



The First Word

JUNE 2018

First United Methodist Church, Racine

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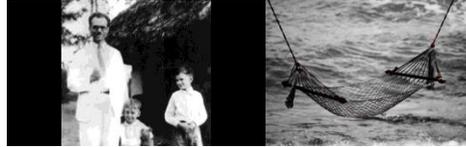
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Dr. George W. and Winifred J. Harley-
Methodist Episcopal Mission to Ganta, Liberia
West Africa - 1925-1965

CHRISTIAN Mission: *a call to equip within and serve beyond our comfort zones....*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (Luke 4:18-19-NIV).

No doubts, the above text fully captures and summarizes the vision and scope of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’s mission to the world. The questions is: does this still holds true for the Church in today’s world? I say resounding yes!

Let me take a moment to briefly reflect on how the ministries and mission of two young American Missionaries from North Carolina works helped saved thousands of lives in the hinterland /interior city of Ganta- Liberia, then a remote little village, since February 25, 1925 to this day. Dr. George Way Harley earned his medical degree from Yale University and later studied Anthropology and Culture at Harvard University. Dr. Harley read about some tropical diseases known as malaria, leprosy, and other rare epidemics that were killing people in Liberia, West Africa. Dr. Harley and his wife, Winifred, expressed the desire to use their education and trainings to serve Jesus Christ by going as missionaries to this remotely dangerous African country, especially traveling 165 miles into the interior on foot to help save lives in the name of Jesus Christ. Being very genuinely concerned about their safety, the Methodist Board of Mission delayed a response to their declared intention for about two years, but later granted it.

When the Harleys arrived in Monrovia, Liberia, the then Liberian president cautioned them to stay in the capitol Monrovia which was a bit safe than the interior that was not accessible then by motor roads. The Harleys thanked the president for his concerns and offer, but insisted on travelling into the interior. They walked most of the 165 miles distance, but at some point were carried in “Hammocks” by volunteer men on their heads and

shoulders. Two weeks later, Dr. Harley and Mrs. Winifred J. Harley entered Ganta, then a small village known as “Gompa!”

Upon arrival, the Chief of “Gompa Village” instructed his men to build a mud hut with thatch roofing for the Harleys to begin their practices of medicine and tutorial education. Some of the employees said when the Harleys began their practices, the indigenous people were very skeptical of Western medicines. Therefore, the Harleys literally had to compensate them in order to receive medical and education services!! Some were given either cash in the amounts of U.S. pennies, two cents, or food stuff, and clothes in order to appease them to accept the services. Alongside the efforts at building rapport with the people, the Harleys were undertaking a larger building project. The building would house the clinic and the Tutorial Programs for the most vulnerable children both in Gompa and the surrounding villages and towns under Winifred’s care. Upon completion, the Harleys brought in many at risk kids and mentored them. Later the kids were sent to Monrovia to continue their education. Some of the people who benefitted from the Harleys’ programs later became nurses, doctors, Church leaders and officials in both the county and National government of the Republic of Liberia.

Twenty five to seventy three years later, the “IN-HUT” Ministry and Mission has grown and now situated on a one hundred –fifty acres of land while the then Ganta Village now has a population of over forty six thousand according to the 2016 National Census report. Currently the Ganta mission Station comprises the Ganta U.M. Hospital that sees and treats over two hundred patients daily; the Nursing School that has produced thousands of nurses; Ganta the U.M Elem Jr. & Sr. High School that enrolls over one thousand students each academic year; has one of the largest United Methodist congregations, and a Maintenance Department. The Harleys’ efforts in Liberia/Ganta accomplished the three major areas of Jesus Christ’s Ministries, namely: Preaching, Healing and Teaching!

When I think about how God miraculously used people like the Harleys, I’m very much inspired to believe that indeed Christ’s ministry and mission can still be accomplished even today. It may not be at same magnitudes as those before us, but within the scopes of our own capacity and ability.

Beginning Saturday 16th thru 21st June 2018, we will be hosting sixty-five to one hundred ” Volunteers In Mission” Team from the Dakotas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church here at Racine 1st UM Church. When request to host this group reached us, there were several mixed reactions including skepticism given the numerical size of our congregation. Others were blunt about our inability to host this group, yet there were those who were and still are optimistic about our capacity and ability to host the group. Finally, our only option now is to prayerfully host the VIM Team, trusting in the providential power of our God to help us accomplish the task he has called and set before us.

