

MONTHLY UPDATE

March 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the Monthly Update contains a lot of the information on issues that affect what is happening in our United Methodist Church; I had wanted to also include a summary of the “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation” itself. There was even more important information that needed to be in this Update. I do plan to include it next month. One of the things that I had stated to our financial supporters and wanted to clarify for all, is that in narrating the lives of two people whom I admire, Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver in the April Update, I had mentioned the two major political parties; that was not to cast aspersion on any one of them but was simply from history. The author of that article is well-respected historian William J. Federer. In the past we in Concerned Methodists have belonged to both parties – but we rarely engage in political discussions. We try to avoid partisanship, but unashamedly stand firmly on our Judeo-Christian heritage and our country’s values.

As noted, General Conference 2022 is scheduled to meet in August in Minneapolis, Minnesota; whether it will or not is problematic. I just learned today from someone in the General Church that the decision will probably be made in the next few weeks. If it must be postponed for any reason, but most probably because of visa problems by the delegates coming in from overseas, then it may be in-effect canceled (my word, not anyone else’s) for next year because it would not make sense to have one in 2023 and then the regularly-scheduled one in 2024. We shall see. I will say that I believe all of us are not exactly sure of what will happen or what the final result will be. When people ask me about it and then put forth the prevailing narrative, that is what I tell them – it really is “up in the air” – but between now and then, there will be a activism and legislative maneuvering.

At the risk of sounding repetitious, I wanted to share a bit more information we received on the Covid/vaccination issue. The *British Medical Journal* stated: researchers from the University of Oxford reported that “new algorithm predicts those most at risk of serious Covid-19 outcomes from 14 or more days after 2nd vaccination dose, when substantial immunity is expected to have developed....” This is not what the “politically correct” narrative portrays. I want to emphasize again, please find out the truth so you can make good decisions for your future health.

On our country’s founding: Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, received contributions from George Washington, Dr. Benjamin Rush, and other founding fathers. Allen delivered a eulogy of Washington in Philadelphia, December 29, 1799: “Our father and friend is taken from us--he whom the nations honored is ‘seen of men no more.’ We, my friends, have particular cause to bemoan our loss. To us he has been the sympathizing friend and tender father. And here let me entreat you always to bear in mind the affectionate farewell advice of the great Washington – ‘to love your country -- to obey its laws -- to seek its peace -- and to keep yourselves from attachment to any foreign nation’ ...” Despite what the critics of our country say, it began as a Christian nation and slavery, even at that time, was recognized for what it was. Before he died in 1799, Washington wanted his wife to free their slaves at some point in the future; she did the following year. With all of the criticism American receives, it is still the freest, most prosperous nation on earth. Would its critics live anywhere else? No.

We cannot say it often enough, but we do so much appreciate your prayers, encouragement, and notes of affirmation. We ask that you also would continue to partner with us as we do what the Lord has called us to do. And please pray for our United Methodist Church and for our country.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

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March 2022 Update

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

There is no difference between communism and socialism, except in the means of achieving the same ultimate end: communism proposes to enslave men by force, socialism – by vote.

It is merely the difference between murder and suicide.

~ Ayn Rand wrote in “Foreign Policy Drains U.S. of Main Weapon” (*The Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 1962):

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Of Interest.

+ ***“We’ve come this far by faith” – a Commentary.***

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (UM News) – Reflecting on the growing divisions within the United States, retired Bishop Forrest C. Stith thinks that an underlying problem is a refusal to address issues related to equity and the racial divide. He compares national divisions to those within United Methodism, noting that the denomination’s “rich diversity is our strength and can be our liability.” – UMM Story, United Methodist News Service Daily Digest, February 04, 2022.

+ ***At many churches, pandemic hits collection plates, budgets.*** There was a “For Sale” sign in front of the Biltmore United Methodist Church in Asheville, N.C. in July 2021. Already financially strapped because of shrinking membership and a struggling preschool, the congregation was dealt a crushing blow by the coronavirus. Attendance plummeted, with many staying home or switching to other churches that stayed open the whole time. Gone, too, is the revenue the church formerly got from renting its space for events and meetings. Already financially strapped because of shrinking membership and a struggling preschool, the congregation was dealt a crushing blow by the coronavirus. Attendance plummeted, with many staying home or switching to other churches that stayed open the whole time. Gone, too, is the revenue the church formerly got from renting its space for events and meetings.

