

UMAction

briefing



Frustrated Liberal United Methodists Form New Denomination

The United Methodist Church (UMC) is gradually returning to its Wesleyan heritage. After the 2000 and 2004 UMC General Conferences reaffirmed traditional Biblical beliefs, a few discouraged liberals have left our church. The Rev. Howard Hanger of North Carolina recently departed because the UMC won't let him perform same-sex unions.

When *UMAction* refers to "liberals" in the church, we mean people who reject historic Christian doctrines such as the authority of Scripture, Christian sexual morality, and Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the only Savior. Many liberals also promote far-left political causes through the church.

Now a new denomination has been started by a small group of liberals who left The United Methodist Church out of frustration that our church is not liberal enough.

The "New Methodist Conference" is their church—founded by the Rev. Rob Angus Jones, Convening Bishop, and the Rev. Deborah Giordano, both former United Methodists. The new church has held its first Annual Conference and will hold another in October 2006.

The California-based New Methodist Conference is indeed liberal and calls itself "a new oasis of progressive Protestant Christian faith and practice" for "other exiles." All

continued on page 4...

Summer 2006

Inside:

- UM Lobbyist Backtracks on Call for Bush's Impeachment. 2
- United Methodist Officials Lobby for Liberalized Immigration. 3
- GOOD NEWS: UM Annual Conferences Back *UMAction* Resolutions 4
- Help Elect Pro-Reform Lay Members of Your Annual Conference. 5
- Some UM Bishops Support Soldier Evading Iraq Duty 6

and more...

(Westminster John Knox Press)

UM Seminary Professor Claims 9-11 Was Bush Administration Conspiracy

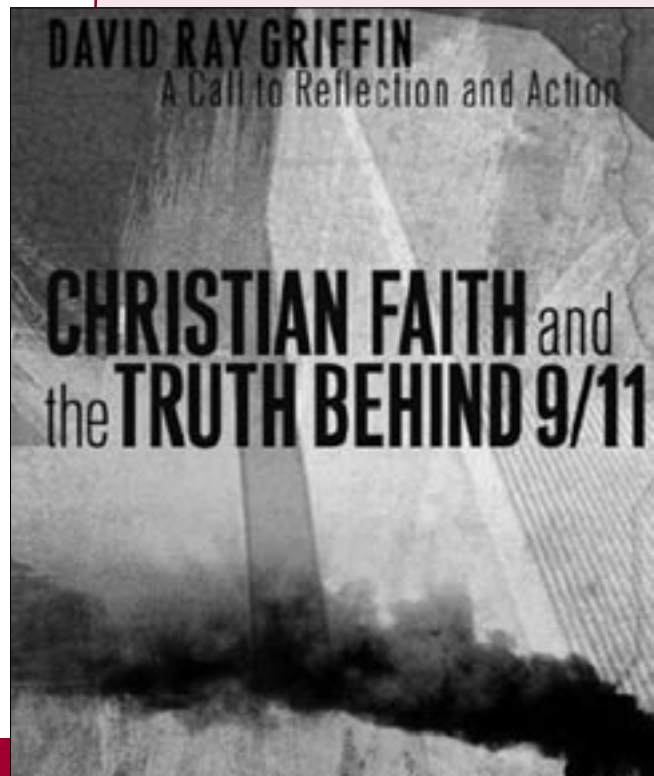
A new book by a United Methodist seminary professor claims that the Bush administration deliberately blew up the World Trade Center with explosives.

David Ray Griffin, Professor Emeritus at United Methodism's Claremont School of Theology in California, writes, "The Bush-Cheney administration orchestrated 9-11 in order to promote this [American] empire under the pretext of the so-called war on terror." His book, *Christian Faith and the Truth behind 9-11: A Call to Reflection and Action*, is published by the Presbyterian Church (USA) publishing house.

Griffin alleges the World Trade Center towers were destroyed in a "controlled demolition" by unnamed "federal officials;" the crash of Flight 77 into the Pentagon was a fabrication; and the U.S. Air Force shot down Flight 93 over Pennsylvania.

"The U.S. government was planning...to use the deaths of some 3,000 people (whom itself had killed) to justify wars that would most likely kill and maim many hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps millions," Griffin charges. He alleges that the United States has killed more than Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. He asserts that the United States is the "chief embodiment of demonic power."

continued on page 4...



