FROM SOCIAL PROPHETS TO SOCIAL PRINCIPLES
1890s-1990s

Two schools of social thought have been at work, sometimes at war, in UM History 1) the Pietist "stick to your knitting" school which focuses on gathering souls into God's kingdom and 2) the activist "we have a broader agenda" school which is motivated to help society reform itself. This lecture seeks to document the shift from an "old social agenda," which emphasized sabbath observance, abstinence from alcohol and "worldly amusements" to a "new agenda" that overlaps a good deal with that of progressives on the political left.

Outline

<u>Part One</u>:
A CHANGE OF HEART in late Victorian America (1890s)
Eight Prophets CRY in the wilderness of Methodist Pietism

In the previous two decades the Freedmen's Aid Society brought economic, moral and religious hope to a society fractured by the Civil War. The newly- formed women's home mission societies, deaconess orders, and Epworth Leagues, (young adult fellowships) in the several Methodist denominations all undertook energetic ministries of mercy. But not until the decade of the 1890s did the church as a whole come to a broader and deeper social passion among Methodists. It is ironic that the practice of the bishops and general conferences issuing "pastoral letters" on social problems was abandoned in the 1880s just when American Methodism's social conscience was beginning to be aroused. The denomination's first modern declaration on social policy was issued in 1908 not in a pastoral letter but in a social creed.1

Several forces led to this development —mainly the pressures of *society* rather than pressures of the Gospel, sad to say. The fruits of industrialization were not without ills. The stock market was at an all time high, and so were corporate profits. But these benefits were not being fairly shared. Wages and salaries were at an all-time low as a percentage of national wealth, even though productivity of American workers was the highest in the world. A six or seven day work week was the norm 100 years ago. There was no minimum wage, few protections for workers in hazardous occupations, and lots of women and children in the workforce. The right of

1 Kenneth E. Rowe, "Pastorals for the People: Pastoral Letters in the Methodist Tradition," IN: *Scholarship, Sacraments and Service: Historical Studies in the Protestant Tradition,* edited by Daniel B. Clendenin and W. David Buschart. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, 123-146.

employees to organize into unions for collective bargaining was widely opposed by American business. The so-called robber-barons were unapologetically raking in a huge percentage of the national wealth. The disposed workers at the bottom were threatening revolt. America was then, as now, drifting apart along class lines. The church, all too often, was in league with the factory in oppression. Its "moral policing" produced a well-behaved and obedient workforce. Machine, clock, church conspired!

Problems attending rapid industrialization were being left largely to *secular* organizations—trade unions, farmers' cooperatives, institutions to aid and support immigrants and the homeless. Legislators in Congress rather than delegates to General Conference attempted to curb exploitation with legislation like the Interstate Commerce Commission (1887), the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890), and the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906). Popular magazines, like *McClure's* and *Cosmopolitan* rather than the equally popular Methodist *Christian Advocates* exposed the seamy side of business. The prophets of the social crisis were *secular* muckrakers,2 like Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair rather than bishop this and pastor that.

To insure that the robust economy's benefits were properly shared among all Americans, eight Methodist Social Prophets took exceptional leadership.

- **Frances Willard** (Evanston) leads Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1874+

Willard raises church women's consciousness on a wide range of public issues and instructs them in the rudiments of what she calls "Gospel politics," which includes petitioning legislative bodies and participating in political parties. She switches from a moralistic to a social-scientific explanation of alcoholism. Rather than seeing alcoholism as a sin, Willard sees it is an environmentally-related disease, with *poverty as the cause rather than the effect of drinking*. **[MEA 1883B]**

- **William Carwardine** (Chicago) champions labor in Pullman strike, 1894[3]

Another sign of social concern in Methodism came during the Depression of 1893. The Pullman Palace Car company in the suburbs of Chicago prospered by building superior railway cars on an assembly line that anticipated Henry Ford's. The cars—ornate, comfortable, finished by some of

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2 In the early 20th century a group of journalists emerged who were committed to exposing the social, economic, and political ills of industrial life. In 1906 they were nicknamed "muckrakers" by President Theodore Roosevelt, who borrowed the word from John Bunyan's Puritan story, *Pilgrim's Progress*, which spoke of a man with a "muck-rake" in his hand who raked filth.

[3]The first American organization dedicated to labor and religion was the Christian Labor Union. It was founded in 1872 by a Methodist minister Jesse Jones and a lay preacher and ship carpenter Edward Rogers. Jones' fame came from his song-poem, *Eight Hours*, which became a labor union anthem. For a full study see Robert James Henning, *Methodist Response to Labor Unrest in Late Nineteenth Century America: A Cultural Theory.* Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1994.

the best Old World craftspeople, outfitted with dining and sleeping accommodations, decorated with tiffany lamps and plush carpets and curtains—opened up a new era in transportation. During the winter of 1893 thousands of workers at the Pullman plant are laid off. Many who kept their jobs received drastic wage cuts. Hundreds were near starvation in the model industrial town built by George Pullman a decade before to house his plant workers.

The Pullman strike was the climax of two decades of labor strife. Efforts to unionize were routinely met with clubbings, shootings, jailings, blacklistings, and executions, perpetrated not only by well-armed legions of company goons, but also by police officers, deputies, National Guardsmen and even regular soldiers. Dozens of workers were killed in these conflicts. In the late 1870s, after a bloody Pennsylvania coal strike, twenty Irish miners were hanged. In the 1880s railroad workers organized by the Knights of Labor crippled four eastern railroads by a series of strikes after their wages were drastically cut. Mobs joined the strikers and federal troops were called in to restore order. Railroad hubs Baltimore and Pittsburgh were occupied cities; dozens died in the riots. In 1886 a bitter strike against the McCormick Harvester plant in Chicago led to the infamous Haymarket Riot. Police order protesters to disperse and began marching towards the speakers' wagon a bomb exploded. The police opened fire. Sixty police officers were wounded along with an unknown number of civilians. In all, seven policemen and at least four workers were killed.

Now eight years later, with many of his people near starvation, paternalistic pappa Pullman would not negotiate with workers. The strike began in May of 1894 and would last seven weeks until federal troops were called in "to protect the mail." Strike leaders were blacklisted, rents remained high and uncut; no individual could own property in the company town. Violence began to break out. "Better half a loaf than none," declared the pastor of the company church. But the young pastor of the newly-formed Methodist church in town did not agree with Pullman's tactics or his preacher's sermonizing.

From his pulpit in the makeshift sanctuary less than two blocks away—the Methodists rented a second floor hall on Sundays from Pullman for $500 a month—William H. Carwardine declared the Sunday after the strike began: "I make no apology for discussing the strike." Reports of the sermon hit the headlines of Chicago's newspapers. Later that year Carwardine published an account of the whole affair in a little book entitled *The Pullman Strike*. Pastor Carwardine was active in relief work for the jobless. In fact, he was so successful in getting new jobs for blacklisted strikers that membership in his church dropped from 300 to 100! He opened his home as a storehouse for relief supplies, testified effectively before the Strike Commission, and published a book elaborating his arguments. **[MEA 1894]** 4

His reward from the hierarchy for his role in the Pullman affair? A reprimand and transfer to a

4 William H. Carwardine, *The Pullman Strike*. Chicago: Published by C.H.Kerr for the Illinois Labor History Society, 1973; reprint of 1894 printing; Steven C, Cobb, *Reverend William Carwardine and the Pullman Strike of 1894: The Christian Gospel and Social Justice*. Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992; Matthew C. Lee, "Onward Christian Solders: The Social Gospel and the Pullman Strike," *Chicago History* 20 (1991) 4-21.

minor church near the Chicago stockyards. While corporations emasculated workers' rights, Methodism officially still preached the gospel of hard work and take what you get. But leaving Pullman did not stop the bold young pastor. He lectured in 64 cities, ran unsuccessfully for political office, and in 1905 became one of the first religious news editors of a major newspaper—the Chicago *Herald and Examiner*. Through the years Carwardine continued to hammer away on two major themes—"the rights of property are at war with the rights of [persons]," and "If there is one law for the rich and another for the poor, there is no justice."

Carwardine was following in the footsteps of John Wesley. Wesley supported fair prices, a living wage and honest, healthy employment for all. Repeatedly at election times he convened the enfranchised members of his societies and urged them to vote for the candidate of noble character who would support humanitarian and Christian principles. Wesley's local and itinerant preachers in England followed his lead. The first fighters and speakers for unions, cooperative societies, political freedom and improved working conditions in England in early 19th century England were Methodist preachers. Three of the six "Tolpuddle Martyrs" of the early English trade union movement were Methodist local preachers. They were sent as prisoners to Australia simply because they dared to organize a union of farm hands.

- **Mary McDowell** (Chicago) an early social worker & pioneer in urban settlement house movement.

A devout Methodist, McDowell worked with the WCTU in the 1880s, organizing youth groups and kindergartens. Later that decade she became a kindergarten teacher at Jane Addams' Hull House and founder of the settlement Woman's Club. Beginning in 1894 she developed a social services program for immigrant families living in the vicinity of Chicago's meat-packing houses and became known as the "Angel of the Stockyards" for her work there. McDowell pressured the federal government to investigate the conditions in which women and children worked and to establish the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor. She gave staunch support to striking packing-house workers in 1904 and 1921, was co-founder of the National Women's Trade Union League, and was one of the initiators of the federal investigation of wages and working conditions for women and children. She pressured the federal government to investigate the conditions in which women and children worked and to establish the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, agitated for liberalized birth control laws, and marched for women's suffrage. McDowell was the only woman invited to the 1907 organizing meeting of Methodist Federation for Social Service. Unable to attend the historic meeting in Washington, McDowell joined MFSS's executive committee the following year, chairing the committee on settlement houses until 1923. She died in 1936 at the age of 81.5

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5 Jeanne Gayle Knepper, *Thy Kingdom Come: The Methodist Federation for Social Service and Human Rights: 1907-1948.* Staten Island, NY: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1996 ; *Encyclopedia of Chicago* at www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org. page 2410. About Women's History at www.sistersinthebuildingtrades.org/Docs/history/mmcdowell.pdf.

- **S. Parkes Cadman** (New York City) models an "open" or "institutional"

Despite the expansion of church programming and the formation of city missionary societies in the years following the Civil War, Methodism failed to maintain its strength of earlier years in the America's larger cities. The "open" or "institutional" church movement was a turn of the century effort by American social gospel leaders in mainline denominations to regain ground the church had lost in the city, and particularly among the working poor.[6] In addition to the main building for specifically religious services, an open or institutional church provided other rooms or buildings which during the week were open to members and friends. Lectures, concerts, debates, clubs and social gatherings were organized; reading rooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, and other recreational rooms were often provided. The church program as a whole was subdivided into special departments managed by committees. The movement consolidated in 1894 with the establishment of the Open and Institutional Church League to coordinate various programs and to pursue interdenominational cooperation.[7]

One of the first Methodist institutional churches was organized in New York City in 1895 by S. Parkes Cadman and his ministerial and lay associates. Cadman (1864-1936) was born in Shropshire, England, son of a miner and Wesleyan local preacher. Young Cadman prepared for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry at Richmond Theological College, near London. While at Richmond, Cadman met a visiting American Methodist bishop John Fletcher Hurst who was so impressed with his ability that he invited him to America. Cadman arrived in America in 1890 and joined the New York Conference.[8]

Cadman began holding evangelistic campaigns in his parishes in New York. Word spread of his extraordinary pastoral and homiletical skills. Five years later (1895) he was appointed to Central M.

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[6] The designation "institutional church" was used by William Jewett Tucker in referring to the social activities of Berkeley Temple, a Congregational Church in Boston, probably the first to use the term. The church began its widened social ministry in 1888. Wade C. Barclay, History of Methodist Missions. New York: Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1957, III : 66.

[7] For studies of the movement see Robert D. Cross, ed, The Church and the City 1865-1910. Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill Co.,1967; Charles H. Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940 and J. H. Dorn, "Religion and the City," in Urban Experience: Themes in American History, edited by Raymond A. Mohl and James F. Richardson. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973.

[8] Fred Hamlin, S. Parkes Cadman, Pioneer Radio Minister. New York : Harper & Brothers, 1930, especially chapter VIII "New York," 88-97. In 1901 Cadman was called to Central Congregational Church, Brooklyn where he remained as pastor for thirty-six years. One of the first radio preachers, he broadcast regularly from 1923 on, in later years to a nationwide audience. Cadman was president of the Federal Council of Churches from 1924 to 1928 and chaired the American section of the Ecumenical Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm, 1925. For additional biographical details see Hamlin biography cited above, Frederick E. Fagley, "Cadman, Samuel Parkes," in Dictionary of American Biography, 2d Supplement, 1958, 85-86; [Harold P. Sloan], "Dr. S. Parkes Cadman Attains the Eternal Presence," Christian Advocate (NY) 111/30 (July 23, 1936), p. 699.

E. Church (later called Metropolitan Temple) on Seventh Avenue near Fourteenth Street in New York City. He had been chosen by church officials partly because of a successful evangelical campaign which he had led one Sunday afternoon in the old New York Academy of Music. Central Church's membership had largely melted away. Distinguished New York families in other days had filled its pews. Among the illustrious members of its congregation were President Ulysses S. Grant and his family. But the city had moved northward and the membership had fallen off. The parish was populous, but few of the people were found in the church.

