

# Monthly Update

May 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this May Update, we shall include some information from Annual Conference meetings but plan to devote a significant amount of space to a pair of issues that is in our thoughts: the “Covid-19” (the “China Virus”) and the future of our United Methodist Church. As far as the “Covid-19” virus that is in the forefront of people’s thoughts; both of the last two pages of this “Update” you can reproduce if you wish to pass on to other people. I had wanted to summarize the information we have on this that we had garnered from multiple sources. Of especial importance is the fact that the recommended treatment for this came from “front line” doctors who treat this disease in some of their patients, not like advice coming from Dr. Fauci who, as I am given to understand, has not treated a patient in over twenty years. As far as the use of Hydroxychloroquine, I still remember Dr. Stella Immanuel from Africa who is firm in her belief that this is an effective treatment for the “Covid-19” virus. The very last reproducible page honors a special group of people: our mothers. They are whom we cherish, and appreciate – with a special place in our hearts: Philippians 1:3.

During these trying times, it is good to look at situations with a sense of humor, as we can. I had received a text message solicitation, reflective of many inquiries I get, asking if I want to sell my house. This the unedited message that they had sent: “Hey Allen! This is Christopher. We are real estate professionals in Fayetteville. We just love PO BOX 2864. Is there a price that might make you happy to sell. Lets talk!”

Here is my response to the realtor: “Sure! I would love to sell it!!  
“An asking price for that and the entire building there at 301 Green Street here in Fayetteville would be \$13,200,000. There is one problem though – I don’t own it, not even the post office box. I think the federal government might object to my trying to work out a transaction to sell it, so you may need to check with them since they are the ones who own the building.”

This reflects that some are using a computer program to generate these messages. So I thought I might send back an appropriate response. A word of caution, though, that may explain the reason that you might be getting inquiries by “people” who want to buy any property you may have. I have an adoptive daughter who is in the real estate business. She told me that real estate is in extremely short supply, and that there are more people wanting to buy homes than there are ones to sell. As a result, you may want to ensure the title to your home is secure to prevent any type of legal problem.

Once again, I thank you for partnering with us for the cause of renewal and – in the work that our Lord has called us to do.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris  
Executive Director

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# May 2021 Update

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

It has been rightly said that taking the easy path is what makes men and rivers crooked.

– As quoted in the Ray Comfort Study Bible, p. 874.

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**The Good Stuff, A Good Word.** Time may change, but the word of God is steadfast, forever. It is one place in all of time that is our beginning, ending and all between. Moral judgment, our compass, was set when God spoke the Word and existence began. The word became flesh and we became whole by His righteousness. Time changed this morning and we have hope today. – Eston Brinkley’s post the morning after Daylight Savings Time “Sprang forward” in March.

### **Of Interest.**

#### **+ “Dismantling racism”?**

[Note: This is one way that your apportionment dollars are being spent. In a chapter I had written for a book several years ago, I had examined “racism” in its varying aspects. I had concluded that racism is like sin; we all have the tendency to show it – despite what ethnic group we belong to. Counter to the popular thinking in the UMC at this time, “racism” is not exclusively a problem exhibited by “whites” as opposed to people of color. – AOM]

Last spring all the General Secretaries of our UMC commissions, boards and agencies pledged to help dismantle racism with a particular focus on white privilege and racial justice. Two years ago the UMC began by deploying resources at the Conference level. This year we intend to continue to do so at the District and fellowship levels. In coordination with the GCUMM, District and fellowship level opportunities relative to Dismantling Racism include, but are not limited to: Reaching out to nearby churches for partnering opportunities including training, Bible studies, Class Meetings, Amend, chartering Boy Scout Troops, video and book studies to include dialog on racism, etc.; exploring what ministries are better conducted together than separately (between predominantly white churches and churches made up mainly of people of color); and surveying churches to establish which ministries and partnerships are already in place. A website that is used is: <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-secretaries-table-statement-on-racism>.

#### **+ *Covid-related headlines.***

After Son Takes His Own Life, Father Warns Against Extended Pandemic Lockdowns, The Epoch Times

CDC Panel Votes to Resume Use of J&J COVID Vaccine Without Restrictions

CDC Investigating 3 Deaths After J&J Vaccine

Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System/VAERS Data include 584 More Reports of Deaths After COVID Vaccines

18-Year-Old Undergoes 3 Brain Surgeries From Blood Clots After J&J Vaccine

33-Year-Old Woman Hospitalized for ‘Mysterious’ Paralysis 12 Hours After Pfizer Vaccine

Scientists Warn of ‘Vaccine Treadmill’ as Vaccine Makers Gear Up for COVID Booster Shots