Biltmore United Methodist Church of Asheville, North Carolina, is for sale. “Our maintenance costs are just exorbitant,” said the Rev. Lucy Robbins, senior pastor. “And we just don’t have the resources financially that we used to have to be able to do the kind of ministry work that we would like.” Biltmore is just one of an untold number of congregations across the country that have struggled to stay afloat financially and minister to their flocks during the pandemic, though others have managed to weather the storm, often with help from the federal government’s Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP, and sustained levels of member donations. After congregants voted last May to put the church property, a two-building campus perched on a verdant knoll just off Interstate 40, on the market, church leaders are still figuring out what comes next, including where the congregation will call home.

The coronavirus hit at a time when already fewer Americans were going to worship services – with at least half of the nearly 15,300 congregations surveyed in a 2020 report by Faith Communities Today reporting weekly attendance of 65 or less – and exacerbated the problems at smaller churches where increasingly lean budgets often hindered them from things like hiring full-time clergy. Attendance has been a persistent challenge. At Biltmore, for example, attendance at weekly services are down from around 70 pre-pandemic to just about 25 today, counting both in-person and online worship.

Unlike Biltmore, Franklin Community Church, about 20 miles outside of Nashville, Tennessee, doesn’t have its own sanctuary, holding services instead at a public school. That turned out to be a blessing during the pandemic, with no need to worry about a mortgage, upkeep, insurance or utilities. “We wouldn’t have survived if we’d had all that,” said the Rev. Kevin Riggs, the church’s pastor. Still, it has been a battle. During the 15 months that services at Franklin went online-only, some members left for other congregations or got out of the habit of giving, according to Riggs. Weekly attendance is down from around 100 to less than 40, and the omicron spike recently forced the church to go virtual again.

The impact is felt in the collection plate: The money coming in now is just about a third of what it was before the pandemic, the pastor said. The church has cut spending where it could, turned to grants to try to make up the difference and worked to raise more money from community members who don't attend but support the church's ministries, such as serving homeless people. "We're surviving. ... But we have felt the hurt," Riggs said.

– By Holly Meyer and Haleluya Hadero; January 16, 2022.

+ **Elderberry extract.** Elderberry extract – Known to shorten influenza duration by two to four days and reduce the severity of the flu. According to the authors: Given that elderberry is a very rich source of anthocyanins, there is reason to suspect that its impact on viruses might be mediated, at least in part, by ferulic acid, a prominent metabolite that appears in plasma following anthocyanin ingestion. [Taking measures to strengthen your immune system is a wise strategy to protect yourself against illness as a strong immune system is your No. 1 defense against all types of infections, both viral and bacterial, and the nutraceuticals discussed in this article can assist you in that effort.]

– Extract from an article by Dr. Joseph Mercola, as reported in *The Epoch Times*; December 20, 2021.

+ Benjamin Franklin served as an ambassador of the new United States. While attending a dinner of foreign dignitaries at Versailles, France, the minister of Great Britain proposed a toast to King George III, likening him to the sun.

The French minister, in like kind, proposed a toast to King Louis XVI, comparing him with the moon.

Franklin stood up and toasted: "George Washington, Commander of the American armies, who, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, and they obeyed him." – Historian William J. Federer, *American Minute*

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

+ ***Visa access a challenge for General Conference.***

ATLANTA – U.S. State Department information shows that it may be visas, rather than vaccinations, that are the insurmountable obstacle to holding General Conference this year. David W. Scott, mission theologian for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, writes that wait times mean up to a third of delegates might not be able to get visas in time. COVID has disrupted normal wait times in many countries, however. During some parts of the pandemic, the US government was not issuing visas at all, at least to particular countries. This has created a backlog of demand for visas in some countries. COVID may have also diminished the capacity of various consulates to process visas in some cases. The result is that in a number of countries, including countries where UMC General Conference delegates reside, wait times for obtaining visas have become quite long. Moreover, visas are still completely unavailable in a few countries where General Conference delegates reside. Other countries have returned to fairly normal wait times.