Who Should Leave? UMAction Recommends: Highlights from “Move Forward in Mission!” Statement

“We rejoice in what God is doing with His United Methodist Church! The church we love is returning to Scriptural faithfulness....

“Much more must be done: hold accountable the bishops, Annual Conferences, UMC agencies, and Women’s Division; protect oppressed pastors and congregations in rebellious Annual Conferences; reform the seminaries; cease allowing any faction to use the church as its political party; and rebuild a responsible, Scriptural social witness....

“UMAction asks all faithful United Methodists to stay in the UMC and work with us for continuing renewal and reform. Do not leave this church—especially now when the great UMC turn-around to Scriptural faithfulness is moving faster and we all can help it continue.

“Christ calls us to unity in Him and His Father and in the truth of God’s word “so that the world may believe” (John 17:11-23). But genuine unity is impossible with those who reject the Church Universal’s historic understanding of God’s word or do not believe in Jesus as the resurrected and only Savior. They

have broken the covenant....

“Irreconcilable differences on essentials are dividing the culture-conforming liberals—who want to rewrite the Bible, the traditional Christian faith, and God’s plan for man, woman, and sex—from the faithful United Methodists who affirm the authority of Scripture and the essential Christian doctrines handed down to us from Jesus and the apostles....

“Some have already separated themselves by refusing to live within our *Discipline*.

“We recommend allowing a gracious exit for those who cannot or will not accept the essential beliefs on which the UMC is founded. The UMC should adopt a fair plan to permit their voluntary, peaceful departure, taking with them their local church property (if the congregation votes to leave) and pension rights. Their beliefs are strong and sincere. They may believe and worship as they choose, but they do not have the right to divide a christian church by undermining its basic beliefs. Some of the unfaithful are now talking about leaving; the UMC should aid their departure.”



UM Lobbyist Backtracks on Call for Bush’s Impeachment

In March, chief United Methodist lobbyist Jim Winkler declared that “we need to impeach George W. Bush,” railed against “our secret police,” and asserted that the threat posed by Saddam Hussein could have been solved without war “[e]ven if it turned out that Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction” and “had been involved in” the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Winkler is General Secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C. With an annual budget of about \$5 million, much of it paid by local church apportionment dollars through the World Service Fund, this church agency takes

positions on legislation before the U.S. Congress.

After reporting by UMAction and others, Winkler issued a public statement of “regret,” saying he “should have omitted this point [calling for Bush’s impeachment] from my speech.” Winkler did not back away from his “personal opinion on the matter of impeachment.” But he said the attention he provoked was “a distraction” to “finding an alternative to the ‘war on terror.’”

Winkler contrasted U.S. military action against terrorism with Paul’s warning in Romans 12 against individuals seeking revenge, while ignoring Paul’s teaching in Romans 13 that governments have the responsibility to use force against evildoers when necessary. Winkler also complained of being “stalked” by UMAction reporters in his role as a steward of millions of dollars of apportioned United Methodist members’ offerings.



ACTION: Familiarize yourself with the activities of Winkler’s agency: www.umc-gbcs.org. Share your concerns with your church’s finance committee about how your apportionment dollars support Winkler’s political lobbying.



Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society. (IRD)

United Methodist Officials Lobby for Liberalized Immigration

Several United Methodist officials have jumped into recent political debates over immigration. In April, bishops Minerva Carcaño of the Desert-Southwest Conference and Jeremiah Park of the New York Conference prominently participated in rallies for liberalized immigration laws.

The Rev. R. Randy Day, chief executive of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, charged that “[t]he White House has also fanned xenophobic flames by making plans to dispatch the National Guard to the U.S.-Mexican border” and denounced a U.S. House bill to stiffen penalties for immigration violations.

United Methodist General Board of Church and Society official Bill Mefford criticized a bipartisan immigration reform bill passed by the U.S. Senate in May, even though many conservatives opposed its provisions for a guest worker program and alleged “amnesty” for some illegal immigrants. Mefford asserted this bill was not nearly liberal enough, because it “doesn’t create a pathway [to citizenship] for all.”

However, Bishop Carcaño, who was asked last spring by the Council of Bishops to represent that entire body on immigration

issues, opined that the Senate bill is “reasonable and compassionate.” She has both affirmed the importance of “safe and secure borders” and called for “a pathway for citizenship” for many illegal immigrants.