I want to encourage us to see how God provides the wings when he says “Fly” and one obeys. The Harleys obeyed God’s Call upon their lives to undertake, humanly speaking, a very dangerous and unpredictable faith journey outside of their comfort zones, and they obeyed.

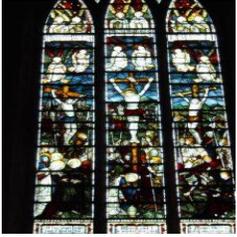
My friends, let’s trust and obey Jesus Christ’s command upon our lives, be it in or out of our comfort zones, and he will surely see us through to the glory of God the Father and Holy Spirit.

In His service together,

Rev. Jakes

Just Say No to Local Church Options for the UMC

By Ben Witherington



Annual conferences are just around the corner all over the U.S. and there will be petitions submitted to annual conferences suggesting something along the lines of a local church option when it comes to defining what counts as Christian marriage, what counts as proper sexual morality, what counts as moral fitness for ordination. It is no use denying our beloved and belabored United Methodist Church is in a crisis, but local church options, whether proposed by a majority of the Council of Bishops or by others, are not viable solutions to our problems. Why not?

First of all, because they are profoundly un-Methodist. Methodists do not decide major issues of doctrine or polity at the local church level, nor even at the annual conference level. They are quite rightly decided at the General Conference level, which is the only body that can speak for the whole church on such matters. This is why we have *The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline* that includes the doctrines and sanctioned practices in it. This has been the Methodist way for basically our entire existence. Ours is not a Baptist or Congregational church polity, nor should it become one. If it did that we would lose the genius that is Methodist connectionalism. So, “No!” The local church should not suddenly become the arbiters of truth as to what counts as holy matrimony, what counts as being morally fit for ordination, what counts as appropriate Christian sexual behavior. No, no, and no. The local option is a ploy of desperation that denudes us of our Methodism; it should be soundly rejected.

Secondly, for the entire existence of the Christian church, including the UM Church, Christian marriage has been rightly and biblically defined as when God joins together one man and one woman – period! This is exactly what Jesus himself directly says in Mark 10 and Mt. 19, and the only second option he gives in Mt. 19 is to be celibate for the sake of the kingdom. He even uses the dramatic term being a eunuch for the Kingdom. To change our view of what counts as Christian marriage is to *dis-fellowship* ourselves from the larger body of Christ — the Catholics, the Orthodox, most Baptists and Congregationalists, and so on. We should not go there if we care at all about ecumenism. Modern cultural trends that have affected and infected some of the Protestant mainline denominations here, and in a few places abroad, should not be allowed to overturn 2,000 years of what the church has said about proper Christian marriage.

Thirdly, it was Chaucer who said about priests ‘if gold rusts, what then will iron do’? He was saying that clergy should be absolutely above reproach morally speaking because otherwise they will set a horrible example for congregations and mislead them. When a church is divided about appropriate sexual behavior, for example, the clergy above all, should be those who err on the side of caution, on the side of Christian tradition, on the side of what the Scripture actually says — which is that same sex sexual activity (whether involving men or women) is a sin. And of course if that activity is a sin, then so-called ‘gay’ marriage is a non-starter. St. Paul was right in insisting that what we cannot do in good faith and in good conscience, we should not do at all, for it will be a sin for us. In other words, if one has any doubts about the ethics of these local option proposals, in whatever form they take, then one should vote against them as good Methodists. I speak to those who are wavering in one direction or another.

I remember a day long ago when I was watching the Watergate hearings and my own Senator, Sam Ervin was sick and tired of what he was hearing from John Dean. He finally shook his finger at Mr. Dean and quoted Galatians, “Mr Dean, ‘God is not mocked, whatsoever you sow, that you shall also reap.’ Tell the truth!” Well, God is watching, and we should have been watching what happened to the Episcopal Church and other mainline Protestant denominations who have already gone the way United Methodists are now contemplating going. If you will know the tree by the fruit it bears — the fruit that such moves have borne is just bad fruit — membership decline, laws suits over property, and more rancor because now the fight takes place in local churches. United Methodists can avoid kicking the can into every local church sanctuary and to make each one, or each annual conference decide these matters. We should take this opportunity to just say, “No!”

Dr. Ben Witherington III is the Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. This essay first appeared on Dr. Witherington’s blog page “The Bible and Culture” hosted by Patheos website.