Cadman began by remodeling the premises, installing electric lights, eliminating pew rents and expanding the use of old Central Methodist Episcopal Church to each day of the week. By the late 1890s Cadman added "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Services" to more formal morning and evening services and excused persons from wearing "Sunday" clothes. His church's program included five choirs and an orchestra, a kindergarten, youth club, gymnasium, game room, reading room, a loan fund and employment service, a soup kitchen, a food and clothing dispensary, cooking and sewing classes, a deaconess home and a medical clinic.[9]

Other Methodist institutional churches followed in Cincinnati in connection with Wesley Chapel, in Chicago, Halstead Street Mission and Morgan Memorial Church in Boston. The movement was promoted by the denomination's City Evangelization Union, an organization authorized by the General Conference of 1892 and from 1896 to 1912 led by Frank Mason North. From 1889 to 1916 the Union published its own newsletter *Aggressive Methodism*, later called *The Christian City*, to promote expanded city missions and institutional churches.[10]

- **Edgar J. Helms** (Boston) founds **Goodwill Ministries**, 1902

Goodwill ministries was founded in 1902 by Helms (1863-1942) as an outgrowth of an institutional church serving inner-city residents who had immigrated to America only to find discrimination and poverty in Boston's crowded slums. The son of poor farmers, he grew up in Iowa. At an early age, he became aware of what it was like to e poor, hungry and out of work. In 1889 Helms enrolled at Boston University School of Theology. After graduation and ordination he was appointed to Morgan Chapel, Now church of All Nations in Boston's South End. In 1902 the country was in a severe economic depression and Boston's South End—a "world parish" with 50,0000 immigrants speaking 39 languages—was one of the city's most impoverished areas. As Helms leads this mission, it becomes apparent that in addition to a massive program of education and relief, there needed to be an effort to provide job experience and skills. **[Source 1908]** Gradually the workshop program expanded to include persons with disabilities.

The workshop program provided recipients of the relief effort a feeling that they had earned the

[9] Stephen J. Herben, Report of the Forward Movement, Metropolitan Temple Parish, New York City : Seventh Anniversary 1892-1899. New York : Press of Walter Logan, 1899.

[10] Wade C. Barclay, History of Methodist Missions. New York: Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1957, III : 67.

right to purchase clothes and household items. And when World War I produced its share of amputees and the paralyzed, Goodwill's role expands to become a leader in the field of rehabilitation.

As word got around that Helms had great success in his efforts, other cities asked him to help with the expansion of the Goodwill model. The concept caught on and the programs took the name "Goodwill Industries." In 1916 the church's General Conference allocated $1 million through its Methodist Centenary Fund to establish Goodwill stores in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis and other cities. Part of its missions Centenary campaign was the expansion of this ministry, so that by 1924 there were thirty-one. The Home Missions Department of the MEC South picked up on the idea and began similar programs in the South under the leadership of G. E. Holley. By 1929 there were Goodwill plants throughout the South, including Texas. Subsequently, the Bureau of Goodwill Industries of the MEC's Board of Missions' Department of City Work developed more than 100 Goodwill organizations across the country. The program won wide recognition for its work in the relief of those caught in the throes of the Great Depression of the 1930s. By 1920 the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension's Department of City Work listed Goodwill Industries as a Bureau under the direction of Helms. In that same decade the MEC, South also developed Goodwill Industries under its Board of Home Missions in Louisville, Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, Dallas, Atlanta and Columbia.11

By the 1940s Goodwill's expanding program needed support from other religious and community resources and the movement gradually [by 1946] separated itself from the Methodist church. 12 Today, Goodwill Ministries, the 7th largest non-profit organization in the U.S., carries on Helms' mission by providing work and job training to disabled people, people making the transition from welfare work and others. By 2000 the international organization operated ministries in 2,000 communities in 26 nations. Its 100th anniversary was celebrated in 2002.

- **William Bell** (Berkeley) promoted the Social Gospel among United Brethren 1909

At the opposite end of the county pastor-turned-bishop William Bell was crusading for a change of heart among the United Brethren. Although a native of Indiana, upon election to the episcopacy he was assigned to the Pacific coast area. Bell was a popularizer—he wrote several best sellers, the most notable of which was *The Social Message of our Lord* (1909). Bell represented his church on several important national and ecumenical bodies, notably the recently organized Federal Council of Churches. He was also busy on the lecture circuit around the country.

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11 Edgar J. Helms and Melvin Pelesare, *The Goodwill, Not Charity, But A Chance*. Boston: Morgan Memorial Press, 192-?; Edgar J. Helms, *The Goodwill Industries, a Manual, a History of the Movement, Departmental Methods of Work, and Cultural Activities, Administration and Organization.* Boston: Morgan Memorial Goodwill Press, 1935.

12 For a detailed history of this movement, see John Fulton Lewis, *Goodwill: For the Love of People*. Washington, DC: Goodwill Industries of America, Inc., 1977.

The social crisis Bell felt was the most important issue facing the church of his day. In his book he called for a "correction of all false and malignant individualism" that would "guarantee a new sense of social responsibility." [*Social Message,* p. 9] He openly favored a radical revision of the economic order. "God never intended," he wrote, "the oppressive ownership of wealth by the few." [p. 126f] In fact, "Christ made it very clear that riches were not only undesirable, but the positive occasion of guilt." Bell called it the state's duty to "assert the right to limit the individual fortune and compel the vast individual wealth of the world to yield in a sane way to such methods as will insure a more equitable distribution." [pp.7-8] He concluded that there was nothing inherently anti-God about socialism. (p. 16].

It was Bell who was responsible for the triumph of the social gospel at the 1909 General Conference of the UBC. Far more than any preceding or succeeding UB general conference, the 1909 one was intensely aware of the social crisis. The Episcopal address recognized "the social crisis of this age" and included a firm recommendation that the church adopt the Federal Council of Churches' "Social Creed of the Churches." Bishop Bell, speaking for his colleagues on the episcopal bench, insisted that "the church should not be behind the state in condemning and seeking to remedy all monopolies as contrary to social welfare." When he concluded the address urging the church to "seek to correct all unfairness and injustice in the making or using of wealth and seek to establish the Golden Rule as the rule of social life," the conference delegates broke into applause! [JGC, UBC, 1909, 21-24] To top it all off, Bishop Bell invited his close personal friend, William Jennings Bryan, then at the height of his popularity to give a keynote address to the conference, an address entirely devoted to social issues. The UBC adopted formally adopted the FCC's social creed of the churches in 1916 and formed a Social Service Commission in 1933.

The Evangelical Church was relatively slow to respond to the challenge of the social gospel and for longer retained the individual-oriented moral stance. Not until 1934 did the EVs adopt a social creed and not until 1938 did they establish a denominational Board of Christian Social Action.

- **Ida Tarbell** (New York, Hartford) Tarbell's investigative journalism heightened moral indignation among middle-class Americans over the corruption of big business and politicians.

In the early 20th century a group of journalists emerged who were committed to exposing the social, economic and political illus of industrial life in America. In 1906 they were nicknamed "Muckrakers" by President Theodore Roosevelt, who borrowed the word from John Bunyan's Puritan story, *Pilgrim's Progress*, which spoke of a man with a "Ruck-rake in his hand," who raked filth. Muckraking grew out of two related developments of the era—a changing journalism and the reform impulse. The muckrakers represented a new cadre of educated reporters, distinct from earlier journalists who wrote polemical, sensationalized news.

Tarbell, an active Methodist laywoman, set the standard for investigative reporting by revealing how John D. Rockefeller monopolized the early oil industry in her 1904 *History of Standard Oil Company.* Her book began a national discourse which led to the 1911 Supreme Court decision to break up the Standard Oil monopoly. President Theodore Roosevelt urged Congress to take the antitrust action but neglected to credit Tarbell and her pioneering work. Her exposé of the ruthlessness of big business and other national ills made her a leader in the early muckraking movement. A postage stamp bearing her image was released by U.S. Postal Service September 2002.

- **Frank Mason North** (New York City) questioned capitalism; argued Socialism can be Christianized

Another prophet crying in the wilderness of Methodist Pietism was New York City-based church executive Frank Mason North. "More than any other person, North shaped the social gospel policies of not just Methodism but mainline Protestant churches of the country between 1892 and 1912," so wrote historian Robert T. Handy in his 1984 book *A Christian America*. Although better known for his famous social gospel hymn "Where cross the crowded ways of life" [*UMHymnal* 1989, no.427], in 1891 North wrote a series of four articles on the topic of "Socialism and Christianity" in *Zion's Herald,* Boston area's Methodist newspaper. **[MEA 1891]** His main point was socialism, devoid of its atheism and materialism, could be Christianized. Two other important points North made in this series of articles are worth remembering: "The city will test the church and decide its competence" and "The problem of poverty lies very close to the problem of sin."

The following year, 1892, North traded a pulpit for a desk in the New York offices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, having become the Corresponding Secretary of the New York City Mission and Church Extension Society, a network of urban parishes, immigrant congregations and interracial centers, including the Church of All Nations, the successor of the famed Five Points Mission of the ante-bellum period. In 1912 he became chief executive of the denomination's Board of Foreign Missions; from 1912 until 1916 he chaired the executive committee of the Federal Council of Churches and from 1916-1920 served as the Council's president.

In 1892 the New York East Conference, through a committee headed by North, broke new ground by framing a memorial to that year's General Conference urging a declaration of Christian duties on social concerns. No action was taken at the conference, but this marks the beginning of the struggle to get the church to commit itself to a vigorous ministry of social justice on behalf of the poor.

North was prophetic in another way. He understood that the problems of black Americans were not only those of the rural dweller in the Jim Crow south, but also those of the more numerous black city dwellers. He was one of the few leading figures in the MEC church who openly

supported the NAACP from its foundation in 1909.

Two Social Prophets from *other Christian traditions* made the same pitch at the same time—that one can be a dedicated Christian and a social reformer at the same time.

Pope Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* ["Of New Things," popularly known as *The Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*], a 1891 papal encyclical to Roman Catholic bishops and faithful, which endorsed labor unions and laid the groundwork for the modern welfare state. It addressed the problems caused by the Industrial Revolution: the migration from field to factories, the exploitation of workers, the spread of communism. Though inequalities and hardship were inevitable, the Pope wrote, each worker was entitled to a just reward. Government should protect workers. Working men and women's associations were encouraged

Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, published in1907. Baptist theologian Rauschenbush was the principal spokesperson for the Social Gospel movement of the early 20th century mainline Protestantism. He offers first, an interpretation of who Jesus was and what he taught. He declared that Jesus lived a life of unconditional love intended to establish a community of justice and mercy. The failure of Christians to do the same as Jesus had done was apparent. The second half of the book provides an analysis of the "crisis" then facing the U.S. He called for a "new humanity" in service to Jesus' mission of establishing a new social order free of the wholesale injustice and cruelties manifested all over the world but particularly in America. Rauschenbusch is today being rediscovered by those who, concerned about the success of the religious right, hope to make more visible the presence of a religious left in the United States.13

In one way or another, all of these "prophets" longed for a "socialized" capitalism which would cultivate the idea that business exists for the community, instead of the principle that a business exists for itself, that is, for the profits it can make for its owners. Attempting to place economic structures under the "law of Christ" rather than the "law of Mammon," **their shared vision ushered in an era of economic justice marked by just wages, full employment, and redistributed wealth.**

13 A 100th anniversary edition, published as C*hristianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century: The Classic that Woke Up the Church*, 2007. [Harper-One $17.95] Paul Rauschenbusch, an associate dean of religious life at Princeton University and the author's great-grandson, has reprinted the text with essays by Cornel West, Jim Wallis and others who "represent the best of the Social Gospel tradition."

Part Two:
From SOCIAL GOSPEL to SOCIAL CREED 1900-1916

Socially-minded Episcopal Methodists heed the call of the social prophets, but divide into three camps 1) **social evangelists,** who seek to change secular society into a Christian one by converting persons one by one, 2) **social engineers**, who believe that social injustices can be fixed with specific legislation created by social scientists, but keep the basic social structures as they are [i.e. capitalism]. 3) **social reconstructionists,** who seek nothing less than a radical reconstruction of the nation's economy and social structures to get justice. [i.e., abandon capitalism and adopt socialism].

Methodism's fresh commitment to social justice was first put to the test in 1906 when the church's agency with the largest workforce—the Methodist Book Concern—turned its back on its own employees. The International Typographical Union had recently inaugurated an 8-hour day for its members in all future contracts. The Methodist Book Concern opposed the move, allied itself with the opposition movement, and fired every union member at each its several printing plants across the country. The ITU appealed to Methodist clergy on behalf of employees **[MEA 1906]** Ten months later the Book Concern gave in, implemented an 8-hour workday, but refused to recognize the union or rehire striking union members. Concerned clergy and members sought signatures for printed petitions to General Conference of 1908 favoring unions.

