

The Christian
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THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Christ, Dedicated to Truth, Dedicated to Renewal

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By Allen O. Morris

"The crisis of the new millennium is not political but rather spiritual and moral. It is a crisis of courage and, more profoundly, a crisis of faith. Can we effectively retrieve our faith-heritage for a meaningful human future?"

~ Professor Thomas C. Oden

"Crisis" The Chinese word for Crisis is a combination of two characters meaning "Danger" and "Opportunity"! Could it be that the crisis facing our denomination at this time poses a danger but also is an opportunity? Possibly so.

Our United Methodist Church (UMC) has been in an uninterrupted decline since 1968. During one period of time, we analyzed this, compared it to the average size of an UM church, and observed that on average, we are seeing the closing of a UM church every day, 365 days a year, for those forty five years. But this is just more than cold statistics. Look at the three pictures below. The first on the left is of Christ United Methodist Church, whose picture I had used for my first book sent to all of the delegates to the 2000 General Conference of the UMC held in Cleveland, Ohio. The second picture in the middle is of that

church being demolished; it was replaced by two businesses. The third picture on the right is entitled *Homosexuality and the United Methodist Church* that was written in 2001 it shows a church splitting as symbolic – that has proven to be prophetic to where we are now as a denomination.

What in reality has caused this decline? Following is a partial timeline showing those issues that Concerned Methodists has addressed, but informative of the reasons for our UMC's decline. Truly, through the years this has been an interesting journey – and battle – for us, both in our ministry but more importantly, for our beloved church.

I checked further and found other non-UM information to include various *Reader's Digest* articles written about, not only our denomination's priorities, but also those of both the National

Council of Churches (NCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). One entitled "Methodism's Pink Fringe" and "Do You Know Where your Church Offerings Go?" published in the January 1983 edition of the magazine.

1977 – David Jessup's investigative report showed that Methodist churchgoers' money went to support the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Vietnam, Cuba, and pro-Soviet movements of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Data in books *The Betrayal of the Church* by UM Dr. Edmund W. Robb and his daughter Julia Robb, and *Biases and Blind Spots* by the late UM Professor Dr. Robert Wilson (both books are on our website).

1980s – Opposed UM support for Marxist movements/governments in Latin America, Africa, and Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.

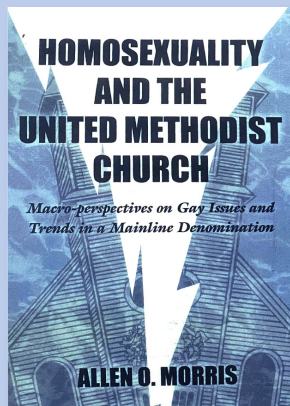
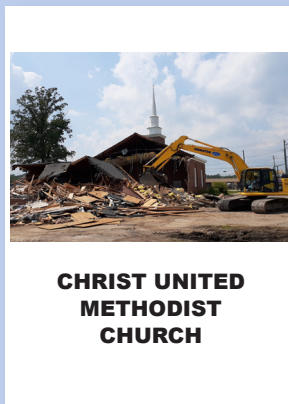
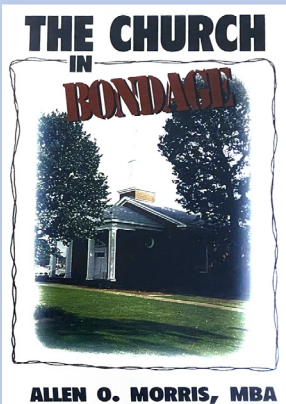
1984 – Fought against "Fire beneath the Frost" mentality espousing a Marxist worldview in Korea.

1985 – 3 UM Bishops (to include mine, NCC Bishop C. P. Minnick, Jr.) took a trip to Nicaragua for solidarity with Sandinistas.

1988 – 18 Bishops to include the president of the Council of Bishop (and yet again Bishop Minnick") took a second trip to Nicaragua.

1988 – present: Opposed advocacy trying to normalize the various aspects of homosexual practice: affirming the practice, performing of "same-sex" services, and ordaining practicing homosexuals into ministry.

1989 – Sent out our first publication "newsletter" from Concerned Methodists (CM) to people in the North Carolina Conference of the UMC; it contained



Continued from page 1

information on expenditures by UM general boards and agencies and also both the NCC and the WCC.

September 30th article describing financial irregularities and deficits by the UM General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).

