

The Christian Methodist Newsletter

Volume 16, Number 6

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2006 Annual Conference Results

Following are membership results from the annual conferences for 2006 with changes from the preceding year:

<u>Annual Conference</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Jurisdiction*</u>	<u>Annual Conference</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Jurisdiction*</u>
Alabama - West Florida	147,925 ⁴	+312	SEJ	North Central New York	77,291	- 1,758	NEJ
Alaska Missionary	4,000	- 45	W-J	North Georgia	342,045	+ 4,410	SEJ
Arkansas	138,317 ⁴	- 670	SCJ	North Indiana	98,229	- 1,050	NCJ
Austria Provisional	686 ¹	+ 27	Eurasia	North Texas	159,724	- 193	SCJ
Baltimore - Washington	196,847 ⁴	- 1,984	NEJ	Northern Illinois	107,602 ⁴	- 2,556	NCJ
California - Nevada	85,925	- 1,822	W-J	Northwest Texas	65,184 ⁴	- 2,832	SCJ
California - Pacific	88,664 ⁴	- 2,571 ²	W-J	Norwegian	13,087 ¹	- 103 ¹	Eurasia
Central Pennsylvania	146,564	- 2,658	NEJ	Oklahoma	245,046 ⁴	- 2,076	SCJ
Central Texas	160,119 ¹	+1566	SCJ	Oklahoma Indian			
Czech & Slovak Republics	1,529 ¹	+ 69	Eurasia	Missionary	6,237	- 16	SCJ
Dakotas	42,133 ⁴	- 1003	NCJ	Oregon - Idaho	33,783 ⁴	- 635	W-J
Desert Southwest	43,003	- 946	W-J	Pacific Northwest	59,089 ⁴	- 1,606	W-J
Detroit	102,425 ⁴	- 1,349	NCJ	Peninsula - Delaware	93,654 ⁴	- 676	NEJ
East Ohio	180,991	- 1,860	NCJ	The Polish Conference	2,528 ¹	+ 19	Eurasia
Eastern Pennsylvania	125,902 ⁴	- 2,594	NEJ	Red Bird Missionary	1,385 ¹	+ 18	SEJ
Florida	321,970 ⁴	- 4,302	SEJ	Rio Grande	14,468	-38	SCJ
Germany North	7,774 ¹	- 112	Eurasia	Rocky Mountain	67,261 ⁴	- 1,836	W-J
Greater New Jersey	102,528 ⁴	- 2,299	NEJ	Sierra Leone	100,102 ¹	+ 5,588	Africa
Holston	167,340	- 373	SEJ	South Carolina	241,664	- 16	SEJ
Illinois Great Rivers	149,001 ²	- 3,115	NCJ	South Georgia	137,822 ⁴	- 1,305	SEJ
Iowa	193,648 ⁴	- 805	NCJ	South Germany	15,373 ¹	+ 36	Eurasia
Kansas East	74,962 ⁴	- 753	SCJ	South Indiana	111,320 ⁴	- 2,054	NCJ
Kansas West	85,796	- 472	SCJ	Southwest Texas	119,677 ⁴	- 403	SCJ
Kentucky	152,129 ⁴	- 2	SEJ	Tennessee	117,350 ⁴	+ 768	SEJ
Liberia	168,618 ¹	From first time report		Texas	283,617 ⁴	- 7,238	SCJ
Louisiana	126,834	-225	SCJ	Troy	61,229 ⁴	- 1,726	NEJ
Memphis	88,123	- 700	SEJ	Virginia	341,346 ⁴	- 540	SEJ
Minnesota	82,037 ⁴	- 1,718	NCJ	West Michigan	67,734	- 197	NCJ
Mississippi	188,676	- 693	SEJ	West Ohio	230,500	- 6,807	NCJ
Missouri	173,794	- 2,228	SCJ	West Virginia	105,342	- 537	NEJ
Nebraska	83,105	- 1,322	SCJ	Western New York	57,093 ⁴	- 1,305	NEJ
New England	95,777 ⁴	- 3,059	NEJ	Western North Carolina	293,089 ⁴	- 646	NEJ
New Mexico	39,218	- 647	SCJ	Western Pennsylvania	195,537 ⁴	- 2,201	NEJ
New York	123,964	- 2,782	NEJ	Wisconsin	91,839 ⁴	- 1,915	NCJ
North Alabama	152,839	- 2,488	SEJ	Wyoming	63,671 ⁴	- 459	NEJ
North Carolina	236,635 ⁴	+ 2,796	SEJ	Yellowstone	16,120 ⁴	- 797	W-J

Change in church membership is a decline of an estimated 84,822 people for the year. UM membership is currently 7,989,875.