Formation of the Methodist Federation for Social Service 1907

The Methodist Federation for Social Service (after 1948 the Methodist Federation for Social *Action*) did not spring full grown out of the consciousness of a little band of American Methodist clergy as is implied in many accounts of its founding.14 In the keynote address delivered in 1908 to the Federation's first national convocation, Herbert Welch, first president of the Federation, recognized the generality of the social movement that produced the Federation and other social

14 The standard, though unpublished, histories of MFSA's founding and early years are Milton J. Huber, *A History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action,* thesis, Ph.D., Boston University, 1949 and William McGuire King, *The Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism in American Methodism*, Thesis, Ph.D., Harvard University, 1977. More accessible are George D.McClain, "Pioneering Social Gospel Radicalism: An Overview of the Methodist Federation for Social Action," IN: *Perspectives on American Methodism,* edited by Richey, Rowe and Schmidt. Nashville: Kingswood Books/ Abingdon Press, 1993, 371-385; William Maguire King, "The Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," *Church History 50 (December 1981) 436-449;* Jeanne Gayle Knepper, *Thy Kingdom Come: The Methodist Federation for Social Service and Human Rights: 1907-1948.* Staten Island, NY: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1996; Alice G. Knotts, *Lifting up Hope: Living Out Justice.* .San Diego, CA : Frontrowliving Press, 2007; and *Pioneers in the Faith: The Methodist Federation for Social Action at 100 Years, 1907-2007*. Washington, DC: MFSA, 2007. For a brief history see MFSA's web site–**www.mfsaweb.org**. The best contextual studies are Walter G. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1961and Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era 1900-1920*. Macon, GA : Mercer University Press, 1988.

service organizations. He singled out as a model the Wesleyan Union for Social Service in England formed three years earlier. Welch told the organization's first national conference in St. Louis in November 1908:

> The chief duty [of the newly formed federation]] is to put American Methodism where English Methodism has come to be, distinctly on the side of Christ's 'little ones'; not to appear as the advocate of any class, be it rich or poor, but as the friend of all ... because they are [all children of God]; to be once again and more fully than ever 'the Church of the people.'[15]

Two years earlier, in the winter of 1906 Welch, then President of Ohio Wesleyan University, met Elbert Zaring,16 editor of Cincinnati-based *Western Christian Advocate* and Worth Tippy,[17] pastor of Epworth Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church in Ohio's largest city, Cleveland. Indiana-born Tippy later served the New York based Federal Council of Churches as its social service executive for 20 years. The three entered into correspondence concerning the formation of an organization for the Methodist Episcopal Church similar to that of the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service in England. Welch was able to bring to the Ohioans the thinking of Frank Mason North, influential executive of the New York City Church Extension and Missionary Society, and other New York pastors interested in jump-starting urban ministry, colleagues from his days as pastor in the New York Conference.[18]

The effort to organize a social service federation was put on hold for the time being until one of their number could go to England, meet the leaders of the Wesleyan Union and visit as many of the their city missions as possible. Welch had spent a sabbatical year at Oxford University in 1902 and had some familiarity with the work of Hugh Price Hughes and English social programs,[19] but the idea became more enticing when a wealthy parishioner offered to pay Tippy's

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[15] Herbert Welch, "The Church and the Social Need," in *The Socialized Church : Addresses before the First National Conference of Social Workers of Methodism, St. Louis, November 17-19, 1908*, edited by Worth M. Tippy. New York: Eaton & Mains; Cincinnati : Jennings & Graham, 1909, p. 21, 30-31. Abingdon Press, 1961. See also Welch's autobiography *As I Recall My Last Century*. New York : Abingdon Press, 1962.

16 Elbert Robb Zaring was born in Rockport, Indiana, graduated from DePauw University in 1891, and was a clergy member of the Indiana Conference until his death in 1954. Active in community service work, he was also assistant, later editor of the MEC's *Western Christian Advocate* based in Cincinnati for many years. He was a co-signer of the letter inviting leaders to the 1907 Conference which founded MFSS.

[17] Tippy was born in Larwill, Indiana, one year after the Civil War ended (1866) and educated at DePauw and Cornell Universities. He served two of Methodism's most prestigious city churches—Epworth Memorial Church in Cleveland and Madison Avenue Church (later Christ Church) New York City. From 1917 to 1937 he was executive secretary of the Church and Social Service Commission of the Federal Council of Churches, now the National Council of Churches. Dr. Tippy returned to DePauw in 1951 to organize and develop the archives both of the university and of Indiana Methodism and served as director of both for six years when he retired to Laurel, Mississippi where he lived with his daughter until his death in 1961.

[18] Huber, *History of MFSA*, p. 58f.

[19] Herbert Welch, *As I Recall My Last Century*. Nashville : Abingdon Press, 1962, 51-52.

expenses for a three-month trip to England. When his congregation granted him a leave in the summer of 1907, Tippy decided to take the voyage and agreed to learn all he could about the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service and the work of the major missions in London, Manchester and Leeds.[20]

Since 1905 Tippy had been conducting experiments of his own in urban ministry in his Cleveland parish, turning lay-people into social workers, organizing a Charities Council, cooperating with city officials, opening the church seven days a week as a neighborhood center. In 1914 Tippy described his experience in awakening Epworth Church, Cleveland to its social ministry in a study book the Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, an ecumenical educational and publication program sponsored by main-line denominations, asked him to write, *The Church, A Community Force*.[21]

From June through July of 1907 Tippy traveled about England studying the Wesleyan movement at first hand. One of the objects of the trip was to study the young Wesleyan Union for Social Service with the idea of organizing a similar agency in this country upon his return. The Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service (WMUSS) was founded in 1904 largely through the leadership of Samuel E. Keeble, the Union's first President.[22] Its mission was defined as:

> the collection and study of social facts, the pursuit of social service, and the discussion of social problems and theories from the Christian standpoint, with the view to educate public opinion and secure improvement in the conditions of life.[23]

As far back as 1899 Keeble had publicly pleaded for a social union.[24] During his Manchester ministry Keeble set up a society in his circuit to consider housing, education, health and sanitation. This ambitious program received favorable comment in the Methodist Recorder,[25]

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[20] Worth M. Tippy, "Autobiography," unpublished MS, Worth M. Tippy papers, Archives of Depauw University and Indiana Methodism, Greencastle, IN, Box DC627, "Europe 1908,"; Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility*, 1988, p. 91-92.

[21] Worth M. Tippy, *The Church a Community Force : A Story of the Development of the Community Relations of Epworth Memorial Church, Cleveland, Ohio.* New York : Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1914.

[22] The two best studies of Keeble are Maldwyn Edwards, *S.E.Keeble : Pioneer and Prophet*. London : Epworth Press, 1949 and Michael S. Edwards, *S.E. Keeble : The Rejected Prophet.* Broxton : Wesley Historical Society, 1977. (Wesley Historical Society Lecture, 1972)

[23] *The Social Outlook,* 1910, iii.

[24] Maldwyn Edwards, *S.E.Keeble,* 1949, p. 65.

[25] *Methodist Recorder* June 11, 1905.

and other districts began to set up their own societies. During the Conference of 1905 a small group of young socially-minded clergy under the inspiration of Keeble officially started the Union with its watchword "See and Serve." By the end of 1905 Keeble was able to announce that WMUSS had been established in every large city in Britain. Local branches studied local social conditions. They were urged by Keeble to "tactfully practise social permeation" (i.e. infiltrate) the various church organizations and meetings and to be ready for "a great work of social propagandism" when numbers were sufficiently great.[26]

Although sometimes worried by "socialism" within Methodist ranks, the Wesleyan press gave the new Union a cautious welcome. Its future seemed bright. The new Union recruited able leadership—Keeble as president, Lidgett and Rattenbury as Vice Presidents, and Lofthouse was secretary. The most effective propaganda was the publication of a penny pamphlet series Social Tracts for the Times. Keeble wrote the first number, Christianity and Socialism. The Union also published a newsletter, See and Serve[27] (the Union's motto) and held a series of scholarly conferences with published proceedings which filled many gaps in official Wesleyan social thinking: *The Citizen of Tomorrow* (1906), *Social Science and Service* (1909) and most important of all, *The Social Teaching of the Bible* (1909).

After his visit in England Tippy stopped in New York to consult Frank Mason North on his way back to Cleveland. Tippy learned that North had been discussing the need for a social service caucus with Harry F. Ward, pastor of Union Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church in the stockyards district of Chicago, a settlement project aided by Northwestern University in Evanston. Shortly after Tippy returned to Cleveland he invited four interested colleagues—North from New York, Harry Ward from Chicago and Welch and Zaring from Ohio—to meet in Cleveland to take the next step. Only three of the five were able to be present: Welch, North and Tippy. After exchanging ideas on the nature of the proposed denomination-wide association of lay and clergy leaders concerned about issues of social justice the group decided to proceed with the organization and called a conference in Washington, DC in December 3, 1907 to launch it. Invitations signed by all five were sent to prominent clergy working in the fields of church extension, religious journalism, education, and the parish ministry and to interested lay leaders, both business people and public officials.

> The Committee has in mind the formation of a society to stimulate wide study of social questions by the church, side by side with practical social service, and to bring the church into touch with neglected social groups. It is an effort to apply the sane and fervent spirit of Methodism to the social needs of the time.[28]

Twenty-five lay and clergy leaders attended the unofficial meeting in Washington— including

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[26] *The Social Outlook,* 1910, p. 210.

[27] Published 1906-1917 with a single editor, Henry Carter.

[28] Quoted in Huber, *History of MFSA*, p. 62-63.

urban evangelism executive Frank Mason North, Ohio Wesleyan University president (and later bishop) Herbert Welch, Chicago working-class parish pastor Harry Ward,29 Cincinnati-based church editor Elbert Zaring, and Cleveland inner-city pastor Worth Tippy. When Frank Mason North moved the establishment of a Methodist Federation for Social Service, the motion carried. A brief mission statement for the new voluntary organization was drafted and adopted: "to deepen within the church the sense of social obligation, to study social problems from a Christian point of view, and to promote social service in the Spirit of Christ." Welch was elected convenor. Later that week the band of Methodist reformers breakfasted with progressive President Theodore Roosevelt in the White House.

Moving quickly into action, the fledgling organization drafted the first Social Creed and presented it to the ME General Conference meeting in Baltimore. 1908.

Several important circumstances set the stage for the birth of the church's first statement of social principles at the 1908 General Conference:

- 600 of the 800 elected delegates are newcomers, many imbued with the spirit of social activism by their popular President Theodore Roosevelt whom they invited to address a conference session. **[MEA 1908].**

- The progressive mood in Baltimore was further stimulated by MFSA, which rented the Lyric Theater, where GC was held in the daytime, for an evening rally at which over 1,000 persons hear the Methodist governor of Kansas, Edward Hoch, Ohio Wesleyan College president Herbert Welch, and Chicago area Methodist Bishop William Fraser McDowell urge the church to press for social justice rather than harp on the evils of dancing, theater-going and card playing.

- MFSA officers used their influence to insert into the Episcopal Address an affirmation of the rights of labor quite advanced in its time, stating "we hold the right of those workingmen who desire to do so, to form labor unions for the advancement of their interest."

- The conference received a flood of petitions from members and local churches calling for the church to take action on the growing economic crisis, especially the growing rift between management and labor.

The first skirmish at conference concerned "union busting" at the Methodist Book Concern.

29 Ward was reared in a revivalist Methodist family on the outskirts of London, emigrated to the U.S. in 1891. He began college at the young University of Southern California, transferred to Northwestern University, and earned a master's degree at Harvard. Study under George Coe at Northwestern solidified a nascent Social Gospel in Ward and his first position following Harvard was the director at the Northwestern University Settlement House in the "back-of-the-stock yards" district of Chicago where he was later appointed to a ME church.

[MEA 1906, Source 1908B] For the first time the conference passed a resolution saying it was all for labor unions and urging all their members to the fullest possible promotion of the principles of industrial peace and human brotherhood, but failed to order the publishing house to rehire striking workers and honor the union.

The union felt it had suffered further defeat. There followed three years (1909-1911) of comparative quiet, but pro-union pressure and agitation had been building up and made themselves very much felt to the general conference of 1912. This conference adopted a report of the MFSS calling for "the immediate application in every industry of the principle of collective bargaining," and recognizing the Federation as the executive agency to rally the forces of the church in support of this policy. But again efforts failed to unionize the publishing house. As the next quadrennium drew to a close and the general conference of 1916 approached, the federation and the union leaders prepared for the battle they knew was coming to order the several units of the publishing units to negotiate a contract with the union. The conference again failed to order its publishing house to unionize as did the following three general conferences, 1920, 1924 and 1928. MFSS leaders served as the mediator throughout this long-standing dispute. Not until November 1931, just prior to the 1932 general conference, did the publishing house executive staff finally recognize the International Typographical Union. The Publishing House of the MEC, South continued to be a non-union shop through merger with the northern church in 1939.30

A progressive mood resurfaced over the next ten days as the **General Conference debated and adopted the first "Social Creed" of Methodism.** The Methodist Episcopal Church officially, if not wholeheartedly, joins the Social Gospel Movement. The creed's principal author was Harry Ward, who penned the statement on telegraph blanks borrowed from the backroom of the Western Union headquarters where a general conference legislative committee on The Church and Social Problems was meeting with the Federation's executive committee. Designed to replace a lengthy and ponderous subcommittee draft, what became the social creed was a concise, hard-hitting eleven-point statement of what Methodists stand for. **[Source 1908A]**

Three brief comments on the denomination's first social creed:

- it was a single-issue creed, indicating how pressing the matter of economic reform was in the first decade of the new century;
- it was a prophetic document—anticipating much of the social legislation passed 25 years later by President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal";
- it was Methodism's first major gift to the emerging ecumenical movement.