Based on the visa appointment wait times reported by the US State Department, there are up to 286 General Conference delegates who, if they were to start the process today in the US consulate in the capital of their country, would not even be able to get a visa application interview before General Conference is scheduled to meet. This is approximately a third of the total number of delegates and just over three quarters of the delegates from outside the United States. Moreover, having a visa application interview is no guarantee of getting a visa, and in some cases there is additional processing time required to issue the visa. That additional processing time could mean that several more delegates would not be able to get visas before General Conference is scheduled to meet in August....

This group includes all of the delegates from the DRC (the country with the second highest number of United Methodists) and the Philippines (representing an entire central conference). It also includes a variety of other African and European countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Russia, all of which have substantial delegate counts. If they start now, at current rates, Nigerian delegates couldn't get visas in time for General Conference in 2024.

– Posted by David W. Scott; February 4, 2022

+ *Church disaffiliations, court cases mount.*

As General Conference continues to be delayed, an increasing number of congregations are parting ways with The United Methodist Church. Some are taking their case to civil courts. However, the number of disaffiliations is only a tiny fraction of the more than 31,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S. Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church (FMUMC), a megachurch in Montgomery, Alabama, is in talks to sever ties with The United Methodist Church. The congregation voted Jan. 31 to disaffiliate and join the Free Methodist Church. FMUMC, one of the largest churches in the Alabama-West Florida Conference, is among the congregations in talks to part ways. The church last May hosted the fifth Global Gathering of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, an advocacy group that is forming a new, theologically conservative denomination called the Global Methodist Church. Instead of waiting for that new denomination's launch, the Frazer congregation voted Jan. 30 to work toward joining the Free Methodist Church – a denomination that is more than 160 years old. "It is not without sadness that we contemplate departing from our denominational ties with the UMC," the church said in a statement. "The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference of the UMC has been our home for many years, and we honor the connection we have shared and the work we have accomplished together. Nevertheless, we believe that the Free Methodist Church is a better fit for our present identity and future fruitfulness."

With a plan of separation on hold, an increasing number of congregations are heading out on their own. However, the number of disaffiliations is only a tiny fraction of the more than 31,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S. With a proposed United Methodist separation on hold, a growing number of congregations are moving ahead with their own plans to leave the denomination.

Exiting the global United Methodist Church is not as simple as taking a congregational vote. For centuries, the denomination has maintained a trust clause, which states that churches hold property in trust for the entire denomination. To leave with property, most exiting congregations – like Frazer – are using disaffiliation procedures outlined in the Book of Discipline, the denomination's policy book. However, some disaffiliation cases are landing in civil court.

The Missouri Conference is working with multiple congregations considering disaffiliation. Bishop Robert Farr on Jan. 31 released a statement and frequently asked questions document explaining how the process works. "Although the Conference has consistently worked with congregations that have explored the process, I have become increasingly concerned about statements made to these congregations," Farr's statement said. His statement goes on to say that some attorneys "have engaged in disappointing practices" including keeping congregations in the dark about the costs of disaffiliation. At present, the Missouri Conference is facing lawsuits from three congregations seeking to circumvent the denomination's disaffiliation process.

Meanwhile, the North Georgia Conference and its largest-member church, Mt. Bethel, remain engaged in a civil lawsuit and countersuit in county court over church property.

In Wisconsin, a disaffiliating congregation has filed a lawsuit in U.S. federal court, arguing that a state law that incorporates the United Methodist trust clause violates the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment and should be overturned. For its part, the Wesleyan Covenant Association is urging theologically conservative congregations to wait and join the Global Methodist Church under the terms of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, a proposal negotiated by a theologically diverse group of leaders. The protocol allows churches and conferences to leave with property and \$25 million in denominational funds to form a new "traditionalist denomination." However, the protocol needs adoption by General Conference to go into effect. The COVID-19 pandemic already has twice postponed the United Methodist legislative assembly and has put in doubt whether the international meeting can go forward as scheduled Aug. 29-Sept. 6 in Minneapolis. The plan's adoption would prevent "the bitter civil litigation that has cost other mainline denominations tens of millions of dollars."

