What is Concerned Methodists?

We are a ministry of laypeople and clergy made up of volunteers serving without pay who are joined together reaffirming our Wesleyan heritage, the Bible as being God’s word, and Jesus Christ as being fully Lord and Savior. We believe that there are some spiritual and moral truths, similar to physical laws of gravity, that are unchanging and universal.

We are grieved that our beloved United Methodist Church (UMC) has been in consistent decline for the past forty-seven years. We do not engage in political advocacy, but call into question those church personnel who give the public impression that they represent UM laity in their lobbying. We oppose actions taken by UM employees that represent UM laity in their lobbying. We do not engage in political advocacy, but call into question those church personnel who give the public impression that they represent UM laity in their lobbying.

We are a ministry of laypeople and clergy made up of volunteers serving without pay who are against our orthodox Christian faith and our Wesleyan heritage.

One bishop has said, “Allen Morris loves the United Methodist Church.” Yes, that is why we want to see it prosper. There are a lot of good things going on at the local church, but we want to see it prosper. There are a lot of good things going on at the local church, but we want to see it prosper.

When we return to our Wesleyan doctrine and heritage that have served us so well in the past, we have problems and correct them, we will start to grow again. Our greatest hope is that the Holy Spirit would pour on the people of the United Methodist Church and every person would be changed into a John Wesley or a Susannah Wesley. Then our people of the United Methodist Church and the Holy Spirit would be poured on the body of the church.

We believe that there are some spiritual and moral truths, similar to physical laws of gravity, that are unchanging and universal.

There may be some new recipients of The Christian Methodist Newsletter who may not be familiar with the Commission on a Way Forward. The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward (AWF) was appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the bishops in their charge from the 2016 UM General Conference to lead the church forward amid the present impasse related to “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer” (LGBTQ) inclusion and resulting questions about the unity of the church. The three models are roughly as follows:

1. The traditional model would affirm the current language in the denomination’s Book of Discipline, the denomination’s governing document, and seek to strengthen enforcement. The church policy book says the practice of homosexuality “is incompatible with Christian teaching” and lists officiating at a same-gender union or a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member as chargeable offenses under church law.

2. The one-church model would remove the Book of Discipline’s restrictive language and leave decision-making around LGBTQ ordination closer to the conference and local-church levels. Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball said the bishops have yet to recommend which level of the church would vote on questions of marriage or ordination. However, the model specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same-gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ people. She called it the most decentralized model because it puts decision-making closest to the ground. It also is similar to a plan the Connectional Table itself proposed to the 2016 General Conference.

3. The multi-branch model would replace the five U.S. jurisdictions with three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry – progressive, contextual and traditional branches. In this case, contextual means allowing churches flexibility in ministry with LGBTQ people as best fits their mission field. Central conferences – church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe – would remain as they are now. This plan would require amending the denomination’s constitution.

The bishops, in collaboration with the collective work of the Commission, will decide on a report to be presented to the Special Session of the General Conference called for February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.

To find a way forward through its impasse around homosexuality, the United Methodist Church will need a new approach to its top policy-making body – General Conference.” Bishop Steiner Ball had told members of the Connectional Table at an April 4-7 meeting. She made clear that the church would not get anywhere if people came to the big meeting “girded for spiritual battle.” When we see other people as objects, we give ourselves permission to ‘horrible-ize’ them,” she said. “We set the stage for war when we exaggerate our difference.”

Ultimately, she said, United Methodists have common interests even if they have different positions around homosexuality….But Germain Mupasa, a Connectional Table member from the Democratic Republic of Congo, said through an interpreter that he was struck by Steiner Ball urging people to listen without trying to convince others of their perspective. “In a roundabout way, I think we will fail,” he said, “because then how do we convince people?”

Mupasa’s is an astute observation. With the bishop’s suggestion as to how to proceed with our actions, only talk would ensue. This would be ineffective and might serve to provide a smoke-screen for those with an underlying agenda to push through a radical agenda. It was also reported that “Several spoke of how even during this time of uncertainty, they wanted to help the denomination continue to focus outward on its mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world.”

