

# UMAction

## Briefing



### African UM Bishop Calls U.S. Church to Biblical Faithfulness

**B**ishop David Yemba of the Central Congo Area has urged The United Methodist Church to be faithful to Scripture and prevent division. He was interviewed by American Family Radio while he was in the United States for the spring meeting of the Council of Bishops.

During the interview, Bishop Yemba told of the growing number of United Methodists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He said new democratic institutions and relative peace in his once war-torn country have helped spur church growth.

However, Bishop Yemba warned that The United Methodist Church can have unity only if it is “governed by the authority of the Scripture.” He said the UMC is not yet as divided as the Episcopal Church USA but will become so if its U.S. leaders are not faithful to the Bible.

Any denomination that is not faithful to God’s Word will fall apart, he cautioned.

“I believe and I continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the [United Methodist] Church to the right direction,” Yemba said, explaining that the “right direction” is “rooted, built on the truth of the Scripture.”

Yemba warned that African United Methodists are disturbed when they hear that UM leaders in America are promoting homosexual “marriage” and other unbiblical social causes.

“To be the church is really to be governed by the Scripture, [by] the authority of the Scripture,” Yemba said. “So some of these issues, when we hear and talk about them, the main question is: how faithful are we to the Scripture?”

United Methodist clergy would be wise to pattern their ministry after John Wesley and draw their inspiration from him, according to Yemba.

About one-third of all United

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Bishop David Yemba and his wife Henrietta (left), Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama (right).



### Fall 2007

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## United Methodist Minister Has Sex Change Surgery

United Methodism's Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference announced in May that a female minister, after surgery, now professes to be male. The Rev. Ann Gordon has legally changed her name to Drew Phoenix and publicly announced her sex change at the 2007 annual conference session in Washington, D.C.

Baltimore-Washington Bishop John Schol was consulted by Gordon/Phoenix before the sex change procedure. He reappointed Phoenix to St. John's Church in Baltimore after the sex change.

Phoenix is believed to be the first United Methodist clergy person who openly had a sex change procedure and then appointed to a UM church.

During a closed clergy session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, two clergy requested "rulings of law" about the propriety of a transsexual clergy person. The issue will go before the United Methodist Judicial Council at its meeting in October.

Bishop Schol, in defending his reappointment of Phoenix, explained: "The Cabinet and myself have done everything to ensure that the *Discipline* is being carried out."

The *UM Book of Discipline* does not specifically address the issue of sex change operations. ❖



The Rev. Drew Phoenix (who was, until recently, the Rev. Ann Gordon). (UMNS)

**ACTION:** In contrast to Bishop Schol's acceptance of sexual identity change, *Transforming Congregations* offers healing ministry for many kinds of sexual brokenness, based on traditional Christian teachings about gender and sexuality. Contact *Transforming Congregations* at: PO Box 580, Millsboro, DE 19966; [www.transformingcong.org](http://www.transformingcong.org).

## Annual Conferences Adopt Controversial Stances

United Methodist annual conference sessions in May and June adopted stances on many issues. For example:

- The Arkansas Conference called for a major study of the reasons for our denomination's loss of 3 million members in the United States.
- The Missouri Conference urged the 2008 General Conference to continue the UMC's support for "laws in civil society defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman" (*Book of Discipline*, par. 161C).
- The Western Pennsylvania Conference called for its churches to celebrate a "Sanctity of Life Sunday."
- The South Indiana Conference passed a *UMAction* resolution calling for greater support of ministries such as *Transforming Congregations*, which provides Christian healing for persons struggling with sexual sin, including homosexual behavior.
- The East Ohio Conference rejected a resolution demanding "the prompt removal of all U.S. troops from Iraq." North Carolina took similar action.
- The Kentucky Conference offered prayers for United Methodist Judicial Council President James Holsinger on his

nomination to be U.S. Surgeon General. The more liberal Pacific Northwest and California-Nevada Conferences opposed Holsinger's nomination because he has upheld the church's teachings on sexuality.

- Surprisingly, the liberal-dominated Kansas East Conference defeated a motion to oppose locating President Bush's library at Southern Methodist University.

Meanwhile, in more liberal actions:

- The Minnesota Conference adding "domestic partner benefits" to its health plan for the benefit of homosexual and non-married heterosexual partners.
- At the Southwest Texas Annual Conference, Bishop Joel Martinez welcomed Troy Plummer, the non-Methodist leader of the pro-homosexuality Reconciling Ministries Network.
- The New York Annual Conference endorsed a resolution condemning IRD and *UMAction*. ❖

**ACTION:** Submit resolutions now for your own Annual Conference next Spring. Let your voice be heard! Check [www.ird-renew.org](http://www.ird-renew.org) for sample resolutions.