Increasingly, though, churches are not waiting to make their move. A United Methodist News review of U.S. annual conference reports and publicly available journals found that annual conferences – church regional bodies – approved about 100 disaffiliations in 2021. That's up from the 32 U.S. disaffiliations recorded in 2020 by the General Council on Finance and Administration, which collects church data. Still, the total number of disaffiliations for both years is less than half of the roughly 280 church closures approved in 2021 because the congregations were no longer sustainable.

While small, the losses already are having an impact. The General Council on Finance and Administration calculates that the 32 disaffiliations in 2020 will result in a \$241,093 reduction in apportionment receipts this year.

The disaffiliation process is time-consuming, stressful and expensive for churches and their conferences alike. Conferences are on the hook for such expenses as pension liabilities, equitable compensation of clergy and apportionments – shares of church giving – that support regional, national and international ministries. Departing churches also must pay a share of their pension liabilities, at least two years of apportionments and satisfy any debts they have with the conference. One Disciplinary provision allows churches to leave with property if they join “another evangelical denomination, under an allocation, exchange of property, or comity agreement” provided the conference and other interested parties agree. Two years ago, Grace Fellowship – a church in suburban Houston – left The United Methodist Church for the Free Methodist Church under this part of the Discipline. Another Disciplinary provision allows congregations to disaffiliate by Dec. 31, 2023, for “reasons of conscience” related to homosexuality if they meet certain criteria. This provision was passed during the same General Conference that strengthened church bans against same-sex weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy. Under both provisions, congregations can be under hefty financial obligations to their conference ranging from more than \$100,000 to millions of dollars depending on the church’s size. Both also give annual conferences final approval over whether a church can leave.

The people called Methodist have seen ruptures before. Throughout the 19th and into the early 20th centuries, U.S. Methodists saw multiple groups break away over various disputes. “Most of the time, down the road, whatever it was that caused the divide goes away, and often we get back together,” said the Rev. Kevin Newburg, a professor of Methodist history at United Methodist Drew Theological School and a United Methodist elder. “But the other thing, the divided groups do much better apart. They thrive.”

The Free Methodist Church, with which Frazer plans to affiliate, is one such example. Free Methodists parted ways with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1860 in opposition to the growing practice of renting and selling of church pews. Those breaking away called themselves Free Methodists because they called for free seats for all and wanted tithes and offerings – not income collected for seating – to support the church’s ministries. The forerunners of The United Methodist Church eventually dropped pew rentals as a fundraising tool. The Free Methodist Church remains its own denomination, but maintains ecumenical ties with The United Methodist Church through the World Methodist Council. Today, the Free Methodist Church has about 1.2 million members around the globe. The United Methodist Church has more than 12 million worldwide.

Even with those connections, churchgoers still grieve the current departures. In a statement, the Alabama-West Florida Conference said it mourned Frazer’s planned exit. “Frazer Church is a remarkable witness for Jesus Christ,” the conference said. “For many years they have been a leader in The United Methodist Church and in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. While we are saddened that they are exploring denominational options, it is our strong desire and prayer that each church and clergyperson honor what God is genuinely calling them to do.” The Alabama-West Florida Conference plans to vote on Frazer’s departure at its annual session June 12-15.

[Note: Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, a megachurch in Montgomery, Alabama, is among congregations in talks to sever ties with The United Methodist Church. This was headed up by Dr. John Ed Mathieson, one of the leaders in the Confessing Movement. – AOM]

– By Heather Hahn, Feb. 8, 2022, United Methodist News; as reported in the UM Weekly Digest; Feb. 11, 2022.

+ Church court clarifies disaffiliation rules.

Key points: The Judicial Council released decisions from its 22-item fall docket. All six rulings deal with questions raised about a new provision that allows churches to leave the denomination with property if they meet certain criteria.

