



SNYDER'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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A Wesleyan Covenant Association Congregation
It's All About Jesus! - Mark 1:17; Matthew 28:19

Monday 4 July 2022

Dear Snyder's Church Family and Friends,

On this day of our National Independence, I am writing to you about the Sufferings for Independence. I am sorry you don't have this to read today, but in a couple of days you can still reflect on the message.

Fifty-six men signed the Declaration Of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships sunk by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in poverty.

At the battle of Yorktown, the British General Cornwallis had taken over Thomas Nelson's home for his headquarters. Nelson quietly ordered General George Washington to open fire on the Nelson home. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and mill were destroyed. For over a year, he lived in forests and caves, returning home only to find his wife had died and his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion.

Such were the sacrifices of the founding fathers. There are no movements that have shaped the world where sacrifice was not called upon. And of course in the church we have all our grace predicated on a sacrifice and it didn't stop at the cross. Jesus told His disciples that they too would need to take up the cross. And that's what they did:

- Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia
- Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city

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- Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece
- John was put in a cauldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward banished to Patmos
- Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward
- James, the Greater, was beheaded at Jerusalem
- James, the Less, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller's club
- Bartholomew was flayed alive
- Andrew was bound to a cross, whence he preached to his persecutors until he died
- Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies
- Jude was shot to death with arrows
- Matthais was first stoned and then beheaded
- Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica
- Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero

I sincerely hope that you were able to celebrate our Fourth of July in a way to remember the great sacrifice that our Founding Fathers provided and for the great sacrifice that millions of Americans have made ever since. And that you also remembered the greatest sacrifice of all when God's only Son, Jesus, gave His life for our sins and the sins of the whole world! Blessings to you.

SECOND MILE GIVING

You have received a letter with information about our Second Mile Giving Need in the month of July. We are averaging about \$1,000 a month less than our budget, even though our financial commitments are all being paid, for which we are grateful. We have a goal to raise \$5,000 in Second Mile Giving this month of July. If we are able to achieve our goal [and to be honest it is a reasonable goal that we should be able to meet easily!] then there is a bonus for the entire church family. Both Bill and Jeff have had beards for years and years – Jeff has a full length while Bill keeps his trimmed shorter. Both Bill and Jeff have agreed to have their beards shaved off in the presence of the entire church family on Sunday August 7th if we have received our goal for the month of July.

Please use the special Second Mile Giving envelope that you received last week in the mail and place it in the offering plates at the front of the Sanctuary as you come into the Service or after the Service has ended.

This should truly be a "joyous and happy" occasion for the entire church family at Snyder's Church.

WOMEN ARE COLLECTING

Paula Beaston and the Women's Ministry are collecting sanitary napkins and pads for Downtown Daily Bread, a homeless shelter for women in Harrisburg. Please place items in the pink basket by the water fountain at the church.

COLLECTING USED EYE GLASSES

As an on-going project for the Ickesburg Lions Club, you can bring those used eye glasses and place them in the box provided in the Narthex and then Beryl Hansbury will deliver them.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS ENVELOPES

Enclosed in this newsletter you will once again find two self-addressed envelopes that you can use to mail your tithes and offerings to the church if you are unable to be present. Remember that as you come to Worship the offering plates are on the stands at the front of the church and you can place your tithes/offerings before Worship begins or at the end of the Service. We always count on the faithful support of the entire church family.

ARTICLE ON MAJOR CHALLENGES FACING THE UMC

The Rev. Dr. Joe DiPaolo, who is the lead Pastor at Lancaster First United Methodist Church has written an article "Major Challenges Facing The United Methodist Church" dated June 24th. A copy of that article is enclosed with this newsletter and should provide all of us with additional and helpful information.

ONLY IN AMERICA

- Only in America can a pizza get to your house faster than an ambulance
- Only in America do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions, while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front
- Only in America do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a DIET coke
- Only in America do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our junk in the garage. Hello!
- Only in America do we use answering machines to screen calls and have call-waiting so we won't miss a call from someone we didn't want to talk to in the first place
- Only in America do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight

AND FINALLY THIS MONTH.....BE BLESSED AND A BLESSING TO OTHERS ALWAYS!

TO THINK ABOUT.....

A good friend of mine in Wilmington NC sent me the following as he was reflecting in his morning devotions the other day: "for the last fifty years or more, the message of the wrath of God has been almost totally absent in Christian pulpits. People have talked about a God of love. This has been interpreted in the minds of people as a God of permissiveness; one who will let us do anything and get away with it. As Charles Spurgeon said, 'The one who does not believe that God will punish sin, will not believe that He will pardon it through the blood of His Son.'"

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

The National Collection week is November 14 – 21 and our filled boxes this year will be due on Sunday November 20th. It's not too early to start collecting and packing those shoe boxes. Right about now the stores will be offering "their back to school" sales that includes school supplies and this is a great time to save money and also collect for the shoe boxes.

USED CARDS WANTED

Bev is collecting card fronts from used Greeting Cards. If you are throwing them away just cut off the front of the cards where the pictures/writing is and bring them to the church and put them in the container on the cabinet near the church office. This is a mission project for St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

AN UPDATE ON DISAFFILIATION

Copies of "The Transitional Book of Doctrine And Discipline The Global Methodist Church" and "Frequently Asked Questions" are available on the stand as you enter the Church building. This is a lot of reading material but worth the time required to help all of us become familiar with the disaffiliation process of our United Methodist Church denomination and the plans as we move forward. You need to be kept informed and materials will be available from time to time to help with that process.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES COMBINE

The Fourth Sunday of each month the Adult Sunday School Classes combine in the Upstairs Adult Classroom with Pastor Jeff leading the class. The next session is July 24th and then August 28. Invite someone to join with us in this combined class session.