1989 – present: Opposed excessive waste at the general church level; this was supported by Rev. Ed Ezaki, past member of the Audit & Review Committee of the General Council on Finance and Accountability. Sent out the “Tooley Report” with financial information in the first edition of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*. It included recommendations on responsible financial stewardship.

1993 – The Stegall Report by Dr. Karl K. Stegall on March 22nd; reported financial irregularities and expenditures by the UM GBGM.

Sent out *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* that included an evangelistic appeal by Dr. Billy Graham.

1993 – present: Opposed support by the WCC of Marxist revolutionary efforts. Published letter by Protestant Christians from former Communist countries that criticized mainline church leaders for their support of past regimes and Saddam Hussein in 1990 Gulf War.

November 4-7: The “Re-Imagining” conference espoused theologies that tried to substitute a “goddess” named “Sophia” for Jesus Christ. Bishop Earl Hunt called this the “worst heresy in 1500 years” in a news release. We opposed support by UM general board personnel and agencies for this conference. Strident resistance offered by the hierarchy and some in other UM churches.

1994 – present: “Re-Imagining” with radical theologies: Some UM clergy to include bishops defended this conference without explaining nor apologizing for the event. Spring edition of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*.

1995 – Vigorously opposed “theological pluralism”. The Fall *Christian Methodist Newsletter* offered a plan to reform the UM Church.

Concerned Methodists assisted Layman Mel Brown, a former Marine and member of the Yellowstone Conference headed up by Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, in his letter to her detailing problems in the denomination and asking for answers.

1995 – present: Opposed support for abortion in the UMC, which is the largest pro-abortion denomination and a co-founder of the “Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights” (the name was later changed to the “Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice”).

1996 – UM General Conference (GC) in Denver, Colorado. Mel Brown led a campaign to bring to the awareness of issues of concern to the delegates in attendance. He took out a full-page ad in the *Denver Post* to lay them out for all to see. He was interviewed by radio and television, and was instrumental in forming the renewal group Concerned Methodists of the Rocky Mountains.

15 UM bishops issued a public statement opposing the stand of the UMC against normalization of homosexuality within the denomination. Concerned Methodists published UM membership that reflected uninterrupted decline since 1969.

1996 – present: Concerned Methodists opposed political activism by UM leaders/employees supportive of left-wing causes. I issued a statement in one of the editions of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter* that “it seemed, when judging from their public political pronouncements, that the UM leadership came from a far-left perspective and resembled those of the Democratic Party.” I received criticism for this, but a few months later, Thom White-wolf Fassett declared that the priorities of the UM leadership was more closely aligned with

the Democratic Party than that of the “other party” as he put it. In effect, he validated my contention made earlier.

1997 – Concerned Methodists published paper on Nicaragua showing the advocacy for that pro-Marxist government by UM leaders.

1998 – CM published paper by Rev. Ed Ezaki detailing accumulation of excess funds at the UM General Church level. Ezaki was severely criticized by UM hierarchy for this and forced to resign from the GCFA's Audit Committee.

CM publishes results of survey taken on its website showing that laity believe they have the right to withhold money to the general church that supports un-Christian causes (86%).

1999 – CM publishes financial figures showing excessive funds are held by UM general boards and agencies, especially the GBGM. UM leaders with the GBCS opposed stance of the Boy Scouts of America in excluding homosexual boys in the organization..

2000 – Publication of the book *The Church in Bondage* that details problems and case studies of churches in the UMC. At the General Conference itself, people to include two bishops invaded the floor and disrupted the meeting. They were arrested and led away.

2001 – 2008: UM bishops and leaders along with the NCC take an anti-war stance in opposing President Bush's going after the terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11th. Bishop Talbert was especially strident in his anti-war statements.

2002 – CM published detailed financial analysis of the UMC in its “Stewardship Report” paper.

St. Paul United Methodist Church (SPUMC) in Fairbanks had its building and parsonage taken away from them by the Alaska Missionary Conference because of their stand for the orthodox Wesleyan Christian faith. Leaders of SPUMC requested help from Concerned Methodists. CM provided assistance through their appeal to the UM Judicial Council and to the Alaska Supreme Court.

2003 – CM published the book *Stewardship Report* detailing how money from laypeople is spent by the general boards and agencies. It estimated that less than 13% of money given into the offering plate was used for actual evangelism.