– Children’s Health Defense, 1227 North Peachtree Pkwy, Suite 202, Peachtree City, Georgia 30269;  
ChildrensHealthDefense.org

#### **+ *Mask Mandates for Children Mostly Harmful – Professor of Medicine.***

Requiring children wear masks does more harm than good, Dr. Jay Bhattacharya told The Epoch Times. Bhattacharya advised Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis not to make children don face coverings. Bhattacharya is a

professor of medicine at Stanford University. He's a health economist by training. "I think about things from a cost-benefit point of view, you have to think about what the costs and benefits are of any policy to set before you make a recommendation," Bhattacharya said on The Epoch Times' "American Thought Leaders. In the case of masks, the evidence [how] children spread the disease even without a mask is that they're much less efficient spreaders. It's not like the flu where children actually are efficient spreaders of the disease. In the case of coronavirus—for reasons we don't fully understand—children even unmasked are less likely to spread the disease to adults, than an adult is to spread disease to an adult," he added.

Studies have found that young children transmit the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus less than older children and adults. Studies have shown children who do wear masks often undermine their effectiveness by touching them and repeatedly taking them on and off. Several studies determined that factors like irritation, difficulty breathing, and low peer acceptability were reported by children who wore masks. Because children don't wear masks properly in many cases, the already-limited benefit is lowered even further, Bhattacharya said. On the other hand, there are serious repercussions to child development when they and others around them are wearing masks.

"Children have developmental needs that require them to see other people's faces. Learning to speak, for instance, requires seeing lips move. For slightly older children, they need to see people, the body, they learn body language, how to interact socially, by watching people. And when you ask them to wear a mask, you sort of cut that out. So you have harms on one side, and very little benefit on the other," he added.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends no masks be required to be worn by children up to 5 years old and that policymakers weigh different facts when mulling whether to impose mask requirements on children between the ages of 6 and 11, such as the intensity of transmission of the CCP virus, which causes the COVID-19 disease, in the area where the child is and the latest data concerning spread from children.

Children should not wear a mask while doing sports or other physical activities, though they should maintain distancing of at least one meter from others, the international agency says, adding that masks can interfere with the learning process in schools and can have a negative impact on activities like physical education and meal times.

Some U.S. governors have mandated children wear masks. In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's administration last week ordered children as young as 2 to don the coverings.

Bhattacharya also responded to how YouTube recently removed a video of a roundtable held by DeSantis, the Florida governor, that featured him and others talking about COVID-19 policies. YouTube has not responded to requests for comment. "It's absolutely shocking," the professor said, adding that engaging in science means weighing different evidence about various matters. I think a healthy discussion, if they, if YouTube thinks that that children should wear masks, make that argument. Show us the evidence, show us your reasoning, and we can have a discussion," he said about the video, which is still available on other sites. So they're not actually trying to protect the public from an ineffective way, what they're trying to do is they want to warn the public that this is a dangerous idea. Well, if they're going to do that, they have a moral obligation to actually make arguments. They just censored it. They want to create this aura of you shouldn't hear this idea, as if it's some banned book. Rather than arguing why the banned book is bad, they just say it should be banned. They're the moral inheritors of book burners."

– By Zachary Stieber and Jan Jefielek; The Epoch Times April 21, 2021 Updated: April 23, 2021.

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

+ **Can a divided church serve a divided society?** by the Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." – John 17:20-21a (NRSV)

For years, the possibility of formally dividing The United Methodist Church has been discussed and debated, and now a proposal for separation to end the current church struggle will go to the next General Conference.

The discourse has always focused on how denominational division would affect United Methodists, but such a division would also influence society – actually, societies – beyond United Methodism.

The term *kulturkampf*, or “culture war,” was invented in the 1870s to describe the fight between Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s government and the Roman Catholic Church over the state’s attempt at cultural dominance in Germany. More than a century later, sociologist James Davison Hunter popularized the phrase “culture war” in the United States, applying it to the political conflict between conservatives and liberals, or traditionalists and progressives, on matters related to abortion, homosexuality, race and other controversial public issues.

Culture wars are now all over American public life. Whenever presidential politics, COVID-19 response, race/racism, abortion, homosexuality and gun rights are mentioned, most Americans quickly fall into opposing camps, with very few in the middle. The divide between conservatives and liberals appears everywhere – in politics, science, medical care, education, higher education, entertainment, denominational life and even the local church.

The divided United Methodist Church lives and moves and has its being in a very divided society, and similar divisions seem to be unfolding in other countries as well.

