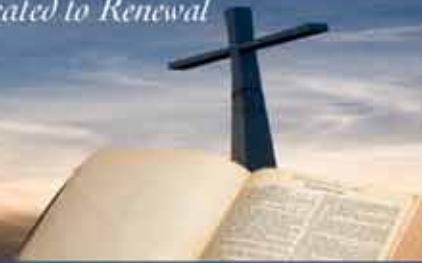


THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Christ, Dedicated to Truth, Dedicated to Renewal



The Christian
Methodist Newsletter
is published by:

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What is Concerned Methodists?

We are a ministry of laypeople and clergy – made up completely 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 are grieved that our beloved United Methodist Church (UMC) has been in consistent decline for the past forty years.

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

We do not engage in political advocacy, but call into question those employees, bishops, and church personnel who give the public impression that they represent UM laity in their lobbying. We oppose actions taken by UM employees that 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 the big problem is at the national and leadership level of the United Methodist Church. Significantly, as goes the leadership, so goes the denomination.

When we return to our Wesleyan doctrine and heritage that have served us so well in the past, face our problems, correct them, and then we will start to grow again. Our ultimate hope is that the Holy Spirit would somehow be poured on the people of the United Methodist Church and every person would be changed into a John Wesley or a Susannah Wesley. Then our church would turn the United States and the world upside down for Jesus Christ!

That is our ultimate prayer!

Misguided Shepherds

Misguided Shepherds is a 330 page book detailing the problems that have gotten our United Methodist Church into the state that we have today. It examines the denomination's leadership role advocating political issues and how they have contributed to the church's 40-year decline.

Order your copy today. Cost is \$14.00 + \$2.00 for shipping and handling. Send your request to: Allen Morris, P.O. Box 2864, Fayetteville, NC 28302.

Volume 20, Number 1

Fall 2010

Call to Action and the Agencies

By Dr. Riley B. Case

I was speaking with a fellow pastor several years ago and inquired whether he and his church might be interested in the Good News magazine. He replied no because they were upset enough with the denomination as it was without hearing more stuff. He went on to explain that the denominational papers were bad enough even with their institutional spin. If his people got the real news they would be tempted to "jump ship."

So it is. In this pastor's mind it is better to keep the people in the dark than that they should be informed about what the church was really doing. I thought of that conversation several weeks ago when the following stories broke:

- 1) Claremont School of Theology. The UM seminary in California is now "multi-faith" meaning they are bringing on board Muslim professors to train Muslim imams (clergy) and Jewish professors to train rabbis. Soon they will train Hindus and Buddhists. UM apportionment monies support this endeavor to the tune of about 1 million dollars a year. In a world of great poverty, in a world crying out for preachers to claim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, in a denomination short of funds, our tithes and offerings are being used to promote the idea that all religions are various roads to the same god. The president of the seminary, Dr. Jerry Campbell, has said that persons who seek to evangelize persons of other faiths to accept Jesus Christ have "an incorrect perception of what it means to follow Jesus."
- 2) "Sex and the Church-an Ordained Single Woman and the Discipline." This article, part of a series on human sexuality appearing in the Faith and Action electronic newsletter sponsored by the General Board of Church and Society, argues basically that the church's standard on sexuality, "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage," needs to be changed. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage can be loving and fulfilling and should not be considered sinful, even for clergy. In August, 2009, a Unitarian minister was given space to make a somewhat similar argument. Other articles in the series have argued that abstinence programs don't work, teen-agers need to be instructed in maturity for the timing of sexual encounters, and abortion is OK. Missing are articles that are written from the perspective of the traditional and Biblical view of marriage and human sexuality. Missing for the last 38 years (since 1972 when the board was founded) are any articles or statements in defense of the Biblical (and United Methodist) stance that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.
- 3) The church's support and lobbying for the Democrat health care plan recently passed by the congress. When Nancy Pelosi thanked the UM Church for its support in passing the Democrat's health plan it took many UM's by surprise. How did we get lined up on only one side of a partisan issue? Those who have been around the inside workings of the church were not so surprised. It used to be different. Many years ago the church's moral and social stances came from the people. There were no general agencies to pontificate that the use of alcohol was sin or the slavery was against the will of God. These views grew out of the convictions of the people responding to Biblical preaching. Today social stances are decreed from the top down. General agencies, such as the General Board of Church and Society, are staffed by some of the most liberal persons in the denomination. These persons write

