

The Confessing Movement

within The United Methodist Church



Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord!

CHRISTIANITY, BY THE NUMBERS

By Dr. Bill Bouknight

April—June

2011

Vol. 17, Issue 2

For 27 consecutive years the International Bulletin of Missionary Research has published an annual “Status of Global Mission” report. George Weigel, Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., has summarized the following significant facts from the latest report:

- Over the past decade there have been 270 martyrs every 24 hours (over 11 per hour). Martyrs are defined as “believers who have lost their lives, prematurely, in situations of witness, as a result of human hostility.” The average number per year was 100,000, as compared to 34,000 in 1900.
- By mid-2011 there will be 2.3 billion Christians in the world, representing 33 percent of the world’s population. These 2.3 billion can be divided into six groups: 1.16 billion Catholics, 426 million Protestants, 271 million Orthodox, 88 million Anglicans, 378 million Independents (not associated with historic denominations), and 36 million fringe groups.
- Compared to the world’s 2.3 billion Christians, there are 1.6 billion Muslims, 951 million Hindus, 468 million Buddhists, 458 million Chinese folk-religionists, and 137 million atheists.

(Continued on page 4)

QUOTABLE QUOTES

*“I’m evangelical
and I’m proud of it.
I consider an evangelical
to be someone who
professes faith
in a way that draws
others to it.”*

*(Former Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice)*

“When religious leaders lack passion for saving sinners, they will sooner or later become enemies of Jesus Christ.” (By Sinclair B. Ferguson)

“Christians...are allowing the hyper-sensitivity of others to silence us. When we allow that, souls perish. Offense is going to come. Let it come.” (Julie Canny in “Blessed are the Unoffended,” by Mark Galli)

In This Issue:

- Christianity by the Numbers
- In the News
- Pray for the Connectional Table
- Apple Corp. vs. The Manhattan Declaration
- God as “Father”?

We Confess

In The News...

TERM LIMITS FOR BISHOPS

A proposal will come before the Mississippi Annual Conference in June that would call the General Conference of 2012 to install term limits on bishops. This proposal, written and submitted by Rev. Mike Childs, would amend paragraphs 47, 48, and 50. Beginning with the Jurisdictional Conferences of 2016, bishops would have tenure of two quadrenniums. Following that term of service, bishops would return to their home annual conferences as elders. Each bishop elected by a Central Conference would have such tenure as the Central Conference electing him/her shall have determined.

The rationale for this change is expressed in the "whereas" clauses: WHEREAS there is a disconnect between the hierarchy of The United Methodist Church and the local United Methodist churches, and this disconnect breeds mistrust and seriously hinders the ministry of the UMC; and,

WHEREAS, it is vital that the hierarchy of the UMC not be out of touch with the local churches; and, WHEREAS, in many of the Central Conferences of the UMC, bishops do not have life tenure, and those conferences are growing rapidly while the UMC in America continues to lose members; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Annual Conference send to the 2012 General Conference of the UMC this resolution calling for an end to lifetime tenure of bishops.

(The full text of resolution can be found on www.confessingumc.org)



RELIGIOUS WAR

Muslim youths shot and killed two Christians on March 21 as they left a church prayer service in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Yunis Llyas, 47, was a father of four, and Jameel Masih, 21, was newly married. Two others were injured and one remains in critical condition. As Christians were arriving for the service, the Muslims had been shouting insults at the women, and the Christians urged them to stop, according to officials with the Barnabas Fund who know Llyas and his family. As the Christians were leaving the service, the youths returned and began shooting. The murders follow the recent assassinations of two prominent advocates for the Christian minority in Pakistan: Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian minister in Pakistan's cabinet, and Punjab Gov. Salman Taseer, who had called for reform of laws that make criticism of Islam punishable by death.

(Credits to *World* magazine, April 9, 2011 issue)

CRISIS AMONG THE PRESBYTERIANS

In response to declining size and divisive issues such as ordination of homosexuals, a group of 44 Presbyterian Church (USA) pastors released a letter February 2nd calling for the formation of a fellowship within the denomination to reorient its goals. The fellowship proposes a reorganization of funds and denominational structures and could lead to a new denomination, according to co-signers including Vic Pentz of Peachtree Presbyterian in Houston, and John Ortberg of Menlo Park Presbyterian in California. PC (USA) leaders responded with a letter calling for denomination-wide "conversation and prayer" to determine the body's future. ♦

(Credits to *Christianity Today*, April 2011 issue)



In The News...

