

UMAction

Briefing



Pro-Homosexuality Activists Take Charge of General Conference Worship

Spring 2007

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Marcia McFee of California and Mark Miller of New Jersey, two activists for the pro-homosexuality “Reconciling” movement, will co-direct music at the April 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

McFee led “worship design” at the 2001 national convocation of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), the main caucus lobbying to overturn United Methodism’s strong stand for Christian sexual morality, which includes disapproval of homosexual behavior.

Mark Miller, an open homosexual, is a leading RMN activist and the Director of Music at United Methodist Drew Theological School. As a delegate to the 2004 General Conference, he joined other pro-homosexuality demonstrators in denouncing the church’s teaching that sex is for marriage (one man and one woman).

In January, Miller used the e-mail list for RMN supporters to recruit visual and performing artists for the worship he and McFee will lead. Will these recruited RMN activists inject their political themes into General Conference worship?

Miller and McFee were appointed by the 17-member Commission on the General Conference, which includes at least five very public activists for the pro-homosexuality lobby. While about one-sixth of Commission members are from the radical-dominated Western Jurisdiction (where less than 4 percent of United Methodists live), none are from Africa (where one-fourth of United Methodists live). 

ACTION: Write to Commission Chairwoman Gail Murphy-Geiss (17984 E. Ida Avenue, Centennial, CO 80015; Fax: 303-722-0624; E-mail: gmurphygeiss@comcast.net), and Vice Chair David Wilson (3020 S. Harvey, Oklahoma City, OK 73109; Fax: 405-632-0209; E-mail: dwoimc@aol.com). Respectfully protest their selection of those divisive figures. Also contact your own bishop to urge him or her to make sure no more “Reconciling” activists are nominated by the Council of Bishops to the Commission on the General Conference. You can find his or her contact information from your pastor or from [www. umc.org](http://www.umc.org)

Mark Miller, performing at the controversial “Hearts on Fire” conference in Fall 2005. (Western North Carolina Conference/Dawn Hand)



United Methodist Bishops Protest Against Bush Library at SMU

Fifteen bishops of The United Methodist Church are urging Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas to reject a proposed George W. Bush Presidential Library.

“What moral justification supports SMU’s providing a haven for a legacy of environmental predation and denial of global warming, shameful exploitation of gay rights and the most critical erosion of habeas corpus in memory?” asked the Rev. William McElvaney, who helped organize resistance to the Bush library, including a petition that 15 bishops and 10,000 others have signed.

One of over 120 colleges and universities affiliated with United Methodism, SMU is legally owned by The United Methodist Church’s South Central Jurisdiction. Half of its board of trustees are UMC members—including three bishops, the pastor of President Bush’s home church in Dallas, and First Lady Laura Bush. But the 11,000-student school has long governed itself autonomously. The UMC exercises little direct influence, except over the seminary, which has been theologically liberal for decades.

Not all United Methodist officials agree with the anti-Bush petition. “I think it’s a fringe group, a marginal group without

any standing other than the fact they happen to be one of eight million United Methodists,” the Rev. Mark Craig told the Dallas Morning News. An SMU trustee, Craig is pastor of the 13,000-member Highland Park United Methodist Church, where the Bushes are members.

Craig told the newspaper that the vast majority of his own congregation supports SMU’s hosting the library because it would help the school and the city. Craig called Bush “a good Methodist and anyone who says other than that is being grossly judgmental.”

The United Methodist Council of Bishops, including Bishop William Willimon of North Alabama, has repeatedly condemned the Iraq war. But Willimon told the Dallas Morning News that he, too, supports the Bush library. Willimon, formerly the dean of the chapel at Duke University (another United Methodist school), said he regretted Duke’s rejection of possibly hosting the presidential library of Richard Nixon, who had attended Duke’s law school. ❖



The Rev. William McElvaney has organized opposition to housing the Bush Presidential Library at SMU. (UMNS)

Action: Sign UMAction’s own petition, which offers support for SMU’s decision making process against its critics: www.ird-renew.org/bushlibrary.