General Conference legislation out of their own biases. This legislation is pushed through the General Conference, often without debate, and placed in the 1084-page Book of Resolutions. Then the same staff members who wrote the legislation quote the Book of Resolutions, "represent" the "church's stand" on numbers of controversial issues, and argue before lawmakers that this is the considered United Methodist position. Obviously, the system is flawed.

Perhaps as never before there is a fundamental divide between the corporate leadership of the United Methodist Church and its people. In addition, the corporate leadership is either unwilling or unable to recognize the seriousness of this problem and relate it to the membership and financial crisis presently facing the church. (emphasis added)

The Claremont situation should be considered as exhibit #1 illustrating our problems. That a denomination that claims to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that speaks of its mission as making disciples of Jesus Christ, that operates with doctrinal standards in the Wesleyan tradition, that historically has been in large part responsible for defining the word "evangelical" in American church life—that such a denomination should continue to pour money into an institution that operates with a philosophy that undermines all that United Methodism has been about, is indefensible.

Claremont operates without regard to United Methodist history and doctrine. It has declared itself to be going in a different direction from the church. This is fine, but this means there should be disaffiliation. Let the school raise money from sources in the Middle East (as it has spoken of doing). But why should bishops urge local churches to cut back staff and program to "pay apportionments" when those apportionments are used as "bail out" money to prop up sick seminaries. Furthermore, MEF (Ministerial Education Fund) monies should support students (who graduate with huge debts), not institutions. And, if the fund supports seminaries it should support seminaries overseas where the church is growing, and not be restricted only to seminaries in the states.

Are these matters even being debated? The Council of Bishops is quiet; the General Board of Higher Education and the Ministry is quiet; the other UM seminaries are hesitant to criticize another seminary lest they too should come under criticism.

Is there hope? At the moment the only hope seems to be the Call to Action Committee, which will be making recommendations with the goal of reforming and renewing the church. The church is investing a great deal of energy and trust in this committee. Will the committee rise to the challenge? Will the Connectional Table and the Council of Bishops be willing to support any of the controversial recommendations? Or will the corporate culture, which is invested in institutions and in a defective church structure that simply is not working, be too much to overcome?

The future of the church is at stake..

Dr. Riley Case is a retired UM pastor living in Kokomo, Indiana.

United Methodist Church Facing Health Bill Fallout*

In the wake of enactment of costly and controversial health-care legislation that will significantly broaden the federal government's power over the U.S. health-care system – as well as over states and individuals – United Methodist bishops and other church leaders are attempting to mollify laity and clergy unhappy about the UMC's role in supporting the health care bill. In recent days, bishops, district superintendents and pastors have issued letters attempting to clarify the church's position and explain the work of the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), the denominational agency that played a key role in pushing for a larger federal role in the allocation of health-care resources and for federal mandates on insurance companies and individual Americans.

On Palm Sunday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi got a standing ovation at San Francisco's Glide Memorial UMC. Just before the bill passed the House of Representatives on Sunday, March 21, Speaker Pelosi singled out the UMC as a key supporter of the bill. "[M]ore than 350 organizations, representing Americans of every age, every background, every part of the country...have endorsed this legislation," she said on the House floor. "Our coalition ranges from the AARP...to the United Methodist Church."

The speaker's comments set off a firestorm of reaction from United Methodists not pleased with the legislation or the sharply partisan process by which it was adopted. (The bill according to polls was opposed by a majority of voters.) The morning after Speaker Pelosi's remarks, church leaders from pastors to bishops began receiving calls and e-mails from concerned United Methodists demanding an explanation. A few laity and clergy posted their concerns in the "blogosphere." "I am so disgusted with our denomination," one commenter wrote on the blog of the North Carolina Conference. "A prominent United Methodist pastor noted that the speaker's remarks about UM advocacy for the controversial bill could further harm the denomination's attempts to reverse decades of membership losses. "In my opinion, Speaker Pelosi's comments give [many] Americans another reason not to be Methodist," wrote Tim Stevens, executive pastor at Indiana's Granger Community Church, on his Leading Smart blog. "I do everything I can to help thousands of Methodist pastors and leaders every year.... It saddens me that the United Methodist Church is often known primarily for its political positions that have nothing to do with making disciples of Christ," he wrote. A clergy commenter responding to Mr. Stevens post wrote. "I will say this though: The handling of this bill was shady at best and to attach the name of a denomination to it does no one any good."