Sources: Annual Conference Reports, *Newscope*, *United Methodist News Service*, General Council on Finance and Administration.

Jurisdictions: "NCJ" - North Central Jurisdiction; "NEJ" - Northeastern Jurisdiction; "SCJ" - South Central Jurisdiction;

"SEJ" - Southeastern Jurisdiction; "W-J" - Western Jurisdiction.

Footnotes:

1 Indicates figures that were reported last year, believed to be incorrect but no others are available.

2 Indicates errors in the data received; figures were estimated by Concerned Methodists.

3 2003 figures are shown since more current statistics were not available.

4 Figures received differed from the computations of Concerned Methodists. The statistics shown were those received.

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Which way are we headed?

By Allen O. Morris

*While eating dinner in the privacy of my home one day, I started to choke. I remember thinking, "This is a stupid way to die. The living room disappeared, and I was in a dark room measuring about thirty feet squared. The floor was like a greased funnel with a dark hole in the middle; I was on one side of the funnel slowly sliding into that hole. I could see where I was going; the fear I had experienced during the Vietnam War was nothing compared to the pure terror I felt. With all of my being I did not want to go into that hole, but there was absolutely nothing I could do to stop the sliding. The only thing I remember is thinking - and it was like a shout inside of my mind - "Oh, God, no!" Finally, after - it seemed like - hours, the hole closed up, the dark room disappeared, and I was again in my living room.*¹

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The “silent treatment”

Marie decided to get a job with the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company while her husband was in school. She was hired and after working there for four weeks she was approached by the steward of the labor union and given a card to sign indicating she was joining the union. When asked if she had to join the union, the union steward told her, “No, but everyone does.” Marie returned the unsigned card to the steward telling her, “Well, I choose not to.”

After two other co-workers tried unsuccessfully to convince Marie to join, the rest of the workers in the office where she worked started giving her the “silent treatment” – not talking to her, refusing to socialize with her, and not cooperating in the work that Marie was to do. This was an accepted practice because an individualist’s actions could not be allowed to affect others in the union; if it did, more and more people might think for themselves, not go along with the group, and leave the union. It had been a very effective method of applying group pressure to ensure conformity.

Carol, though one of the office workers and a union member, was a “free spirit” and saw the frustration Marie experienced in trying to do her job but not getting cooperation from the others. At one point, she really lost it and shouted, “±§¢#¢@*# it! Why don’t you help Marie out? Can’t you see she’s trying to get something done?”

Her outburst helped for a few days, but the group lapsed back into their program of ostracizing Marie and giving her the “silent treatment.” This continued until she gave notice prior to her and her husband’s moving away.

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In the May 2006 issue of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* we discussed the battle going on in the United Methodist Church (UMC) in “Liberal” vs. “Conservative” theology. There is a similar struggle taking place in society as a whole.

On one side is the group who sees America as being basically a good country with freedom and opportunity for anyone who works hard and tries to make a success for himself. These people tend to have traditional moral values and an orthodox Judeo/Christian faith. They are in the majority in our country at this time.

On the other side are those seen as “secular/progressive” in their worldview. They divide the country into classes of the “rich” and the “poor” with a “zero-sum” view of wealth – society that “takes away from the poor and gives to the rich”; so what is needed is take it from the rich and give to the poor. They view the United States as flawed and the source of much of the evil that is in the world today. Some of their beliefs are characterized in areas such as non-judgmentalism - no right and wrong, complete sexual freedom, full self-gratification to include illegal drugs, abortion and euthanasia, separation of church and state, no American unilateral military action, internationalism, open borders, government-provided prosperity for all, governmental control over children, and - that there are many equally valid religions with universal access to heaven – if there is one. Some aspects resemble a “socialist” platform similar to that of the 1930s.

As far as tactics they support any means necessary to implement their program to include “stealth” methods. Rather than engaging in discussion on the merits of their “progressive” ideas they espouse a tactic of not responding to questions or concerns since they know that many Americans would be repelled by the reality of these ideas.

Some areas espoused by the “secular/progressives” parallel priorities of church leaders being pushed today by some in high positions of responsibility in the UMC along with other mainline denominations. In just the area of sexuality, the homosexual cause is in the forefront of this activism: the practice of homosexuality itself, homosexual marriage, and homosexual ordination. No other movement has so stridently pushed to have its behavior accepted by society at large. For instance, I have never heard of anyone promoting a “Promiscuity Pride Parade” or forming an “Adulterers’ Advocacy” group. When victories are won in the public sector, not by majority vote but by judicial fiat, other aspects of this practice are emboldened. No wonder that those espousing polygamy have mounted their campaign in the Northwest and NAMBLA (The North American Man Boy Love Association) is becoming more active.