## Five Annual Conferences Urge UM Withdrawal from Pro-Abortion Rights Group

At their June meetings, the South Indiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, Holston, and Northwest Texas annual conferences of The United Methodist Church adopted resolutions calling on the UM 2008 General Conference to withdraw United Methodist agencies from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

The UM Board of Church and Society (GBCS) and the United Methodist Women's Division both belong to RCRC, which defends the legality of all abortions.

These concerns were stated in one or more of the five resolutions:

- RCRC supports legalized abortion in all circumstances, in contrast to Biblical and historic Christian teaching about human life.
- The United Methodist Church opposes partial-birth abortion (*Book of Discipline*, par. 161J) but the RCRC defends it.
- RCRC opposes parental notification and opposes limits on taxpayer funding for abortion.

- RCRC does not represent the diverse views of local United Methodists.
- RCRC leaders publicly oppose the United Methodist biblical stand that homosexual behavior is “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The Mississippi Conference's resolution noted that an RCRC publication on “What the Bible Really Says About Sex” argues at length that, “It is, at best, inaccurate to use Scripture to condemn committed, consensual same-gender sexual relationships.”

Four more annual conferences—Arkansas, Louisiana, Memphis, and North Georgia—adopted resolutions in 2005 and 2006 stating serious concerns about RCRC. These nine annual conferences include more than one-and-a-half million United Methodists.

**ACTION:** Learn more about RCRC's abortion rights activism at: [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org).

## United Methodist Relief Agency Partners with Muslim Aid

The British-based Muslim Aid and the significantly better-funded United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) announced this summer that they are creating “a landmark partnership to build peace and help relieve poverty.” This proposal for \$15 million of joint projects builds on past cooperation between the two groups in offering relief to tsunami survivors.

Both groups declare their commitment to humanitarian goals and avoiding any religious discrimination in their relief work. But Muslim Aid is much more open about its religious faith than UMCOR, which heavily depends on U.S. Government grants. UMCOR's statement of “Our Values” does not mention God or Christianity.

In contrast, Muslim Aid cites the Koran, Allah, and Muhammad. A significant part of Muslim Aid's work is helping poor Muslims fulfill their religious duty of animal sacrifice on the Eid-ul-Adha Islamic holiday.

Although “a non-political humanitarian charity,” Muslim Aid appears to share much of the politics of UMCOR's parent

body, the UM General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). During last year's Israel-Hezbollah war, Muslim Aid accused Israel of “targeting unarmed civilians” in “a naked act of aggression.” But Muslim Aid had no direct criticism for the Hezbollah terrorist organization or its Syrian and Iranian sponsors.

Muslim Aid also sponsors bicyclists in the London-to-Jerusalem “Peace Cycle” program to protest Israeli “injustice” toward Palestinians. Other political causes promoted by Muslim Aid include international debt cancellation, “trade justice,” and demands “for an end to poverty and prevention of climate change.”

**Muslim Aid is much more open about its religious faith than UMCOR, which heavily depends on U.S. Government grants.**

**ACTION:** Do you believe UMCOR should openly say that its good work is done in the name of Jesus Christ? What do you think about UMCOR's partnership with Muslim Aid? Please share your thoughts with UMCOR: 475 Riverside Drive, Room 330, New York, NY 10115. [umcor@gbgm-umc.org](mailto:umcor@gbgm-umc.org).



## UM Women's Division Joins Anti-Israel Rally

Noisy pro-Palestinian activists rallied outside the U.S. Capitol on June 10 for a demonstration against Israel. The United Methodist Women's Division endorsed this demonstration. One emcee said the rally was part of an "international day of protests ... for boycotts, sanctions, and divestment" against Israel, whose destruction many participants openly favored.

The rally was organized by United for Peace and Justice and the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. Member organizations of the latter include the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), the United Methodist Women's Division, and the far-left Methodist Federation for Social Action.

The GBGM routinely gives grants to the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. Its 11-member Steering Committee includes GBGM official David Wildman.

United Methodist Women's Division President Kyung Za Yim declared, "We are here to demand that the U.S. end its military, economic, and corporate support of Israel's illegal occupation."

Yim inaccurately portrayed The United Methodist Church as a pacifist denomination. The *UM Social Principles* acknowledge that war may be preferable to "unchecked aggression, tyranny and genocide." ❖



The UM Women's Division participated in the pro-Palestinian rally. (IRD/John Lomperis)

**ACTION:** For an alternative to the politicized UM Women's Division, contact the RENEW Network for United Methodist Women: P.O. Box 889, 133 Clarkesville Street, Cornelia, GA 30531; [www.renewnetwork.org](http://www.renewnetwork.org).