The UM GBCS, an official agency of the denomination, did play a lead role among religious organizations in pushing for a stronger federal role in health care. That emphasis was tantamount to lobbying for legislation likely to be embraced by Congressional liberals and opposed by those who preferred a more free-market approach to addressing issues of health care availability and affordability.

As part of its advocacy, in December 2009, GBCS orchestrated a letter-writing and telephone campaign aimed at persuading Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) — a United Methodist — to vote for the same controversial legislation that passed the House last week. On Christmas Eve, six days after that focused campaign began, the Senate passed the bill. Sen. Nelson — the final senator to make up his mind — voted "yes."

On the House side, GBCS' Faith in Action newsletter noted earlier this month that "help is needed in the next few weeks as Congress deliberates over final passage of critical health-care protections." GBCS urged United Methodists to "contact your members of Congress" and "support health care reform." GBCS — without actually endorsing the bill by name — was essentially endorsing the bill that had already passed the Senate and was about to come before the House. Given the GBCS clear attempt to sway members of Congress to "support health care reform" in the weeks leading up to the March 21 House vote, it seems reasonable that Speaker Pelosi (who is not a UM) would construe GBCS' advocacy as an actual endorsement by the UMC of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, especially since GBCS is an official agency of the denomination.

In response to church member concerns about role of the UMC in passage of the legislation, Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the UM Council of Bishops, issued a letter that characterized the role of GBCS as simply one of "monitoring Congressional action" and "informing [Congressional leaders] of the church's stance consistent with General Conference action." Likewise, Bp. D. Max Whitfield of the Northwest Texas Conference insisted that GBCS simply promoted principles, not specific legislation. Other bishops issued similar letters, including Bp. Larry Goodpaster (Western North Carolina), Bp. Scott Jones (Kansas East/Kansas West) and Bp. Janice Riggle Huie (Texas).*

However, this is just word-play. The GBCS and other leaders in the UMC did take a highly visible role in pushing for this legislation and did give the politicians the impression that it had the support of the entire Church. It is disappointing that the leaders of our denomination would not admit to the clear truth that UM employees engaged in political lobbying to pass legislation that they (the laity) very much opposed – and with good reason. Quite simply, they are being untruthful in this. It is no wonder that an increasing number of the people in the pews distrust our church leadership. – AOM

* As reported in the MethodistThinker.com; March 31, 2010.

Islam and the building of the Ground-Zero Mosque

Our denominational leadership is increasingly supportive of Islam as indicated in what is happening at Claremont School of Theology in California. This Islamic-friendly attitude is seen increasingly in the writings of the various UM news media. But a more complete and accurate analysis of Islam can be found in the section of the book *Misguided Shepherds* entitled "Christianity and Islam". Finally, it must be stated that having concerns about an ideology that is determined to injure or destroy you is not a "phobia" or "racist view" as some are wont to allege; this would be a legitimate concern expressed by thoughtful people who have a concern for the present and their country's future. This applies to Islam. Take the time to ascertain the truth. – AOM

...There is plenty to reflect upon before allowing a mosque to rise next to the ruins of the World Trade Center and the small Orthodox St. Nicholas church that stood nearby. Ground Zero Mosque proponents argue that the 1st Amendment of the Constitution obliges all Americans to respect their religion, and law. Well meaning, but ignorant of history, their non-Muslim supporters also believe the 1st Amendment is on their side. They have savagely denounced those opposed, labeling them with just about every pejorative, including "un-American" and "criminal."