In late August, she and Northern Illinois Conference Bishop Hee-Soo Jung offered their strong support to an “immigrant rights” activist who has violated U.S. immigration laws and is now receiving “sanctuary” in a Chicago United Methodist congregation. In an August CNN interview, Carcaño suggested she was speaking for the entire United Methodist Church in declaring that “we” would be “standing with this congregation” and with this activist, who has twice entered the U.S. illegally. ✚

ACTION: *Respectfully contact your bishop with your views about allowing Bishop Carcaño to speak for our church on controversial immigration politics. To get contact information for all active Bishops, go to www.umc.org and click on “DIRECTORY,” then “Regional Offices,” and then “Bishop/Episcopal Areas.”*

Pro-“Gay” Causes Touted at UM Clergywomen’s Convo

Support for pro-homosexuality causes was urged in August at the United Methodist International Clergywomen’s Consultation in Chicago. Over 1,500 UM clergywomen, including several bishops, attended the event.

Retired Bishop Judith Craig complained about the continued “knocking”



on the door by those ostensibly outside the church, in a seeming referring to active homosexuals who want to be leaders in The United Methodist Church.

The clergywomen were urged to sign a

petition supporting “full inclusion of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people in the church,” including “full membership rights, full marriage equality, full ordination rights and full access to denominational funding.”

The United Methodist Church disapproves of homosexual and other non-marital sex; prohibits ordination of practicing homosexuals; and also prohibits same-sex unions and church funding for pro-homosexuality advocacy.

Jerome Del Pino, General Secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, which sponsored the event, received a standing ovation when he appeared to indicate his support for the “open membership” cause that is championed by opponents of United Methodist beliefs on marriage and sexual ethics. ✚

ACTION: *If you know Biblically faithful United Methodist clergywomen looking for supplemental clergy fellowship and mentorship opportunities, refer them to Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, an ecumenical network of evangelical clergywomen from several denominations in the Wesleyan tradition: www.whwomenclergy.org.*

Recently retired Bishop Susan Morrison (right) pressures clergywomen to endorse an anti-war declaration at the meeting. (UMNS/Kathy L. Gilbert)

GOOD NEWS: UM Annual Conferences Back UMAction Resolutions

Several UMC Annual Conferences in May and June adopted, in full or in part, resolutions that UMAction had drafted.


The Holston and Dakotas Conferences adopted UMAction's resolution supporting state laws defining marriage as a union of one man and one woman.

The Memphis and North Carolina Conferences adopted versions of UMAction's resolution stating serious concerns with United Methodist official participation in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), which lobbies for unrestricted "abortion rights." The Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women's Division belong to the abortion rights coalition. In response, RCRC denounced the "well-funded" UMAction and the renewal movement within mainline churches. RCRC is several times larger than UMAction and is primarily funded by liberal foundations.

The Arkansas Conference adopted a version of UMAction's resolution affirming "belief in a regenerated [church] membership...and the responsibility of pastors to nurture, lead, and discern in matters of that membership." Discussion of this resolution led the Virginia Conference to adopt a likeminded resolution declaring that "clergy will receive anyone who is willing to take and live out the vows of membership."

Last year, Virginia Bishop Charlene Kammerer sought to punish a pastor who would not grant immediate church membership to an unrepentant, active homosexual man. The UMC Judicial Council overruled the bishop and restored that pastor to his pulpit. Kammerer and other bishops advocate automatic church membership for all who request it.

Here are some other Annual Conference actions:


- The North Carolina and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences rejected resolutions supporting Bishop Kammerer on the church membership issue.
- The West Virginia Conference voted to make evangelism its "missional priority" for 2008-2012 and overwhelmingly rejected a resolution endorsing automatic "open" church membership.
- The fast-growing North Georgia Conference called on United Methodist officials "to be proactive in fully supporting" United Methodism's official support for "laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman." The 2004 UMC General Conference overwhelmingly adopted that stand, proposed by UMAction.
- The Western North Carolina Conference called on the 2008 General Conference to maintain the UMC's opposition to homosexual behavior.
- The West Virginia and East Ohio Conferences rejected resolutions supporting the Council of Bishops in its opposition to the Iraq war. 

ACTION: Any United Methodist can submit a resolution to his or her Annual Conference. See our sample resolutions at www.ird-renew.org. If you are interested in submitting one or more to your Annual Conference, please contact UMAction for help at jlomperis@ird-renew.org.

Frustrated Liberals, from page 1...


quotations are from its Website.