This is of especial concern in our United Methodist Church because it is a “defining issue” on which the future of our denomination rests. Often when people express concern about this advocacy to church officials they receive the response, “We need to focus on the really important things like winning people to Christ.” That is precisely the point here. We are talking about the issues of sin, salvation, and obedience to God’s Word. Immoral sexual practice is more than just a physical act. It goes against socio-medical health, the Bible, the *Book of Discipline*, our Wesleyan heritage, and the majority of UM laity. If our actions are not based on truth we cannot “win people to Christ” since we will have no foundation to do so.

Church leaders’ support of homosexual practice strikes at the very heart of who we are as Methodists. The Bible talks about the seriousness of sexual sin being against our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:15-20), which are the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and to be guarded with especial care. In addition sin has the effect of blocking our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2; Ps. 24:3; Ps. 66:18; et, al.). The “dark hole” quote narrated above was a near-death experience I had when I was going to church as any “good” person was; the problem was that I had a physical relationship with my girlfriend. All my friends thought that was okay; God didn’t. I did not realize the significance of this until I read the Bible – which reflected back to me that sex outside of marriage was sin – serious sin.

What is the response by church officials to those supporting the church’s position in this area?

The Ed Johnson case is a defining event in the life of our church. He is a very godly, humble, man who held a prayer meeting in his local church 5:00 o’ clock in the morning, six days a week. For as long as I have known him, I have never

heard him say a critical word against anyone to include his clergy superiors who had engineered his removal from his church in South Hill, Virginia. When pressured by Bishop Charlene Kammerer to admit a man evidently involved in a homosexual relationship to membership into his church, Ed could not in good conscience do so. I was told that during the legal proceedings to remove him as the pastor of that church, he was not allowed to tell anyone about what was happening to him.

As a result of the church process, Ed was removed as senior pastor of his church. One day, he had a place to stay and income; the next, he didn't - he was out of a job. People from all over rallied to his assistance providing him with money to buy food and clothes for his family. A church member offered him a house "for as long as he needed it"! As we now know, when his case was appealed to the Judicial Council, their decision #1032 ruled that Ed had been dealt an injustice (which would have been obvious to any clear-thinking person) and had to be restored to his pulpit with back pay.

After this, the Council of Bishops issued their "pastoral letter" saying that homosexuality is not a bar to church membership. Since membership vows call on us to "repent of our sin" this action would seem to put the bishops in the position of opposing the *Book of Discipline* and the doctrine of our church.

In addition this flies in the face of the practice of John Wesley himself. A diary entry for - June 16, 1757 states, *"In the evening I preached at Sunderland. I then met the society and told them plain none could stay with us unless he would part with all sin - particularly, robbing the King, selling or buying run goods (smuggling) which I could no more suffer than robbing on the highway. A few would not promise to refrain, so these I was forced to cut off. About two hundred and fifty were of a better mind."*²

It was for similar reasons that St. Paul UMC in Fairbanks, Alaska was discontinued; they had their church taken away from them for no viable reason other than the members speaking out against conference activism in politics, abortion, and homosexuality, and to truly be the church and win people to Jesus Christ.

How else have concerns over departures from our faith been answered? Although some Godly clergy have been faithful to our orthodox beliefs other "Company Men" have employed measures designed to neutralize dissent:³ "stealth" leadership - working behind the scenes in ways that are not always visible or apparent to accomplish their objectives, which might be opposed by the laity if they knew what was happening; incrementalism - small, barely noticeable changes over a period of time; keeping people "under control"; information control - withholding information from the people in the pews; stacking the boards with the "right people" who will do only what he says; focusing only on the local church and ignoring what is occurring in the general church; and targeting.

Look at what happened to Marie with the "silent treatment" she received. Ostracizing someone who does not automatically go along with the crowd and speaks the truth can be effective in reducing the influence that individual has on the others. This is especially true when the person is trying to speak a word of warning about problems in the church. If the individualist can be turned into a "non-person" and marginalized, then people will not pay attention to what he has to say regardless of the validity or importance of his message. Even in 1984 Charles Keysor observed that "evangelicals are... excluded from the highest elective and major policy-making positions."

What is the result of all this activity?