From the Islamic "radicals" perspective, a mosque at Ground Zero is a sign of conquest and supremacy, just like the Aqsa mosque and Dome of The Rock, built over the ruins of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, and the Hagia Sophia basilica in Constantinople, turned into a mosque (now a museum in Istanbul). History is not lost on the radicals that engineered the 9/11 attacks, and they are counting on Americans' ignorance of history to allow construction of a third monument symbolizing Islamic conquest, to be built over the irrefutable argument of destruction. It will serve the cause of radical Islamization, not Islam.

This is not the time to be building a monument that grants the 9/11 terrorists proof of the righteousness and inevitability of their cause.

Today's "respect" without historical perspective is tomorrow's "submission."

– Leon A. Goldstein

(The author is a retired army officer who, as a Foreign Area Officer, specialized in the non-slavic minorities and Islamic politics in the former Soviet Union.)

OPERATION BANDANAS

Providing Psalm 91 Bandanas to Our Deployed Military

Since Operation Bandanas began in November 2006, many thousands of soldiers have been covered and blessed with Psalm 91 bandanas. Through the generosity and gratitude of people from the Ft. Bragg community, the state of North Carolina and, now, from all over the United States, thousands of our courageous troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have been provided a bandana with God's words of comfort, strength and protection.

Please consider partnering in this mission for our military. Share the word with all that you know, individuals, email address books, churches, organizations, and businesses. With God's favor and blessing upon this effort and through the generosity of His inspired people, we will continue to send Psalm 91 bandanas as gifts to all of our deployed troops.

Operation Bandanas, c/o Mary Gray, PO Box 87356, Fayetteville, NC 28304
<http://operationbandanas.com/> • E: bandanas91@yahoo.com.

Illegal Immigration

Our denomination's bishops have come down squarely on the side of "comprehensive immigration reform" – or in reality illegal immigration. Bishop Minerva Carcano appears to have taken the lead in pushing this issue to include street demonstrations. In addition to all of the public information in the public media and that contained in the book *Misguided Shepherds*, one of our associates offers this perspective from Arizona:

"Considering all of the turmoil on our streets in Phoenix at the State Capital, the Sheriff's headquarters and the various sports stadiums, it is no small wonder that our State is highlighted in much of the news on network TV. Unfortunately, our Bishops do not understand the nitty-gritty of this problem in the border states with Mexico. We do in fact live with this on a daily basis and take great exception to the Church not coming down on the side of US Law in this instance. By not doing so, our Church simply condones acts of violence and enables further acts of disobedience by the ridiculous demonstrators in our streets.

Most of the Church is quite insulated from the daily reality of unabated Illegal Immigration and the effects it has on the citizens of AZ. To pontificate in this matter by championing the side of illegal aliens while ignoring the drastic impact of the crimes is political pandering."

Sincerely in Jesus, Hal

Here We Go Again

The UM Judicial Council is being asked to revisit a decision allowing a pastor to bar a gay man from joining his congregation. When the denomination's top court meets Oct. 27-30 in New Orleans, seven of the 31 docket items relate to membership issues, including the right of pastors to decide who is worthy of membership. Judicial Council Decision No. 1032 (J.D. #1032) from Oct. 29, 2005, related to the case of the Rev. Ed Johnson, who had been the senior pastor at South Hill (Va.) UMC until the Virginia Annual Conference placed him on an involuntary leave of absence. Bishop Charlene Kammerer upheld the action. After J.D. #1032 was issued, Kammerer was compelled to return Johnson to his pulpit – and the Council of Bishops issued their "Pastoral Letter"* disagreeing with the ruling. The following year, she reassigned him to a church in Dahlgren in the far northeast corner of Virginia.

The Rev. Johnson had held a series of meetings with the man, and the man's sexual practices was a significant part of the discussions. Rev. Johnson had delayed admitting the man into membership in the church because Johnson said the man would not repent nor live a different lifestyle. Therefore, Johnson believed that the man was not ready for church membership at that time in his spiritual life.

The Northern Illinois, Minnesota, and Arkansas conferences are requesting the Judicial Council reconsider J.D. #1032. If reconsideration is granted, the Judicial Council would place them on the April 2011 docket.