2004 – CM published the book *At the Crossroads*; a copy was sent to each 2004 General Conference delegate.

General Conference gathering in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During the proceedings on Thursday of the second week, protesters who were loudly beating a drum went onto the conference floor. Bishop Janice Riggie Huie, who was presiding at the time, warmly said, “Let's welcome our brothers and sisters.” Immediately after this lengthy disruption and the protesters had left the floor, she had everyone stand and sing the song “Blest be the Tie that Binds” – an action that she had obviously planned in advance.

2005 – The Reverend Ed Johnson of South Hill, Virginia was forced out of pastoring his church because of his refusal to admit into the church he pastored a man who was a professed practicing homosexual. His case was appealed all the way up to the UM Judicial Council – who ruled in favor of Reverend Johnson (decisions #1031 and #1032). The Council of Bishops issued a statement two days after the ruling was released affirming that membership was “open to all” in reply. We publicly termed it “an episcopal temper tantrum”.

Lake Junaluska hosted a “Hearts on Fire” conference that was a blatantly pro-homosexual rally. Reporters from Concerned Methodists and the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) attended. This angered many laypeople and churches, resulting in many withholding the paying of their apportionments.

2006 – Continued to fight the battle on behalf of the people of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Fairbanks against having its building, parsonage, bank account, and name taken away from them by Alaska Missionary Conference leadership. The Alaska Supreme Court gave all of their property, the church building and the parsonage that the people had built and paid for, to the Conference but allowed the people to keep the name. The members continued their church with the name St. Paul Church and meeting in various other church buildings in Fairbanks.

*Never be a prisoner to your past. It was just a lesson –
not a life sentence.*

*Courage is contagious – and when a brave man takes a stand, the
spines of others are stiffened.*

~ Reverend Billy Graham

*I have no sympathy for those who preach nothing but peace and
keep back from men the awful fact that some will lose
their soul in hell.*

~J.C. Ryle

The site of the 2012 United Methodist General Conference was moved from Richmond, Virginia to Tampa, Florida. The reason given was that Richmond is the home of a minor league team named the "Braves" associated with the Atlanta Braves. At the time, the position of Concerned Methodists was that this was an example of "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel" – the hypocrisy of moving the site of the General Conference from a name, that was complimentary toward Native Americans and one they themselves had coined, such as "Brave" to a city that had a sports team named the "Buccaneers" – pirates who were often brutal and murderous to those they captured.

The ruthless persecution of Christians by radical Muslims was, for the most part, ignored by our UM leadership.

2007 – Bishops continued to oppose the Iraqi War and took other political actions from a far-left perspective.

Concerned Methodists published the book *Stewardship Perspectives – 2007*.

The National Council of Churches (NCC) is encountering financial difficulties, as narrated by John Lomperis and Alan Wisdom in their book on the NCC entitled *Strange Yokefellows: The National Council of Churches and Its Growing Non-Church Constituency*. It should have died because of lack of financial support.

UM clergy continue to oppose Iraqi War.

New Hope United Methodist Church voted to withhold paying their apportionments out of concern for what is happening in the UMC, especially as pertaining to the continued support for homosexual advocacy, abortion, left-wing politics, and waste of money. The church leadership subsequently appeared to be replaced in a carefully-orchestrated campaign to unseat them.

New Philadelphia United Methodist Church also had grave concerns over their pastor Dwayne Lowry being forced to resign. They had similar concerns about what was happening in the UMC: homosexuality, power, and waste of money.

Growing concerns over support by some UM employees for various aspects of Islamic advocacy.

2008 – UM GC in Ft. Worth, Texas. On Thursday of the second week, protesters invaded the floor and disrupted the proceedings with foreknowledge by the presiding bishop. On the following day, numerous petitions were pushed through with little or no debate – despite the fact that one of the African delegations had been sent home early and were missing from the deliberations. On that Friday delegates passed 32 amendments to the UM constitution that would then have to go out to all of the annual conferences the following year to be voted. Of those, we deemed 23 to be especially damaging as they would in effect break our worldwide connection and lay the basis for the normalization of homosexual practice in the UMC. We vowed to oppose them with everything at our disposal.

A delegation of members from St. Paul United Methodist Church in Fairbanks had gone to GC to try to bring to the attention of the delegates their plight but were in effect ignored, even by those in the evangelical renewal groups. This would have been a great opportunity to change the impetus of the general conference from the homosexual issue to the injustice done to that church.