During the fall of 1908, a MFSS founder Frank Mason North, active ecumenist and well as social justice advocate, had created a second version of the creed, adding four additional affirmations: the right to 1) a job, 2) unemployment compensation, 3) aid to dependent children, and 4) old age

30 Walter N. Vernon, *The United Methodist Publishing House, A History* [1870-1988]. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989, 227-230, 309-312.

disability insurance, later enacted in the national social security program. North presented the "creed" to the Federal Council of Churches, representing most of America's Protestant churches, meeting in the fall of 1908 which endorsed it wholeheartedly. The expanded 14-point statement known as "The Social Creed of the Churches" was gradually taken up by one denomination after another. Within the Methodist family, the Social Creed in either Methodist ecumenical form was adopted by the United Brethren in 1912, by the ME Church, South in 1914, by the Methodist Protestant Church in 1916; the Evangelical Church lagged until 1934.Despite efforts to develop a common text, the social creeds of the several churches were continually modified. In 1932 Mr. North played a central role in updating the text when the FCC creed adopted an extensive revision called "Social Ideals."

Toward a "Socialized Church" ?

General conference delegates in 1908 recognized the MFSS as the denomination's "executive agency to rally the forces of the church in support of social reform. This affirmation was reaffirmed by the 1912 and 1916 general conferences, but with the stipulation that three bishops be designated each quadrennium to sit on the Federation's governing board.

The ME Church's new social service federation immediately launched a drive to encourage churches to actively engage the social order. Following the pattern of their British social mentors, MFSS leaders organized the first national conference of Methodist social workers in November 1908. Meeting in St. Louis attendees heard stirring addresses on "The Socialized Church" by Frank Mason North, "The Church and the Social Need" by Herbert Welch, "What Workingmen Might Reasonably Expect from the Church," by Prof. Edwin Earp (Drew Theological Seminary) "The Value of a Social Settlement in an Industrial Neighborhood" by Mary McDowell, "The Deaconess in Social Settlement Work" by Isabelle Horton, and "The Deaconess as the Pastor's Social Assistant," by Bertha Fowler.31

To spread its message further, the Federation also began immediately to use the print media. One of the most popular publications among the many leaflets, monographs, and bibliographies put out by MFSS during the earlier period was a 1909 pamphlet, *The Methodist Church in Organized Charity*, by J. W. Magruder, a member of its executive committee and general secretary of Federated Charities in Baltimore.32 In that compact but comprehensive study, Magruder revealed the gist of social service that characterized MFSS's approach during this period. Scientific social work demanded "order, economy, and an avoidance of the very appearance of

31 National Conference of the Social Workers of Methodism (1st:1908:St. Louis, Mo.) *The Socialized Church: Addresses before the First National Conference of the Social Workers of Methodism, St. Louis, November 17-19, 1908,* edited by Worthy M. Tippy for the Methodist Federation for Social Service. New York ; Eaton & Mains, 1909.

32 J. W. Magruder. *The Methodist Church in Organized Charity*. [Dover, NH]: Methodist Federation for Social Service, 1909. 32p. Another popular early pamphlet, *Suggestions for Individual Service,* published in 1910 urged members, pastors and district superintendents to perform community service.

the evil of paupering." Organized charity was in reality a threefold process involving emergency relief, adequate relief, and "radical relief." Emergency relief was merely a temporary expedient, "first aid to the injured," pending adequate relief, which required time, thought and skills, and aimed at "the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual redemption of any individual or family in distress." Magruder used "radical relief" to designate the type of relief that works to root out the causes of distress, such as lawlessness, disease, unemployment, poor housing, child labor, and any other evil that attacks the life, health, and character of the community. Radical relief would gradually supersede the necessity for either emergency relief or adequate relief. The note of optimism and confidence for the future that Magruder prophesied constitute a significant dimension of the MFSS's spirit during its early years. The work of organization throughout this period was enhanced by the deep conviction that the social movement of which it was steadily moving toward the consummation of the Kingdom of God on earth. FSS also prompted the Methodist Book Concern to publish works on the "social crisis," including full texts of papers delivered at its several national conferences, 1908, 1922 and 1926. *The Abingdon War-Food Book*, with a foreword by Herbert Hoover and reprint of John Wesley's 1773 classic "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions" along with up-to-date war-time recipes and menus was initiated by the federation.

In 1911 MFSS launched an even more important means of communication, the still-running *Social Service Bulletin* (renamed *Social Questions Bulletin* in 1933). The *Bulletin*, first edited by Ward, presented opportunities that were not conceivable under the spasmodic policy of printing leaflets and pamphlets. Among other things, the bulletin brought individual members directly in touch with the MFSS leadership as local agents propagating social service ideas and practical work in behalf of MFSS.

About the same time other members of the Methodist family of churches also began to establish "social justice" caucuses, boards, agencies or commissions—Methodist Protestant Church in 1916, MEC, South in 1926, Evangelical Church in1930 and the United Brethren Church 1933. **The several denominations' theological schools began to expand their curriculum and faculties and guest lecturers to include what came to be called "Christian sociology."** One year following the adoption of the Social Creed, 1909, Drew Theological Seminary established one of the first professorships of Christian Sociology in an American theological school, and hired a European-university trained professor, Edwin L. Earp, to be its first incumbent. Earp penned seven books before ending a thirty-year teaching career at Drew in 1938. The church's publishing houses rushed books on the subject through their presses, such as Washington Gladden's *Christianity and Socialism* (1905), five lectures given before the students at Drew earlier that year.

In 1911 **Harry Ward** began his first of 34 years as unpaid Federation executive while teaching Christian ethics first at Boston University School of Theology (1913-17) and then at Union Theological Seminary in New York (1918-1941). MFSS seeks to champion above all the cause of working people and organized labor. Ward's experiences with the working poor in Chicago forever colored his understanding of the gospel, and his pastorates soured him on the comfortable

Christian life of the middle and upper classes. Years earlier, as director of a Chicago settlement house, he became friends with pioneer social workers Jane Addams and Mary McDowell. Later, while serving as pastor in Chicago's meat-packing district, he conducted funerals for packinghouse workers killed in frequent factory accidents. Moved by their oppression, Ward strongly supported the workers' drive to form a union to improve their conditions. During and between major U.S. labor disputes, he built labor and religious coalitions that transcended race, class, party and faith in pursuit of social equality.

The following year, 1912, **Bishop Francis J. McConnell,** well known across the church for his brilliance in defense of academic freedom and civil liberties**,** was chosen Federation president and served as such for the next 32 years. That same year he was elected bishop. The two positions gave the new bishop practical experience in social reform at the national level. Under the leadership of such leaders as Ward and McConnell, the social gospel itself was being transformed from the efforts of individual congregations into the coordinated programs of national Protestant organizations.

During these years Americans witnessed an expansion of the role of government that not only changed the way people understood their political system but also made Ward's and McConnell's kind of social activism possible. The early reforms supported by churches, especially reforms in health care and family services, began to shift away from churches and toward government agencies as the purveyors of security and succor. By the 1910s, when the social gospel was at the height of its strength and popularity, Americans were beginning to expect more from their government than they had in the past. McConnell became convinced that religious conviction should not stop with itself or with the church. Christians had an obligation to "protest against political and industrial evils" in order to "guard the intellectual and moral interest of the people." McConnell realized the increasing inability of the church to act effectively on its own. In a 1922 book *Christian Citizenship,* which he designed as a course of study for young people, he argued that the "distinction between secular and sacred" had caused "much harm." While wishing to avoid a "fusion" of church and state, McConnell insisted that the two were interdependent. "What we seek today," he said, "is not formal and official connection between the larger social groups and Christianity but the sanctification of all these groups by the Christian spirit." The "Christian ideal" for the state, he argued, was "the welfare of the people." The Christian citizen thus had an obligation to participate in the political process to make the state aware of one's Christian aims. In effect, McConnell elevated citizenship to moral duty. His Jesus would be a lobbyist of the people in an expanding regulatory state. Not surprisingly in the 1930's the bishop vigorously promoted President Franklin Roosevelt's government-sponsored social security program for the aged and the needy.33

The early *women* leaders of MFSA never receive due recognition; nor has the indispensable role of the Methodist deaconess movement, of which they were a part. Alice Knotts helped

33 William Maguire King, "The Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," *Church History 50 (December 1981) 436-449;* Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920;*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988.

correct that by documenting in her 2007 book, *Lifting up Hope, Living Out Justice*, the extraordinary contribution of five Methodist deaconesses to the implementation of the Social Gospel in Methodism and to the birth and life of the Methodist Federation.34 Two of them, **Grace Scribner** and Winifred Chappell, served as co-executives of the Federation and co-editors of the *Social Questions Bulletin*, and probably were its primary writers for more than a dozen years beginning in 1911. Growing up in the poverty of Michigan's upper peninsula and then training as a deaconess, Grace Scribner served effectively in these capacities with MFSA for 12 years. Tragically, in 1923 Scribner was killed by an automobile while crossing Broadway in front of Union Theological Seminary in New York..

Her friend **Winifred Chappell**, a native of Iowa, an instructor in the deaconess training school in Chicago, came to New York to replace her. Consecrated a deaconess in 1908, Chappell, was elected to the Federation's executive committee in 1914 and shared the Federation's leadership with Ward and Bishop McConnell. She carved out a special place for herself through her editing, writing, speaking and teaching. She edited the Federation's *Social Questions Bulletin* and from1922 through 1947. Few church leaders were more perceptive in discerning or more courageous in exposing the demonic side of unrestrained capitalism. She was a socialist to the core. She supported women's suffrage, labor unions, working men and especially working women, but her heart was primarily aligned with the poor and exploited. Her defense of working women of Passaic, NJ in a 1926 strike against mill owners is vintage Chappell. **[MEA 1926].** Between herself and Harry Ward, Chappell may actually be the more radical of the two. Of her it is said, "Everyone on the left knows her."

The minds and energies of these four leaders—Ward, McConnell, Scribner and Chappell—dominated the drive and direction of the federation for several decades. They served as the social gadflies of Methodism. Under their joint leadership MFSS convened two national conferences on Christianity and the economic order in 1922 and 1926 which exposed the demonic side of capitalism.

The Social Gospel : Many Limitations/ Impressive Legacy

The Social Gospel movement, Methodist and ecumenical, had many faults and limitations. Most of the movement was sentimental, moralistic, idealistic, and politically naïve. It preached a Gospel of cultural optimism and a Jesus of middle-class idealism. It was culturally chauvinist and thoroughly late-Victorian. It spoke the language of triumphal missionary religion, sometimes baptized the Anglo-Saxon ideology of Manifest Destiny and usually claimed that American imperialism was not really imperialism or imperious, since it had good intentions. The social gospel helped to build colleges and universities for African Americans, but only rarely did it demand justice for blacks; it supported suffrage for women, but that was the extent of its feminism. It created the ecumenical movement in the U.S., but it had a strongly Protestant, anti-Catholic idea of ecumenism. Most social gospel leaders vigorously opposed World War I until

34 Alice G. Knotts, *Lifting Up Hope, Living Out Justice.* San Diego, CA: Frontrowliving Press, 2007.

the U.S. intervened, whereupon they promptly ditched their opposition to war. After the war they overreacted by reducing the social gospel to pacifist idealism.

The succeeding generation (my own!) was very hard on the social gospel. Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary in NYC blasted both Rauschenbush and the movement repeatedly. Reinhold's brother H. Richard Niebuhr, my teacher at Yale Divinity School in the 1960's, excoriated the social gospel and its liberal theological underpinnings in a memorable quote: "A God without wrath, brought men without sin, into a kingdom without judgment, through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." [from his *Kingdom of God in America*, 1936] The brothers Niebuhr taught wrongly that the social gospel had no doctrine of sin but, more justly, that it was too middle class and lily white to be a serious force in power politics. After the Niebuhrs' generation had passed, liberationists judged that the social gospel *and* the Christian realists like the Niebuhrs and company were too middle class, white, male-dominated, nationalistic, and socially privileged to be agents of liberation.

Yet for all its faults and limitations, the social gospel movement produced a greater progressive religious legacy than any generation before or after it. Niebuhrian Christian realism, Neo-Orthodoxy, Neo-Reformation theology inspired no hymns and built no lasting institutions. It was not even a movement, but rather a reaction to the social gospel. The Social Gospel, by contrast, was a 60-year movement, an enduring perspective that paved the way for modern ecumenism and social Christianity. It had a tradition in the black Methodist churches led by Ida B. Wells-Barnett and AME Bishop Reverdy Ransom. It had anti-imperialist, socialist and feminist advocates in addition to the mushy reformers. And it created the ecumenical and social justice ministries that remain the heart of U.S. social Christianity.

