



The Plumbline



WUMFSA

Wisconsin Chapter United Methodist Federation for Social Action

October, 2000

WUMFSA Spring Retreat To Focus On "Racism;"

Curtiss Paul DeYoung to Lead Program

The first weekend in March, Friday & Saturday, 2 & 3, 2001 is the chosen date for the annual WUMFSA Spring Retreat. The place is tba.

The participants will look at many aspects of racism in the life of our church and nation.

Curtiss Paul DeYoung, president of TURN [Twin Cities Urban Reconciliation Network], a metro-wide ministry that serves as a catalyst for reconciliation and social justice in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota will be the keynote speaker.

He has served as a pastor in the Church of God and is the author of *Coming Together: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity* and *Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge-Our Only Hope*.

The retreat planning committee includes Deanna Shimko-Herman, Pat Lyon, and David Sharpe are the planning committee. Send suggestions to them. Registration materials will be sent in January. See WUMFSA web-site for info.

An Advent Gift for You from WUMFSA

A Devotional Booklet by and for Wisconsin Conference People for Advent Preparation

Advent has historically been the time for Christians to prepare for the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. Have you found that much of your time in December is so caught up in activities identified with the secular Christmas holiday that you're starting to yearn for deeper meaning than what parties and shopping can provide?

There are alternatives to assist you to stay focused on the message of the Word incarnate. Preparing the Year of the Lord's Favor, a new devotional series authored by Wisconsin writers, is available for those seeking to make room in their Advent 2000 preparations for intentional spiritual disciplines.

Based on Luke 4: 16 - 30, these daily meditations for use November 27 through Christmas Day combine the best of United Methodism's tradition of personal piety and social justice. The themes are Good News for the Poor, Release to the Captives, Recovery of Sight, Freeing the Oppressed and Proclaiming the Lord's Favor.

Key writers for the devotionals are Sandra Foley Gaylord, Amy DeLong, Dale Hanaman and Jodi Arpke-Lone. Steve Zekoff served as general editor for this publication of the Wisconsin Chapter of the United Methodist Federation for Social Action. Members of the Chapter will be using it as their common devotional during Advent 2000. Others seeking to actively engage their Christian faith with their daily actions will likewise benefit from the spiritual discipline afforded by these devotions.

The devotional may be downloaded from the Wisconsin UMFSA web site, www.wisconsinumc.org/mfsa.

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*24 years of Social Witness in Wisconsin
92 Years of Social Action in the Methodist Churches, USA
Originators of the United Methodist "Social Creed"*

Do you have a missionary spirit?

Have you felt called to take ministry beyond your own church and community? Do you like adventure? Think you would benefit by walking a mile in someone else's shoes? Maybe the Korean Exchange Program is for you.

We are looking for adults to travel to Cambodia, South Korea and Thailand for 9 weeks June 11-August 12, 2001, to teach English to children and adults 6-8 hours a day. Room and board provided. Your cost is 35% of the round-trip air travel between USA and Cambodia, Korea or Thailand, plus your visa and passport fees, some teacher resources and classroom materials. A 5-week program is available.

Do you believe in social justice, cultural diversity, a simple lifestyle, and the Christian faith. Can you work independently, work with a wide range of people, and be flexible?

For more information and to request an application, contact the Chair of the Korean Exchange Program:

Deanna L. Shimko-Herman
414-313-0343 (cell phone)
262.534.6581 (home)
E-mail: dshimko@ols-inc.com
5341 Northwest Hwy, Waterford, WI 53185

You must complete an application and submit recommendations by a clergy and two other persons to the Korean Exchange Program. Deadline for applications is December 31, 2000.

The Korean Exchange Program is a grassroots exchange founded in 1993 between Caldwell and English Settlement United Methodist Churches in Racine County and five rural Korean Methodist Churches in Kangwon Province, South Korea. In 2000 the Exchange expanded to Cambodia and Thailand. The Exchange celebrates 8 years of reconciling ministry by finding unique ways to bring people of different cultures together!

