



UMAction

BRIEFING

November 2003

A newsletter for United Methodists working for Scripture-based reform in our denomination. Circulation: 315,000

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BISHOP TALBERT FALSELY ATTACKS ENTIRE RENEWAL AND REFORM MOVEMENT

Did you know that if you are part of the movement to reform and renew The United Methodist Church you are a white supremacist, segregationist, and anti-women?

Well, now you know. Bishop Melvin Talbert, the Ecumenical Officer of the UMC Council of Bishops, said so in his speech to the far-left Methodist Federation for Social Action in Lakeside, Ohio on June 18, 2003.

Bishop Talbert applied these labels to the entire UM reform and renewal movement:

- “conservative segregationists”
- “white supremacy” and “white male domination”
- “the same persons who fought against the civil rights movement”
- “against women”
- “mean-spirited”
- “evil tactics”
- “fronts for political right-wing groups”

He specifically named

these targets and added a long list of individual United Methodists who lead these groups:

- Institute on Religion and Democracy, including UMAction
- Good News
- RENEW Network, a faithful UM women’s coalition
- Confessing Movement Within The United Methodist Church
- Mission Society for United Methodists
- Lifewatch
- A Foundation for Theological Education
- Coalition for United Methodist Accountability
- Association for Church Renewal, an ecumenical group

He complained that some UM seminaries have Deans or faculty whose education was partly funded by A Foundation for Theological Education, which supports UM students who affirm traditional Christianity.

He accused “blacks and



Bishop Melvin Talbert

women” who participate in the UM renewal movement of being “a few to make it appear not as it is.” If you are black or female and support renewal of your church, Bishop Talbert deems you as a mere token.

Bishop Talbert’s speech was careless about facts:

- He offered no evidence that any UM renewal group has ever favored “segregation,” “white

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ACTION: Contact your own Bishop. Respectfully tell him or her what you think about Bishop Talbert’s attack on the United Methodist renewal and reform movement. Ask your Bishop to urge the Council of Bishops to replace Bishop Talbert with a NEW Ecumenical Officer who will help unite, not divide, our church. For contact information for all UM Bishops, go to: <http://umc.org/locator/offices/bishops.htm>

BRISTOL HOUSE OFFERS FAITHFUL CONFIRMATION MATERIALS FOR UM'S

Confirmation is a significant process in the life of a youth in the UMC. It is a teenager's opportunity to review the basics of the faith and make a decision to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, if he or she has not already made that decision.

Sometimes official United Methodist confirmation materials have not emphasized the basics of the Christian faith. So in 1975, the Good News organization for UM renewal produced *We Believe* studies for confirmation and development of basic beliefs, first for youth and later another volume for older youth and adults.

Bristol House, Ltd., formerly the publishing arm of Good News, became independent many years ago. It provides teaching resources from a Christ-centered, Wesleyan perspective to a primarily United Methodist audience.

We Believe, revised by Bristol House, continues to offer pastors a basic study to help young people continue growth in Christian faith and become responsible members of The United Methodist Church. They will not learn everything they need to know about Christianity in 13 brief lessons. They will be given a framework to develop their theology and guide their relations with pastors and Christian mentors. The

content of *We Believe* focuses on these themes:

1. Every person must make his or her own decision to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

2. Jesus is Lord. There is salvation through no one else.

3. Christ is more than our example and teacher. We can have a living and vital relationship with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. We all are called to witness to the salvation Christ offers with our words and our deeds.

5. Mission involves both proclamation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and performing acts of service.

6. Acts of mercy and justice grow out of personal commitment to Christ.

7. We focus on God, the object of our faith. The emphasis is on His grace and power, not on our feelings. The emphasis is not on the strength of "our" faith, but on the nature of God.

8. We affirm God as Father, as Jesus called Him.

9. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, not a vague impersonal spiritual force. He convicts us of sin and gives us the power to overcome it. He cultivates His fruit of the Spirit in our lives and bestows gifts to be used to build up the body of Christ.

10. We affirm the authority and divine inspiration of the Scriptures. We use reason, experience, and

tradition to help discern the truth, but Scripture is primary.

11. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, meeting their needs whenever we are able.

12. We are called to personal and social holiness. We are called to honesty, sexual purity, gracious behavior toward others, justice, racial equality, and care of the earth.