In the 1800s, American Methodists and citizens in general were divided over the evil institution of slavery. Historian

Mark A. Noll, in accepting the National Humanities Medal in 2006, provided a narrative that helps American Methodists understand our past. Noll said that U.S. churches played an active role in civil society for decades leading up to the Civil War. He stated that the Bible, understood authoritatively, led evangelicals not only to personal faith but also to public witness and work. In his book “The Civil War as a Theological Crisis,” Noll said that as the slavery issue heated up across the nation, evangelicals on both sides – abolitionists in the North and pro-slavery advocates in the South – used the Bible to make their own cases. Therefore, Noll said, evangelical Protestants “who believed the Bible was true and who trusted their own interpretations of Scripture above all religious authorities constituted the nation’s most influential cultural force. By 1860, religion had reached a higher point of public influence than at any other time in American history.” Despite this public influence, the evangelicals (including a large proportion of Methodists), relying on their individual interpretations of the Bible, could not settle the issue of slavery. Contention spilled into the culture and then into the political realm, leading to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Tragically, because Methodists themselves were divided – and eventually split in 1844 over slavery – they could not help the nation resolve its crisis.

Richard John Neuhaus (1936-2009), the Lutheran pastor and later Roman Catholic priest who was committed to the church’s witness in the public square, often asserted: “Culture is the root of politics, and religion is the root of culture.”

Mindful of that idea, what can we say about the witness of a divided church in a divided society?

When a divided church cannot make up its mind about its own faith and life, societal division often aggravates division in the church. Methodism struggled with slavery in the 1800s and with sexuality over the last 50+ years. In both cases, the church’s lack of biblical and traditional doctrine and discipline made it vulnerable to the divisive culture wars and political battles of the day. When a divided church formally separates in such circumstances, it looks distressingly similar to other institutions that are unraveling in the polarized society.

When a church considers dividing, authority in that church is diminished. Its doctrine, morals and discipline likely become matters of choice for its clergy and laity. That is what happened in American Methodism in the 1800s, and that is what is happening in American Methodism in our time.

When a church divides, the culture and politics of the resulting denominations can become extremely, irredeemably predictable and partisan, with no space for people with different cultural commitments and different political views to gather. Post-division denominations tend to provide religious refuge for society’s conservative and progressive tribes. Such churches cannot, with integrity, challenge the extreme polarization of culture and politics in the larger society, since the churches are themselves polarized. At their worst, such churches usually allow polarized people and institutions to grow even more entrenched in their partisanship.

When a church remains unified and carries catholicity in a polarized society – even if those practices are far from perfect – that church’s witness can be powerful. That church, secure in its identity as the Body of Christ, confident in living under the Headship of Christ, can be a strong sign of contradiction (Luke 2:34) to a divided world.

It can invite all, from the left and the right, to repent and be baptized. It can welcome all to the Lord's Table and it can offer the preaching and teaching of the Word of God to all. It can become a gathering place for all, in Christ's name, to call into question the idolatries of the world's politics. It can become Christ's countercultural community that demonstrates a different way, a faithful way, to live in a divided world.

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” – I Corinthians 13:4-7 (NRSV)

– The Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Wilson, North Carolina; UMNS, February 26, 2021.

+ **Leadership body invites church to vision work.** Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai is chief connectional ministries officer for the United Methodist Connectional Table, which unanimously approved plans to host conversations around the globe about the church's vision and mission. The Connectional Table wants more United Methodists to have a place at the table. On April 22, the denomination-wide leadership body unanimously approved a proposal to use the next year to host conversations around the globe about the future United Methodist Church. The Connectional Table acts as a sort of international church council, coordinating mission and ministry across agencies and other church entities.

After decades of conflict over the status of LGBTQ people, The United Methodist Church now faces multiple proposals to break up along theological lines, and plans already are underway for breakaway denominations. General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking body, has final say about whether any separation plan is adopted. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the global gathering to be postponed twice, with it now is scheduled for Aug. 29-Sept. 6, 2022 in Minneapolis. During the delay, the Connectional Table plans to set up conversations where United Methodists from varied walks of life can meet to discuss the denomination's identity, vision, connectionalism, etc.

The Connectional Table and the Out of Chaos group both support legislation to create more regionalized governance in the church – such as the Christmas Covenant and the Connectional Table's own proposal to make the U.S. a regional conference. One question the Connectional Table hopes the conversations will take up is how to remain connected in mission while more local in church governance. However, the aim is to be more expansive than any slate of legislation.

[Note: We are wary of these plans. The Connectional Table's own proposal to make the U.S. a regional conference is very similar to the 2008 General Conference plan pushed in Ft. Worth. This would have the effect of separating us from the overseas Methodist churches, shift the balance of power in favor of the “Pro-LGBTQ” side, and lead to normalization of this practice in the United States – and fracturing our world-wide connection. We strongly stand against this. – AOM]

– By Heather Hahn, UMNS; April 22, 2021.