See "A Cambodian Vignette..." on Page 3

... To Join the Wis UMethodist Federation for Social Action!

- ◆ Special 2000 New Member Rate for the first year is \$20.00, \$30.00 for a Household paid before Jan. 1, 2001.
- ◆ Regular 2001 Dues are \$45 regular, \$65 household, \$20 low income/student. Renew anytime.
- ◆ Memberships include national membership and national newsletter.

Present Members: 2001 Dues are due Jan. 1.

Pay early and avoid the rush!!

Send new membership request or renewal with a check to WUMFSA";
c/o Bette Barnes, Treasurer; PO Box 259855; Madison, WI 53725.
Please support Plumblin and our work for justice and peace.

Plumblin Fund Faces A Desert Dry Spell

When this issue of *Plumblin* is paid for, our funds will have been depleted. It's up to you if you want this effort to continue. Send your contribution to keep it coming to the all Wisconsin Annual Conference members.

Send donations to "WUMFSA";
c/o Bette Barnes, Treasurer;
PO Box 259855; Madison, WI 53725
and mark for Plumblin .



(Continued from page 1)

Copies will also be available at many Wisconsin Conference meetings and events this fall. Persons wishing to order individual copies may do so by sending a \$4 contribution to: Sandra Gaylord, 121 Wisconsin Avenue, Waukesha, WI 53186. Checks should be made payable to "WUMFSA."

United Methodist congregations and groups are encouraged to duplicate and distribute the material for local use. You are invited to offer this resource as the Advent 2000 devotional for your community of faith.

Suggestion to Pastors: Why not reproduce this devotional booklet as your congregational advent booklet and share it with your people?

A Cambodian Vignette . . .

From Last Summer's KEP

Mission In Cambodia

by Pat Lyon

We don't know which one of us actually came up with the idea. We only know that once we thought of it we had to make the idea happen. There is the sense in which Deanna [Shimko-Herman] and I are a dangerous combination. We would visit the new prison at the Khmer Thmei Village. "Why?" They wanted to know. Because we work in the village and we want to know all about the village. Our drivers took us to the pastor's house and we all went up to the prison about 11:00 a.m. The guard told us to come back at 2:00 p.m. We did. It was a very hot day. This time the guard said, "You must get a ticket from the governor's office." Since we were teaching English at the governor's office, this seemed feasible. Deanna asked about seeing the person in charge and we were told to return at 9:00 a.m. This was a very busy day and we understood "return at 9:00 a.m." to mean that's when the office is open. We found out later that the chief counsel was expecting us and we stood him up! Deanna apologized profusely when we went back. We watched as the man (a Christian) wrote a special letter for us in Khmer. There are no typewriters. He reached into his desk drawer and retrieved a special stamp. Then he stapled the letter shut. He gave the letter to the man who would be

our escort. We knew this guy. The next day at 9:00 a.m. we arrived to meet our official escort to the "Koc" (jail) One problem. Two women, one driver. So Deanna and the escort motored to the Orchade to get a second driver. We arrived at the village and stopped by the parsonage for the pastor. We were on our way at last.