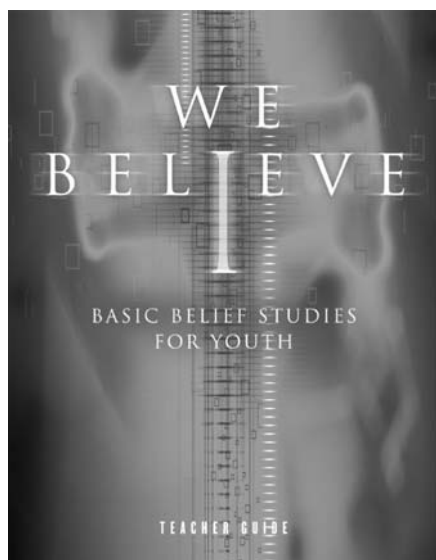
13. Confirmation is a time to build faith in God, not to create uncertainties. We acknowledge that we all struggle in our faith journey at times. In confirmation we discuss students' questions and help them understand the strength of what the Christian Church, through the centuries, has been and what it continues to believe and affirm.

14. Confirmation is a time to help young people begin to understand the workings of The United Methodist Church and help them form a spiritual relationship with a local congregation, the denomination, and the church universal.

Why is the content important?

The United Methodist Publishing House's last two confirmation offerings were *Follow Me* and *Claim the Name*. *Follow Me* emphasized Christ as an example to follow. Despite an orthodox chapter on salvation, it was heavy on action instead of relationship. *Claim the*

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ACTION: Bristol House also offers Confirmation studies for older youth and adults, Bristol Bible Curriculum for all ages, and many resources for United Methodists.

For a catalog and a free copy of John Wesley's sermon, "The Character of a Methodist," please call: 1-800-453-READ (7323) and mention *UMAction*. You may also visit www.bristolhousetd.com.

CHURCH & SOCIETY BOARD AGAIN TRIES TO CHANGE UM STAND ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Here they go again! The United Methodist Board of Church and Society, at its March 2003 meeting, decided to urge the 2004 General Conference to delete United Methodism's opposition to homosexual behavior. The vote was 20-12.

Directors voting against the deletion, and in defense of the church's stand on homosexuality, were Pat Curtin (Texas), John Dowell (Florida), Les Fowler (North Carolina), Rev. Philip Granger (Georgia), Gloria Holt (Alabama), Bishop William Hutchinson (Louisiana), Laura Little (North Carolina), Howard Mason (Delaware), Charles Porterfield (Indiana), John Redmond (South Carolina), Hank Shelton (Tennessee), and Marget Sikes

(Georgia).

The Board has been trying for many years to change United Methodism's official stand against homosexual behavior. This vote was closer than in past years.

The Board voted to petition that this language be added to *The Book of Discipline* in paragraph 161G: "Although faithful Christians disagree on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all." It also voted to petition that this language be deleted: "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider the practice incompatible with Christian teaching..."

The directors rejected an al-

ternative petition from director Hank Shelton, which would have reaffirmed the *Discipline's* current language on homosexuality while calling for a moratorium on further General Conference discussion about homosexuality.

The Board discussed a resolution on sex change operations, asking the church to "place no restrictions on the full participation of transsexual persons in the life and ministry of The United Methodist Church." The Board voted to refer the proposal to the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, which handles ordination issues.

The issue arose because last

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ACCUSES U.S. OF "AGGRESSION" AND "ILLEGAL" WAR; IMPLIES PRESIDENT BUSH IS WAR CRIMINAL

The governing Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in September issued a statement asserting that the United States and its coalition partners are guilty of an "immoral" and "illegal attack on Iraq" and an "act of aggression."

The United Methodist Church contributed over \$642,000 to the World Council of Churches in 2001, the latest available report.

The WCC Central Committee includes representatives from U.S. denominations, including The United Methodist Church. The statement was approved unanimously,

with two abstentions.

The WCC called for the United Nations to investigate "war crimes and crimes against humanity, violations of international humanitarian law including the illegal resort to war, and to prosecute all such crimes."

The WCC's obvious implication that President Bush should be prosecuted as a war criminal was confirmed in a news release from the WCC news service. It said, "the WCC's Central Committee also implied that U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair might appropriately be charged with war crimes for their 'illegal resort to war' on Iraq."