### **Homosexuality and related Sexuality Issues. *American Family Association Letter.***

Allen, I grieve for America. For families who have lost a friend or loved one to COVID-19. For a nation so divided that those who have resorted to violence and anarchy threaten the very fabric of the republic. For those who sit in the pews of many of our churches and never hear the life-changing, supernatural gospel of Christ. For businesses and families – particularly single parents – who are struggling financially. For the average citizen who, in vain, turns to social media or his favorite celebrities for truth and hope. But most of all I grieve for the coming generations of America's children and young adults who have believed Satan's lies regarding God's wonderful plan for human sexuality and happiness....

But first, consider these disheartening survey findings that indicate that Generation Z (ages 6-24) is even more deceived on the issue of gender than millennials (ages 24-45). Among Gen Z youth, 59% believe nouns other than man and woman should be used, and 25% of this age group believe they will change their gender identity at least one time in their lives! (Source: [hbr.org/2020/04/companies-cant-ignore-shifting-gender-norms](https://hbr.org/2020/04/companies-cant-ignore-shifting-gender-norms)) In the coming years, imagine how many moms and dads will be forever heartbroken because their son or daughter has decided they are “gay” or has chosen to identify as the opposite gender. Or when they learn that their grandchildren will be raised genderless. I imagine some version of that tragedy has already happened in

your immediate family or church family. And yet we cherish those sons and daughters with a love that only parents can understand.

Moreover, the political landscape is expected to change dramatically over the next few years. For example, in January, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) announced a change to the chamber's governing document. The change would "honor all gender identities by changing pronouns and familial relationships in the House Rules to be gender neutral."

So I grieve. But I also fight. I fight for the soul of our nation as well as for the souls of our children and grandchildren. When it comes to our children and our nation, I don't apologize for proclaiming that the cross of Christ is the only source of truth and hope. But neither do the false prophets of the sexual revolution apologize for promoting their twisted viewpoint of "gay" sexuality and transgender ideology. All pretense has been rejected. The gloves are off. They want our children and are not shy to say so. For example, Daniel Villarreal, an influential gay writer and activist, criticized those who wanted to protect children from the promotion of homosexuality in schools. He admitted:

"I and a lot of other people want to indoctrinate, recruit, teach, and expose children to queer sexuality AND THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT." (Emphasis in the original.)

Or listen to the blunt honesty of educator and writer S. Bear Bergman, who claims to be a transgender man (a woman who identifies as a man). She wrote a stunning admission on the Huffington Post titled "I Have Come to Indoctrinate Your Children into My LGBTQ Agenda (And I'm Not a Bit Sorry)."

"I am here to tell you: All that time I said I wasn't indoctrinating anyone with my beliefs about gay and lesbian and bi and trans and queer people? That was a lie. All 25 years of my career as an LGBTQ activist ... I have been on a consistent campaign of trying to change people's minds about us. I want to make them like us. That is absolutely my goal. I want to make your children like people like me and my family, even if that goes against the way you have interpreted the teachings of your religion."

Did you hear that? Miss Bergman admits to lying about her intentions to indoctrinate your kids. Moreover, she doesn't care what you believe or how you want to raise your own children. After all, she's on a campaign. Does your religion teach that the LGBTQ agenda is contrary to God's design for humanity? Too bad. She's teaching it to your kids anyway.

Activists like Bergman aren't even bothering to lie anymore. Do you know why? She thinks her side is winning – and she may be right. So I grieve and I fight. But I also plan.

For over three years, AFA has been planning and working on a major documentary to address the issue of human sexuality truthfully, compassionately, and without biblical compromise. The result is the film titled *In His Image: Delighting in God's Plan for Gender and Sexuality*. You may be among the hundreds of thousands of people who supported the making of the film and who have already watched it. If so, thank you. So I grieve, I fight, and I have a plan. But I also pray. All my grieving, fighting, and planning are powerless unless it drives me to pray for God's intervention. Prayer is the heartbeat of our relationship with Him, and He is our only hope. Yes, He is sovereign and all powerful. He uses our prayers along with our efforts and resources to bring forth His perfect will. Even now, as you begin to pray about to whom you will give a copy of *In His Image*, remember this verse from Psalm 118:4: "Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me. ..." So we grieve, but not as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 2:19). We fight, but not with the weapons of the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:4). We plan, but trust in God's providence (Proverbs 16:9). And we pray because the gracious Creator and King of the universe says "let your requests be made known" (Philippians 4:6).

On behalf of AFA; for the cause of Christ and His kingdom, – Tim Wildmon, President, American Family Association

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Sinful men have no trouble seeing other people's sins. – As quoted in the Ray Comfort Study Bible, p. 874.