EXECUTIVE BISHOP POSITION PROPOSED

At their May meeting, the Council of Bishops endorsed an amendment to the church's constitution to elect one of its own to a full-time, four-year position as president without the usual responsibilities of overseeing a geographic area. Bishop Oden stated that a full-time president "would facilitate a greater sense of unity and witness for the denomination as a whole." Concern was raised by Central Conference bishops that the requirement of the individual to have a strong knowledge of church agencies makes it virtually impossible for a bishop outside the U.S. to hold the position. Additional concern was raised about "one person acting on behalf of the whole" instead of the council working together as a united body.

The Interim Operations Team Makes Additional Recommendations to the Connectional Table

The Interim Operations Team (IOT) was created to build on recommendations from the Call to Action steering team in order to influence, guide, and challenge leaders and groups across The United Methodist Church. This 7 member team recently made a presentation to the Connectional Table. Below are some of the key recommendations made:

1. Create a 13 member Connectional Ministries Board (CMB) to run the church
2. Provide for a set-aside bishop (Executive Bishop) to serve as President of the Council of Bishops whose responsibilities would include serving on the Connectional Ministries Board (possibly as the chair).
3. Combine all agencies into fewer groups under the authority of the CMB.
4. Have a new group (agency) that would assist local churches on a fee-for service basis.
5. Change apportionments to a flat 5% of local church income.

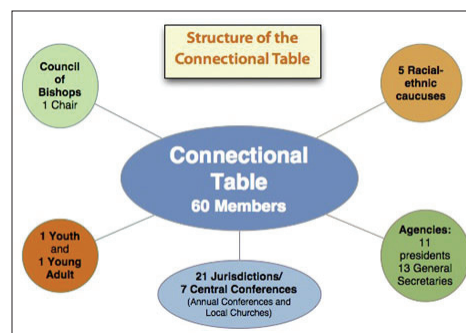
OTHER CALL TO ACTION PROPOSALS

In an effort to promote more vital congregations, United Methodist leaders are weighing proposals that would dramatically change church funding and the denomination's agencies.

The **possible changes** under consideration include:

- Combining general-agency functions into fewer groups.
- Establishing a new agency that would coordinate connectional ministry among the agencies.
- Changing the funding formulas for the general church and annual (regional) conferences.

(UMNS May, 9, 2011)



(Continued from page 1)

- As of mid-2011, there will be an average of 80,000 new Christians per day and 79,000 new Muslims per day, but 300 fewer atheists every 24 hours.
- Africa has seen the most stunning growth in Christianity over the past century. In 1900 there were only 8.7 million African Christians; today there are 475 million. The number is projected to reach 670 million by 2025.
- In regard to Christian unity, there were 1600 Christian denominations in 1900. Today there are 42,000. \$545 billion is given to Christian causes annually, which comes out to about \$1.5 billion per day.



- 71 million Bibles will be distributed this year.

In summary, Christianity may be waning in Western Europe, but it is growing impressively in other parts of the world, including that toughest of regions for Christian evangelism—Asia. Pentecostals and charismatics, with an average of 37,000 new adherents every day, are experiencing the fastest growth in two millennia of Christian history. ♦

PRAY FOR THE CONNECTIONAL TABLE (CT)

The 2012 General Conference will have an unprecedented opportunity to institute some long overdue changes to our United Methodist system and structure. The CT has been charged to bring to the General Conference proposed changes that could not only fix the issue of fair representation but also could help the UMC reduce the bureaucracy.

The CT's objectives include the following:

Provide a forum for vision and implementation.

Enable flow of information and communication.

Coordinate program life of the global church.

Evaluate the missional effectiveness of agencies.

Recommend changes for agency effectiveness.

Provide leadership in planning and research.

Collaborate with the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) to develop the budget.