In reality, the issue over sexuality is rooted in one’s view of Scripture – is it normative for what God calls “sin”? Until the denomination gets that right, we have no basis for truth nor for “making disciples for Jesus Christ.”

Denominational Revival

We will not have denominational revival until we have personal spiritual revival. We need to focus on essentials. Just as every human body requires oxygen for life, so every human soul needs the life that Jesus Christ gives. We need the passion for saving the lost that they so desperately need – the passion that John Wesley had and those in the “third-world” countries have today. We need to repent of our failure to fully serve the Lord, and pray for an outpouring of His Holy Spirit. We need to stay spiritually grounded through prayer, Bible study, scripture memorization, witnessing, and obedience to His Word. This reality is found in our Wesleyan heritage.

A Way Forward

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Majority of UMC Bishops Favor Same-Sex Unions, but Other Options on the Table

by John Lomperis

The spring 2018 meeting of the global United Methodist Council of Bishops spent the majority of its time in closed sessions. The focus was wrapping up the “Way Forward” process.

At the 2016 General Conference, petitions to liberalize church policies against homosexual practice and other forms of extra-martial sex were going down in flames, while petitions to increase accountability were advancing. So some liberal bishops intervened in very extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented ways. Ultimately, they used questionable parliamentary tactics to narrowly ram through their motion, which “deferred” some (but not all) of the accountability petitions and called for the creation of a “Commission on a Way Forward” to prepare for a specially called General Conference to resolve our conflicts over sexual morality and accountability.

The commission has finished meeting, and the final report to the special February 23-26, 2019, General Conference was expected to have been finalized at our bishops’ April 30 – May 4 meeting. But within days of our bishops voting on their final decision, they were publicly disagreeing on what they had agreed on. Bishop Scott Jones of Texas publicly revealed some of what happened. He reported that one vote showed that a simple majority of active bishops favored the Liberalization Plan, but that this majority was less than two thirds. Then over 80 percent voted to adopt a final report that would also “include” a Traditionalist and Multi-Banch Plan, while stating that a majority “recommended” the Liberalization Plan.

Apparently a majority of UMC bishops favor same-sex unions, but other options are on the table; some traditionalist bishops voted for the final report because they had been led to understand that it would allow all three plans to be available as options. The Liberalization Plan has been described as forcing United Methodists in every annual conference, at least in the USA, to accept same-sex unions, and likely also homosexuality as active ministers. Some liberal bishops are dishonestly marketing this as “the one-church plan,” even though it would be the one plan most guaranteed to split the UMC.

The Traditionalist Plan has been described as maintaining our biblical standards on sexual morality and increasing accountability. The Multi-Banch, or “Connectional Conference,” Plan has been described as dividing American United Methodism into two overlapping nationwide jurisdictions with separate standards on sexuality, while somehow remaining in one denomination.

As of this writing, few details have been released about what exactly would be included for each plan in the final report. But thankfully, the Judicial Council has ruled that others can submit alternative proposals. Meanwhile, liberal bishops like Ken Carter of Florida and Bruce Ough of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area are eagerly promoting the Liberalization plan. Ough was the main proponent of the “Way Forward” proposal at the 2016 General Conference, and was Council of Bishops president from then until last spring. Carter was co-moderator of the commission, and has succeeded Ough as Council president.

Fortunately, bishops do not vote at General Conference and the Liberalization Plan is unlikely to pass. But the now-public liberal biases of the Council of Bishops as a whole, which currently under-represents Africans while over-representing more liberal areas of the USA, should give traditionalist United Methodists pause before trusting this group.

For reflection: Matthew 18:5-6 (+ v. 7).

Source: By John Lomperis, UMAction Briefing; Summer 2018, P. 4. Lomperis is the Director of UMAction. UMAction Briefing is published by The Institute on Religion & Democracy, 1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005.

“Us versus Them”?*  
by Allen O. Morris

Going back to my “dark hole” experience, it took me two years to sort it all out; what I found was that a main reason for this happening was that I had a physical relationship with my girlfriend. I thought it was okay; my friends thought it was okay; society thought it was okay. This “dark hole” was beyond my own understanding – but when I later read the Bible, it reflected back to me that what I did was wrong.

