



L a i t y ■ V o i c e

Newsletter of the Methodist Laity Reform Movement

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Faith in Jesus Christ

This testimony was written by a young pastor in Zimbabwe. It was written the night before his martyrdom for his faith in Jesus Christ.

"I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made—I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed vision, world talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

"I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted in prayer, and labor with power.

"My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

"I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me ... my banner will be clearly visible and flying!"

—*The Village Methodist*, Auburn, AL April 6, 2000

**Please visit our Website:
www.mreform.org**

Something Good Is Happening

In our first issue of *Laity Voice* we asked for news of positive things happening in United Methodist Churches in Iowa. **Mavis Diment** sent news from Grace United Methodist Church, Marcus, Iowa:

Remember the Youth

The Membership Care Committee at Grace UMC in Marcus gives "prayermarks" to the congregation each fall to encourage prayer for our youth. Names of all junior high, high school, and college students are included. The congregation is encouraged to remember the young people during semester test time and other significant occasions.

Pastor Appreciation: Celebrate All Month

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Do you and your congregation make a special effort to thank and encourage your pastors? Their jobs are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and they preach, teach, administer, negotiate, etc., etc., etc.!

At Grace UMC we use the entire month of October to show our appreciation to our pastor. Each family or individual selects one day of the month to show appreciation in a unique way. It could be a card, flowers, or food (we are United Methodists!) — or a special phone call or other gift.

Fifty-Year Members Recognized

Visitors to Grace UMC find a Fifty Year Member Roll and the traditional Cradle Roll displayed in our hall. Members' names are engraved on small golden plaques and hung below the main plaque, which is the number 50. During a worship service the fifty-year members receive a red rose and a certificate to mark their achievement.

Our Church Family Cares

We aren't Hallmark, but we do use cards in many ways at Grace UMC. Each pew rack contains a

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packet with a selection of all-occasion cards, especially thank you notes for the members to use in response to prayer concerns and praises that are lifted up during the service. To enhance the congregation's involvement with our young people, card showers are given to the Confirmands and to our graduating seniors.

Our Membership Care Committee sends Christmas cards and a small remembrance, such as homemade ornaments and crocheted cross bookmarks, to members over 70, all 50-year members, nursing home residents, and families who had a difficult year due to sickness or death.

Words from Wesley

From "The Character of a Methodist", a tract published by John Wesley in 1739.

Methodists are those who had God's love poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to them, who love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and with all their minds, and with all their strength. God is the joy of their hearts, and the desire of their souls; which constantly cry out, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you! My God and my all! You are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever!*

Justice and Social Reform

The proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and his Gospel, must be our center of mission. As individuals are transformed by accepting redemption given to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, justice and social issues will then become a concern for those who are transformed. Justice and social reform are indispensable to the Christian faith, but they are an effect, not a cause. The greatest need is to realize that our only hope to release the poor and oppressed from the evil "principalities and powers" of the world, is to accept the Biblical truth of transformation through Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

Good Websites for Bible Study

<http://bible.crosswalk.com>

<http://bibles.net>

Methodist Laity Reform Movement

OUR PRINCIPLES:

1. Our first loyalty is to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We praise and support all that is good in The United Methodist Church (UMC).
3. We are loyal to the UMC and seek to help restore its faithfulness and to heal and reform it.
4. Only God can heal our Church, but we can help.
5. The laity must become more active in the leadership, reform, and decision-making of our Church.
6. We ask all members to stay within the UMC—do not leave. With God's guidance we can change the Church.
7. We affirm the UMC's Mission: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ" and the UMC's Priority: "to proclaim the good news that salvation comes through Jesus Christ". (See *Book of Discipline*.)
8. The UMC must stay out of partisan politics and not allow any political faction to promote its agenda through the Church.
9. The UMC should take a stand on an important public policy issue if there is a clear Christian position supported by a large majority of UMC members.
10. The UMC must reduce and decentralize its top-heavy structure and budget, giving higher priority to Local Churches and their ministries.
11. We believe in the power of prayer.
12. We will "speak the truth in love." (Eph 4:15.)
13. We will not be silenced.
14. Our members are not obligated to agree with all of our Principles or Reform Agenda.
15. We are not a lobbying organization.
16. We are an independent organization.
17. We have a long-term commitment to help reform the UMC. With God's direction, faithful Iowa laity will restore faithfulness in our Church.

NOTE: The above is a summary. For our complete Principles and Reform Agenda, call 1-800-334-8920 or e-mail us at info@mreform.org or go to our Website: www.mreform.com.

Positive Changes in the Iowa Annual Conference?

Encouraging signs of change during the June 2001 Iowa Annual Conference session in Ames:

Bishop Gregory Palmer is a cheerful, positive, fair-minded presiding officer. His strong, enthusiastic Christian faith shines brightly.

The 2001 IAC session was more often focused on the Mission of The United Methodist Church: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ." (*Book of Discipline*, par. 120.) The name of Jesus was heard more often.

The 2001 IAC was again swamped in partisan politics, with **66** proposed resolutions — some helpful, but most divisive and promoting the one political viewpoint that controls the IAC Board of Church and Society. United Methodists from other Annual Conferences tell us they consider only a few resolutions; they can't believe **66**! But this time fewer harmful resolutions sailed through without debate. More people asked questions or spoke in opposition.