Bishop John Hopkins has chaired the CT since 2005. It is essential that meaningful recommendations be brought to General Conference in 2012; to defer until 2016 would be egregious. The CT needs our prayers and encouragement.

(By Dr. Steve Wood, Senior Pastor, Mount Pisgah UMC, Atlanta)

APPLE CORP VS THE MANHATTAN DECLARATION



Joel Belz, writing in the January 29th edition of "World" magazine, brought us the bad news that the Apple Corporation has refused to allow a presence on its systems for the Manhattan Declaration. The Manhattan Declaration is a relatively brief, civilly expressed statement

(manhattandeclaration.org) summarizing the essential beliefs of Christianity. It also tells why traditional marriage (between one man and one woman) is right for society and why the idea of marriage between homosexual partners is wrong. Also, the Declaration stresses the sanctity of life for the unborn and the need for preserving religious liberty.

In order to publicize the Declaration and gain more exposure for it, some of its authors (most notably Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship and Robert George of Princeton University) authorized an application (or app) to be used on all Apple iPhones, iPads, and related equipment. Tens of thousands of such apps are in use,

sponsored by commercial interests and non-profits.

At first Apple's review unit approved the Manhattan Declaration, and for several weeks brought new attention (and new signers) to the cause. But homosexual activists took issue, claiming that the statement was offensive in tone. The Apple management caved, and removed the app.

Some have suggested a boycott of Apple, but Joel Belz agrees with Colson and George in supporting a different strategy. They rec-

ommend that every time a Christian has communication with Apple personnel, whether it's making a call about repairs, signing a contract for a service agreement, or maybe buying a new iPhone; make it a point to complain, as gently and winsomely as possible, about Apple's policy.♦

The Manhattan Declaration is a relatively brief, civilly expressed statement (manhattandeclaration.org) summarizing the essential beliefs of Christianity.



YOUR MOST IMPORANT VOTES

If you are one of the thousands of United Methodist laypersons and clergy who will attend your Annual Conference during the next couple of months, your vote for General Conference delegates could constitute a turning point for our beloved denomination. The lay and clergy delegates you will elect will meet for two weeks next spring in Tampa, Florida. That General Conference, consisting of 1,000 delegates from around the world, will determine whether Methodism continues on a reform path or reverts back to cultural accommodation and further decline. The overseas portion of our Church is the fastest-growing part, especially in Africa. Those overseas delegates tend to be more evangelical and orthodox, and they have a high view of Scriptural authority. The good news is that there will be more overseas delegates at the 2012 General Conference than ever before. On the other hand, the U.S. portion of the UMC has been wavering between liberalism and evangelical orthodoxy, even though most of the growing parts of the U.S. Church are evangelical and orthodox.

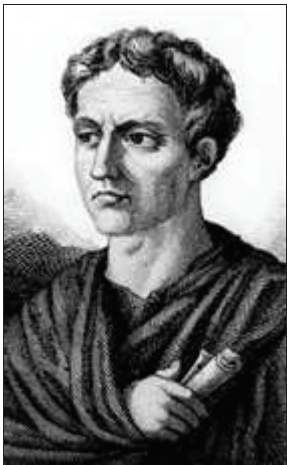
Before you go to Annual Conference, prepare to vote carefully and prayerfully. First, find out as

much as you can about those persons (lay or clergy) who have offered themselves as candidates for election. If you are a layperson, you can vote only for lay delegates; clergy persons can vote only for clergy delegates. Ask specific questions, like these: What parts of the Book of Discipline, if any, would you like to change? Do you favor separating our worldwide Church into “regional” conferences? Do you favor the current stand of the UMC on the issues of abortion and the practice of homosexuality?

If you don’t know the candidates and don’t have time to talk with them personally, ask a trusted friend or clergyperson for their advice.

A second suggestion is that you attend the **ENTIRE** conference. Some Methodists, especially retired clergy, have a habit of attending for one day only. But the voting process for General Conference delegates will likely continue for the entire Annual Conference. Multiple ballots will be taken until the required number of delegates each receives a majority of votes cast. So, please don’t go home early!

Remember, this will be your most significant opportunity to influence the UMC for the next four years. Do it carefully and prayerfully!



Petronius Arbiter

We trained hard but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization.