1. Church membership decline. For the first time since the 1930s, it has dropped to under 8 million in the U.S. - to 7,989,875 in 2005.⁴
2. Financial problems. Last year Lake Junaluska, located in the Western North Carolina Conference (WNCC), hosted a "Hearts on Fire" conference promoting homosexuality in the church. In the wake of that event, our members in the WNCC have told us that giving to the apportionment has dropped to as low as 69.5%.
3. A divided church. There is division in the church but we have not been the cause of it. We in Concerned Methodists stand firmly on the Bible; the person, teachings, and works of Jesus Christ; our Wesleyan heritage; and the orthodox Judeo-Christian faith extending back for over 3,000 years. One way that this division could be characterized is the directions in which we might be headed:

Some U.M. Leadership	Obedience to Jesus Christ
Various UM employees	The Bible
	Our Wesleyan heritage
	A majority of UM laity
	!
	!
	!
	!
	Our Church

We believe that a majority of the laity in the pews are still orthodox Christian; assuredly, that is where we in Concerned Methodists are – focused on the Cross of Christ and the Bible as being God’s Word. But all too many clergy and some in positions of leadership are following a path that would take our church away from the orthodox Christian faith. Some are sociable and eloquent when they preach, but while they talk about Christ and the Bible, their actions do not match what they say; their “walk” does not match their “talk.” As Jesus told us to “judge a tree by its fruits” (Mt. 7:15-20) it is important to focus on the reality of a person’s actions and not just what he says.

The “pastoral letter” issued by the bishops is a radical departure from our church’s doctrine, moral foundation, and history. The Bible is replete with the need to follow God’s teachings and the consequences of rebelling against His teachings. Our church leadership neglects to do that at not only its own risk, but for all those who trust in the spiritual guidance they provide. In addition they missed a great opportunity to witness to the lives of millions of people who have experienced the transforming power of Jesus Christ!

Appeal to the clergy

Providing reliable spiritual leadership to the laity, the “sheep” that God has entrusted to your care, is a sacred responsibility. The Bible is replete with references to this and the consequences of failure in this area. We ask that you provide leadership based on the sound moral teachings of the Bible and our over 200-year history of Wesleyan holiness. Don’t lead our church down the failed pathway taken by other denominations that have normalized homosexual practice or radical apostate doctrines. Read what Jesus had to say to the religious professionals of His day in Matthew 23. Remember, you can be truly faithful to God or a “Company Man” – but you cannot be both!

Lead us back to onto the path of our Wesleyan heritage that had such a “thirst for souls” it permeated our church. Would we pass by someone sinking in quicksand without helping him? Absolutely not! Why then don’t we have a similar urgency about preaching the full gospel of Jesus Christ – that we are all sinners; Christ died for our sins; if we confess our sins and accept what He did on the cross – we can have changed lives and the assurance of salvation when we die!?

Under this type of leadership, we as a church could turn this country upside down for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Appeal to the laity

We appeal to the laity to let your voice and your financial giving speak for you. It is your money that fuels what the church does. There is no other means of accountability in the polity of the United Methodist Church today. Would you continue to pay an employee who refused to do what he knew to be his job? Insist on faithfulness!

Think about what you are doing. In giving your money, think of symbolically lifting an offering plate up to the Lord. Now, envision putting on the offering plate some of those things supported by your apportionment dollars: lukewarm religion, immorality, homosexual acts, or secular political busy-work. This is your responsibility.

If – at some point down the road - we learn that our church has normalized homosexual practice and radical doctrines, and you wonder how it happened... and if, in spite of all the information we have provided, you have continued to remain quiet and given your money unquestioningly that made its way into the apportionment, then go into the bedroom and look into the mirror. There you will see who has caused our church to be what it is.

- Allen O. Morris

Notes

1. “A Texas Mule” by Allen Morris, as contained in *New-Life Witnesses*, 2003, p.29. The complete testimony is found on the internet at - <http://cmpage.org/texasmule.html>
2. Diaries of John Wesley, June 16, 1757, as quoted in *Power Evangelism*, by (Nigerian Methodist Arch-Bishop) the Most Rev. L. S. Ayo Ladigbolu, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Intermedia Crossway Publisher), p. 30.
3. An expanded discussion of these areas is in *At the Crossroads*, chapter 8.
4. Linda Bloom; *United Methodist News Service*; “U.S. United Methodist membership drops below 8 million”; New York {378}; Jun. 21, 2006.

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The People of St. Paul Church lose court battle

The members of the congregation of St. Paul Church in Fairbanks learned they will lose their church – the building they had constructed with their own hands and money. This week the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that the property would go to the Alaska Missionary Conference in Anchorage. \$147,252.37 in apportionment dollars from the General Council on Finance & Administration (GCFA) has gone to finance the lawsuit against these people. Of this, \$78,392.43 is from the General Board of Global Ministries and \$68,859.94 from the GCFA itself.

