

# faith & freedom

*Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness*

February 2008

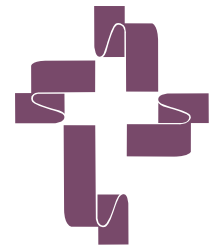
A photograph of a Black man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, speaking at a clear acrylic podium. He has his hands raised in a gesture of emphasis. The background is a plain wall with a framed abstract painting on the left.

## African Methodists Call for Renewal and Transformation

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- ▶ NCC Receives New, Liberal Social Creed
- ▶ Israel = South Africa: The Dubious Analogy that Drives Pro-Palestinian Church Activists





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# African Vitality

by James W. Tonkowich

Last December, Gene Robinson, the Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, said regarding his upcoming “marriage” to his male partner: “I always wanted to be a June bride.” “Always”? Really?

That bizarre gender-bending—all too common today—is a symptom of a deeper spiritual malady in the churches in America. The problem is not homosexuality—or any other kind of sexuality. Rather there is a crisis of authority. We live in a culture that has despaired of knowing what Francis Schaeffer called “true truth”—that is, those things that are true for all people at all times and are not subject to personal whims, idiosyncratic spiritualities masquerading as Christianity, and “every wind of doctrine.”

The mainline churches in America have been infected by this malady in a significant way; the evangelical churches to a lesser extent, though the signs are not promising. But the African churches are a different story.

In October 2007, a group of African United Methodist bishops and other leaders issued a document entitled “Recipe for Renewal and Transformation of Global United Methodism in the New Quadrennium (2009-2012): Declaration to 2008 General Conference” (see p. 22).

In their declaration the African leaders write regarding marriage:

Faithfulness to the Word of God requires that we... declare: That God created sexuality for lifelong marriage between man and woman **only** (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-24); therefore any attempt by the Church or some of its members to embrace or accept and practice other forms of union is to deny God’s omnipotence and omniscience, and hence suggest that the Almighty God was in error when he instituted marriage between one man and one woman for life. (Emphasis in original)

The critical phrase is “Faithfulness to the Word of God requires that we ... declare,” for everything rises or falls on the authority of Scripture and our faithfulness in submitting to that authority.

Will Africa be the bulwark for orthodoxy that we desperately need? A bulwark not only for United Methodists in the West, but for Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics, and evangelicals as well? If so, it will not be the first time.

In his new book *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, theologian and IRD board member Thomas Oden argues that what we know as Christian orthodoxy was forged during the first Christian centuries not in the Middle East or in Europe, but in Africa. Augustine, Athanasius, Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Anthony, Pope Victor, and others were the exegetes, theologians, and activists whose efforts resulted in the Nicene Creed, the Definition of Chalcedon,

and the other works of the great ecumenical councils. Oden writes:

Global Christianity has benefited incalculably from these meticulous works of African exegetes and moral theologians.... Through their debate the ecumenical councils were prepared to confirm universally patterns of Christology and triune reasoning that were first defined in Africa.

The vitality and influence of African Christianity was so strong that, for example, as Oden notes, “There is little doubt that Irish Christianity sustained strong African and monastic motifs in its piety, hagiography, and temperament.”

And African Christianity remains vital and influential.

“What the Holy Spirit is manifestly doing in Africa today,” writes Oden, “is very different from engineering institutional mergers through negotiation or strategic planning”—the very thing that is breaking down in the contrived, bureaucratic ecumenism in the West. “Rather, through grace the Spirit is quietly awakening faith. That faith is surely manifesting itself in the works of love, for love is what faith does.” This is the true and ancient ecumenism to which African Christians made such substantial contributions many centuries ago.

Many of the same modern developments can be seen in the other churches of the Global South and across Asia, but historically Africa has a unique relationship to the Church catholic. African intellectuals built the framework for much of what we still define as orthodox.

The United Methodist document concludes:

When the Baby Jesus was threatened by a vengeful King Herod, the Holy Family fled to Africa for sanctuary (Matthew 2: 14-15). Today, the Church in Africa offers itself as a sanctuary for God’s Word for the renewing of his Church around the world.

In the midst of the spiritual chaos that characterizes the Church in the West, this is an offer we need to welcome, looking again to the spiritual and theological vitality of African Christianity—modern and ancient. 📖

*Jim Tonkowich*



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## International Briefs

### New Global Christian Forum Meets in Kenya

Church leaders from 72 nations gathered in Limuru, Kenya, November 6–9 for a new Global Christian Forum. “We have here what might be described as a new Pentecost,” said the Rev. Cecil Robeck, a U.S. Assemblies of God minister and professor at Fuller Seminary in California.