The United Methodist Judicial Council has released six decisions dealing with Paragraph 2553, a new church law that allows congregations to leave with property under limited conditions. The rulings all stem from questions raised during the 2020 and 2021 annual conference seasons. The UM Judicial Council has released

six decisions dealing with Paragraph 2553, a new church law that allows congregations to leave with property under limited conditions. The rulings all stem from questions raised during the 2020 and 2021 annual conference seasons. The top court released six decisions Feb. 9 related to a new provision governing how congregations can leave the denomination with property. All six rulings from the United Methodist Judicial Council stem from questions of law raised about the Book of Discipline's new Paragraph 2553 – approved by the 2019 Special General Conference in St. Louis.

Passed during the same legislative assembly that strengthened church bans against same-sex weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy, the church law allows congregations to exit with property for “reasons of conscience” related to homosexuality if they meet certain requirements. The disaffiliation plan offers a limited way to release congregations from The United Methodist Church's centuries-old trust clause, which states that church property is held in trust for the benefit of the entire denomination. The provision permits such disaffiliations through Dec. 31, 2023.

In 2019, the Judicial Council upheld Paragraph 2553 as in line with the denomination's constitution. In that ruling, the church court also spelled out that any disaffiliation must include:

Approval for disaffiliation by at least a two-thirds majority of a church's professing members present at the vote.

Establishment of terms and conditions between the exiting local church and the conference board of trustees.

Ratification of a church's disaffiliation by a simple majority at annual conference.

Already more than 130 U.S. congregations have used Paragraph 2553 to part ways with the denomination. However, that is a small fraction of the more than 31,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S. The provision also continues to spark questions of law at annual conference sessions. The Discipline – the denomination's policy book – requires bishops to respond to questions of law raised during the sessions at which they preside and that any bishop's decision of law go before the Judicial Council for review. The new Judicial Council rulings cover decisions of law that bishops made during the 2020 and 2021 annual conference seasons.

One question before the court was whether annual conference members can amend a congregation's disaffiliation agreement when it comes to the floor for a vote. In Decision 1420, the Judicial Council affirmed the decision of law by North Georgia Conference Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson that an annual conference's authority is limited to a simple yes or no vote. The church court notes that under the Discipline, a local church “cannot sever its connectional relationship to The United Methodist Church without the consent of the annual conference.” The Judicial Council has construed this provision to mean that the annual conference must ratify any disaffiliation agreement. “Consequently, ratification in this context denotes the retroactive approval by a vote up or down by the members of an annual conference but does not include the right to amend the disaffiliation agreement,” the church court ruled.

In Decision 1422, the Judicial Council affirmed another decision by Hauptert-Johnson. During annual conference, a lay member asked the bishop whether a church that identifies itself as traditional could use Paragraph 2553. In this context, “traditional” means a church that supports the denominational restrictions around homosexuality. Hauptert-Johnson said she found no ruling of law was required “because the North Georgia Annual Conference Board of Trustees has indicated that it will not question ‘the reasons of conscience’ behind a church's decision to disaffiliate.” The North Georgia Conference and its largest-member church, Mt. Bethel, are engaged in a civil lawsuit and countersuit in county court over church property. Mt. Bethel has invoked Paragraph 2553 in making its case. However, the United Methodist Judicial Council made no mention of that court case, and explicitly said it was focusing on the questions of law submitted to it.

In Decision 1421, the Judicial Council addressed two questions: Whether the sale of property can be completed before the conference votes and whether the conference board of trustees can enter into a nondisclosure agreement with a departing church. The church court said the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees acted unlawfully by closing sale on the property of a church before the annual conference voters ratified the disaffiliation agreement. “The execution, delivery, and filing for record of any deed to property cannot be accomplished prior to such ratification,” the Judicial Council ruled. However, the church court also said that the board of trustees can enter into a nondisclosure agreement as part of a negotiated

settlement, where permitted by local laws. The ruling reversed in part and modified in part a decision by Bishop David Graves. Judicial Council member Beth Capen wrote a separate opinion... dissenting in part with the ruling. She agreed that the annual conference should vote on any disaffiliation settlement before property changes hands. She said it was improper that the conference board executed the quitclaim deed and release of trust clause months ahead of the annual conference vote. But she disagreed with the use of a nondisclosure agreement. “The Annual Conference must have access to all information concerning a congregation’s proposed disaffiliation,” she wrote.