Episcopal Church Rejects Biblical Authority and Sexual Morality; Decline Worsens; More Churches Depart

Eleven Episcopal churches in Virginia have voted to leave the Episcopal Church because of its rejection of the authority of Scripture, including blessings of same-sex unions and choosing an openly homosexual bishop. The congregations include some of Virginia’s largest and oldest Episcopal churches, including Truro Church and The Falls Church. Both have histories that date to the 1700s and are linked to George Washington.

These departing churches have placed themselves under the authority of faithful Anglican bishops in Africa.

Additionally, at least seven dioceses of the Episcopal Church have declined to acknowledge the authority of their denomination’s new liberal presiding bishop. At least 100 congregations nationwide have already left the Episcopal Church. Many, like the Virginia parishes, are facing court battles with their local dioceses about ownership of the church properties.

Meanwhile, many faithful Episcopalians in the United

States are hoping for the creation of a new faithful Anglican church in North America that is part of the global Anglican Communion. Bishops of the global Anglican Communion have asked the U.S. Episcopal Church to reconsider its anti-Biblical pro-homosexuality positions, but the denomination has refused. The Episcopal Church is now one of the fastest-shrinking denominations in America, having declined from three million to two million members over the last 40 years. ❖

ACTION: Talk with each person (clergy or lay member) in your church who will attend your UM Annual Conference in May or June 2007. Ask them to help the Annual Conference elect delegates to the UM 2008 General Conference who will NOT allow our UMC to follow the Episcopal Church’s disastrous course. See page 5.

Radical United Methodists Convene “Hearts on Fire” II

Pro-homosexuality activists in the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered in October for a day-long “Hearts on Fire” conference, invoking the controversial Fall 2005 gathering of the same name in Lake Junaluska, NC.

A brochure distributed at this latest conference instructed parents that it is important for sexually confused adolescents to “[d]evelop...sexual competence by becoming involved in sexual relationships.” The brochure came from the Parents Reconciling Network, a subsidiary of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), the caucus that organized both “Hearts on Fire” events.

Baltimore-Washington Bishop John Schol sent greetings to the conference. Troy Plummer, RMN’s national director, and a member of the Orthodox Catholic Church, has elsewhere praised Schol as “very supportive” of the RMN cause. The Baltimore-Washington Conference office provided free meeting space for the event, despite ¶612.19 of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, which prohibits any use of Annual Conference funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.” In response to UMAction’s reporting on the event, Bishop Schol released a statement affirming his support of this use of Annual Conference resources.

One workshop urged local churches to affiliate with RMN, defying the United Methodist Judicial Council’s prohibition against formal caucus affiliations. The featured plenary speaker was Jimmy Creech, who was praised for performing a homosexual



Jimmy Creech, who was defrocked for performing a same-sex union service. (IRD/John Lomperis)

union service, for which he was eventually defrocked.

Creech dismissed the expectation that United Methodist clergy follow the Bible and the *Discipline* as “not a life of faith.” Alternatively, he urged his audience to journey to “an uncharted future...with no roadmap.” He also shared his ad campaign which equates opponents of homosexuality with the Ku Klux Klan.

“Just a few” Methodist congregations are affiliated with RMN, Creech lamented. He deplored that United Methodism has “become more exclusive and restrictive” not only on homosexuality but on broader theological matters. Fellow liberals should not seek to “preserve unity that is based on injustice,” he asserted, and “the United Methodist Church might not survive this” conflict over homosexuality.

A workshop on “Transcending Gender” was led by Sally Sparks, who at the 2005 “Hearts on Fire” proudly declared that ten years ago he was a married “straight, conservative, evangelical, white male” and now is only still white, having undergone a sex change operation, and now relating to his wife as a lesbian. ❖

ACTION: Watch for any apparent violation of Discipline ¶612.19, which prohibits any use of Annual Conference funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality,” and report it to UMAction. Also, respectfully ask Bishop John Schol to uphold the Discipline in the Baltimore-Washington Conference: 100 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002, E-mail: bishopschol@bwcumc.org, Fax: 202-546-3186, Phone: 202-546-3110.