- E-mail; GCFA letter April 11, 2006.

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It's Time

By Reverend Richard Dean

- **IT'S TIME** the leadership of the UMC started listening to the rank and file local churches, laity and pastors. Specifically I am referring to the "Hearts on Fire" conference ...held at Lake Junaluska over Labor Day weekend [2005]. This conference has already... receive[d] publicity...out of proportion to the group's membership, numbers and relationship to the UMC. This is a conference that should not be allowed to be held on UM owned property because of their stated aims, which disregard the "Discipline."

- **IT'S TIME** that the leaders of the UMC's boards, divisions and bishops stopped pandering to our dissident minority that exerts influence totally out of proportion to their numbers. This is a group that is long on billingsgate and publicity, but woefully short on substance. Among our boards, divisions and bishops, we have a dissident few who think Scripture and the "Book of Discipline" are mere suggestions, suggestions which are subjective to their own personal revelations, struggles, and dislikes, rather than the objective standards of our denomination.

- **IT'S TIME** for the UMC leadership to realize that this conference is a perfect chance for the local churches and laity to show their independence and vote their feelings. How you ask? The SEJ - Lake Junaluska are in the apportionments for every church in the WNCC. If we (the local churches) don't feel it is appropriate to have a pro-homosexual conference at Lake Junaluska, then we don't have to fund the SEJ-Lake Junaluska administration. We don't have to support them, especially when the printed, published and stated aims of said "Hearts on Fire" conference is calculated to put an end to established UM teachings on homosexuality, marriage, sexual behaviors, ordination & more.

- **IT'S TIME** for every local church in the WNCC and SEJ to boycott the SEJ-Lake Junaluska cabal by cutting them out of their apportionments for the rest of 2005, 2006 and beyond. You see, what I am proposing is very United Methodist. After all, when we disagreed with Taco Bell & the Mt. Olive Pickle Co., we boycotted them. So, why not boycott the SEJ-Lake Junaluska administrators for their apostasy? I am not calling for others to do something that I am not willing to do myself. As of this writing, I have resigned from the Advisory Council of the UM Foundation for Evangelism. Why? The Advisory Council holds their meetings at Lake Junaluska and I am boycotting Lake Junaluska. I will not shop at their bookstore, eat at any of their restaurants nor will I take my confirmation class there to visit as in the past. Come next May I will write my Bishop and DS and ask them to excuse me from Annual Conference as a matter of personal conscience and protest.

- **IT'S TIME** for the local membership of the UMC to stand up and be counted. Our leadership which has ill served us for thirty years and through the loss of 4 million members, needs to learn the golden rule of finance; "The one with the gold makes the rules." And the local churches have the gold in the form of their apportionments. No longer should our leadership be allowed to treat us as cash cows, ignore the local churches and laity and treat them with bemused indifference and condescension. When a UM organization like the SEJ-Lake Junaluska holds out its hand for our money, while punching us in the nose with the other hand, they need to hear a resounding NO. No we won't take it anymore.

Lastly, some will see this letter as harsh and unloving. Hogwash! The one thing the "Hearts on Fire" crowd wants from the church is the one thing we can't give them. We can't give them the idea that sin is okay and should be ignored. What they want from us is "cheap love." "Cheap love" as defined by Kenneth Collins in a recent article as being love that: "lacks seriousness, pays no price, and in the end 'tolerates' evil-all in the name of kindness, affability, and social grace." I am not willing to offer them cheap love. I am willing to offer them the love that brings people to repentance and restoration. The choice is theirs, but for me? **IT'S TIME** to vote with our dollars.

Printed in *The NC Christian Advocate*, by Rev. Richard I. Dean. Rev. Dean is the Senior Minister of Higgins Memorial UMC, Burnsville, NC (Western North Carolina Conference)

Our Annual Appeal

We ask that each of you pray and seek the Lord's leading as to how you might support the ministry of Concerned Methodists. We make the most efficient use possible of the money you entrust to our work. Since we have no paid employees and minimize overhead, we are able to translate the maximum amount of donations into our ministry of informing people about what is happening within our UMC. Those who provide financial assistance to us will receive our "Monthly Update" in addition to *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*. Remember, all donor information is strictly confidential.

For those contributing a gift of \$25 or more to our work, we will send a copy of the book *At the Crossroad*, which has 268 pages of finances, polity issues, Methodist heritage, and data on political activism in our Methodist Church.

Please mail your gifts to: Concerned Methodists, P. O. Box 2864, Fayetteville, NC 28302-2864