This time, our entourage was immediately allowed inside the prison. We met in a large pavilion with a man we assumed to be the warden. He wore a uniform and black boots. He had an incredibly kind face and I told him so. Much to our amazement, they showed us everything. There was a large outdoor cooking area with an open fire. We were allowed in a "minimum security" area. We walked through one of those mazes like you have at the bank. This one was made of barbed wire. The first two rooms were for the women. They were large rooms with a bathroom on one end. Khmer beds lined the walls. They are like wooden tables with mats on them. The inmates waved and smiled at us. They were all very young. The men waved to us, (not indecently) and we waved back. The other buildings were more desolate. More security. On the way to the gate, we asked the kind man if there was any opportunity for the prisoners to exercise. He pointed to a volley ball net. "Very poor prison," he said. "Have net, no balls." Oh, oh, another idea brewing. The next day Deanna and I, the Pastor, and two drivers arrived at the Khmer Thmei Village Prison (Actually, the Siem Reap Province Prison carrying two volley balls, a packet of information about the Korean Exchange Program and some English work books. This time we were immediately escorted to the office of the head of the prison. Yes, he wanted us to teach English to the prisoners. It is because they have no literacy that they go to prison. When could we start? When pastor Sokha introduced himself I was so proud to hear the word "Methodist." Amazing, isn't it, what a couple of balls can do?

Pat Lyon and Deanna Shimko-Herman spent the summer in Siem Reap, Cambodia teaching English through the Korean Exchange Program. Each day they rode motor bikes to a remote village to teach at the Knar Thmei United Methodist Church. They also visited the Siem Reap Province Prison where they hope to offer classes next year. They are grateful for the prayerful and financial support of MFSa. Pat e-mailed stories to her church, relatives, and friends about her experiences. We will publish more in future issues.

Refugee Struggle as Biblical Struggle by Amanda Stein

Sitting by candlelight in the coldness of my cement brick home I read the editor's plea, "It's your turn! Write a think piece, original work, etc., and send it to the Plumline..." and so from the highlands of Guatemala I have taken these words to heart, and have decided to share how the lives of thousands of Mayan people have biblical insights for fellow Christians in the U.S.

My husband, Jason, and I are human rights observers in a return refugee community in rural northwest Guatemala. In 1996, after 36 years of bloody civil war which can be attributed to the extreme economic disparities in the country, the guerrillas and the Guatemalan government signed peace accords which ended the conflict. The war left 200,000 people dead or disappeared in its trail, but in addition, it also caused at least another 100,000 to flee the country to take refuge in Mexico. After having lived more than twelve years in exile and heartened by growing prospects for peace, the people of our community decided to return to their country in 1994. Because they still carried great fears after having suffered from such violence and repression, the returnees insisted on having international accompaniment to assure their safety back in their homeland.

In January, the village of Chacula, Nueva Esperanza ("New Hope") celebrated the six-year anniversary of its return. Many communities, including Chacula, continue to request international accompaniment for fear of renewed repression from the state or conflicts at the regional level. We have been living in solidarity with the people of Nueva Esperanza for eight months observing their struggle with an apathetic government and hostile neighbors.

So why should this be an important issue to Wisconsin United Methodists?

Repression, violence, and fleeing refugees are not strange and random acts of the present, unrelated to and disconnected from our Christian tradition. These experiences are also our own, part of our biblical stories and heritage.

Sometimes it is difficult to put such harsh and complicated political situations into a Christian perspective. But consider: Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and his family were also refugees, fleeing for their lives into Egypt to seek political asylum. Even as a baby, Jesus represented the sung peace of the angels and embodied the struggle for a kingdom of righteousness. He threatened the power of established authorities like that of King Herod, and so plans were made to kill him. In much the same way the government of Guatemala carried out its policy of extinguishing the indigenous of these lands, on the pretense of ridding the country of subversives. The Guatemalan people who were the victims of these strategies were poor and often vulnerable, and included old men, women, and children. But much like Jesus, they had heard God's mandate for justice and call for jubilee, and for this reason they were targeted.

Jesus, Joseph, and Mary are not the only ones who fled for their lives. Their ancestors ran with Moses, wandering in the wilderness and passing years in desolation. The Holy Family's descendants continue to flee. "Maria," a middle-aged woman of our community, recounted her story of giving birth seven days before they ran tens of miles to arrive in Mexico. Swaddled to the back of his older sister, five year-old "Chus" remembers the two of them ducking behind rocks to avoid random bullets shot into the darkness by the advancing army. "Jose" was shot dead with 15 other people whom the military had dragged from a Catholic mass.