The social gospel made a novel, radical and far-reaching contribution to Christianity and society by claiming that Christianity had a mission to transform the structures of society in the direction of equality, freedom and community. If there was such a thing as social structure, redemption had to be re-conceptualized to take account of it; **salvation had to be personal AND social to be saving. Not a bad legacy indeed!**

Part Three:

Social Gospel Radicalism / Retreat to Pietism : Conservatives Concoct "Red Scare" 1916-1930

Back to Abstinence and forward to Prohibition, 1910s

While the economic crisis was the focus of the church's first social creed, the church's public focus was NOT on the economy or the plight of workers, but on the evils of alcohol. Temperance, solely interpreted as abstinence, had long been recommended in all congregations and Sunday schools. Temperance Sunday with its pledge card became an annual event; grape

juice had been ordered for communion services since the 1880s; temperance literature of all kinds was penned, published, and promoted. But in the new century Methodism's toward government prohibition war faced many obstacles. Alcohol consumption had become an accepted and honorable practice among many Americans, especially the flood of new immigrants from Europe who flocked to voting booths and many evangelical ministers adhered to a theology that prohibited involvement in politics.

Early in the new century, however, a new generation of preachers dismissed the widely held belief among evangelicals that church and state must remain separate. A new style of evangelicalism emphasized practical, everyday application of the gospel, and political involvement for the cause of "righteousness." By the declaration of Methodist general conferences in 1904 and 1908, the church announced its intention to achieve moral reform through the agency of the state.

A vigorous **Prohibition campaign** was led by Washington-based Methodist lobby35—the **Board of Temperance, Prohibition & Public Morals** organized 1912—convinces Congress to ban booze. **[MEA 1916].** The Methodist building in the nation's capitol, neo-classical befitting its prominent place on Capitol Hill—to the left is the Supreme Court, across the street looms the U.S. Capitol—was completed in 1924 at a cost of $650,000 to house the MEC offices, especially the new Board of Temperance. Famed orator William Jennings Bryan and reform-minded Pennsylvania governor Gifford Pinchot spoke at the dedication. Its adjacent apartment complex, constructed in 1931, has been home to scores of congressional representatives, Methodist bishops and Supreme Court justices, men and women in leadership roles who have shaped the fabric of American society.

After Prohibition became law of the land in 1919, the Board led by **Clarence True Wilson** turned to education and enforcement. During the period between the enactment of Prohibition in 1920 and its repeal in 1933 Methodism's primary social interest was to defend Prohibition. In 1922 Wilson toured the country in a "prohibition water-wagon," a specially-fitted Ford Model I.

The Christian temperance movement eventually defeated itself with the absolutism of Prohibition, which spawned outlandish bootlegging and crime problems and made lawbreaking fashionable. The Depression eventually pushed joblessness and poverty ahead of temperance on the church's social agenda. Church leaders condemned the evil of liquor without much recognition of the social circumstances that might drive some people to drink. The Methodist experiment in legislating morals failed when Prohibition was repealed in 1933. When repeal came, Wilson undertook an every-state campaign to warn of the consequences.

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35 Before World War II only the Methodists and Roman Catholics had established permanent lobbies in the nation's capitol. The Quakers followed in 1943, Presbyterians in 1946 and Baptists in 1948. A 1951 study found 15 church lobbies in the capital. For the full story see Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies*. Knoxxville : University of Tennessee Press, 1988 28.,

Methodism's social gadflies fan flames of "Red Scare" 1920s

There were other voices then tee-total Wilson with other social agendas; **Bishop Francis J. McConnell,** MFS president**,** was one of them. When the nation's **steelworkers went on strike in 1919** against the deplorable conditions in the mills and for an eight-hour day and a liveable wage, Bishop McConnell became the leader and spokesperson for an ecumenical commission investigating the crisis. Their report mobilized public opinion against the prevailing 68 hour work week in steel. As bishop in the Pittsburgh area, McConnell became the target of criticism for the commission's report, which made a major contribution in creating public sympathy for the striking workers. He served as President of the then socially-progressive Federal Council of Churches (1928-1932), held endowed professorships at Vanderbilt and Yale and was active in the ACLU.

MFSA Executive **Harry F. Ward** was another perennial target of the religious and secular right. Ward pressed church to engage the social order, especially to take the side of the working poor instead of management in labor relations. **[MEA 1919A]** Later that year an article by Ward in S*ocial Service Bulletin,* MFSA newsletter, giving cautious support to the Russian Revolution, caused a stir. Under his leadership in 1922, 1926 and 1930 MFSS sponsored national conferences on "Christianity and the Economic Order," the first such conferences of their kind in the U.S. The FBI begins keeping files on Ward; a New York state investigating committee accuses him of "teaching Bolshevism." At the same time his MFSS colleague Grace Scribner's weekly column on the social application of the gospel was dropped from the Methodist *Sunday School Journal*. During World War I, the Federation vigorously defended the rights of conscientious objectors and political dissenters. As the political repression continued after the war, commitment to civil liberties and opposition to political oppression becomes a central theme of MFSS life. In 1920, **Ward joined other activists in founding the <u>American Civil Liberties Union,</u>** whose board he chaired into the 1950s. The FBI kept him under steady surveillance and, in the 1930s he was summoned to appear before the House of Representatives' Dies Committee (forerunner of the House Un-American Activities Committee). Ward was willing to work with Communists for radical social transformation in the U.S., despite their faults because they were still on the correct side of the world's dividing line, favoring socialism over capitalism. That was a hard argument to sell by the late 1930s, and impossible following World War II. Although Ward continued to head the MFSS until 1944, he was increasingly denied recognition in official denominational circles, openly labeled a Communist and pursued by the FBI until his death in 1966.36

1930s Socializing or Defending Capitalism in the Great Depression

The <u>low point</u> of Methodist social justice advocacy

36 See David Nelson Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003 and Eugene P. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet: the Times and Life of Harry F. Ward.*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984.

Now that the nation is deep into a financial collapse (2009), at the beginning of a bad depression, and on the edge of what might become a second Great Depression, it is instructive to recall the nation's first major economic depression and Methodist response to it.

MFSS sees the stock market crash and deepening recession as evidence of capitalism's concentration of wealth and reliance on workers to bear the biggest brunt of economic distress. As the decade opened Methodism's MFSS's critique of the depression-riddled social order appeared to gain receptivity. The 1932 MEC General Conference declared "the present industrial order is unchristian, unethical and anti-social," a victory for MFSS.

But polarization between progressives and conservatives sharpened in the years that followed. "Red-baiting" resumed; reactionary attacks were launched at MFSA from various quarters, including the Hearst press, partly in reaction to Ward's "fact finding" 1929 trip to Russia. Never a card-carrying member, he was widely suspected of being a communist. In truth he was blind to the demonic side of socialism Stalin-style, but he was no communist! In 1934-35 the widely-read Hearst newspapers ran a series of syndicated articles calling upon the Methodist Episcopal Church to rid itself of the "red incubus" of that "McConnell-Ward-Chappell radical aggregation." Church critics suggested that MFSA change its name to the **Marxist Federation for Social Strife**!

In 1934 Chappell was openly vilified by conservatives after spending six weeks in the coal fields of West Virginia organizing miners. The following year, 1935, a **Conference of Methodist Laymen**, conservatives all, was organized in Chicago to prepare for a showdown at the 1936 General Conference. Smaller groups of social and theological conservatives were organized in southern California and southern New Jersey. Stalwart fundamentalists Harold Paul Sloan, Haddonfield, NJ pastor and Clarence True Wilson of the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals had formed a radically-right-leaning caucus, **Methodist League for Faith and Life,** in 1925, precursor to the Good News movement launched forty years later.

The extent of the divergence in the mind of depression-era Methodism may be measured by noting the contents of the laymen's February pamphlet entitled *Which Way America?* and MFSS's March 1935 issue of its *Bulletin*. The laymen's pamphlet was a defense of the following theses: that the sole business of the church was regeneration of the hearts of individuals and does not include any other contribution to the construction of the social order; that the existing inequalities of wealth and income are not nearly as great as commonly supposed; that the share of national income that goes to interest and profits could not be made any less, and the share that goes to highly paid executives could not be much less, without curtailing production to the detriment of all; that the "right of every man to a job" is a misleading slogan that cannot be used against the present system, which is in realty "has done an amazingly creditable job of maintaining employment even in the face of disturbing influences which have originated outside of its control"; that the New Deal's "social security" by government action is wrong in principle and practice; that government costs too much because it tries to do too much. In short, let the church and the government both take their hands off the wheel, and the good ship business will

ride the storm, under the wise piloting of its old officers, and will bring everybody safe to port. [Sound familiar? "Bush-o-nomics" before Bush.]

The Federation's *Bulletin* started with a radically different set of presuppositions. Summarizing the agreements reached in a series of conferences held across the country, it organized its findings for presentation at a national conference to be held in Columbus immediately preceding the General Conference. The *Bulletin* began where the resolution adopted by the 1932 General Conference left off, with the statement that "the present industrial order is unchristian, unethical and antisocial because it is largely based on the profit motive, which is a direct appeal to selfishness. Selfishness is never morally right, never Christian." But the Federation went still further. If profit-seeking is essentially selfish and sinful, the system which depends upon it must be supplanted with a more Christian motive, and the church is within its proper bounds when it urges that change. The program which the Federation proposed for the approval of the church was "a planned economy" which continuously adjusts economic efforts to measure needs.. "The motive of service is required and generated, just as the motive of service is required and generated by the profit-seeking economy." The result envisaged was a society without class distinction or privilege, and the democratic ownership and control of the national wealth.

The shock troops on both sides were ready for battle.

Despite intense lobbying and debate by both left and right at the conference in Columbus, Ohio, <u>the low point in social advocacy came in 1936 when the MEC General Conference REMOVED the Social Creed from Discipline</u>! In its place was added a statement on "the Spiritual life of the Church" drafted by the now powerful evangelical caucus.37 **[Source 1936]** The battle of Columbus was won by the conservatives—the right was right, agreed the majority of lay and clergy delegates <u>in the middle of the worst depression the nation had ever seen</u>!

A bright light shining in the depression darkness was **Wade Crawford Barclay**, a Methodist missions executive, who **pioneered justice-oriented spirituality**. In 1936 he authored a volume called *Challenge and Power*,38 in which he offered a trenchant critique of how much Christian worship and devotion ignored the justice imperative. "Religion is the opiate of many people," he wrote" and "much of our liturgy of worship is deficient. It is blind to the realities of the present-day social situation." He cried out for worship that would unmask how we are unwittingly "conformed to our present evil world, partakers of its unsocial practices." He called for a "liturgy of the social gospel…that challenges…the selfishness and greed embodied in our economic system, and that calls upon God for the sustaining grace and inner power to resist and to overcome against all obstacles and odd," sustaining us when "progress is slow, defeats are many." His book includes 90 devotionals authored by such persons as Georgia Harkness, Jane Addams, Rufus Jones, Eugene V. Debs, Vida Scudder, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Walter

37 "The Battle of Columbus" *Christian Century* 53/14 (April 1, 1936)486-487.
38 Wade Crawford Barclay, *Challenge and Power: Meditations and Prayers in Personal and Social Religion for Individual and Group Use*. New York : Abingdon Press, 1936.

Rauschenbusch. Barclay himself instructs readers in contemplative guided prayer for a particular social or personal issue, a style of prayer that is a remarkable precursor of contemplative activist spiritual practice today.

1940s Expanded Social Commitments, but Uncertain Future

When three branches of Methodism united in 1939, the uniting conference harmonized the three uniting denominations' different social pronouncement texts. In addition, several new concerns were added, including respect for conscientious objection to war and the recommendation that the Social Creed be presented to each congregation at least once a year.39 **[See Source 1908]**

The denomination began the decade of the 1940s with several initiatives toward social justice. The general conference authorized the formation of a **Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR)**, later UMCOR and the **Women's Division established a Department of Christian Social Relations**. MFSS vehemently opposed the racially segregated jurisdictional system imbedded in the plan which united the ME, ME, South and MP churches. In 1940 **Mary McLeod Bethune** joined **Bishop Edgar Love** and others on the MFSS executive committee in 1940 bent on combating racism in the new denomination's churches and agencies. Now led by **Charles Webber**, MFSS pressured the church's publishing house to sign a contract with the printing trades and attempted to desegregate the dining room at the Methodist Building in Washington, DC., but to no avail. (Eight years later, **Bishop Robert Brooks** of the Central (all-black) Jurisdiction, was elected MFSA's president.) But that same year, 1940 Ward, was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee and confess his pro-communist leanings. Union Theological Seminary president Henry Sloan Coffin and Professor Reinhold Niebuhr defended him on grounds of academic freedom, but Ward was forced to resign his faculty post at Union Theological Seminary the following year. In the middle of the decade (1946) the **Evangelical United Brethren Church approved an ambitious statement of social principles at its uniting conference**.

The retirement of Harry Ward and Bishop McConnell in 1944 triggered both internal dissension and external criticisms of Methodism's social justice caucus. The Rev. **Jack McMichael,** even more radical in ideas and methods than Ward and McConnell, was chosen as MFSA's executive secretary. McMichael led the Federation's period of greatest expansion, with some 40 conference chapters and 5,000 members by the end of the decade. In response, the FBI compiled thousands of pages of files on MFSA and on its executive McMichael and the House Un-American Activities Committee published an 88-page government publication purporting to document the Federation's subversive nature. In 1953 McMichael appeared before the HUAC and challenged their accusations of Communist subversion with such telling references to the ministry of Jesus that an aggravated committee ember shouted, "Can't we leave Jesus out…." Jack replied that he absolutely could not, adding that "in a situation like this, where guilt by

39 Donald K. Gorrell, "The Social Creed and Methodism Through Eighty Years," *Methodist History* 26/4 (July 1988) 213-228.

association seems to be the principle on which you are operating… I am sure [Jesus] himself would have long ago been hauled before this committee."