The WCC statement demanded "immediate and orderly withdrawal

of the occupying forces" but did not explain how the UN would maintain order if all U.S. and coalition troops would immediately leave. Another demand was that the "occupying powers" provide "full reparations to the Iraqi people for damages caused and precipitated by the unlawful use of military force."

The WCC also criticized the UN Security Council for "giving the occupation an open ended mandate" and "granting the occupying powers the right to legally and financially administer Iraq."

ACTION: About half of United Methodism's financial support for the WCC goes through the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund. Ask your Administrative Board to consider redirecting to a faithful Christian ministry the part of your church's apportionment payment that goes to this fund.



The WCC Central Committee met in Geneva. (Photo: WCC)

CHURCH HOMOSEXUALITY ADVOCATES PROMOTE MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS

When arguing for church acceptance of homosexual behavior, most advocates talk about “monogamy” in spite of evidence that truly monogamous homosexual relationships are rare. But others are bolder.

“I am a strong ally of those in healthy, polyamorous relationships,” declared Debra Kolodny, a lesbian activist. She argued that having multiple sexual partners can be “holy.” Kolodny led a workshop at the WOW (Witness Our Welcome) 2003 convention for “sexually and gender inclusive Christians.”

Hundreds of homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual people gathered in Philadelphia August 14-17 to urge religious acceptance of non-traditional sexual behaviors.

WOW 2003 was sponsored by the pro-homosexuality caucus groups in most mainline Protestant denominations, including Reconciling Congregations for United Methodists and the Methodist Federation for Social Action.

“There can be fidelity in threesomes,” Kolodny insisted. “It can be just as sanctified as anything else if all parties are agreed.” She said polyamory is unacceptable “if there is deceit.”

Kolodny said polyamory does not usually involve simultaneous group sex. But there are exceptions, she admitted, as she recalled

a friend of hers who shares a bed with his wife and a male partner. Kolodny said that consensual recreational sex could be a part of polyamory. But polyamory usually involves some level of commitment and intimacy, she said.

Kolodny apparently realized that her promotion of many sexual combinations was inconsistent with the homosexual lobby’s “born that way; cannot change” claim.

Most of her talk was about bisexuality. “I disagree with the queer movement [when it claims] that sexual orientation is predetermined,” Kolodny said, asserting that the existence of bisexuality “challenges all that.”

“I know a lot of women who chose to become lesbian,” Kolodny said. “Love between two people is always beautiful,” she added, and should be regarded as part of free choice.

“I’m not sure we can make the case for genetic predetermination,” Kolodny stressed, saying sexual preference depends on opportunity, support, and spiritual experiences.

Kolodny lamented that the “queer” movement insists on the “party line” of genetic predetermination as part of a “political strategy.”

“The queer movement relies on, ‘We can’t help it. We’re born this



Jorge Lockwood

way,’ she said

She contrasted the insistence on genetic predetermination with the teachings of Judaism and Christianity, which say: “God gives us choices.”

The Rev. Jorge Lockwood, Global Praise Coordinator for the United Methodist Church’s Board of Global Ministries, led a workshop called “Redeeming Our Bodies, Congregational Song as a Path of Liberation.”

“As queer people, we have another way of looking at the body,” Lockwood said. He complained that people often think the “desire of a 25 year old gay man for another 25 year old man is a beautiful thing,” but the desire of a 65 year old for a 25 year-old is “dirty.”

ACTION: Get the full report on WOW 2003 at www.ird-renew.org. Tell your Pastor and your Bishop what you think about the campaign for church acceptance of many kinds of sexual immorality. Most important, find out about Transforming Congregations, a United Methodist ministry that helps people struggling with homosexuality and other sexual brokenness to find transformation and healing through Jesus Christ: www.transformingcong.org.

*Confirmation Materials...
continued from page 2*

Name seems to assert baptismal regeneration and assumes that confirmands, saved by their baptism, now need to claim Christianity as their own (see “Claiming the Name: A Theological and Practical Overview of Confirmation” by John Gooch). Doctrine is portrayed as secondary to experience.

In contrast, Bristol House believes that sound, Biblical doctrine and willingness to obey divine revelation help develop faithful disciples. *We Believe* focuses on helping students make good decisions, but they need the truth revealed through the Scriptures.

