism and xenophobia in Africa. We, therefore, call on all United Methodists wherever they are to continue fighting systemic racism, xenophobia, and ethnic tribalism in whatever forms they present themselves. We reject white supremacy as it discriminates against people based on their skin color, nationality, and the languages they speak. These evils are incompatible with Christian teaching and should be chargeable offenses in the United Methodist Church.

4. We celebrate the fast growth of the United Methodist Church in Africa and its youth.70% of this growth is among our youth and young adults. While we celebrate, we are also worried about the future of our church in Africa and the rest of the world as we head toward the 2021 General Conference. Talks of separation harm this growth and harm our mission. Our young people should be allowed to decide their future in the United Methodist Church. We need to hear their voices. This is an urgent plea to our African leaders, and to our global connection.

5. We celebrate unity in mission and reject dissolution or separation of the United Methodist Church in Africa. We are aware that after the tumultuous 2019 General Conference, various groups and individuals in the United States have put forward plans that call for the dissolution of the United Methodist Church reflected in their petitions to the next General Conference. We do not see any evidence of prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit in any dissolution plans that have been proposed. Our central conferences have not been part of any conversations related to these proposals. Therefore, we reject any plan that calls for the dissolution or dismemberment of the United Methodist Church. We call on African United Methodists to reject any dissolution of, or separation within, our denomination in Africa, and to affirm that beyond the next General Conference – under the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit – we will continue to be the United Methodist Church in Africa represented by the Cross and Flame.

6. We stand with the College of Bishops of Africa and that of the Philippines Central Conference in rejecting the dissolution of the United Methodist Church. These bishops issued separate statements published on August 31, 2019, September 9th, 2019 and October 30, 2020 in which they declared firm opposition against dissolution and reaffirmed their commitment to the unity of our global church.

7. We support restructure proposals, such as the Christmas Covenant, that is rooted in equitable connectional relations and respect for contextual mission policies and practices. We support calls for a new polity in which regional bodies or conferences in Africa, Philippines and Asia, Europe, and the United States, have equitable contextual legislative authority, allowing adaptations of their respective Books of Discipline for effective mission and practice in their regional contexts, while maintaining the organic integrity and unity of our global United Methodist connection. This new polity recognizes and honors the particular gifts and graces, theological and doctrinal heritage, needs and challenges, of each region. It also upholds in prayer and mission our global solidarity committed to justice, reconciliation, and compassion.

As we prepare for the next General Conference, we call on all United Methodists to spend substantial time in prayers for the direction of the Holy Spirit. We pray for God’s blessings upon the United Methodist Church in Africa and the rest of the world.

Signed: Rev. Ande Emmanuel – Nigeria, Rev. Lloyd Nyarota – Zimbabwe, Rev. Dr, Eunice Iliya – Nigeria, Rev. Betty Kazadi – DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), Mr. Amos Davidson – Nigeria, Mr. Jefferson Knight – Liberia, Priscilla Muzerengwa – Zimbabwe, Rev. Naftal Oliveira MasselaNaftal – Mozambique, Pastor Ahmed Ayuba Ahmed – Nigeria, Mr. Albert Otshudi Longe – DRC (total – 10). –
Statement issued on February 08, 2021, as reported in the Daily Digest; February 17, 2021.

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Whom God would use greatly He will hurt deeply. ~ A.W. Tozer, p. 52

Religious liberty is in danger of becoming a second-class right. ~ U. S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito
in his address to the Federalist Society

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Global Outlook

Zimbabwe. Christmas Covenant.

[Note: We strongly oppose this. This is a variant on the idea passed at the 2008 General Conference in Ft. Worth and sent for approval to conferences around the world in 2009. We in Concerned Methodists pulled out all stops to oppose – and defeat it. This “plan” is designed to be a Trojan Horse to normalize homosexual practice in the UMC. – AOM]

HARARE, Zimbabwe – An international group of church leaders has launched a website to answer questions and offer testimonials about the Christmas Covenant, the first major restructuring proposal to originate in the central conferences – church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The legislation aims to transform central conferences into regional conferences and creates a U.S. regional conference. – As reported in the Daily Digest; February 17, 2021.

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The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the sole legitimate object of good government.

~ Thomas Jefferson, p. 77