2009 – CM conducted an all-out effort to oppose passing the "23 separation amendments"; CM published book *On the Brink* that detailed how damaging the "23 separation amendments" would be if they were adopted; a copy of the book was sent to all of the delegates around the world, plus a cover letter to each delegate in the overseas conferences that explained in simple language the result to our worldwide connection if these amendments were adopted. In the subsequent polling, every one of the "23 separation amendments" was defeated. CM received e-mails from African conferences pledging support.

2010 – CM published the book *Misguided Shepherds*, that detailed continuing

concerns over UM advocacy in the areas of: stewardship, church politics, truthfulness, morality, homosexuality, radical theologies, Islam, health care legislation (UM support for Obamacare), illegal immigration, disobedience of the Book of Discipline by some bishops.

2011 – CM educated the people, especially delegates to the 2012 General Conference, as to the dangers posed by the plan to fundamentally change the structure of the UMC offered by the Connectional Table; it would virtually turn over to the Council of Bishops the control of the UMC. We vigorously opposed this.

2012 – UM General Conference gathering in Tampa, Florida. During that session, on Thursday of the second week, protestors invaded the floor and disrupted the proceedings for several hours. On the following day, a compromise that had been worked out called "Plan UMC" was ruled unconstitutional by the UM Judicial Council; this nullified any meaningful action that had been accomplished there.

2013 – Some UM annual (regional) conferences voted in June to divest or have their funds divested from companies involved with Israel's "occupation" of Palestinian land: Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, Hewlett Packard and, in one case, General Electric. This reflects a one-sided view of the situation – and not realistic for Israel's right to defend itself and to exist as a country.

The Ecumenical Korea Peace Conference issued a "Call for Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula"; UM Wisconsin's Bishop Hee-Soo Jung seemed to support the Ecumenical Korea Peace Conference in their "Call for Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula."

[Note: When the most repressive government in the world has refused to compromise with the least call for modification of its dictatorial policies, it would seem that one could recognize that very little compromise would be possible until there is a change in the government. This is seen as unrealistic in terms of effecting true peace. The Bible is replete with examples of the importance of not associating with the ungodly – and North Korea is the most repressive, atheistic country on the face of the earth. – AOM]

2014 – UM clergy in theologically liberal conferences and jurisdictions are performing same-sex "marriages" in defiance of the UM Book of Discipline – and suffer no repercussions. The push to change the Book of Discipline to normalize homosexual practice continues.

Abortion. Given the trends seen in recent national reports, National Right to Life now believes that there had been over 56 million abortions since 1973. The UMC had staffers who testified as "friends of the court" on behalf of abortion – and our UMC is still the largest pro-abortion denomination in the country.

[Note: Now – 2023 – it is over 60 million abortions. – AOM]

2016 – UM General Conference gathering in Portland, Oregon. After effort failed to pass a vote to overturn the UMC's position on homosexual practice, it was determined through "interesting" parliamentary proceedings to have a "Special Called Session of the General Conference" to decide the issue "once and for all" as it was put. CM provided the book for *The Issues @ Hand* all delegates.

2019 – Special Called Session of the General Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. After intense lobbying and the vote before the General Conference, the UM's stance on homosexuality was upheld. Delegates from conferences in the Western Jurisdiction took the floor of the Conference and stated that they would not abide by the Book of Discipline on this issue – yet no action was taken to address their open defiance of the General Conference's decision.

2020 – the present. The UMC is suffering a "civil war" of churches and members who want to "remain UMC" or to disaffiliate and leave. This is causing extreme disruption at all levels.

2021 – The Illinois-Great Rivers Annual Conference (IGRC) Vermillion River District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) approved Isaac Simmons, an openly gay man and publicly practicing drag queen, as a candidate for ministry. He currently works at Hope United Methodist Church in Bloomington, Illinois...