* In their pastoral letter, the logic of the bishops would have been:

1. The individual admits he is in a homosexual relationship and refuses to leave it.
2. The Bible says that homosexual practice is a sin. The Book of Discipline states that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching.
3. In order for an individual to become a member, he must – according to the Book of Discipline – repent of his sin.
4. The individual refuses to repent of his sin or to give it up.
5. The individual then would either have to lie and say he was repenting of his sin when in fact he was not, or to tell the pastor the truth – that he cannot take the vows of membership with integrity.
6. If the individual cannot take the vows of membership, how then can he become a member?

Is this rational? It would appear not. Such logic causes increasing numbers of people to question the denomination's leadership. Furthermore, what is missing in all of this is – what Rev. Ed Johnson was doing with the individual. He was counseling him in an effort to persuade him to give up what the Bible calls sin – as he should have been doing. He was being faithful to what he, as a Spirit-filled pastor, should have been doing. When the actions were taken to remove him from his church, he and his family experienced traumatic change. One day he, his wife, and his teenaged daughter had a place to stay, the next day they had no home, no income, no means of employment. Have we no sense of compassion for this humble, Godly man and his family? What are our true priorities? What are we thinking? – AOM

– Linda Bloom, UMNS, as reported in Newscope, August 11, 2010. Nicholas Elms, The South Hill Enterprise, August 7, 2010; vol. 105, No. 7. The book Misguided Shepherds by Allen Morris, pp 118-126

Vital Congregations and a Creeping Crisis of Relevancy

Two research studies commissioned by the Call to Action Project have recently been posted at umc.org/calltoaction <<http://umc.org/calltoaction>>. Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, chair of the steering team, said, "Radical, deep and strategic change is needed for The UMC to align our culture, structure and processes in order to foster vitality in congregations." The steering team continues its deliberations and will deliver its report and recommendations to the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table in the fall. Among the problems outlined by the operational assessment are a general lack

of trust within the denomination and a perception of great distance among local churches, annual conferences and the general church agencies. [Emphasis added] – Heather Hahn at UMNS and Newscope, as reported in Newscope, August 4, 2010

With the lack of truthfulness from members of the general boards and agencies and our denomination's leadership, is it any wonder that we have a lack of trust and consistent 40-year decline? We have serious integrity problems that need to be faced. – AOM

Membership in The United Methodist Church

Year	Membership	Net Loss	Year	Membership	Net Loss	Year	Membership	Net Loss
1969	10,789,624	1 st Yr. Tracked by CM	1983	9,332,712	72,452	1997	8,457,227	42,517
1970	10,671,774	117,850	1984	9,266,853	65,859	1998	8,405,746	51,481
1971	10,509,198	162,576	1985	9,192,172	74,681	1999	8,356,816	48,930
1972	10,334,521	174,677	1986	9,124,575	67,597	2000	8,334,204	22,612
1973	10,063,060	271,461	1987	9,055,145	69,430	2001	8,303,561	30,643
1974	9,957,710	105,350	1988	8,979,139	76,006	2002	8,257,495	48,646
1975	9,861,028	96,682	1989	8,904,824	74,315	2003	8,192,495	65,000 (est.)
1976	9,785,534	75,494	1990	8,849,538	55,286	2004	8,135,806	56,689
1977	9,731,781	53,753	1991	8,785,184	64,354	2005	7,989,875	84,822
1978	9,653,711	78,070	1992	8,723,034	62,150	2006	7,931,733+	53,449
1979	9,584,771	68,940	1993	8,646,466	76,568	2007	7,856,752	74,981
1980	9,519,407	65,364	1994	8,584,199	62,267	2008	7,774,420	82,332
1981	9,457,012	62,395	1995	8,534,891	49,308			
1982	9,405,164	51,848	1996	8,499,744	35,147			

Bringing Up Father

No, not the comic strip characters featuring Jiggs and Maggie, the high-society family and their experiences. This is about the penchant for clergy to not refer to God in masculine terms. For instance, in the Adult Bible Studies for Fall 2010, typical of the writing is the politically-correct version, "God identified God's self to Moses by way of God's relationships with..." (p. 6) Whereas the normal way to have written that would have been, "God identified Himself to Moses by way of His relationships with..." And later on page 7 we have, "God revealed God's self in the fire..." with the normal way saying it would be, "God revealed Himself in the fire..." Isn't this a bit silly?