IAC members stated their strong concerns about the divisiveness and poor stewardship of having a paid IAC lobbyist. We will get a direct vote on this issue in the 2002 IAC.

Lay members of the IAC were better prepared, and more of them spoke on the issues.

The IAC session proved that the IAC can be a church or it can be a political party, but it can't be both. There was constant tension between the inspirational Christian emphasis of this IAC and the burden of 66 resolutions. The IAC ran out of time and dumped about half of the resolutions — adjourned without voting on them. More Iowa United Methodists now say: fewer resolutions!

Send Us Names!

This issue of Laity Voice will reach at least 20,000 Iowa United Methodists. But our Iowa Church has 200,000 members. Help us reach more of the remaining 180,000!

Please use the enclosed envelope to send us names and addresses of Iowa United Methodists. And send us your church directory or member list; mark everyone interested in helping our Church fulfill her mission. We will send information to every name and address you provide.

A Letter From Our Bishop

Bishop Palmer sent this letter to Jim Pfeil, a Director of *METHODIST LAITY REFORM MOVEMENT*. We don't speak for Bishop Palmer and we don't claim he agrees with us, but we do find his letter encouraging:

July 11, 2001

Jim Pfeil
PO Box 21
Armstrong, IA 50514

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your note regarding the annual conference session.

I, too, believe annual conference members need to use more discretion in the resolutions they submit and pass. The annual conference sessions and resolution committee will be working on a solution to the overabundance of resolutions for the 2003 session.

Grace and peace,

(signed)
Gregory V. Palmer

Some UMC Boards and Officials Oppose War on Terror

Many faithful United Methodists are asking, with sorrow in their hearts, why some official United Methodist Church pronouncements are out of touch with the people in the pews — especially now, when most United Methodists support responsible military action against terrorism.

In recent public statements, the UMC General Board of Church and Society opposed the war on terrorism, and the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries opposed U.S. bombing in Afghanistan.

Your December 2001 *UMAction Briefing* (to arrive mid-January) thoroughly discusses this issue and what has gone wrong. Contact us for a copy of *UMAction Briefing* or get it on our Website: www.mreform.org.

William Bennett Speaks

— Renewal Begins With Taking a Stand —

I Corinthians 2:5 - "...your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

The words of William J. Bennett, Jr. to a large audience last June speak to us now. Bennett said standing firm in the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior is essential to changing the culture, rather than allowing the culture to continue changing the church.

Bennett talked about code words of a cultural movement that seek to diminish the role of religion. For example:

Tolerance – "This has become an 'indifference,' but tolerance does not require indifference. We can be tolerant, but we still must take the stand that some things are right and some things are wrong."

Judgmental - "In the times we live, many people believe the worst thing you can be is judgmental. Judgmental means using judgment. So what do you do about the jury system? What do you do about hiring a babysitter?"

Pluralism - "This simply means that many will thrive. It does not require us to abstain from judgment." He pointed out that indifference, unwillingness to judge, and unfettered pluralism have led to paganism ranging from all types of consensual sex to crass entertainment.

"People of all faiths are being encouraged more and more to keep their views private. And the culture is suffering from rot," he said. Bennett implored Christians to engage culture with truth and traditional virtues. He said, "If you declare that truth, that truth obligates you to engage the world. There are some fights that we need to be involved in. We cannot shrug our shoulders and say, 'I don't understand it.' In engaging these arguments ... we do it in the Spirit of Christ."

Bennett said it takes courage to engage this culture. He quoted Flannery O'Connor, "We live in a time in which the world is pushing hard against us. You have to push as hard as the age is pushing against us."

Bennett concluded by quoting Scripture, "Be not afraid. Be not afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

Editor's Note: Bennett was secretary of the Department of Education under President Reagan and the nation's drug Czar under President Bush. He has written numerous books including *The Book of Virtues* which has sold more than 2.3 million copies.

Laity Sunday- Tell us your story!

The *2000 Book of Discipline* asks all United Methodist Churches to recognize their laity locally on or about the third Sunday of October each year. Tim Moss, Director for Lay Leadership Development for the General Board of Discipleship, proposed an appropriate sermon called "Setting the Table". (See www.gbod.org/laity/articles/laity_sunday01.html)

In 2001, some churches asked laity to give the sermon, read scripture, lead prayers and singing, and give their testimonies. **What happened in your church?** We would like to let others know how and where laity made significant contributions to their service.

Please send us a note, or e-mail (to mreform@yahoo.com), or call 1-800-334-8920. Your story may give ideas to others to promote more laity involvement!

Include UMCOR

If media in your area are naming organizations through which folks can assist victims of September's tragedies, ask them to include UMCOR—the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

In Iowa, designate gifts for "Adv. Sp: Love in the Midst of Tragedy #6001" (General Advance Special #901125-3). Contributions can be given to your local church or mailed to either the Iowa Annual Conference, 500 East Court Ave, Suite C, Des Moines, IA 50309, or directly to UMCOR, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 330, New York, NY 10115. You may also call 800-554-8583 to make a credit card donation. One hundred percent of your gift goes to the designated response.

Make Your Voice Heard!

Your opinion counts! Return a copy of the MLRM 2001 Opinion Survey. The survey and recent reports may be viewed on our website: www.mreform.org.



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