2022 – Jurisdictional Conference elections of new bishops for the UMC. On November 4, 2022, John Lomperis of the Institute on Religion & Democracy (IRD) summarized results from the Jurisdictional Conference elections of new bishops

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Continued from page 3

for the UMC. The denomination is further liberalizing in what its top leaders believe and teach about Jesus Christ. Newly elected Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai in the North Central Jurisdiction recently declared that in the UMC, "it is not important that we agree on who Christ is." Newly elected Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank openly "calls for heretics ... to lead the church forward." A second openly partnered, gay activist bishop, Cedric Bridgeforth, was elected in the Western Jurisdiction, and a third came historically close to being elected in the Northeast, openly breaking longstanding rules banning "self-avowed, practicing homosexual" clergy. The growing caucus of gay activist bishops will increasingly redefine the denomination. The formerly conservative-leaning Southeastern Jurisdiction elected liberal leader Tom Berlin as bishop. At the 2019 General Conference, Berlin characterized the denomination upholding traditional Christian values on marriage and sex as a sickening "virus" like Ebola. Jurisdictional conferences across America, even in previously conservative Southern regions, adopted resolutions calling for effectively purging conservatives from denominational leadership (under the misleading pretext of denominational loyalty) and pushing immediate, de facto policy changes to disregard longstanding rules prohibiting same-sex weddings. But these gay activist bishops' lavish, six-figure salaries are subsidized annually by apportionments taken from United Methodist offering plates across the country. Western Jurisdiction delegates electing... "unqualified" bishops do not even pay entirely for their own choices. Litmus tests prevented any of the thirteen newly elected bishops from being a theological traditionalist who believes in historic, biblical Methodist doctrine about marriage being a covenant of one man and one woman.

Just one example of the result on our United Methodist Church, is that of 150-year-old Louisiana church, with more than 2,800 members, is now named Live Oak Church and has no plans to join any other denomination. The congregation voted Oct. 30, by a 99% margin, to disaffiliate from the United Methodist denomination. And so it goes....

When we consider the crisis in our denomination, what are we to make of it? We see different things that have been supported or opposed over the years – but how do those issues compare with what the Bible teaches us to regard? What or who is responsible? "Everything rises or falls on leadership," as John Maxwell was quoted. Indeed, years ago, a company executive when analyzing the decline in membership of the UMC (17% at that time) was quoted as saying, "If my company had lost 17% of its business on my watch, I would have been fired."

Indeed, IRD's Mark Tooley was quoted on December 2, 2022 as saying, "Just days ago, 487 United Methodist churches were approved for disaffiliation from the denomination, bringing the total of ratified exits to 1,314. Hundreds more have already voted to exit and are awaiting final approval. Almost all of them are theologically conservative churches anticipating the denomination's official and enthusiastic liberalization on LGBTQ issues when its governing General Conference meets in 2024. By the end of next year (the deadline for exiting with church property) at least 3,000 and possibly 5,000 churches are expected to exit. United Methodism has 30,000 U.S. churches. Denominational agencies are preparing for a 38% drop in funding for 2025-2028, which implies an approximate expected membership loss of 2.3 million members from the nearly 6.3 million

the denomination had in the United States in 2020. That is not a minor exodus."

This leads me to make two observations, first on where the "fault" lies in our problem and on our church as a whole:

1. Responsibility for the decline, disruption, and civil war going on in our United Methodist Church rests squarely with the Council of Bishops. In actuality, we as a denomination have descended into chaos – and this needs to be laid squarely at the feet of the bishops.

2. We as a denomination are dysfunctional when measured in terms of our professed goal of "Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." We are only kidding ourselves if we think this is true. If we are not following Jesus' teachings, we are not truly His disciples, and if we are not His disciples, how can we lead anyone else into a relationship that we ourselves do not have?

Despite what the Council of Bishops has said about not postponing the end date to disaffiliate, I propose:

1. For the Council of Bishops to arrange to extend the deadline to December 31, 2024 for any churches who might wish to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church.

2. For the Council of Bishops to request or arrange for the those churches who have already taken action to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church be permitted to send delegates to the 2024 General Conference and participate fully in deliberations there – and to vote on all aspects of the process.

More than anything else, what is needed today in our United Methodist Church is authentic, top-down revival.

If the Council of Bishops should fail to do that, the only advice I would have is for each church to disaffiliate – and to do it as soon as possible before time runs out and the deadline to do so has passed. It pains me to write this but it is what I would advise if the Council of Bishops fails to take meaningful action to correct this chaos that they have caused.

One final comment on those who decide to remain. Look again at the first two pictures on the front; envision that as being your church. If serious action is not taken, the remaining part of the United Methodist Church will suffer collapse organizationally, financially – but most tragically, spiritually.

Remember, I had predicted over 20 years ago what is happening in our church today.

— Allen O. Morris

If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions,

and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.

~ Charles Haddon Spurgeon