The **Advance Program**, a major church-wide "second-mile" giving program of the Methodist Board of Missions, including disaster relief through UMCOR, was inaugurated in 1948 to heal the sick, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and share the faith in the post-war world. While local churches were called to support the denomination first through World Service and other apportioned funds, the Advance offered individuals, church groups, congregations, districts and conferences a way to voluntarily select and support specific ministries. The Advance became one of the great success stories of modern Methodism, and has changed the lives of persons all over the globe for the better. The sixtieth anniversary of the Advance Program was celebrated in 2007. During the 60 years, UMs gave more than 4 million Advance gifts, totaling more than $750 million for thousands of ministries in more than 100 countries. In a typical year, the Advance receives between $30 million and $35 million for missions, with a number going much higher when catastrophic human-made or natural disasters occur.

That same year, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the first global commitment to universal human rights. Thomas Jefferson and the American Congress issued the first notable human rights proclamation in 1776. But it was the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789 that had the greatest impact on western thinking. The 18th century American and French declarations unleashed an implacable logic that expanded rights to all sorts of individuals and groups, including Jews and other members of minority religions, native peoples, slaves and women. In the 19th century, however, rights became attached to particular nations and ethnicities, and they lost much of their equal and universal character. It took two devastating world wars in the first half of the 20th century to shatter this confidence in the nation. In the second half of the 20th century, only after a 150 year struggle, did human rights come to dominate the conscience of the world. Human rights have become the world's more or less commonly shared bulwark against the brutalities and cruelties that still afflict much of humanity.

1950s Red Scare Again

During the next decade (the1950s) the civil liberties situation worsened. When the "Hot War" against Fascism gave way to the "Cold War" against Communism, the lines of division among Methodist were sharpened. For many years the "Social Gospel" had been condemned as "socialistic" by conservative wing of the church. Though the hands of the former had appeared to be strengthened by the series of economic and social reforms which were enacted by federal and state governments during and after the Great Depression of the 1930s, their opponents never ceased to label all such reforms as socialistic and the friends of such legislation as socialists.

The new threat of Soviet Russia as a world power after World War II and the fears engendered by Russian domination of neighboring states magnified old fears of Communism and gave rise to

new ones. Because the social gospel and the social reforms of recent years were based on considerations of human welfare which were also professed by Soviet Communism, it became the basic strategy of conservatives to identify them with each other. Thereafter, the war against liberalism in the Methodist church was to be waged in the name of the "battle against Communism."

As the oldest and most articulate organized group of social liberals in the Methodist Church, MFSS was in the most vulnerable position to receive the assault that was launched by the conservatives within the church. Particularly strong attacks were made against certain bishops and other church leaders affiliated with the Federation against the use of the term "Methodist" in its title, against Federation pronouncements which could be construed to represent the whole church, and also against the influence of the Federation upon the educational and publication program of the church. Furthermore, the conservatives began to organize and to try to push the Methodist church officially back to positions which they themselves favored with respect to social issues.

Among the conservative groups to find expression in the 1950s were the "Committee for the Preservation of Methodism," "Circuit Riders, Inc," "One Methodist Voice, "Volunteer Committee of Christian Laymen," "Committee of Loyal American Methodists," "The Protest Committee of Lay Methodists," "Unofficial Methodist Opposition" and "Bible Protestant Press, Inc." Further fuel was added to the fires of controversy by Rembert Gilman Smith's book, *Moscow Over Methodism* (1950)40 and Stanley High's sinister innuendos in "Methodism's Pink Fringe," which appeared in *Reader's Digest* (February, 1950). The *Digest* refused to publish Bishop Oxnam's brilliant rejoinder to High's article on the grounds that it did not open its pages to controversial matters!

Methodist leadership tried to steer a safe middle course. The church, through its General Conference in San Francisco, May 1952, took official action to heal the breach caused by this prolonged conflict over social issues. Certain statements made in the name of the MFSA were officially disclaimed by the denomination. The Federation was also requested to drop the term "Methodist" from its title to move its headquarters out of the Methodist building on lower Fifth Avenue in New York City, and was enjoined from appearing to speak for Methodists, a function rightly reserved for the General Conference itself. Moreover, the General Conference brought the consideration of social issues more directly under its own guidance by created a safer Board of Social and Economic Relations.41

The Cold-War–era FBI had a long list of Americans it considered disloyal; not a few were Methodists. A document declassified in 2007 showed that J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI had a plan in 1950 to suspend *habeus corpus* and imprison some 12,000 Americans he suspected of

40 St. Louis: John S. Swift Co. for the Methodist League Against Communism, Fascism, and Unpatriotic Pacifism, 1936; reprinted Houston, TX: Printed by the University Press, 1950.
41 MEC *Discipline*, 1952, p. 391

disloyalty. President Truman wisely demurred re implementing Hoover's plan. Congressional committees grilled person without safeguards of court procedures and issued unfounded innuendos to an eager press. The era was to carry the name of a Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, who whipped up and rode the tide of anti-Communist hysteria.

In 1948 a congressional Committee on Un-American Activities chaired by Senator McCarthy issued a report entitled *100 Things You Ought to Know about Communism and Religion*. Its declared intent was to inform churchfolk what would happen to them and their churches if communism ever took over. Two Methodist groups were openly attacked by the FBI as "tools" of the Communist Party—MFSA *and* the Methodist Epworth League (which had not existed since 1939, after 1941 the Methodist Youth Fellowship) had been infiltrated and whose leaders, programs and publications were closely monitored. McCarthy found vocal support especially among evangelicals like Billy Graham. Graham depicted the U.S. as "falling apart at the seams" because of rampant immorality and the infiltration of the left wing into schools and churches. Protestant clergymen who questioned McCarthyism or evidenced any softening of Cold War rhetoric faced charges of being tainted with Communism.42

Fuel was added to the fire when ever-popular ***Reader's Digest*** **exposed Methodism's "pink fringe" [Source 1950], charging several Methodist groups and leaders with ties to international communism. Walter Muelder**, social ethics professor at the denomination's Boston University School of Theology, and MFSA's vice president, issued a public protest. **[MEA 1950]** So did Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, whose reply *Reader's Digest* refused to publish.43 The U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) collected and republished attacks on MFSA and MYF in 1952. Other critics within the Methodist Church, especially the Texas-based "Circuit Riders, Inc.," capitalized on the prevailing McCarthyite hysteria to secure General Conference repudiation of MFSA. Formed in 1948, their single purpose was to drive the federation out of Methodism; later the group attacked the Federation for its support of racial integration.

A storm of vilification was directed against the MFSA at the general conference of 1952. Pressured from folks back home, conference delegates demanded that the MFSA stop using the name "Methodist" (though that matter was not legally within the jurisdiction of the conference) and vacate its offices in the Methodist building in New York City. The Federation did move out of the church's office building, but defiantly did not change its name. Declassified FBI files obtained by MFSA in the 1980s under the Freedom of Information Act detail how thoroughly the government was involved in getting the Methodist Church to repudiate MFSA. A "safer" (less "radical") Board of Social and Economic Relations was established in 1960, which later became the modern Board of Church and Society.

At the same time several prominent Methodist church leaders were put under suspicion and

42 During the 1940s and 1950s FBI surveillance of MFSA is recorded in 5,000 pages of FBI files, now open to researchers in MFSA archives at Drew University Library, Madison, NJ.
43 G. Bromley Oxnam, *The Reply the Reader's Digest Refused to Publish*. New York : Bishop's Office, [1950]

surveillance, including Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, MFSA executive Harry Ward and theological school professor Georgia Harkness among others—were accused of being members of the Communist Party. Harkness' biographer Rosemary Skinner Keller surmises that it was because of her pacifism and opposition to World War II that she was placed under surveillance by the FBI and accused of being a member of the Communist Party. In the FBI file of Harry F. Ward, there is an entry which states that professional informant Louis Budenz

> Advised that Dr. Georgia Elma Harkness…was clearly associated with the CP [Communist Party] and subsequently agreed to join. Informant stated that from 1943 to 1945 Dr. Harkness was a member of CP fronts; it was publicly known that she was a member of perhaps 10 such fronts and that she was influenced by Dr. Harry F. Ward to become associated with the front groups.44

MFSA executive **Jack McMichael** was summoned to testify before the McCarthy-led House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1953. McMichael was called to testify that he was second-in-command in a Communist cell in New York. The charges were easy to refute, because McMichael was a 16-year old high school student in Georgia at the time. Still, the FBI effectively blacklisted him. Harassment continued for a long time after he returned to pastoring congregations in the California-Nevada Conference.

Bishop Oxnam (1891-1963), a highly respected and highly visible church leader, president of the Federal Council of Churches in the US 1944-1946 and president of the World Council of Churches 1948-1954, was a favorite target of HUAC. The committee repeatedly released "unevaluated" reports implying that Oxnam was a member of several "subversive" organizations and either sympathized with the Communist party or allowed himself to be used by it. The same hard choice was offered in those days to many Americans inside the churches and out: confess either to treason or to treasonable stupidity. To clear the record Bishop Oxnam demanded a hearing before the congregational Committee a year before broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow famously took HUAC to task and at the peak of McCarthy's popularity and power, The hearing itself, a fatiguing session lasting from mid-afternoon till midnight July 21, 1953, was televised across the nation. *U.S. News and World Report* reprinted the transcript of the hearing in full. The bishop, mountains of files at hand, exposed the sloppy research, unreliable and deliberate falsehoods in committee records and statements, indirectly unmasking the committee's self-aggrandizing motivations in suggesting he was communist dupe.

Bishop Oxnam publicly protested against "procedures that are in effect the rule of men and not of law; procedures subject to the prejudices, passions and political ambitions of Committeemen; procedures designed less to elicit information than to entrap; procedures that cease to be investigation and become inquisition and intimidation." **[MEA 1953]** The *Christian Advocate* for August 6, 1953 carried a summary of public reaction to the hearing, which it evaluated to be favorable to Oxnam, though it reported the negative responses as well, quoting one Methodist, "Still, with all those organizations mentioned, he must be a pinko." The summary mentioned

44 *Social Questions Bulletin*, March/April 1983, 1-2. The citation is from the FBI file on Harry F. Ward

that many daily papers editorially commended Oxnam, such as the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the *Boston Herald*, the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *New York Times*. Officially the Methodist Church stood behind its bishop. Annual conferences across the country sent Oxnam copies of resolutions passed which supported him and condemned HUAC.45

From this encounter these principles remain vital: separation of church and state, freedom of speech, no guilt by association, innocence until proven guilty, and the refusal to be cowed by a demagogue. No formal withdrawal of charges was made by Senator McCarthy; nevertheless, the thinness of the evidence and the unfairness of the inquisitorial tactics used resulted in broad public support for the bishop. The "trial" helped diminish public respect for HUAC. A brilliant defense of the rights of the individual citizen to security from unsubstantiated accusations and trial by gossip was subsequently set forth in Oxnam's book, *I Protest*, published the following year. That summer (June 28, 1953) *Parade* magazine, which accompanied countless Sunday newspapers across the country, carried a two-page article by Oxnam enticingly titled "How to Uncover Communists …without throwing mud on innocent people." 46

Bishop Oxnam exonerated himself, but MFSA lived under a cloud for a decade. Between 1953 and 1960 MFSA operated without an executive secretary: pastor Lloyd Worley served as its president and chief executive officer. Throughout the 1950s MFSA cooperated with the religious Freedom Committee which had been organized to protect radical clergy from conservative attacks and legal prosecution; it also demanded the repeal of the harsh Smith and McCarran Acts as well as the abolition of HUAC.A dedicated remnant, including such leaders as Worley, Mark Chamberlain and Lee and Mae Ball, saw the importance of an *independent* advocate for social justice and kept the Federation alive until it blossomed again in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.

In the midst of the whirlwind, in 1951, the Board of Missions quietly launched the **US-2 Program**, recruiting young adults to serve as missionaries working for justice, freedom and peace in U.S. communities. In 50 years the program trained about 13,000 young adults between the ages of 20 and 30 to serve in U.S.-based ministries—a breakthrough of social justice concern in this period!

Part Four:
RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE : 1960-1980

Election of John F. Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, as President.

45 Angela Lahr, "The Censure of a Bishop: Church and State in the McCarthy Era," *Methodist History* 44:1 (October 2005, 29-42.
46 Robert Moats Miller. *Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam: Paladin of Liberal Protestantism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990, CHAPTER ???.

"The Pill,"an oral contraception, becomes available to the public.47

The Civil rights and anti-war movements, women's rights and, after 1972, gay & lesbian liberation movements gradually gain power and influence in Methodist circles.

1960s

1960 General Conference merged three boards (Temperance, Peace and Social & Economic Relations) into new comprehensive Board of Christian Social Concerns. MFSA barely survived the 1950s assault. Many insisted the Federation was either dead, irrelevant, or toxic because of its progressive tradition. There was no money, no national staff. The Federation was held together by volunteers for nearly eight years. Then in 1960 the Rev. **Lee Ball began a 13-year term as paid MFSA executive.** Ball criss-crossed the country to reintroduce MFSA to the church; a resurrected MFSA pursued a vigorous critique of US-led intervention in Southeast Asia. The Federation also endorsed lunch counter sit-ins, freedom rides, and other actions promoting civil rights and racial integration.