The persecution of groups or races of people which verges on decimation continues today in many countries of Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and in Latin America. Thanks be to God that the massacres have ended here, but the people still have many roads to travel seeking justice and an end to impunity for all their family members who died under the years of persecution. There is still hope of self-determination and the establishment of indigenous rights. Pay extra attention to the news from Guatemala this month. Listen to hear how the people are rising again to reclaim what they lost in the war, and how shalom is alive and active with the pueblo here.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." As committed Christians, pastors and leaders of the church, how are we to preach the Gospel, asking others to dedicate their lives to be with the poor, the refugee, and the widow, if we ourselves have not yet made these steps on our own? As our churches dwindle in membership, we must be reminded that Jesus went out to the people, and in return they began to follow him. Young people are searching for direction, middle-aged people are looking for meaning, and older people want their time to have purpose. Accompaniment may not be a typical form of church work, but it is ministry all the same. Groups such as NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala), Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemakers Team, and Witness for Peace are in need of people of all ages and abilities to assist in their efforts to make a better life for others around the globe. If we look out to the world, outside of ourselves and our church walls, we can rediscover a sacred and historic path with those whom God calls the "Blessed."

"What is our responsibility in the creation of a more just and peaceful world? Our response might be summed

News Notes

*** Laguna Beach - The Rev. Jimmy Creech, the minister who was defrocked from the United Methodist Church a year ago for performing a same sex union, has officially joined Soulforce as the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Soulforce is an interfaith network of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) individuals and their family, friends, and allies, committed to applying the principles of nonviolent resistance as taught by Gandhi and King to the liberation of sexual and gender minorities. Rev. Creech plans to take a leading role in the Soulforce actions taking place November 12 - 14 in Washington DC during the National Catholic Bishops Conference. Vigils and Protests will be taking place outside the National Basilica.

“You don’t need to be a United Methodist to hold the United Methodist Church accountable for the Spiritual Violence against Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. I don’t need to be a Catholic to hold the Catholic Church accountable. The Catholic Church hurts millions of people through financially supporting anti-gay legislation and initiatives that deny GLBT people of their civil rights,” declared Rev. Creech. “I have decided to officially become part of Soulforce because I believe in the goals of this movement, to use relentless non-violent resistance to end Spiritual Violence.”

All people of faith on any spiritual journey are invited to join Soulforce and take part in the DC Action Nov. 12-14. People can register at the Soulforce Web site: <http://www.soulforce.org> .

*** Action Alert — SISTER HELEN PREJEAN - STOP THE DEATH PENALTY

September 8, 2000 from the Milwaukee Pledge of Resistance

Sister Helen Prejean is using the Internet to stop the death penalty.

The author of “Dead Man Walking” wants 1 million U.S. signatures calling for a death penalty moratorium. The time to act is NOW and you can do it online! Sign her petition and find out how YOU can help.

The following link will take you directly to the petition page on her website:

<http://www.Moratorium2000.org/action/petition.lasso>

*** Bread and Roses - Premier Theatre Showing

December 1, 2000; 7:30 p.m.

Orpheum Theater, 216 State Street, Madison

This film focuses on the struggle for labor rights by a Mexican immigrant who joins her sister as a maid in a corporate office.

(Continued from page 4) Refugee (continued)
up by the word ‘accompaniment:’ to deviate from other pathways for a while (and then forever) to walk with those on the margins, to be with them, to let go. Through this encounter with God at the margins, we as individuals and societies experience a profound, on-going, spirit-led conversion of the heart, soul, and mind. Slowly our centers of gravity move outside of ourselves and we find ourselves suddenly dancing with friends in unknown places and with great joy.” *Saint Francis and the Foolishness of God, Marie Dennis, et. al.*

May God bless you. *Que Dios les bendiga.*

In solidarity, Reverend Amanda Stein, May, 2000

The Rev. Amanda Stein now volunteers with the International Service for Peace (SIPAZ) in Chiapas, Mexico. Earlier, beginning in Aug., 1999, she and her husband were working with the Guatemalan Accompaniment Project also in Chiapas. In both jobs, they work with poor Mayan indigenous communities. Amanda was ordained deacon in 1998 after graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. On leave of absence since that time, they first lived in France, last year in Guatemala, and this year in Mexico. She plans to return to the Wisconsin Conference this coming spring (2001) to serve a local church.