SCRIPTURES AND THEMES- 06/2018

Pentecost – 2nd Sunday/Holy Communion 06/03/2018

Psalms 51: 1-11

Genesis 1: 1-4

Acts 1:1-8

John 15: 1-5

Theme: **Power of the Holy Spirit..**

Pentecost -3rd Sunday 06/10/2018

Psalms 34:1ff/ *Psalm 145:18*

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

1John 1: 1-9

Theme: **The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

Pentecost – 4th Sunday/ Father's Day
06/17/2018

Psalms 20:1ff.

1Samuel 15: 34-16:13

1Corinthians 12: 1-11

Mark 6: 7-13

Theme: **The Church in Mission together.....**

Pentecost – 5th Sunday 06/24/2018

Psalms 9: 9-20

Ephesians 1: 1-14

John 16: 8-13

Theme: **The Holy Spirit's work of
Salvation...**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Each Sunday

Faith To Life Bible Study 9:00 am

Morning Worship 10:00 am

Fellowship Time 11:15 am

Keith Griffin Pokémon League 1:00 pm

Casa de Dios Worship Service 5:00 pm

Each Monday

OFFICE CLOSED

Casa de Dios Bible Study 6:30 pm

Each Wednesday

Kiwanis Club Luncheon Noon

Young Adult Dinner & Discussion 7:30 pm

Each Saturday

Sack Lunch Program Noon

Sunday, June 3

FFRANK Breakfast 9:00 am

Saturday, June 9

Controlling Community Violence 9:00 am

Sunday, June 10

VIM Hosting Team Meeting 11:15 am

Tuesday, June 12

Council Meeting 6:00 pm

Finance Meeting 6:00 pm

Friday, June 15

Set up for Mission Work Team 9:00 am

Saturday, June 16

Dakotas UM Conference Mission
Team Arrives 5:30 pm

Sunday, June 17

Catered Meal & Worship 6:00 pm

Thursday, June 21

Dakotas UM Conference Mission
Team Departs

Saturday, June 30

Controlling Community Violence 9:00 am

Friday June 15 – Monday June 18

Annual Conference in Middleton Wisconsin
At the Marriot Hotel

HAPPY BIRTHDAY IN JUNE

- 2 - Scott McClelland
- 5 - Paul Burlingame
Amanda Mireles
- 6 - Harv Randecker
- 15 - Deb Johnson
- 16 - Shardae Feest
- 18 - Tessa Meredith
Dylan Olson
- 20 - Mary Meekma
Rick Reinhard
- 21 - Hilda Ayers
- 22 - Charlotte Schnaare
- 26 - Abigael Bergman
- 27 - LaVerne Fawcett
- 29 - Charlotte Hirth
Rick Reinhard
Dan Jarrett

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IN JUNE!

- 6 - Lyle & Mary Meekma
- 8 - Dan & Amy Magnuson
- 13 - Chuck & Jean Harmon
- 15 - Nathan & Liz Michael
- 18 - Roger & Betty Oakley
Paul & Karen Burlingame
Ryan & Corie Lovejoy
- 24 - Ed & Karen Robotka
- 25 - Mark & Carol Buhler
- 26 - Andy & Judy Madsen
Chuck & Jane Bragg
- 28 - Otto & Marilyn Nelson



ALTAR FLOWERS IN JUNE

- 3 -
- 10 - Jeff & Marcia Fernholz
- 17 - Patti Walker
- 24 -

USHER SCHEDULE

June 3

Jeff Fernholz
Ricky Castro
Jan Rosellini

June 10

Chuck & Jane Bragg
August Grulich

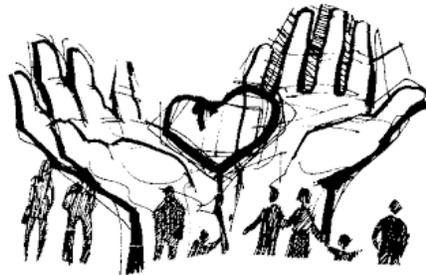
June 17

Jeff Fernholz
Roger & Betty Oakley

June 24

Ricky Castro
Chuck & Jane Bragg

If you are unable to be a greeter/usher on your assigned day, please contact someone from the usher list to substitute for you. Thanks.