## UM Lobby Office Files Suit Over Methodist Building Trust Fund

Bishop James Swanson of Knoxville told the April meeting of the UM General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) that the Board has filed a lawsuit seeking court approval of the GBCS's use of the Methodist Building Endowment Trust Fund.

The trust document, signed in 1965, restricts the trust fund's entire principal and income, including all income from the valuable Methodist Building on Capitol Hill, exclusively for "work in the areas of temperance and alcohol problems." But the GBCS is asking the court to allow the GBCS to continue spending the trust income on a wide range of political lobbying.

The GBCS, which functions as a United Methodist lobby office in Washington, D.C., spends about \$5 million a year, including about \$2 million from the Methodist Building Endowment Trust Fund. GBCS lobbies against tax cuts, school choice, and U.S. military actions, while supporting homosexual rights, abortion rights, socialized medicine, a larger welfare state, and liberalized immigration policies.

Bishop Swanson explained that the GBCS is asking the court to retroactively validate this past broad use of the restricted trust fund and also to effectively nullify the restrictions for the future.

Several United Methodists have become intervenors in this lawsuit, opposing the GBCS position.

In June, the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, home to nearly 300,000 United Methodists, adopted a resolution accusing the GBCS of having "not followed either the letter of the [Methodist Building Endowment] trust or the spirit of its founders as it has expended a large portion of the funds from the trust (approximately \$2 million annually) on items and programs not in accordance with the requirements of the trust." The resolution noted the importance of confronting alcohol problems and urged the GBCS "to honor the guidelines of the *Discipline* and the purpose stated in the trust and use restricted funds for the work on temperance and alcohol related problems." ❖

**ACTION:** You can learn more about this issue by visiting [www.ird-renew.org/umbuilding](http://www.ird-renew.org/umbuilding). Urge GBCS General Secretary Jim Winkler to listen to the Western North Carolina Conference, withdraw the lawsuit, obey the trust restrictions, and use the trust fund for much-needed work on alcohol problems. GBCS, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002. [jwinkler@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:jwinkler@umc-gbcs.org).

# UM Seminary Promotes “Queering the Church”

In April, United Methodist-affiliated Boston School of Theology hosted and sponsored a conference on “Queering the Church: Changing Ecclesial Structures.” The event was promoted by Reconciling Ministries Network, the main pro-homosexuality caucus within United Methodism. Conference speakers advocated “hard-core queer theology,” “triadic unions,” “erotic relation with the divine,” and the “queerness of God,” in contrast to United Methodist biblical teachings about sexual behavior.

The Rev. Robert Goss, author of *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto*, claimed that Jesus Christ was “sexually intimate with his male disciples.” He boasted that his Metropolitan congregation stages “gay passion plays with transgender characters, and queer nativity scenes.” He denounced United Methodism because it affirms biblical sexual standards.

Episcopal theologian Carter Heyward told of finding liberation from “heterosexism” through “the hot desire of a queer God who we incarnate and share flesh with.”

Addressing the pro-homosexuality lobby within mainline denominations, Professor Mark Jordan of United Methodist-affiliated Emory University lamented, “We’ve played much too nice

with the churches.” As one of United Methodism’s 13 seminaries, Boston School of Theology receives about one million dollars each year from the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) portion of United Methodist apportionments.

UMAction’s “Reform Agenda for United Methodists” calls for these reforms: “All UM agency staff persons and UM seminary faculty and administrators shall honestly affirm classical Christianity as stated in the historic Christian ecumenical creeds... The UMC shall uphold for all persons the traditional Christian standard of sexual morality as taught in Scripture: fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness. All staff persons of UM agencies and UM seminaries shall uphold this standard in teaching and practice. The UMC shall defend and strengthen the married, two-parent family and marriage as a Biblically-sanctioned lifelong covenant between one man and one woman.”



**ACTION:** Respectfully ask Dean Ray Hart why this UM seminary hosted this conference: Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. rayhart@bu.edu.

Be sure to visit [WWW.IRD-RENEW.ORG/REGISTER](http://WWW.IRD-RENEW.ORG/REGISTER) to sign up for E-mail updates!

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## YOUR OPINION, PLEASE!

Should the UM 2008 General Conference withdraw United Methodist Church agencies from the pro-abortion rights Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)?

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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Fall 2007


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Methodists now live outside the United States, mostly in Africa. There are nearly 1 million United Methodists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Yemba is one of three UM bishops.

Yemba was elected Bishop of the Central Congo Area in February 2005. His ministry is centered in Kinshasa, the capital city. Before becoming a bishop, he taught theology at the UM-affiliated Africa University in Zimbabwe, where he was founding dean of that department. 

**ACTION:** Thank Bishop David Yemba for his leadership and ministry. E-mail: [dhyemba@yahoo.com](mailto:dhyemba@yahoo.com).

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