We need to realize that God is beyond gender – yet He has chosen to be identified in the masculine. Jesus Himself referred to Him as "Abba" – "Daddy" when praying. The fact that when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior we have the right to call God "Father" – this is an immense privilege describing a closeness that we can feel combined with the reality that we can go to Him in prayer with our requests.

So when we bow to political-correctness and refuse to call Him in those terms but use "gender-neutral" terms this distances ourselves from Him by our verbiage. If we feel compelled to bow to how someone else thinks we need to call God, are we putting that pressure above His self-revelation? If that is so, what is truly our god? Is it the opinions of others?

We truly need to examine our motives in use of these terms. For me, I would not for anything give up the joy of calling the God who created the universe and knows me by name – "Father!" – Allen O. Morris

Have You Accepted Jesus?

The Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, I admit that I need You. Please forgive my unbelief and the things I have done wrong. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He paid for all my sins with His blood on the Cross. I call on His name to save me. I now receive His life. I believe Jesus is living in me, that I am forgiven, and now I am a Christian. Because of this free gift of eternal life I will go to be with Jesus when I die. Thank you, Lord, for saving me. – Amen

Prayer by UM pastor Reverend Terry Teykl

Boycott of the Home Depot

I am planning to ask the Board of Directors of Concerned Methodists to support the boycott of the Home Depot that has been called by the American Family Association (AFA). The reason? AFA has stated that this company is supporting organizations that are public in their anti-family values. Just as Concerned Methodists supported the AFA in their successful boycott of K-Mart for their anti-family values, so do we stand with them in this. Let us pray that the Home Depot will face what they are doing and support sound values that are grounded in sound ethics and morality. – Allen O. Morris

Leaders cannot show the way until they know the way.

Concerned Methodists

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Fayetteville, NC
28302-2864

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

UM “Mercy and Justice”?

In the case of Rick Barney and his wife Susan, she had admitted to taking money from Garber United Methodist Church (GUMC) over a period of time. Rick said that he and Susan were told to turn over records and information she had, the problem would be taken care of “in house” and not go into the legal system. After Susan had complied with this request, communication was cut off and they were told to contact the GUMC attorney. Rick states, “I feel like we were lied to.” It did go into court, but as part of the “deal” that was allegedly worked out, if the Barneys made restitution, Susan would get a lighter sentence.

Rick summed up what was taken from them in an attempt to atone for Susan’s crime, “Before it was over this is what Garber United Methodist Church took: \$40,000.00, Susan’s parents home, two lots we owned next to our home, about \$100,000.00 which was my 401K retirement money (I had started saving before I met Susan), my motorcycle, Susan’s car, both of our life insurance policies, and we agreed to give up our home to them. As to my home that has not yet happened I am dragging my feet in giving up my home.”

In a June 3, 2010 letter to Bishop Alfred W. Gwinn, The Raleigh Area of the UMC, I had written in part:

Dear Bishop Gwinn,

First of all, how was she able to systematically take this money – \$946,278.99 over a period of seven years and it not be discovered? This would seem to me to reflect a lack of financial accountability.

...in pushing for “immigration reform” or amnesty for illegal immigrants, UM personnel advocate flouting laws... by our government. Yet, in this situation, the last full measure of the law was used to exact as much money as possible to satisfy the debt. UM personnel are trying to squeeze the last possible dollar out of this family in payment. Public “justice” issues are belied by aggressive action against this family. Cannot private “justice” be offered here?

Sincerely, Allen O. Morris

Then from a July 19th letter received from Susan Barney who is at Fountain Correctional Center for Women #3020:

“...I have met several women who are incarcerated on similar charges and amounts of embezzled funds who are serving similar sentences. The one difference between my circumstance and theirs is that they are not paying restitution. They are not facing five years of probation to pay restitution and they have not paid any of the funds back. Once again, how much punishment is enough?” [emphasis in the original letter]

In a conversation I had with Rick, he informed me that two of the women involved in embezzlement received lighter sentences – and did not pay back one dollar as restitution.