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Hebron (continued)

posted on our CPT website and Emailed across the world. Our action alert called on people in the U.S. and Canada to send packets of soil to Israeli consulates and embassies and leaders in the Israeli, U.S., and Canadian governments, urging an end to the confiscation of Palestinian land. (Under the Barak administration, more Palestinian land has been confiscated than has been returned through the Peace Process)

This is one dramatic example of the many and varied peacemaking activities in which I participated during my month in Hebron and Palestine in February 2000, as a reserve CPTer. CPT is an initiative of Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker churches who support violence reduction teams around the world. Members include United Methodists and Roman Catholics as well. We have maintained a peacemaking presence in Hebron since 1995, at the invitation of the mayor.

The Rev. Doug Wingeier, Wis. Conference member, since retiring from G-ETS faculty and moving to North Carolina has been something of a peace activist; first demonstrating against the School of the Americas, the Nicaragua solidarity work, and Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron and Haiti. This article was written in February, 2000 and is good background to the current frustrations and anger in Palestine now..

BUCKETS OF SOIL IN THE INTEREST OF PEACE

by Doug Wingeier

It is November 1997 and I am standing on a hilltop overlooking the beautiful Beqa'a Valley east of Hebron, in the southern West Bank. We are standing on the land of Abdel Jawad Jabber, a Palestinian farmer, and the valley and hillside opposite are covered with vineyards and orchards—all except a new concrete bypass road cutting the valley down the middle, built on land confiscated from Abdel Jawad without compensation, and fenced off along with 150 meters on either side, after he watched his grapevines uprooted by bulldozers.

We--myself and members of the Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) I am visiting--are standing in the doorway of Abdel's son Atta's house, which is under a demolition order from the Israeli occupation for being built without a permit--which costs over \$1,000 to apply for and is hardly ever granted. Atta and his wife Rodina have invited us for maqlube, a delicious Arab chicken and rice dish. As we sit in a circle on the floor around the food, Atta raises his hands and eyes upward and says the traditional Muslim prayer before a meal--"In the name of Allah/God the most merciful, the most compassionate." In that moment I feel a deep human and spiritual bond with this Muslim family, who have suffered so much at the hands of the Israeli occupation, yet still can express gratitude to God for the good things of life, and offer hospitality and friendship to us Americans, knowing that the funds and backing for the Israeli settlement (Qiryat Arba) creeping across his valley, is coming from my government and taxes.

Now it is over two years later (February 2000) and I am again standing in the same spot--except that Atta's house where we had the maqlube feast has been demolished, not once but twice, and a Red Cross tent has been put up for him, Rodina, and their three small children. As I look across the valley I see first a big gas station built at the corner of the bypass road and a new road leading up to the settlement, both built on land confiscated from Abdel Jawad since I was last here. And across the hillside opposite me directly behind his house, has been constructed a huge wall, 35 feet high and 75 yards long, made of gigantic stone blocks--ostensibly to "protect" the settlement above from the "terrorist" family below. (Every Palestinian is a terrorist, from the settler's point of view.) Abdel's hillside orchard has been bulldozed to make room for the wall, so one wonders who are the real terrorists.