(By non-Methodist Petronius Arbiter in 210 B.C.)

May I Ask A Personal Question?

During the past 90 days, have you prayed for and contributed money to help renew The United Methodist Church? We are in a struggle for the soul of our beloved Church. Change is required. The famous definition of insanity is doing the same things we have always done and expecting different results. But the status-quo of institutional decline is tempting because it requires no effort. It's easy and cheap. On the other hand, reform is impossible without constant prayer, hard work, and financial investment. But when we stand for Scriptural authority and the essentials of Wesleyan theology, we feel the wind of the Holy Spirit filling our sails. In this struggle, there is no neutral position. To seek neutrality is to assist the status-quo.

Your continuing prayers and financial support are vital. There are several ways you can contribute. Go to The Confessing Movement website at www.confessingumc.org. In the top right corner click on "donate." Directions will be given. A second way is to phone The Confessing Movement office at 317-356-9729 and make a donation via your credit card. A third way is to mail a check to The Confessing Movement at 7995 East 21st Street, Indianapolis, IN 46219.

Thanks for answering honestly my personal question. Pray that within our lifetimes we will experience a renewed, dynamic, orthodox, evangelical United Methodist **MOVEMENT**, and to God be the glory!

God As "Father"?

Dr. Sandra Richter is one of the most insightful Bible teachers in America. Formerly a professor of Old Testament studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, she now teaches at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, MS. Unlike many female pastors and professors, Dr. Richter does not attempt to change biblical references to God as "male." In making her case she goes back to the intent of the biblical writers. The Christian God meets people where they are, in real space and time; and real people come with real cultural norms. Israel was a tribal nation. In that culture the "father" was a larger-than-life figure who carried the well-being and security of the family on his shoulders. So, by presenting himself as Father, the Almighty revealed himself not as a distant, remote deity but as an intimate caretaker, authority, redeemer, and guide. God also claimed the role of parent. The biblical image of Father is not one who is abusive, neglectful, proud, or inflexible. Like the father of the prodigal son, he leads with wisdom and compassion. He is the kinsman who will pay whatever ransom is demanded for one of his children even if that ransom is his own life.



Dr. Sandra Richter

For the full text of Dr. Richter's article, go to The Confessing Movement website (www.confessingumc.org and go to Featured Articles)

**The Confessing Movement
within The United Methodist Church**

7995 East 21st Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219
(317) 356-9729

Fax: (317) 356-9742

Web site: www.confessingumc.org

E-mail: cm@confessingumc.org

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 52761

Purpose Statement

**Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord.
The Confessing Movement exists to enable
The United Methodist Church to retrieve its
classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as
disciples of Jesus Christ.**

Officers

Honorary Co-Chairmen

Maxie Dunnam
Tom Oden

President

Gregory McGarvey

1st Vice President

Larry Baird

2nd Vice President

Judy Graham

Secretary

David Jenkins

Treasurer

Tom Junk

Asst. Treasurer

Joe Kilpatrick

Editor,

We Confess

Bill Bouknight

Board of Directors

Turner Arant

Ryan Barnett

Larry Baird

James Buskirk

Bob Collins

Mary Daffin

Sam Daffin

Wendy Deichmann

Maxie Dunnam

Mickey Ellis

Ira Gallaway

June Parker Goldman

Judy Graham

David Jenkins

Tom Junk

Joe Kilpatrick

Charles Kyker

John Ed Mathison

Gregory McGarvey

Dan Moore

Joy Moore

Donna Schlitt

Jim Smith

David Stanley

Gregory Stover

Jeff Switzer

Phil Thrailkill

Stephen Wende

Steve Wood

Staff

Executive Director

Patricia L. Miller

Associate

Directors

Bill Bouknight

Riley Case

Secretary

Heather Catlow

Bette Grubaugh

Bookkeeper

Bonnie Petrow

Advisory Council: William Abraham, Frank Alegria, John Case, Buddy Cooper, Tom Dyer, Gail Harrelson, Godfrey Hubert, Diane Komp, Evelyn Laycock, Liz Meyer, Randell Mickler, Elizabeth Moreau, J. D. Phillips, Jeff Spiller, Budd Sprague, Harry Wood