On September 2nd Rick – under threat of legal action – was forced to move his family out of their home.

I must ask yet again, “Where is the much-touted mercy in how this case was handled?” – Allen O. Morris

Call for Changes *By Allen O. Morris*

1. Eliminate the office of bishop in the United States. The bishops have demonstrated a failure to responsibly address the causes of decline in the United Methodist Church. If such a supervisory position is needed, it can be replaced by that of General Superintendent – who would be the senior district superintendent in the conference with expenses to be borne by his own district and conference. All expenses for a district superintendent are to be borne by his own district. A separate Episcopal Fund can be maintained for the expenses of bishops in the overseas churches, where growth is demonstrated.
2. Provide that General Superintendents serve for two terms and then be returned to the pastorate or retire.
3. Provide for effective recall of General Superintendents. If they will not abide by the teachings of the United Methodist Church, or if they publicly oppose its teachings, they need to be removed immediately. It is unconscionable that they should continue to be in positions of authority, represent the UMC, and receive church money to undermine its teachings and the Christian faith.
4. The focus of ministry needs to be the local church. We need to recognize that this is the basic field of outreach in our denomination and should be the UMC’s main interface to the secular world.
5. The prioritization of ministry needs to be from the local church to the general church (a “bottom-up” as opposed to a “top-down” philosophy).
6. In the local church the function of the pastor should be to provide biblically spiritual nurture and authentic pastoral care to his congregation, which should be considered a sacred trust from God.
7. Title to the property of a local church needs to be held by the local church. When a church building is constructed, financed, and cared for by the people in a congregation, they should own it.
8. Stewardship. The mandatory apportionment needs to be eliminated in favor of the Biblical voluntary, freewill offering. When extreme pressure is placed on the members of a local church to pay a mandatory apportionment for unbiblical activities or excessive expenses by a bloated denominational hierarchy, the laity in a church have a right to not support it.
9. The UMC’s denominational bureaucracies need to be downsized to the minimal functional level and commensurate with the support they receive from freewill offerings. One example of this need is the huge General Board of Global Ministries staff that outnumbers the total full-time UM overseas missionary force. Brazilian Methodists took a radical step in their church, getting rid of the overhead it supported and almost “starting over.”
10. Accountability. If our denominational employees and leaders will not abide by the Bible and the Book of Discipline, local churches should not be obligated to support their activities through coerced giving.
11. Money from the UMC’s “Ministerial Education Fund” to the seminaries should “follow the student” as he/she attends school, so that the graduating divinity student will not be burdened with a huge debt. Since Asbury Theological Seminary graduates more people who become UM pastors than any of the “official” seminaries who receive apportionment money, it is not cost-effective to continue supporting church education in this way.
12. Local churches need to be able to provide direct support to missionaries of their choice. The bureaucratic machinery drains too much out of the giving dollar to provide for effective world-wide missions.

From the book Misguided Shepherds by Allen Morris, pp. 295-297.

The Coming Economic Collapse

In addition to all of the other signs of burgeoning crises in our denomination, economic problems are coming to a crisis point: annual conferences are downsizing, combining, reducing the numbers of districts, flat-lining/ reducing their budgets and going into financial distress; the Western, North Central, and North Eastern jurisdictions are in accelerated decline and soon will be financially unsustainable; and the unfunded pension liability is putting a financial burden on the system that cannot be sustained. In addition, if the Judicial Council Decision No. 1032 is considered and overturned by the Judicial Council, there will be an extreme crisis of confidence in that body, the Council of Bishops for their orchestration of the Judicial Council elections at General Conference 2008, and the polity in the United Methodist Church – which will exacerbate the growing crisis of potential collapse.

Just like dominoes in a row toppling each successive one, so may our entire denomination collapse.

“Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”? Given the radical far-left political activism by denominational employees, lack of truthfulness, and absence of true Christian evangelism in the United Methodist Church – these are just empty words devoid of substance.

We have some serious choices to make – and we need to do it soon. Really soon.

Bishops, this is your responsibility!

– Allen O. Morris

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