The new church proclaims: (1) Universalism: "We believe that all will be 'saved.'" "We would not presume to say that only through Jesus can a person know God's will and grace." (2) Pacifism: "War is never a Christian response to human evil." (3) Liberalized sexual standard: "We celebrate Gay and Lesbian and Bisexual believers and clergy as fully equal members of this Conference."

The New Methodist Conference is small but appears eager to grow. 

ACTION: Visit the Website of the New Methodist Conference: www.newmethodist.org Compare UMAction's "Move Forward in Mission!" statement at www.IRD-RENEW.ORG.

9-11 Conspiracy, from page 1...

Ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Griffin is Co-Director of the Center for Process Studies at Claremont seminary, along with John Cobb, Jr., a prominent liberal United Methodist theologian. Both Griffin and Cobb advocate "process theology," which claims that God is constantly evolving and is never complete or fully in charge. 


ACTION: Many United Methodists are deeply concerned about radicalism in our seminaries. To learn about constructive efforts to improve the quality of theological education for United Methodist seminarians, visit the website of A Foundation for Theological Education, which was started by IRD co-founder, the Rev. Dr. Ed Robb, Jr.: www.johnwesleyfellows.org

Help Elect Pro-Reform Lay Members of Your Annual Conference

SPECIAL ACTION: *Help your local church elect a pro-reform Lay Member of your 2007 Annual Conference—more than one, if your church elects more than one Lay Member. Help elect a pro-reform Alternate too. Please act now. Key points:*

- The 2007 Annual Conference will elect the delegates to the vitally important 2008 General Conference.
- Talk now with pro-reform friends. Select and work for a good candidate. Find out who is on your local church's Committee on Lay Leadership (nominations committee). Get the date of your annual Charge Conference (usually in the Fall).
- Promptly talk with Lay Leadership Committee members and recommend a respected church member. Plan for

several pro-reform friends to do the same.

- If the Committee does not nominate your suggestion, you can make nominations during the Charge Conference. Request a secret ballot. Do not be discouraged by resistance or criticism. To continue United Methodism's return to Christian faithfulness, many more Biblically-minded, pro-reform Lay Members of each Annual Conference are urgently needed.
- Consider and pray: are YOU willing and able to serve as a Lay Member? If so, promptly tell the Lay Leadership Committee that you would like to serve. If the position has already been filled, offer to serve as the Alternate Lay Member. Also, contact your district office and offer to serve as a district at-large Lay Member of Annual Conference. 

Be sure to visit WWW.IRD-RENEW.ORG to sign up for our Online Community!

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:

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Please send UMAction Briefing to the United Methodists on the enclosed list of names and addresses.

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

My Name: _____

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YOUR OPINION, PLEASE!

What are your hopes for our General Conference in 2008?

- Reaffirmation of traditional biblical beliefs, including Christian sexual morality and renewed focus on faithful living and evangelism.
- More liberalized beliefs, with an emphasis on inclusion, affirmation of "alternative lifestyles," and focus on interfaith dialogue.
- Not sure.

**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)

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Summer 2006

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Some UM Bishops Support Soldier Evading Iraq Duty

Several United Methodist bishops have rallied to the cause of a U.S. Army officer who refuses to deploy to Iraq. Lieutenant Ehren Watada has attracted great media attention by publicly condemning the U.S. military operation in Iraq. Watada joined the U.S. Army after the Iraq war began in 2003.

Bishop Roy Sano, Secretary of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, wrote to Watada's mother, telling her he was "inspired by the brave step your son took."

Bishop Robert Hoshibata of the Oregon-Idaho Conference told Watada, "I applaud your willingness to balance your call to duty with your innermost thoughts and core beliefs." Bishop Mary Ann Swenson of the California-Pacific Conference wrote to Watada to "commend [him] as one who has taken a courageous and difficult stand...in opposition to a particular war" and to assure him of United Methodist support.

A liberal United Methodist congregation near Watada's army base in Washington state has offered itself as a "sanctuary" for American soldiers who wish to escape their military commitments. The pastor told an interviewer that all war is inherently immoral.

In contrast, the United Methodist Church's stand is that some wars are regrettably justified in cases of "genocide, brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked international aggression." 

ACTION: Contact Bishop Roy Sano and politely encourage the Council of Bishops to acknowledge the official United Methodist stand on war: bishopsano@umc-cob.org.

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