OUR SUMMER GUESTS

Just a reminder. Our summer VIM guests will be arriving June 16. If you wish to help, please sign up on the sheets found on the table on the north side of the sanctuary. Please call the church office if you are attending the Sunday evening catered meal June 17. The cost is \$10; you may place in collection plate, give to Sue Mills, or drop in at the church office.

Your involvement with this project as we share this mission and outreach with our Dakota guests will be much appreciated.

Patti Walker



4TH OF JULY FOOD BOOTH

The 4th of July Parade in Racine is a marvelous tradition. Once again, on July 4th First Church will have a food booth in the church parking lot entrance. Ellen Spiering has agreed to oversee the food booth again this year. Look for the signup sheets in the back of the sanctuary for various jobs. Lastly, if you cannot volunteer, we definitely need customers. Come, spend lots of money purchasing wonderful things to eat and drink.

FOOD BANK ITEM FOR JUNE

The item for June is toilet paper. Thank you for helping this great mission! Every small act of kindness goes a long way.

LOOSE CHANGE OFFERING FOR JUNE

This month your loose change will go to the Health Care Network located at 904 State Street, Racine. You will help provide free/low cost health care to Racine County residents who are of limited income and medically uninsured. Simply place your loose change, or more, in the small brown envelopes found in the pew racks or on the sanctuary tables and place it in the offering plate.

Judicial Council Rules Against Council of Bishops, Allows All United Methodists to Submit Petitions

By Walter Fenton

Earlier today The United Methodist Church's Judicial Council (its "Supreme Court") issued an 8-1 [decision](#) repudiating the Council of Bishops' argument that only its preferred option for a way forward could be presented to the special General Conference scheduled for February 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri.

In a recent meeting the majority of the Council of Bishops (COB) recommended a "local option" approach to the church's long debate over its sexual ethics, teachings on marriage, and its ordination standards. The proposal calls on the General Conference delegates to liberalize the church's sexual ethics and allow pastors and annual conferences to make decisions about presiding at same-sex weddings and whether to ordain openly gay clergy.

A minority of bishops and other groups argued that the UM Church's constitution allowed any group, pastor, or lay member to present a petition to General Conference, even one called for a specific purpose, as long as the petition was in harmony with the purpose.

Earlier this week, during an oral hearing before the Judicial Council (JC), Bishop Bruce Ough, past president of the COB, claimed only the COB's plan should formally come before the special General Conference.

The Rev. Keith Boyette, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, [argued otherwise](#). Boyette, a practicing attorney since 1978 and UM pastor for twenty-four years, was elected to the JC himself at the 2000 General Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. He served on the council for eight years. He was joined in his argument by Bishop Scott Jones of the Texas Annual Conference, and John Lomperis, president of UM Action and General Conference lay delegate from Indiana.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association is grateful for the JC's decision. It preserves the right of organizations and all members of The United Methodist Church to present petitions to the special General Conference. Permitting other petitions to be filed will allow them to be printed and translated well before the February 2019 General Conference. The 864 delegates and members of the UM Church will be able engage in a robust discussion of all the petitions prior to the special General Conference.

"The WCA has made clear since its inception that millions of United Methodists around the world could not continue in a church that adopted a 'local option' plan, so I'm grateful for the Judicial Council's decision" said Boyette. "Thanks to its constitutionally grounded decision, I expect we'll see at least two or three other proposals submitted by the July 8, 2018 deadline. And I am sure one of them will be one orthodox, evangelicals can rally around. There's still a long way to go, but the JC's decision is a step in the right direction."

Rev. Walter Fenton is an elder in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. He has an extension appointment to serve with the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

Have the Talk

Preparing for the Days Ahead

The United Methodist Church remains in a time of uncertainty, and yet the picture is coming into sharper focus. The Commission on a Way Forward has finished its work. The majority of the Council of Bishops (COB) has determined it will recommend a previously failed “local option” plan to the special 2019 General Conference. Shortly, the Judicial Council will announce if plans other than COB majority’s preferred option can also come before the conference. And in July, the specific details of the COB’s plans and others will be available for all United Methodists to review.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association highly recommends that pastors and laity become informed as possible about where the UM Church is potentially headed and how the various plans could impact their local churches. To that end we will run a series of articles that will help resource pastors and congregations for the weeks and months ahead.

We could think of no better way to begin that series than by reprising the Rev. Dr. Chris Ritter’s “Have the Talk.” It is addressed to pastors, but it is good for laity to read as well, especially for those that might need to prod their pastor to have the talk.