1962 *Supreme Court decision ends official sponsored prayer and devotional Bible readings in public schools.*

1964 General Conference began a process to end the segregated Central Jurisdiction

1968 General Conference formally ends Central Jurisdiction, but all-black annual conferences continue in the southeast until 1973; **forms <u>Commission on Religion and Race,</u> and issued first *Book of Resolutions.***

MFSA always sought out issues where the church was lagging behind and needed to catch up. One such issue in the 1970s was apartheid in South Africa. The focus was on convincing the UM Board of Pensions to join the ecumenical movement encouraging U.S. corporations to divest from South Africa. The New York chapter of MFSA first pressed their way into a directors' meeting to challenge the board on this matter. Though told that they were ill-informed, meddling incompetently in a technical field and that the Board would never given in to such pressure, they vowed then and there to launch the Federation's ultimately successful campaign to get pension investments out of supporting apartheid. Actions include dialogue and demonstrations at Pension Board meetings and resolutions at annual conference and General Conference sessions. Under pressure, the board steadily moved to taking a role among church-related shareholders, which they have to this day.

In 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organize the **Poor Peoples' Campaign** to address issues of economic injustice. The campaign culminated in a march on Washington, DC demanding economic aid to the

47 <u>Statements here and below in italics are events which shaped the RISE OF THE RELGIIOUS RIGHT in the United States</u>

poorest communities of the nation. King's economic bill of rights called for massive government jobs program to rebuild America's cities. The campaign did not focus on just poor black people but addressed all poor people. Right-leaning *Reader's Digest* warned of an "insurrection." Dr. King was assassinated prior to the completion of the campaign.

1969 *"Battle of Anaheim," a fight to end sex education in the Anaheim, CA public schools, inflames the religious right.*

1970s Mainline decline begins

Mainline Protestants entered a long slow decline. In 1965 membership peaked for most mainline denominations including the Methodists. By the early 1970s the UMC had lost nearly 20 percent, or more than 2 million members. With the decline in numbers came diminished status. Mainline Protestantism lost their collective standing as the "magisterium."

1970 *"Kanahawa County (WVA) textbook wars," a fight to allow parents to control the content of their children's textbooks; Heritage Foundation, a fledgling conservative Washington think-tank headed by Paul Weyrich, gets involved.*

General Conference mandates socially responsible investment policy; the following year the independent "socially responsible" balanced mutual fund, Pax World Fund, is formed by two Methodist GBCS staffers. By 1990 the fund ranked first among all balanced funds with a total return of 10.45 percent. It was the only mutual fund to receive four-star recognition from *Money* magazine for its performance in a year when one of the principal market indices showed a loss of 6.56 percent.

1972 *Both houses of Congress pass the Equal Rights Amendment, inflames the religious right.*

1972 General Conference adopts expanded and thoroughly revised statement of Social Principles. Four issues were lengthily and often bitterly debated: abortion, homosexuality, war & peace, and civil disobedience. The conference also **established Commission on Status & Role of Women**; Equal Rights Amendment is passed in both houses of Congress; controversy over ordination of "self-avowed, practicing" gays and lesbians begins.

1973 *Roe vs Wade decision of US Supreme Court results in legalized abortion.*

1974 Under leadership of **George McClain** MFSA begins to organize aggressively within the denomination; field staff provides on-site support strike of non-professionals at UM Hospital in Pikeville, KY. Other labor-related actions followed, along with attention to gay and lesbian concerns, corporate exploitation, the Vietnam and Gulf Wars and the Palestine/Israel crisis.

1977 MFSA begins to promote **boycotts** of J.P.Stevens and Nestlé products across the church.

National Women's Conference in Houston organized by the Carter administration; hot topics are Equal Rights Amendment, abortion and lesbian rights.
Equal Rights Amendment falls three states short of ratification.

1978 *IRS attempts to revoke tax-exemption status of segregated Christian schools.*

1979 The Revs. Ken Horne and Ray Buchanan found the **Society of St. Andrew,** an intentional community of two families called to life and ministry together in Christ. It has grown into an ecumenical national hunger relief agency affiliated with the UMC. From an initial $30,000 grant to distribute a million pounds of potatoes from the Virginia Conference in 1983, the Society by 1999 grew to a nationwide ministry salvaging more than 20 million pounds of produce annually. In addition to its headquarters in Big Island, VA, the society has regional offices in North Carolina, Texas and Florida, and fourteen satellite offices in five states. Ministries of the Society include the Potato Project, Harvest of Hope, the Gleaning Network, St. Andrew Press, St. Andrew's Retreat and an international hunger-relief program. The organization also has established three programs focusing on different areas of hunger—the Washington (DC) Area Gleaning Network, Hunters for the Hungry, and Stop Hunger Now. The Hunger Relief Advocate program was launched in the late 1990s with the help of the churchwide Commission on United Methodist Men and the United Methodist Committee on relief. The Program aims to establish hunger relief advocates in the denomination's U.S. conferences.48

Jerry Fallwell, Paul Weyrich and others form Moral Majority

Part Five:
Progressives Sag, Conservatives Soar, yet Social Justice Advocates are Not Silent 1980-2008

1980s

The social justice will of Methodism and mainline Protestantism sagged in the years following the antiwar and civil rights movement—years in which liberal Christian leaders lost direction and energy and somehow missed, overlooked, and underestimated the fact that they were losing the faithful by the millions to the newly aroused, generously-funded, and politically savvy religious right, including the Moral Majority and the National Conservative Political Action Committee. Culture wars over such "wedge" issues as abortion and homosexuality begin in earnest.

1980 *James Dobson, former Church of the Nazarene pastor, founds Family Research Council;*

48 Linda Green, "National agency marks 20 years of feeding the country's hungry," *United Methodist News Service*, July 8, 1999; www.endhunger.org/aboutus.

by 1990s Dobson becomes the Christian Rights's most powerful leader. His multi-million-dollar-a-year media empire includes a daily radio show, with him as host that reaches millions of listeners, as well as a rapid-response telephone and letter-writing operation.
Onslought of AIDS begins.

1980 General Conference supports Stevens boycott and adds a new section on work in the Social Principles, beginning with the affirmation that "persons come before profits."

The **Human Rights Campaign** was founded in 1980, with a goal of raising money for congressional candidates who supported fairness. In the years that followed HRC established itself as a resilient force in the overall movement for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights as it strived to achieve fundamental fairness and equality for all.

1981 *White House Conference on the American Family, organized by the Carter Administration, passes by a single-vote a resolution that endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion on demand and gay rights, inflaming the Religious Right.*

1983 In January 1983 conservatives ask "Do you know where your church offerings Go?" in article published in the widely-circulated *Reader's Digest* charged that church funds were being used for leftwing revolution, not religion. Primary targets were the National Council of Churches and its primary supporter the United Methodist Church. The article suggested church members form committees" to monitor their local church's giving and should designate their personal donations to specific causes they support. Shortly after the magazine hit the newsstands CBS-TV issued its own criticism (January 23, 1983) of the National and World Council of Churches via a segment of its top-rated "60 Minutes" program. The program implied that church money was being used to buy arms for leftist military groups around the world, a charge that was never substantiated. Both the CBS and Digest reports relied heavily on information supplied by the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), a small, neoconservative group in Washington which had United Methodists among its leadership.

In the wake of the 1983 reports, UM Bishop Paul Duffey [add Episcopal area???], was asked by the denomination's Council of Bishops to chair a blue-ribbon committee to consider the charges. While the committee found no evidence of improper use of church money, it did make recommendations concerning organization and administration which were found to be unwieldy and confusing. The committee asked the ecumenical councils to supervise budgets more carefully, be more responsive to membership needs, be more accountable to participating denominations, and delineate carefully the use and origin of funds.

1984 Conservatives press for a new social action agency to speak out against "moral evils"

currently not addressed by the denomination's General Board of Church and Society. That proposal was made by some 600 participants attending the July 1984 Good News convocation in Granville, Ohio. "Scriptural holiness no longer includes moral social issues," said Donald Wildmon, head of a television monitoring group based in Tupelo, Mississippi. He criticized GBCS, the Council of Bishops, and other general agencies for their "silence on moral issues" such as gambling, pornography, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse and anti-religious sentiments. He suggested an alternate social action agency to address those ills. GBCS head Haviland C.Houston told *Newscope* editors those issues have been discussed in special issues of the board's magazine, *Engage/Social Action* and saId he would be happy to meet with Wildmon and other Good News leaders "to bring them up to date in those areas."49

A grass-roots declaration designed to lift up the need to preach and practice an evangelistic ministry which would be biblically oriented and holistic was developed during the bicentennial celebration of the UMC. It was circulated across the denomination prior to the 1984 general conference. Hundreds of local church persons from the five jurisdictions endorsed the declaration for presentation to and approval by the general conference. The declaration appealed to the church and individuals

> to strengthen their efforts in Christian mission;
> to reaffirm their commitment to work toward racial justice and inclusiveness;
> to address the grim reality of hunger in American and the world;
> to call for renewed efforts toward achieving a nuclear freeze and arms limitation;
> to confront the ever widening gap between rich and poor nations;
> to accentuate basic education and work among young people.

The **"Baltimore Declaration"** was presented to the general conference from the floor as a matter of personal privilege and was approved by the body and referred to the Council of Bishops and the General Council on Ministries for study and implementation.50

General Conference passes aground-breaking resolution on "The Church and People with Mental, Physical, and/or Psychological Disabilities." The Resolution shifted church policy away from the charitable model of disability toward a social, economic, political, psychological and theological view of human diversity. The intention of the resolution is to ensure that children and adults with disabilities receive equal opportunities to participate in the life of their congregations. The resolution was amended and readopted in 1996 and 2004. [Consult *Book of Resolutions 2004,* resolution 22, pp. 345-349.]51

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49 *UM Newscope*, July 20, 1984, p. 2
50 *The Baltimore Declaration: A Call to Commitment and Action as United Methodists Move into their Third Century*. Dayton, OH; General Council on Ministries, the UMC, 1984.
51 See also *From Barriers to Bridges: A Community Action Guide for Congregations and People with Disabilities.* Washington : National Organization on Disabilities, 2006 or www.nod.org.

1986 **Council of Bishops issue landmark <u>Pastoral Letter on Peace [MEA 1986b]</u>;** World Methodist Council adopts Social Declaration (*UM Hymnal* 1989 # 886)

1988 *Pat Robertson runs for president and is defeated in the Republic primaries. Scandals erupt involving television evangelists Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker.*

1989 *Christian Coalition formed by Pat Robinson with the help of Ralph Reed.*

1990s The left tries valiantly to play catch up with right

1990 With overwhelming bipartisan support the Congress passed the **Americans with Disabilities Act**. Physically challenged UMs vowed to "trouble the waters" of the denomination to break down the physical and attitudinal barriers toward people with handicapping conditions. More than 50 clergy with handicapping conditions met November 1990 at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville to organize an advocacy group : the **Association of Physically Challenged Ministers of the UMC.**

Bishop Felton E. May vacated regular Episcopal duty with the Harrisburg, PA Area to lead a new UMC attack on the crisis of drugs and violence. This is the first time an active bishop has been pulled out of regular service and opened an office in Washington, DC

1991 A *Pan-Methodist Social Witness Resource Book* to assist Methodist churches wanting to help persons in their communities, was published by the four denominations—AM.E., A.M.E.Zion, C.M.E. and the UMC—participating in the Commission on Pan-Methodist Cooperation.

First evangelical men's Promise Keepers rally.

1992 Quadrennial Study Commission splits on homosexuality **[MEA 1992]**

Despite strong opposition from some Republicans, the COP presidential election platform retains an anti-abortion plank as well as planks which support the Religious Right's positions in favor of public school prayer and in opposition to same sex marriage, birth control information programs in public schools and use of public funds to subsidize "obscenity and blasphemy masquerading as art."

President Bill Clinton's election as President cheers those on the left, but galvanizes the Christian Coalition; membership doubles by 1993.

1996 **UMC Council of Bishops launches a church-wide initiative on children and poverty**; fifteen (of fifty) bishops tell press at General Conference in Denver they disagree with the

church's affirmation that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

1998 Picket or Pray? During his term as MFSA chief executive **George D. McClain** encouraged uniting social witness, Biblical faith ad spiritual practice. His 1998 book *Claiming All Things for God* helped many to build on the growing intersection in people's lives of action for justice and the inner journey in the spirit, and offered rituals individuals and groups can use to begin to be religious together.

Church trials begin for clergy who openly break church's ban on "Holy Unions." Nebraska pastor Jimmy Creech defends his disobedience. **[MEA 1998a]**; Bishops issue pastoral statement on "Holy Unions" **[MEA 198b]**; Judicial Council determines disciplinary prohibition against gay unions enforceable. **[MEA 1998c]** MFSA long supported same sex unions and ordination for gays and lesbians and was active around the church trials of the Revs. Jimmy Creech, Greg Dell and later Beth Stroud.

Following the murder of Matthew Shepard that year, the Human Rights Campaign and the UMC's gay caucuses, Affirmation and Reconciling Congregations Program joined the Human Rights Campaign and others in a national movement supporting hate violence legislation to protect GLBT Americans. In 1999, thanks to such lobbying efforts, the Senate passed a major hate crimes bill.