We walk down the lane, cross the bypass road, and go down to the corner near the gas station, where about 15 jeeps, 50 police and soldiers, and a dozen journalists are massed. We have informed the authorities, settlers, and media what we plan to do today, and they are waiting

for us. We carry a banner proclaiming, Land Confiscation Is Not Peace." In our group are 14 members of CPT, 25 Israeli peace activists (members of Rabbis for Human Rights and the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions), and about 15 Palestinians (the Jabber extended family, neighboring farmers in the Beqa'a Valley, and representatives of the Palestinian Land Defense Committee).

We all have buckets of soil, some brought from as far away as Tel Aviv. We proceed up the hill toward the settlement, as far as the police and soldiers will let us go. Then, one by one we each make a little speech, saying in a variety of ways, "You have taken this family's land, you seem to forever want more, so here, here is more land for you"--then dumping our buckets at their feet. This was a prophetic, symbolic action, similar to those enacted by the Hebrew prophets, and in the spirit of the saying of Jesus, "Turn the other cheek, give your coat as well as your cloak, and go the second mile." A rabbi and several other Jews spoke against the injustice and about their respect and friendship with the Palestinian people.

Under Barak, more Palestinian land has been confiscated than returned in the Peace Process.

When my turn came, as I dumped my bucket I said, "The soil belongs to God and it is sacred. To tear it up with bulldozers is a sacrilege. To cultivate it to produce food and beauty is a godly act. This family is doing God's will here in this valley, and to take their land, destroy their crops, and keep them in fear is a crime against them and against God."

The farmer, Abdel Jawad, had brought a branch of one of his uprooted olive trees, and stuck it in the heap of soil from our buckets, while making a fiery and impassioned speech about all the abuse that had been heaped on him and his family. At the end, he invited all those assembled to have a cup of tea at his home across the hill. We all went--Palestinian, Jew, and Christian--and 30 or 40 of us sat in his yard while his granddaughters served us tea.

Soon an Israeli army jeep came up his driveway, saying they were concerned about the safety of the Israelis present and demanding that they leave, because the head of Rabbis for Human Rights had actually received death threats from the settlers. Abdel Jawad came out of his house with two cups of tea on a tray and offered them to the soldiers--an act of reconciliation by a Muslim which--whether or not he had ever heard the saying of Jesus, "Love your enemies"--was certainly done in that spirit. But the soldiers refused to accept it.

Our Israeli friends soon left, and we CPTers then said our goodbyes and made our way by taxi back to our apartment in Hebron, where we sat down at the computer and sent out news releases, photos taken on our digital camera, and action alerts to media and our constituency all over the world. News stories about our action appeared that night on Palestinian TV, and the next day in the Arabic newspapers in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Story and pictures were

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Across the Episto Chasm - Editorial

The Digital Dumbing Down Of Our Denomination

by Dave Steffenson, Editor

It seems to me our brothers and sisters in the “Good News” wing of the UMC (Confessing Movement, et. al.), are more children of George Boole than John Wesley.

Boole (1815-1864) was a British logician who developed Boolean algebra in 1854 in his book, *An Investigation of the Laws of Thought*.

Classic logic saw everything in black or white, yes or no terms. Since the 18th century, our thinking has been dominated by the Law of the Excluded Middle — it’s either/or -- a (muddled?) middle way is not logically real.

Boolean logic is more complex because it deals with sets of numbers or things instead of one number and its opposite. But it still is a “one or the other” sort of business. This is called binary thinking, and it’s extremely useful. I’m writing this editorial in binary language — my computer is putting together a long series of ones and zeros and not the letters I’m seeing on my screen. A great deal of our modern technology is built on the binary proposition that the complement of any element or proposition is simply the negation of the statement—either/or, true or false but not both. We use boolean logic when we use a web search engine.

However, my computer is a strict fundamentalist. Get one of those ones or zeros in the wrong place, such as misspelling someone’s e-mail address, and the message won’t get there. What I write must be absolutely right or wrong in the binary world.