Have the Talk

By Chris Ritter

I get it. Delaying local church discussions on the divisions threatening the UMC is an attractive option. The presenting issues are matters over which every local church has at least some internal disagreement. Why swat a hornet’s nest? There are plenty of other things to talk about. We have a whole world to reach with the Gospel of Jesus Christ... and there are budgets to keep, forms to file, funerals to conduct, meetings to attend, and events to plan. Also, we are all currently in a denomination-wide holding pattern. This is the eye of the hurricane between General Conferences 2016 and 2019. Outside of prayer, there is not much we can do to affect the high-level negotiations currently taking place. Why talk now when we will know more later?

I have been married long enough to testify that big discussions are best held before they have to be. By the time you *have* to talk, you are in the rushed pace of time lines established by others. For this reason, I believe the current lull is the ideal and necessary time to bring people up to speed on what has happened, what is happening, and the various visions for what might happen next. It is time to have the talk.

Not every talk is a good or helpful one. Tone matters. Some need to learn that there are ways to engage concerned laity that do not involve torches and pitchforks, recriminations or fear. Format matters. Don’t assume that the pulpit is the best place for sharing information. Most people in the pews on Sunday don’t need or want to know everything that is going on. Folks have different views on human sexuality. Almost no one wants to be part of a group fussing over this. Taking disagreements to the pulpit can often throw gasoline on the fire. Our goal is to shed light, not add heat. We will be the better for sparing the general church population the details of denominational infighting.

I recommend your Sunday morning communication be quite limited, brief, and focused on prayer. Our beloved denomination is currently in serious discussions about how to move forward together given some deep and serious divides. The Commission on a Way Forward has done its work. Our Council of Bishops is preparing to

put a plan before the whole church. We of course need to be in prayer as the process continues to unfold between now and called General Conference in St. Louis, February 23-26, 2019. But, also keep people informed. Provide links to articles where people who want to know more can find information and analysis.

Sermons on the topic of human sexuality can sometimes be appropriate. In thirty years of ministry, I have only preached one sermon on the topic of homosexuality. People were asking and changes in our culture demanded it. I made the message part of a message series on “burning issues.” I sat on a stool on floor level rather than preaching from the pulpit. We went through every text in the Bible about homosexuality. I preached the message to gay and straight, young and old. I am glad I did it. I posted a full transcript of [this message](#) on my blog and refer people to it when asked my opinion. Not every pastor should do it like I did. I would, however, recommend a thorough treatment of the topic of the New Testament vision for marriage in every United Methodist pulpit. A biblical view of marriage will challenge many norms of the larger culture in which we live.

Deeper conversations need to happen with church leaders and decision makers. I made it a point to have discussions with my church council and these conversations led to our church joining the Wesleyan Covenant Association. Some pastors are holding evening forums where all those interested can come for information and context.

In all conversations, be careful not to disparage the denomination. Our amazing connection is a treasure to be preserved not a problem to be eliminated. The positions and standards of the UMC are biblical, compassionate, and in keeping with two thousand years of Christian teaching. Don't demonize. When talking about people who disagree with you, assign them the best possible motives. State their arguments as well as you would your own. There are ways to draw necessary contrast without making our brothers and sisters in Christ out to be the enemy. We battle not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12).

I am praying for you as you decide what to say to the people in your spiritual care. Like all congregations, the one I serve is not completely of one mind. This is not a time for silence but a time for leadership. As you well know, God has not called us to popularity but to faithfulness. The groups I have spoken to have communicated overwhelming appreciation that their pastor shared with them the challenges we now face. The truth graciously stated is winsome and compelling. While the days ahead will not be easy, I encourage you to remember Joshua 1:9... Be strong and courageous. Now is the time to have the talk.

The Rev. Dr. Chris Ritter is the Directing Pastor of a multi-site ministry in the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference that includes Geneseo First United Methodist Church and Cambridge UMC.

If you'd like something in the July newsletter please send your information in by June 22nd

Send it to racine1umc@tds.net or give me a call at (262)633-7632

Thank you

The First Word is published monthly by First United Methodist Church

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FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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First United Methodist Church

The Vision statement:

- **To provide a community for people to experience God and find inspiration for daily living.**

The Mission statement:

- **To welcome and encourage all to live faithfully through Jesus Christ in ways that impact them and others.**

“A perfect church for imperfect people”