

Methodists have cut 259 jobs_111003

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DALLAS (RNS)-The United Methodist Church has cut 259 jobs over the past two years-a 21 percent drop-according to the United Methodist Reporter, an independent newspaper.

The nation's second-largest Protestant denomination, facing a drop in revenues because of the lagging economy, laid off 65 people between Sept. 30, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2003. Sixty additional empty positions were kept vacant, while others were not filled after retirements.

In addition, statistics provided by the church and compiled by the newspaper showed the church has lost 305 missionaries-14 percent of its overseas force-since 2001.

Income to the church's World Service Fund has consistently fallen about 10 percent below budget goals. Income for 2003 so far is about 2.9 percent below the same point in 2002.

The church's Board of Global Ministries saw a \$29 million deficit last year.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.