In Decision 1423, the Judicial Council affirmed a decision by New England Conference Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar that United Methodist clergy members in good standing can make a motion for a church’s disaffiliation. “Clergy members have the right to vote on disaffiliation resolutions that come before an annual conference,” the Judicial Council ruled. “This includes the right to make a motion to approve such resolutions.” The Judicial Council also agreed with Devadhar that one of the questions he faced was parliamentary in nature and outside the Judicial Council’s jurisdiction.

In two decisions, the Judicial Council dealt with what terms an annual conference can set for any disaffiliation agreement within its boundaries. Paragraph 2553 says annual conferences “may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.”

In Decision 1424, the church court affirmed Arkansas Conference Bishop Gary Mueller’s decision that “the requirement that Arkansas Annual Conference Board of Trustees seek ‘repayment of district, annual conference or general church grants made in the past 10 years...does not invalidly negate, ignore or violate church law.’”

In Decision 1425, the Judicial Council also affirmed Devadhar’s decision that the New England Conference can require churches considering disaffiliation to go through at least an eight-month discernment process, seek assessments of the impact of the departure and hold at least four listening sessions... The Judicial Council’s ruling said the disaffiliation process established by General Conference constitutes minimum standards, “which do not preclude additional procedures and standard terms created by annual conferences, provided that the latter do not negate or violate the former.”

The Judicial Council is continuing to deliberate on a 22-item fall docket. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the church court has been meeting online over a period of months and publishing decisions as they are ready.

– By Heather Hahn, United Methodist News; Feb. 9, 2022.

Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia & Other Life Issues.

Tens of thousands of pro-lifers braved the cold Friday to attend the 49th March for Life in Washington, D.C. Tens of thousands of [maskless] pro-lifers braved the cold Friday to attend the 49th March for Life in Washington, D.C. in hopes that the Supreme Court will overturn Roe v. Wade. The large crowd gathered on the National Mall to hear from several pro-life speakers before marching to the steps of the Supreme Court. – Caleb Parke, Todd Starnes; Jan 21, 2022.

(UM) Bishops.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church is calling upon United Methodists to use their influence in their states, legislative districts, and local precincts to enable voter registration and to encourage elected officials to provide the resources necessary to support the fullest possible participation in elections. The bishops issued their statement today in the aftermath of the decision by the United States Senate to reject legislation that would have counter action taken by several states legislatures making voting more difficult, especially in minority communities.

– Rev. Dr. Maidstone Mulenga, Press Release; Jan. 21, 2022. Council of Bishops, 100 Maryland Ave, Washington DC

(UM) Men. Changes, expansion for United Methodist Men. Greg Arnold, the new CEO of United Methodist Men, said from their offices on Music Row that he is keeping his options open regarding the future home of the agency dedicated to men’s ministry. “Let’s see what happens,” Arnold said. “From a business perspective, the

value of this property is appreciating faster ... than it would be if we were to sell it and take the money and put it into some other investment account.” On the other hand, if Arnold’s vision to expand the reach of the agency comes to fruition, the office could well be too small in as soon as 18 months. “When this agency was formed, there was a commitment that it would be self-sufficient out of the gate,” Arnold said. “That didn’t happen, and it hasn’t happened for 25-26 years.”

Greg’s wake-up call. Born in Scottsboro, Alabama, Greg Arnold is a graduate of the University of Alabama, where he met his wife, Rhonda. Their daughter Olivia is about to graduate from the University of Mississippi. Olivia played a key role in Arnold’s transition from being a workaholic businessman to a more balanced life. “I was physically, emotionally and spiritually just spent,” he recalled. “I was doing far more than I should have and took it all on my shoulders.”