We cannot think of sexuality aside from spiritual issues; it has spiritual significance (Dr. Julie Slattery). We cannot condone sex with just anyone because God’s standard is to be within marriage. When we do less than that we are, first of all, misusing what He intended for us to be good, pleasurable, and procreative we err. Secondly, it is sin – plainly and simply (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, among many, many other references). Third, it opens the door to problems that we would not experience if we lived according to His will in that area. Billy Graham explained in an article entitled “Sex is meant for husband and wife” in response to a high school teenager who wrote that he/she was still a virgin but being pressured to give in. Billy had given advice to keep that person’s commitment to purity.

Billy further explained that “...few things can create more problems in our lives than misusing sex and ignoring the boundaries He has established. God knows the troubles we get into (emotionally, socially and physically) when we allow ourselves to yield to sexual temptation – and we drag others into the same troubles, also.” Billy went on to say, “God intended for the sexual relationship to be an expression of love between a man and his wife – and that is one reason why God’s purpose for sex can never be fulfilled outside the mutual commitment of marriage. The Bible is clear: ‘Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body...honor God with your body’ (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).”

Dr. Charles Stanley in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 6:20 writes, “All sin separates us from God, but sexual sin damages and sabotages the very physical processes that keep life going. It also tends to warp the human character at a very deep level. No Christian should ever say, ‘It’s my body; I can do what I want with it!’ No believer owns his or her body; Christ paid for it with His own blood on the cross. It belongs to Him.” (Life Principles Study Bible, p. 1028)

All too often, homosexual practice has been targeted as being the issue of central importance in our denomination. It is a relatively small part of the much greater problem of heterosexual sin. 

Continued on next page
immorality. We must not criticize the one without condemning the other. Indeed, if we had maintained high standards of morality in the hetero-sexual arena, we might not have had to address the seriousness of the problems of homosexuality that we do. If we could quantify the numbers of sexual encounters, undoubtedly there are far more of a heterosexual nature simply because there are far more people who engage in that type of sexuality than either homosexuality or bisexuality.

In our own United Methodist Church, we ostensibly stand for concrete moral values in the area of sexuality. The UM Social Principles reaffirms Biblical truth in this area when it notes in Paragraph 65G that, "sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the marriage bond." This is a standard that should be observed, lived, and taught in our church's life. In reality, the most important reason for adhering to Biblical morality was stated in Dr. J. Vernon McGee's Bible commentary on I Corinthians 6:16–18, "My friend, you cannot live in immorality and serve Christ."

The core issue is sin; this goes back to my "near death experience" when I was sliding into that dark hole. What I (and others) thought was okay was in fact not; what was of overwhelming importance is God's standard. When I later read the Bible and it reflected back to me my actions, I realized the seriousness of what it calls "sin." The loving thing for someone to have done for me would have been for him to point out my involvement in sin. The same core issue that we are dealing with in the United Methodist Church – with all of these meetings, legislation, plans, and talk about restructuring – is God's standard in terms of sexuality.

This is not "Us versus Them" nor should finger-pointing be involved; this is an issue of obedience to God's standards, sin, and purity that affect all of us. Indeed, two of the books I have authored dealing with this area are dedicated to "Sis" who is my adoptive "sister" – since she was a college freshman she has lived as a lesbian. I love her with all of my heart but cannot affirm the choices she makes. A parallel in our church is that I count as friends several people on the other side of this issue with whom I disagree but love and treat with respect.

We need to remember it is not about "hate" or "phobia" – as some people allege (and we must always cut through misunderstanding and manipulative rhetoric in this area) – but about speaking the truth in love. God wants obedience to His will. Stanley also spoke of this in his commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:13, "From Genesis to Revelation, God instructs and urges His people to obey His commands..." (p. 1053). Later he goes on to reiterate this in his commentary on I Corinthians 7:19, "God values devoted obedience far more than adherence to religious ritual." I would add, "Or to our own self-direction that leads us away from the truth of His word. We must never underestimate God's requirements for obedience and holiness."