Survey: Most UMs Say They Are Conservative or Moderate

According to a recent survey by Ellison Research for LifeWay Christian Resources, roughly 90 percent of United Methodist laity and 70 percent of United Methodist clergy say they are conservative or moderate.

Over two-fifths (42.1 percent) of United Methodist laity self-identified as political conservatives, nearly another half (47.9 percent) self-identified as politically moderate, while only one-tenth self-identified as politically liberal.

About 40 percent of United Methodist clergy self-identified as politically conservative, while 30 percent said they were moderate, and 30 percent said they were liberal.

These survey results contrast with the pronouncements of most United Methodist agencies, which almost exclusively adopt politically liberal positions. ❖

ACTION: For more information about the survey, visit the Methodist News section of our website: www.ird-renew.org/umaction.

National Council of Churches Relies on Liberal Foundations...and United Methodists

For the first time in its history, the National Council of Churches (NCC) now gets more money from mostly liberal foundations and activist groups than from its 35 member denominations. The NCC is often controversial for its frequent political pronouncements from a liberal perspective.

But among its church supporters, The United Methodist Church is the NCC's largest donor. Thirty-six percent of the NCC's church funding comes from United Methodism, even though United Methodists comprise only 18 percent of the 45 million members of NCC-affiliated churches.

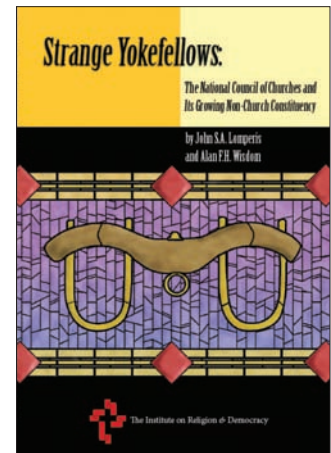
This is documented in a recent report from the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) called "Strange Yokefellows: The National Council of Churches and Its Growing Non-Church Constituency."

Only six of the top 16 funders of the National Council of Churches are actual church groups. Non-church funders include the Ford Foundation, the Sierra Club, AARP, and the philanthropies of billionaire liberal activists George Soros and Ted Turner.

The NCC's general secretary is the Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, a former Democratic congressman, who described the council's efforts to influence the 2004 elections as "work for regime change," echoing the slogans of Democratic activists. A 2005 fundraising

letter identified the NCC with "the religious left," lamented GOP election victories, and boasted that the council "works closely with MoveOn.org."

In Fall 2005, the United Methodist ecumenical agency sent a letter to the NCC protesting the "partisan political tone" of the letter. But annual United Methodist funding in the last completed fiscal year was increased by 10% to about \$650,000. ❖



ACTION: Read the IRD report "Strange Yokefellows" on NCC funding at www.ird-renew.org/yokefellows or by contacting UMAction. Then respectfully share your concerns about the NCC with the Rev. Larry Pickens, head of our church's General Commission on Christian Unity & Inter-religious Concerns. 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1300, New York, NY 10115. Fax: 212-749-3556. E-mail: lpickens@gccuic-umc.org.

Good News: United Methodist Theologian Defends Sanctity of Life

A prominent Methodist theologian vigorously denounced abortion in a sermon in Washington, DC.

"We are in a fight for life. In this fight there is a place for prophetic confrontation, for effective polemic, for appropriate protest, and for political engagement and action," said the Rev. Dr. Billy Abraham of Perkins School of Theology. He was speaking at a worship service organized by Lifewatch, an unofficial pro-life caucus within United Methodism.

The United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill in the nation's capital is a main center of religious support for abortion rights. There, the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and other mainline lobby groups oppose any proposed legal restrictions on abortion.