The *We Believe* study offers chapters on:

- Belonging to the church and the Body of Christ.
- The Scriptures – how they came to us, why we need to know them, and how to use them practically.
- Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- Sin and salvation
- How we should live as Christians and as UM Christians
- A brief history of the church and the development of our denomination
- Practical aspects of the working of the church.
- Spiritual disciplines, evangelism, and service.
- The sacraments of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism
- Worship

We Believe also includes practical ways to help students learn the books of the Bible, find Scripture references, and become acquainted with the hymnal and other tools used in worship.

Confirmation is more important than ever to the church. Many United Methodist young people have had spotty and inconsistent experiences in Christian education.

Bristol House believes they need an overview of the Christian faith and the work of the church as well as a foundation for continuing discipleship.

In her 2002 book, *The New Faithful*, journalist Colleen Carroll says younger generations are looking for a challenging faith. “Those raised in mainline Protestant and Catholic churches typically complain that their faith formation consisted of vague platitudes about tolerance and love, not the ‘hard gospel’ of sin and salvation. They recall church leaders so absorbed with chic social causes that they failed to lay the faith foundations for their service work.”

Bristol House’s main objective is to help ensure that the next generation of United Methodists have the resources to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

***ACTION:* Talk to the Church and Society Chairman in your Local Church about the General Board of Church and Society’s opposition to Biblical Christian and United Methodist beliefs. Discuss how your local Church and Society Committee might develop better and more faithful alternatives to the Board’s far-left agenda.**

*Bishop Talbert...
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supremacy,” or “white male domination.”

- He failed to mention that IRD, UMAction, and other renewal groups actively work for equal human rights for all persons of all races.
- He ignored the many renewal leaders who have long records of strong support for racial equality and civil rights and are against racial segregation.
- His put-down of women renewal leaders is puzzling. If all these women are mere tokens, why are they so effective?
- In an amusing error, Bishop Talbert called Mark Tooley, UMAction Executive Director,

*Homosexuality
continued from page 3*

year a minister in the Baltimore-Washington Conference who had had a sex-change operation asked to return to the pulpit. His request was not accepted and he (now professing to be a woman) surrendered his ministerial credentials after a complaint was filed against him on unrelated issues.

Board of Church and Society General Secretary Jim Winkler appeared to admit that a majority of United Methodists do not support his agency’s political positions. “There are, it seems, almost always a minority in any congregation who are willing to stand up and be counted on matters of war and peace, racial, environmental, and economic justice, and health and wholeness.”

a “former FBI agent.” Not true. Mark is a former CIA analyst.

- Bishop Talbert’s “fronts for political right-wing groups” accusation ignores the fact that UMAction and other renewal movements oppose allowing any political faction – left-wing, right-wing, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, or any other – to use the church. We support a strong UMC social witness on issues where most Christians agree there is a clear Christian Scriptural position. We oppose church political statements on issues where honest Christians can and do honestly disagree. We oppose the far-left tilt of some UMC agencies, but we would equally oppose a far-right tilt.

UMAction

BRIEFING

November 2003

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Don't Leave Our Church! Stay and Work for Reform!

We tell you the painful truth about what has gone wrong with the United Methodist Church: unfaithfulness and far-left partisan politics by too many high church officials. We don't enjoy bringing you bad news, but we must tell the truth.

The good news is the growing movement to restore Scriptural faithfulness in our church. More and more United Methodists are working together for reform and renewal.

Don't leave! Our great Methodist heritage is too valuable to be abandoned. Join with us to help the United Methodist Church return to its Wesleyan roots as a growing, evangelical, Christian church living Christ's Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19)

Help Us Reach A Million Homes!

Yes, I (we) want to help UMAction inform one million United Methodists and their families about the urgent need for church reform and faithfulness. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

\$50 \$75 \$100 Other \$_____

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_____ Please send UMAction Briefing to the names I have marked in the enclosed church directory.

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Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Clip and mail to: UMAction c/o IRD
1110 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 1180
Washington, DC 20005

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YOUR OPINION, PLEASE!

1. Should Bishop Melvin Talbert be REMOVED as an officer of the United Methodist Council of Bishops?

YES NO

2. Should The United Methodist Church STOP sending money to the World Council of Churches?

YES NO

3. Should our church CONTINUE its stand that "we do NOT condone the practice of homosexuality and consider the practice INCOMPATIBLE with Christian teaching"?

YES NO