As Billy so often does, he then urged the teenager who had written him to commit his/her life "-- every part of it to include your relationships with others and your body -- to Jesus Christ." He concludes his advice with, "You will never regret your decision to follow Christ, for His way is always the best."

"Us versus Them"? – Absolutely not! We all face this together! The foundational issue is: do we want people to make choices that will hurt them in this world and be devastating in the world to come – possibly sending them into a "dark hole" Christ-less eternity? Of course not!

— Allen O. Morris

At the Crossroads in Our United Methodist Church

By Allen O. Morris

Although much attention is given to the “A Way Forward” report on the future of our denomination, we face other challenges as well. I believe that we are at a defining moment in not only our United Methodist Church but also in our country and in a wider context – of the world. Basically, these are spiritual issues.

In our country we see our freedoms being eroded and our foundational documents increasingly ignored. We see increased division and violence in the public sector as some are trying to divide us into group hostile to each other and along political and/or racial lines. At times people have been assaulted for merely expressing their views or wearing a shirt with the "wrong" message.

Just this past month I learned of a massive group of people demonstrating and chanting words like, "No wall, no war, no USA!" In actuality, this is nothing new; in 1986 I remember reading a book entitled In Defense of Creation which had as one of its ideas supported by members of the UM Council of Bishops the idea of a "world without borders." The more recent protest centered around the question of whether or not to build a wall on our southern border to stem the massive influx of people crossing into our country illegally. Indeed, as a native of Texas, I’ve learned about people finding Islamic prayer rugs in the desert – apparently discarded by people coming here illegally who made their way through the desert; just this past month I learned of one man who was caught trying to smuggle 6 illegal Somalis into the country from Mexico. People from India have been smuggled across our southern border. We need to oppose illegal immigration. In reality, if we have no borders, we have no country.

As far as the need to protect our borders by measures such as building a wall along the southern border, apply a common-sense test: do you lock the doors of your house at night? Why? The obvious reason is there are "bad" people in this world and we need to protect our homes and families from them. The same applies to the United States; we have "bad" people in the world who hate our country. As we know, hundreds of citizens in our country have been harmed or killed by people who are here illegally (with just two being Kate Steinle and more recently Molie Tibbetts from Iowa). I have been involved in a prison ministry where 24% of the inmates are from other countries. In addition we have an epidemic of illegal drugs flooding across our borders. Finally, our country has some very real enemies to include external threats coming from areas such as a China-Russia-North Korea-Iran axis, anarchists, and radical Islam; they would like to do us harm and even bring about the collapse of the United States.

We face internal problems as well such as rampant immorality and secular-humanism using Saul Alinsky tactics that threaten to undermine the stability of our society. One thing that the presence of Islamists in our country who refuse to assimilate will do is to force us as Christians to confront the fundamentals of our faith – what do we truly believe? Our country is under attack by those who would like to bring it down.

What should we do? Nelson Bell, Father-in-Law to Billy Graham, was committed to working for renewal within his (Presbyterian) denomination. His daughter Ruth talked about the influence her father had over her husband, “Over the years, Bill saw that to retreat is not a way to fight a battle.

When things get difficult, you don’t quit your church and join another. This is daddy’s firm policy: you take a stand, you defend the faith, but you don’t retreat.” This applies to both our church and our country.

As mentioned earlier, the problems in these three these areas (our United Methodist Church, our country, and the world) are at their very core spiritual issues.

May I ask that you do some things? Please commit to pray! One church here in Fayetteville follows the example of Winston Churchill who during the height of World War II called for everyone to stop what they were doing at noon and take one minute to pray for their country. This church asks its members to commit to pray for the United States for one minute at 9:00 P.M. every night.