But every year, on the January anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision mandating legalized abortion, Lifewatch gets permission from the Board of Church and Society to rent the chapel and host a pro-life service.

In keeping with the day's events, which included the annual National March for Life, Abraham urged, "We cannot but be

activists in the opposition to abortion and the commitment to save life..." He called abortion as "one of the greatest evils of our time."

"We all know that there is a distinction between the baby and the mother; we all know on scientific grounds that everything essential to human life is there from conception; we all know that destroying defenseless, innocent human life is morally evil." And yet, Abraham said, pro-choice advocates assume that "...a baby in the womb is not ontologically different from a toenail."

Abraham pondered the language of choice employed by abortion activists. "They disguise the choice of destroying life in an abstract political freedom...pro-choice advocates really want to use the coercive power of the state to license the taking of innocent human life. They hijack the language of freedom and choice and turn it into a cloak for violence and death." Rather than leaving choice in the "evasive, quasi-political" dimension

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Time to Take Action at Your Annual Conference

Priority One: Each United Methodist Annual Conference in the United States will meet in May or June 2007 and will elect delegates to the UM General Conference that will meet in Fort Worth, TX, April 23-May 2, 2008. They will also elect delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference that will elect new bishops in July 2008.

Each delegate elected by your Annual Conference will be vitally important. Will the 2008 General Conference continued to our church's strong return to faithful, traditional Christianity? Or will there be a takeover by the far-left activists who reject basic Christian beliefs—causing United Methodism to divide and splinter as the Episcopal Church is now doing?


Please talk now with everyone you know who will have a vote in your Annual Conference. This includes each clergy person and each lay member of Annual Conference from your local church.

Please ask them: vote only for delegates to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences who will strongly defend the traditional Christian faith, including the authority of Scripture, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and Christian sexual morality—and who will vote to get the UMC out of partisan politics and focus on making

disciples of Christ.

Priority Two: *UMAction* has prepared many sample resolutions for local church members like you to submit to you Annual Conference session in May or June 2007. Our resolutions address such important topics as the National Council of Churches, homosexuality, abortion, human cloning, Just War teaching, radical Islam and political pronouncements by our church officials. They offer a simple, concrete opportunity for grassroots United Methodists to advance the renewal of our denomination. Several of these resolutions were almost immediately denounced by the radical RMN caucus.

To view these sample resolutions, go to the "2007 Sample Resolutions" section of the *UMAction* menu on our website (www.ird-renew.org) or contact us at the phone number on this mailing.

Please act quickly! The deadlines for submission are fast-approaching and in some annual conferences have already passed. Guidelines vary from conference to conference, so you should contact your own conference office for details on how to submit a resolution. To get that contact information, talk to your pastor or go to www.umd.org and select "OUR CHURCH," then "Directory," and then "Annual Conferences." 

Be sure to visit WWW.IRD-RENEW.ORG/REGISTER to sign up for E-mail updates!

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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YOUR OPINION, PLEASE!

Do you support Southern Methodist University's decision to host a George W. Bush Presidential Library?

- Yes!
- No!
- 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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Briefing

Spring 2007


The Institute on Religion & Democracy
1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601
Washington, DC 20005-2601

202-682-4131
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that he accuses pro-choice groups of inhabiting, Abraham called it a question: "Of course there is a choice to be made; and the crucial choice in the case of abortion is whether we deliberately destroy a human life."

His sermon delved into the mandate of Hebrews 12:14, explaining how Christians may simultaneously "pursue peace" while being faithful to the call "to a life of holiness." "Holiness," Dr. Abraham contended, is "the call to be different.... Essential to that difference is a resolute commitment to life over death when it comes to abortion. Equally essential to being different is that we do all we can to take care of the women who are tempted to opt for abortion." 

ACTION: For more information on strengthening a pro-life voice within our UMC, contact Lifewatch: P. O. Box 306, Cottleville, MO 63338; www.lifewatch.org.

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