Fuzzy Logic More Real

“Fuzzy logic allows for values between 0 and 1, shades of gray, and maybe; it allows partial membership in a set. When the approximate reasoning of fuzzy logic is used with an expert system, logical inferences can be drawn from imprecise relationships. It is used, for example, to optimize automatically the wash cycle of a washing machine by sensing the load size, fabric mix, and quantity of detergent. Fuzzy logic is used to control passenger elevators, household appliances, cameras, automobile subsystems, and smart weapons.” *The Concise Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Third Edition Copyright © 1994, Columbia University Press.*

I dwell in a fuzzy logic world. When I get beyond computers or washing machines to human relationships, life get a whole lot fuzzier. And when I’m doing theology, things are often more complex and fuzzy because I’m a finite person, limited by culture, geography, intelligence, ignorance, and a whole lot more.

So as I said in the first of these series of epistemological editorials, I said absolute **certainty** is hard to come by, but **certitude**

(the assurance that comes with trust or faith) is the gift of grace which fills our being and becoming. The more I think and learn, my faith gets stronger but my beliefs get more fuzzy because it’s a fuzzy world.

To grossly oversimplify, I’ve found the world of religion is made up of two kinds of persons — digital and fuzzy. Digital people want clear **answers** — yes or no, no fuzzy middles for them. The Bible is either true or its not, homosexuality is either sin or its not, Christ is the only way or he’s not — choose up sides and fight about it. Truth always begins with a capital letter.

Fuzzy people are more interested in better **questions**. As one seeks ever more consistent and adequate truths (lower case, plural), the questions are refined and new answers emerge. One American philosopher identified 12 possible relationships between absolute yes and absolute no rather than the emptiness of the excluded middle.

So, the trip becomes more exciting than the destinations. And God emerges in ever-increasing and relevant richness out of this process.

The Digital Divide and the Fuzzy Fray

The ugly ecclesiastical politics that has emerged in the UMC seems to pivot around the digital divide. Those to the right tend toward putting forth propositions of “Truth,” and some want to exclude all those who don’t come down on their side of the divide — boolean logic. Either get on their bus or get out.

While John Wesley had definite beliefs and strongly proclaimed them, often in Boolean terms. That was the theological method of his day. But his spirit was already on the side of fuzzy logic because he was a genius in applying and reworking his beliefs in terms of the realities of the world he served.

Those at General Conference who wanted to institute tests of doctrine and orthodoxy are boolean disciples. But to reduce our theological dialogue to a digital divide is to accelerate the digital dumbing down of our church.

When I call for more fuzzy logic in our theological dialogue, I don’t mean fuzzy as in George W.’s term “fuzzy math.” Nor do I mean that our thinking should be fuzzy or lacking in clarity. We should always seek clarity, consistency, and coherence.

No, fuzzy logic is more like the Apostle Paul in I Cor. 13, where he says we see Truth through a fuzzy window (a dark glass) because we are mere humans. He affirms that theological fuzziness will not go away until we stand fully in the light of God and our human limitations have gone away. Don’t decry fuzziness — embrace it and enjoy it!

It’s Your Turn! Write a think piece, a reaction piece, an original work, or just a brief letter and send it to Plumblin. We need your input to make this a lively dialogue medium for the Wisconsin Conference. Write on any issue facing the United Methodist Church or general questions of social justice and action.

Send , articles, letters, news and address changes to:
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 now has its own address:
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2001 Deadlines for Upcoming *Plumline* issues (provided we can keep meeting the cost):

- Jan. 6 for Jan. issue.
 - April 1 for April issue.
 - July 15 for Aug. issue.
 - Oct. 15 for Oct. issue.
- Everyone is welcome to write an article, feedback letter, idea, comment, etc. Send written contributions to Dave Steffenson, Editor. Send donations to WUMFSA, PO Box 259855, Madison, WI 53725

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MFSA List-Serve (on-line news and discussion for members only), contact Larry Medsker at: medsker@American.edu.

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