May I also ask you to think about fasting for our country? Indeed, John Wesley fasted on a regular basis. One plan offered by the World Methodist Council is to fast from Thursday evening after dinner through Friday after lunch. We could fast and pray that there might be a move of the Holy Spirit across the United Methodist Church so that every one of us would be changed into a “John Wesley” or a “Susannah Wesley!” May I also ask that you open your Bible and pray a “Psalm 91 hedge of protection around the United States of America against all enemies foreign and domestic – and guidance for our national leadership? Then I ask that you pray that our country would once again become a beacon of morality, freedom, and truth to the whole world. In the past the United States has been one of the most generous, selfless countries on earth: helping other nations, families adopting children from overseas, fighting for the freedom of others – while never annexing one square foot of territory. We can still have a bright future!

President Ronald Reagan stated in 1961, “But freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction….We didn’t pass [freedom] on to our children in the bloodstream. The only way they can inherit the freedom we have known is if we fight for it, protect it, defend it, and then hand it to them with the well-taught lessons of how they in their lifetime must do the same. And if you and I don’t do this, then you and I may well spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it once was like in America when men were free.”

We face serious challenges. Inform yourselves. Inform others. Pray.

Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground… — Ephesians 6:13

* Taken from the title of the book At the Crossroads by Allen Morris, © 2004.

**If my people who are called by my Name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land.** — 2 Chronicles 7:14
This past June 12th – 13th I attended the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention held in Dallas, Texas to report on its proceedings as a press representative for The Christian Methodist Newsletter. It was instructive to say the least and I learned a great deal.

- First of all, I observed the people – the ages of many of the attendees and the plethora of youth and teenagers. This contrasted with the sea of “gray heads” I notice when reporting on our Annual Conferences or our quadrennial General Conferences. I venture to say that the average age of the attendees was at least twenty years younger than in many of our gatherings (no statistical survey; just a rough estimate).

- The second thing that I noticed was the liveliness and vitality with which the proceedings were conducted. When there was an item of business to address, it was resolved expeditiously in a minimum amount of time. Whereas we have “Delegates” attend our conferences, they have “Messengers” who attend in far greater numbers than at our conferences; they voted by raising their yellow cards to signify approval or to otherwise address the issues.

- The third was the size of the book that addressed conference reports and business; their Book of Reports was entitled “Testify (Acts 5:20) Go. Stand. Speak.” and was 185 pages in length. It contained reports, statistics, and other relevant data.

- The fourth was the greater amount of time during the conference dealing with spiritual issues and worship. It seemed there was a vitality that is all too often missing in our own United Methodist gatherings. Often during the public meetings and deliberations Scripture verses would be used to speak to the issue at hand.

- The fifth was the brief length of the gathering – two days. Short. Business-like. Efficient. To the point.

- The sixth were the issues apparently supported by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) headed by Russell Moore. Some of them were to assist churches in applying the conscience protection in health care, defunding of Planned Parenthood, no taxpayer funding and ethical concerns in the public arena such as: promotion of global religious freedom, and its laser-like focus of winning people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. – would be troubling and injurious to not only their denomination but to our society as a whole – Let us pray that this does not happen.

A second area of concern centered on Russell Moore’s actions before the Dallas gathering. He had apparently made public statements from a decidedly political view by sharply criticizing those who had supported one of the presidential candidates. The public activism resulted in a bit of turmoil at the SBC with one Messenger making a motion to defund the ERLC; it was defeated. It will be interesting to see if this Commission takes the same path our United Methodist counterpart the UM General Board of Church and Society takes. One result of this shift is that it would sideline the Gospel. This would be tragic. Let us hope this does not happen.

Let us pray that the Southern Baptist Convention will stay focused on truly winning people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ – even as we “contend for the faith” and are trying to get our own United Methodist Church back on track and in line with our orthodox Wesleyan Heritage.

The question was asked, “Can we learn anything from the Baptists?” The answer is a resounding “Yes!” For those of us in the renewal ministries working for revival in the United Methodist Church, let us pray that we will – through the power of the Holy Spirit – be catalysts in helping to make this happen.

– Allen O. Morris

As Christians, the Bible calls us to be salt and light to influence our culture.
— Dr. Ben Carson, Leading pediatric neurosurgeon in the world.

Membership in The United Methodist Church

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