Olivia surprised him during a rare week home with a question: “What are you doing here?”

“There is not a dagger hotter and sharper than that to put in a dad’s heart,” Arnold said. He prayed for the revelation of his next step, and concluded that men’s ministry was his future. “I’d already started men’s ministry on the side just as a salve to the burden I was carrying,” he recalled. “I knew I was called to minister.”

Arnold has extensive business experience to his credit, and also substantial work in men’s ministry in The United Methodist Church. The combination makes him ideally suited to be the executive leading United Methodist Men in uncertain times. He succeeds Gilbert C. Hanke, who retired last year. “Greg Arnold’s natural ability to lean towards innovation enhances The United Methodist Church’s ability to reach men and offers opportunities for men to grow into strong disciples of Jesus Christ that will change this world,” said Mississippi Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., who is president of the United Methodist Men Commission, in a statement. The way Arnold sees it, every one of the millions of men in the denomination needs to be served, if possible. Of the more than 32,000 United Methodist churches in the U.S., only about 3,500 pay \$85 annually for a UMM charter, he said. “So what are we doing to serve every single one of those souls?” he said. “If we can make that happen, then there’s not a building that can contain us.” His strategy is to offer United Methodist men escape from isolation by creating communities they wish to join. “When it comes to the United Methodist men, I’m interested in helping a male move through that maturation process spiritually, no matter the age,” Arnold said. “If I have shame, how do I handle that shame? If I have fear or isolation, how do I handle that?” Arnold, 51, brings substantial and varied experience to the new position. The failures are as important as the successes, he said.

He founded Nexus Therapy Management, which provides physical, occupational and speech therapy in nursing homes. That company, of which Arnold is still president, now operates in Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas. His team got so proficient that Arnold was able to simultaneously take on duties as a deployed staff member of the United Methodist Men Commission, based in Mississippi. He did that for 12 years, mostly as a volunteer, before resigning to head the men’s agency. “He’s just such a very unique mix of having so much business experience and understanding the way the world works,” said Robert Noland, a friend of Arnold’s and author of Christian books. “But at the same time, he understands ministry, understands the church. ... Greg can go into a room of businessmen and connect with them and go into a room full of pastors and connect with them.”

Among Arnold’s plans are:

Serving every local United Methodist church with credible, high-quality resources that help them reach every member of their community. Introducing a new rebranded set of modern resources to effectively reach all generations, to include new training programs, a credentialing program for men’s ministry specialists and more.

Launching a dedicated small group ministry app with topics and content relevant to the challenges of today’s men. This app also could be used by churches as their men’s ministry program.

Bringing the Live Bold app, which Arnold has already developed and successfully marketed as a resource for Christian men, under the United Methodist Men umbrella.

Redefining and tightening the relationship between men’s ministry and Scouting, after lawsuits charging abuse are settled. The United Methodist Church has already pledged \$30 million toward a national settlement in the Boy Scouts of America’s bankruptcy reorganization plan.

Shifting organizationally to better align stakeholders and partners with the mission to equip every connected man and youth to become effective disciples.

Providing better marketing of the existing charters-subscription option to local churches. The charters-subscriptions include basic resources on how to start, grow and sustain effective men's ministry in the local church. These connected churches have access to United Methodist Men staff-led online training and a wide variety of activities of other United Methodist agencies and ecumenical organizations.

Making newly developed resources available to churches outside of The United Methodist Church, for a fee.

Arnold terms his new position as “a burning call” rather than a job. “I knew that no matter whether it was in this role or not, I would continue to serve the agency in the church at whatever capacity was needed,” he said. “The successes I've had in business, they seem to parallel what United Methodist Men could use moving forward, especially at a time when the church is looking at ... coming out of a pandemic.” – By Jim Patterson, UMNS, Nashville, TN; Jan. 31, 2022.

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“Social justice” ... protesters are the Fifth Column vanguards envisaged by Weatherman, declaring war on the Empire and plotting to tear down its walls from within. ~ David Horowitz, an author who had previously been a 1960s radical Marxist, wrote in the *Jewish World Review*, September 6, 2001.