2000s

A strong cultural wind blowing toward the political and religious right sometimes drove UMs in a right-ward direction. Sometimes the church pushed leftward against the prevailing wind. Usually it dug in its heels on the middle ground.

2000 In the face of anti-abortion pressure from the religious right, General Conference delegates opposed partial-birth abortion, yet retained its long-standing (1972) recognition that "tragic conflicts of life with life may justify abortion."

General Conference delegates this year, along with the next two—2004 and 2008—refused to back off from its 40-year-old declaration that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with "Methodist" teaching., yet they simultaneously expanded its call for recognizing the basic human rights and civil liberties of LGBT persons.

This year the statement on war in the Social Principles was significantly revised. Whereas the 1988 statement, coming on the heels of the Council of Bishops 1896 decidedly pacifist Pastoral Letter on Peace, offered no justification for war, the 2000 statement acknowledged "that most Christians regretfully realize that, when peaceful alternatives have failed, the force of arms may be preferable to unchecked aggression, tyranny and genocide." We "respect those who support the use of force, but only in extreme situations, and only when the need is clearly beyond reasonable doubt, and

through appropriate international organizations." The 2000 Social Principles qualified the earlier statement in another place: the earlier principles declared "We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy." The 2004 Social Principles retained those sentences but inserted the word "usual" between "an" and "instrument," thereby deleting the implied pacifism of the earli2r declaration.

UM Board of Church and Society said it was "sorry" for its own history—confessed publicly its complicity in African slavery/racism and Native Ameircan genocide as well as a long tradition of anti-Semitism and Catholic bashing.

2003 A Massachusetts court ruled in favor of marriage equality

2004 UMC Council of Bishops opened its first permanent office in Washington, DC, with retired Bishop Roy Sano staffing the post at the Methodist building situated across the street from the Capitol and the Supreme Court.

James Dobson, Focus on the Family chief, played a crucial role in prompting President George W. Bush to endorse the Federal Marriage Amendment and in getting a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage on the ballot in Ohio. Dobson conferred with Karl Rove about a Supreme Court nomination; he received a thank-you note from ultra-conservative Samuel Alito, President's Bush's successful nominee for the high court.

2005 UM pension agency became one of the original 25 signatories of the new United Nations "Principles of Socially Responsible Investment." By signing them, organizations agree to 1) incorporate environmental, social and governance issues into investment analysis and decision-making processes, 2) be active owners and incorporate those issues into ownership policies and practices. 3) seek disclosure on environmental, social and governance issues by the companies in which they invest. 4) promote acceptance and use of the principles in the investment industry 5) work with one another to enhance effectiveness in implementing the principles 6) report on their activities and progress toward implementing the principles.

2007 MFSA celebrated its 100th anniversary at a third "Voices of Faith" conference with the theme "Make Plain the Vision." The conference ends with a worship celebration and call for justice across from the White House.

Even though two UM groups have been responding to the same domestic disaster relief efforts, leaders of the UM Committee On Relief (UMCOR) and UM Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) came together for the first time in February and created a covenant for their mutual work. In the last ten years the number of volunteers has grown dramatically, particularly in response to the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005. During that time, the two

groups would often run into each other on the ground. The work of UMVIM is to get members into service, while UMCR assist conference in their relief efforts, including volunteer coordination.

UMC took leading role in Katrina hurricane recovery. A July 18, 2007 *USA Today* article reported that UMCOR's home improvement efforts outpaced other religious charities working in the region, showing that 57,000 UMC volunteers provided services on 16,000 of the total of 53,000 homes improved.

2008 **The 100th anniversary of the Social Creed will be observed.** In today's post 9/11 world, issues of security, war, environment, civil rights, gay rights and racism are still in the forefront of the denominations concern. A revised Social Creed suitable for singing will be presented to General Conference 2008. A proposed text was circulated for trial use in 2006. The most recent draft is available on GBCS's website. **[Source 2007]**

General Conference delegates adopted the proposed text as a "companion litany," leaving the current creed in place and adding this poetic and singable litany alongside.

To ensure that the visionary ministry of General Board of Church and Society and its predecessors during the past 100 years continues for centuries for come, in 2006 the United Methodist Foundation and the GBCS united in launching an endowment fund, the **Social Justice Ministries Endowment Fund.**

CONCLUDING SERMONETTE: Reclaiming the Wesleyan preferential option for Justice

Following Wesley's lead, Methodists have insisted: if religion is in the heart, it will be visible in good works. At their best, Christians living in the Wesleyan tradition have never separated doctrine form ethics—what they believe from how they live. And how they live is not merely a question of how they live as *individuals*, but also a matter of how they live as members of local and national communities and as citizens of the world. Making disciples involves transforming communities as well as human hearts.

We witness to the principalities and powers in state capitals, Washington and at the United Nations not because we seek special favor or legislation for the UMC, or believe that salvation is derived through lobbying, but because our faith in the risen Christ compels us to call institutions to accountability on behalf of the children, the widow, the weak and the impoverished.

I have a concluding theme … which comes from an old hymn "Lead Kindly light," which was in the Methodist hymnal when I started my ministry in the 1960s, but is not in our current

hymnal:

> Lead kindly Light, amidst the encircling gloom
> Lead thou me on!
> The night is dark and I am far from home;
> Lead thou me on!

And then the hymn goes on:

> I do not ask to see the distant scene;
> *One step enough for me.*

My experience has taught me that you have to take the first steps, even if you don't know where they will lead. I believe that one step is enough and you take it, as long as you have faith you're doing the right thing. Charity and justice are the two feet of Christian service. Trying to walk on just one foot, either one, would be both difficult and ultimately self-defeating. **But walking on *both* feet—being in ministry with the poor while actively working to eliminate poverty—is to live more fully the Gospel.**

Will we step up to the challenge of forming consciences for faithful citizenship, moving churchfolk and their churches from Mercy to Justice?

- **We will not want to live with the consequences of an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, in this country, and around the world.**

According to the Census Bureau, nearly 37 million Americans—12.6 percent of the population—were living in poverty in 2005. [*New York Times,* April 17, 2007, A26.That same year nearly half of Americans reported incomes of less than $30,000 and two-thirds make less than $50,000. [*New York Times* August 21, 2007, 1, C8.] The government poverty line for a family with two parents and two children is $19,806.

Lawmakers must adopt more realistic criteria. They must also realize that improving earned income tax credit for the working poor and providing better early education—are some of the best investments a nation can make.

The privileged prefer charitable giving to social action to empower the poor because charity makes the giver feel good and the receiver feel humbled. Empowerment gives the poor a sense of dignity but threatens the advantages of the rich.

The hungry need bread, the homeless need a roof, the oppressed need justice, and the lonely need fellowship. At the same time–on another and deeper level–the hopeless need hope, sinners need

forgiveness and the world needs the gospel. On this level no one is excluded, and all the needy are one. Our mission as the church is to bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God's undying love–as one beggar tells another where to find bread. **Helping people with food, housing and other necessities is not *charity* but *justice.* To reject the poor is to reject God; to welcome the poor is to welcome God.**

So you might want to …

Take the Food Stamp Challenge

For one week in November 2007 the Rev. Sonnye Dixon, pastor of Hobson UMC in Nashville, participated in a Food Stamp Challenge, living on $21 a week—the average weekly food stamp allotment provided by the U.S. government.

Food stamps have not been adjusted for inflation in more than a decade. In the U.S. more than 10% of adults and almost 17% of children live in "food insecure" households. More than 26 million Americans rely on food stamps. To draw attention to hunger issues, you might want to try it yourselves and invite your church leaders to do the same.

Support the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

In 2000 the United Nations committed to working much harder to end poverty. They created the Millennium Development Goals—eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that would dramatically help poor people all over the world. **[see two class handouts**, one a summary of goals, the other a litany**]**

- **We must not lose our sense of social entrepreneurship in a time when society needs such strategies**

Our Methodist forbears had a passion to serve the mission of God. At their best they relentlessly pursued new opportunities in service of that mission to Christ's poor; engaged in continuous innovation, adaptation and learning; acted boldly and held themselves to high standards. As a result, there are fine educational institutions, hospitals and health care organizations, and social service institutions across the country that were founded by Methodists.

Yet across the denomination we now take many of these institutions for granted, acting as if they have always existed and always will exist. And in many cases we have allowed their (and our) sense of mission to drift, so that many of them have become indistinguishable from secular counterparts. We may be nostalgic about them—they are a particularly poignant feature of many founders day celebrations of more or less "church-affiliated" colleges, hospitals, homes for children and seniors, social service centers—but unfortunately we are not invigorated by a missional sense of what they might become in the future.

We need a stronger sense of mission, one that leads us to take risks in the service of the Gospel, risks such as starting new churches and creating new institutions—like Africa University launched by UMs in 1992—even as we seek to preserve and revitalize those created by our forbears.

I am not imagining that faith-based organizations ought somehow to be the primary agents addressing social needs—government and other actors in the social sector have critically important roles to play. Nor am I suggesting that local congregations ought to try to become quasi-public delivery agents of major social programs. Most churches are not equipped to be social service delivery agents in the ways initially envisioned by the organizers of President Bush's faith-based initiatives. I am suggesting however, that a spirit of social entrepreneurship would reinvigorate pastors, congregations and Christian leaders with a commitment to mission.52

- **We will not want to live with the hidden assault on our civil rights.**

In his recent provocative book Kenji Yoshino, a law professor at Yale, describes a phenomenon he calls "covering": the pressure exerted on racial and ethnic minorities, gays and others to mute certain characteristics in order to fit into the mainstream. Yoshino traces the history of civil rights legislation in the U.S. from his perspective as a gay Japanese-American and concludes that too often the courts have ignored the threat posed by the "dark side of assimilation."53

- **At a time when religion in American politics almost invariably means the religious right, those of us on the left must remain a vibrant reminder that <u>faith cuts through politics from more than one direction, with more than one message</u>.**

Conservatives are much more enthused about the teaching of Paul than that of Jesus; progressives pay attention to the words of Jesus above all. For both parties, the moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors—basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work—is universally binding on our consciences.

There is no guarantee that the religious left gets it right any more than the religious right. Still this septuagenarian, shaped by the leftist politics of the civil rights and anti-war movement of the 1960s might seem a little Sisyphean—all these years to contemplate Iraq, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iran, feminism, gay pride, multi-culturalism, nuclear Armageddon, global warming and the rest. But then I've seen Jim Crow come and go, seen Africa pass from colonial rule to self-rule not without enormous pain, past and present. Steps forward. Steps back.

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52 Thee UM agencies—GBGM, GBCS and GCFA—collaborated in 2001 to produce a guide to faith-based initiatives. Entitled "Community Ministries and Government Funding," the document can be found through GBGM website www.gbgm-umc.org.

53 *Kenji Yoshino: Covering: The Hidden Assault on our Civil Rights*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Moral idealism will never create a good society. We must not blink at the fact that idealists alone have never carried through any great social change. The possessing classes rule by force and longstanding power. They control nearly all property. The law is on their side, for they have made it. For a definite historical victory, a given truth must depend on the class which makes the truth its own and fights for it. We shall never have a perfect social life, yet we must seek it with faith. At best there is always an approximation to a perfect social order. **The reign of God is always coming. But every approximation to it is worthwhile!**

Look around today and it is easy to see nothing by cynicism, apathy, polarization and political and moral gridlock. But if you listen closely, you might hear something—a faint, but persistent tapping at the window that political scientists, criminologists, and biologists say is the sound of change arriving anyway. From capital punishment to global warming, to poverty and peace, to abortion and homosexuality, many of the social issues that divide us are shifting and evolving—perhaps in some instances into a new consensus, and no less profoundly, toward a reframing of the old debates. May it be so in the churches and in society!

Let Dom Helder Cámara, beleagured Roman Catholic Archbishop in Brazil, have the last word:

> When I give food to the poor they call me a Saint
> When I ask why the poor have no food, they called me a Communist.

Resources for the task

The **General Board of Church and Society** is present on the Web at *www.umc-gbcs.org*. There you can keep up to date with action alerts and press statements of the board as well as information on a variety of social issues. Staff names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses may also be looked up. The site also provides opportunity for you to dialogue with staff as well as links to several other social justice ministry Web pages. You may want to get on e-mail list for *Faith in Action*, a weekly digest of GBCS programs and concerns.

In 2002 GBCS launched a new electronic advocacy center called **UMPower** on their website, which is designed to allow UMs to track legislation, sign up for networks, communicate with federal and state legislators and with the media, and enable advocacy work. Check it out!

Some Published Resources I have found helpful

Couture, Pamela D. *Child Poverty: Love, Justice and Social Responsibility*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007

-----. *Seeing Children, Seeing God: A Practical Theology of Children and Poverty*. Nashville;

Abingdon, 2000.

-----. *Blessed Are the Poor? Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Kimbrough, S. T., ed. *Songs for the Poor; Hymns by Charles Wesley*. Revised edition. New York: General Board of Global Ministries, 1997. CD also available. Order www.Cokesbury.com.

McClain, George D. *Claiming All Things for God: Prayer, Discernment, and Ritual for Social Change*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Wolfteich, Claire E. *Lord Have Mercy: Praying for Justice with Conviction and Humility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.