Major Challenges Facing The United Methodist Church (<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2022/06/23/major-challenges-facing-the-united-methodist-church/>)

By Joe DiPaolo
June 24, 2022



Delegates pause for prayer at The United Methodist Church's contentious 2019 Special General Conference.

The United Methodist Church is coming apart. One annual conference in Europe has already departed to unite with the Global Methodist Church, and hundreds of US congregations have already been approved for disaffiliation during this not-yet completed annual conference season.

With General Conference postponed again, and no possible passage of a gracious separation plan before 2024, UM Church bishops and annual conference boards of trustees are creating their own policies. In many cases, it isn't pretty. Some are putting up as many roadblocks as they can, to make separation and realignment with the Global Methodist Church virtually impossible. In addition to the financial requirements in the UM Church's *Book of Discipline*, (see paragraph 2553), some bishops are insisting local churches pay a percentage of the market value of their property – as high as 50 percent. In other cases, local churches asking for meetings to begin negotiations, or obtain pension liability figures, are being stonewalled with delay after delay.

As they look ahead, no wonder many traditionalist pastors and congregations feel the deck is stacked against them, and bishops are holding all the cards. But is their hand as strong as it appears? Consider the problems facing our episcopal leaders as they scan the horizon:

The "Death Tsunami" is rolling ashore. More than a decade ago, we were told of the coming "death tsunami" (<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1868/the-coming-death-tsunami>). Demographic trends within both the larger culture and the UM Church pointed to a sharply increasing rate of membership decline. Figures for 2020 were recently released by the UM Church's General Commission on Finance and Administration (GCFA) (<http://www.umdata.org/UMFactsHome.aspx>), showing a loss of nearly 220,000 members in the U.S. in *just one year*. The previous year, the decline was more than 180,000. At that rate, the UM Church will lose another million members in the U.S. *by the end of 2025*, falling to about 5.2 million – and that is just from attrition, since hardly any churches disaffiliated in 2020.

The exodus from the UM Church is accelerating. In the last few years, many United Methodists in the U.S. have kept their heads down, waiting for the *Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation* to pass. But now that any consideration of it must wait until 2024, and progressive signers have withdrawn their support (<https://www.protocolresponse.com/>), many more traditionalists are seeking to leave. A survey published by the UM News service (<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/what-do-united-methodists-really-believe>) in 2019 revealed that 44 percent of U.S. United Methodists described themselves as theologically "conservative." If even half of that number left, with or without their buildings, that would mean nearly another million and a half members, along with their money. Last November, GCFA estimated that U.S. local church net expenditures would drop 20 percent by 2024 (<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/estimating-financial-impact-of-church-exits>). Imagine if your congregation was suddenly facing the loss of 20 to 25 percent of your most committed members. What would that mean for the future viability of your church? The bishops are facing at least that, if not more – and that is only in the U.S. In other parts of the world the membership loss is likely to be even higher.

UM Church financial liabilities are growing. I admit to doubts about how real the unfunded pension liability is, because so much depends on the method used to estimate it. But taken at face value, conferences are facing hundreds of millions of dollars in unfunded liabilities to make good on pension promises. Selling properties can only go so far

without warm bodies in the pews giving on a long-term basis. There are also looming liabilities over cases of sexual abuse. In December, the UM Church agreed to pay \$30 million in the Boy Scouts settlement (<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/30-million-from-united-methodists-in-bsa-bankruptcy>). And a top-heavy, expensive denominational superstructure will likely continue as is, draining away diminishing resources.

Empty church buildings can be expensive. While there are valuable properties bishops can turn into cash, there are also many others that will be hard to sell and expensive to maintain and insure. Nor is the current seller's market in real estate going to last forever, especially if we enter another economic downturn. In some cases, it may make sense for a congregation to leave its buildings behind and start meeting at the local high school – especially if it is in deep debt or dire shape. And in divided churches, a vote either to stay in the UM Church or align with the Global Methodist Church will lead to major membership losses – resulting in fewer full-time appointments, lower connectional ministries payments, and more closed churches.

Restructuring the UM Church will be a challenge. Hopes by institutional leaders to restructure and redefine the UM Church will need supermajorities at the 2024 General Conference to change the constitution. That will be a tall order (<https://hackingchristianity.net/2022/04/shall-progressives-inherit-the-united-methodist-church-no-not-yet.html>), with African delegations likely to have a large presence, and the recent record of constitutional changes failing to get necessary annual conference approvals afterward. It is even possible that they will have a hard time getting a simple majority to change the paragraphs on sexuality. If that happens, how many committed progressives will decide to leave rather than wait until 2028 or later?

For those of us who feel powerless, and that UM institutional leaders are firmly in control of the situation, it is time for a reality check. Our bishops and leaders are facing an enormously difficult situation – which may explain, at least in part, why some seem so desperate to prevent local churches and assets from leaving. If the experience of the last two months is any indication, however, the breakup of United Methodism is unstoppable.

But it is still not too late to make it as amicable as possible. Right now, it seems we are moving back toward intensified internal conflict, with angry rhetoric heating up, and costly legal battles multiplying. Such a future can only increase the challenges, and further harm the “brand” of United Methodism. It is in the best interest of all – bishops, institutional leaders, theological conservatives and theological progressives – to change course and institute policies which reflect the gracious spirit of the *Protocol*, rather than enforcing a punitive (and selective) letter of the law. Only then can both bodies, The United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church, have the opportunity for fresh, new beginnings.

The Rev. Joseph F. DiPaolo is Lead Pastor at Lancaster First United Methodist Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He is also a member of the Wesleyan Covenant Association's Global Council.

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