Prominent leaders in attendance at the forum included the Rev. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches; Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Dr. James Legget, Chairman of the Pentecostal World Fellowship; the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and Dr. Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

A joint message from the participants explained: “Our desire has been to create an open space wherein the representatives from a broad range of Christian communities and inter-church organizations, who confess the triune God and Jesus as perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect and to address common challenges together.”

The Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America told Ecumenical News International that the forum was convened “not with the view of creating complicated structures, but rather with the view of maintaining the fellowship of conversation and of Christian hope.” Speaking on behalf of the Vatican, Bishop Farrell affirmed, “Every good thing that leads in a positive way to rediscovering our unity in Christ is something good, something that we will try to collaborate with, something that we will want to be a partner in.”

### Venezuelan Bishops Help Defeat Chávez’s Bid to Enhance Power

The Venezuelan Catholic bishops played a part in rallying voters to defeat President Hugo Chávez’s bid to consolidate his power. Chávez’s proposed package of constitutional changes would have empowered the Venezuelan president to appoint directly many formerly independent national and local officials, to install a “socialist economy,” and to seek re-election for an indefinite number of terms.

In an October statement entitled “Called to Live in Freedom,” the bishops criticized Chávez’s proposals as “morally unacceptable in the light of the social doctrine of the church.”

“The alarm bells should not only be ringing in our neighboring countries, but Venezuelans must wake up to face the prospect of constitutional reform,” said Archbishop Roberto Lückert of Coro, Vice President of the Venezuelan Bishops Conference.

Chávez has described the narrow defeat of his proposal as a “pyrrhic victory” for his opponents, threatening to enact the changes by other means. Archbishop Lückert has urged Venezuelans to fight such an attempt by electing strong state and municipal officials. 🗳️

“Some would have said that this event was not possible, but here we are,” Kobia told the more than 240 conference participants. He acknowledged the past hesitancy of evangelicals to embrace the “social gospel” often associated with the WCC, but noted an increased activism on issues such as global warming. “It is time for Pentecostals and evangelicals to clarify where they stand on issues of social engagement,” the WCC head declared. 🗳️

### Christianity on the Rise among Youth in Nepal

The historically Hindu nation of Nepal

is experiencing a surge in the number of Christians, particularly among its young people, according to a report by Ecumenical News International.

In 1991, the number of Christians in the mountainous nation of 29 million people was estimated to be about 50,000. Current estimates report over 800,000 Christians in nearly 6,000 individual congregations.

Nepalese constitutional reforms in the 1990s established a multi-party democratic system. While retaining long-time bans against religious conversions, the new constitution also eased some restrictions on religious practice. Police

Andrew Alvarez/AFP Photo



**PEACEFUL PROTEST** A Venezuelan Catholic woman protests against the Chávez regime in a solemn march. Catholic bishops played a significant role in the defeat of constitutional “reforms” Chávez desired, which would have removed presidential term limits.



have since stopped actively prosecuting Christians engaged in evangelism. The resulting growth of Christianity has been spearheaded by the nation's youth, who have been successful in winning older family members to the Christian faith.

"I am happy I could persuade my family members to become Christians," said Raju Lama, who converted to Christianity from Buddhism in 1989 at the age of 16. Ten years following his conversion, Lama's parents became Christians. Lama now heads the United Christian Youth Fellowship in Katmandu Valley. "It is the youth who are at the center of the growth of the church [in Nepal]," said Lama.

"Youth are providing a vital link in a flourishing of Christianity," agreed Pastor Simon Gurung, President of the National Christian Council of Nepal. Gurung was twice imprisoned for the preaching of Christianity prior to the reforms of the 1990s.

Despite the large increase in the

number of Christians, however, Gurung warned that without institutional improvements, the growth of Christianity among the Nepalese youth could stagnate. "Unless we begin developing social service centers, their enthusiasm could fade away in the long run." 📖

### British Policy Organization Urges Downplaying Christmas

The Institute for Public Policy Research, a political think tank in England associated with the ruling Labour Party, is recommending that Great Britain de-emphasize the celebration of Christmas in an attempt to promote multiculturalism. According to the *Daily Mail*, the institute proposes that minority cultures and religions be afforded greater public recognition in an attempt at "even-handedness."

"We can no longer define ourselves as a Christian nation, nor an especially religious one in any sense," argues the institute. "The empire is gone, church

attendance is at historically low levels, and the Second World War is inexorably slipping from memory." It suggests, "If we are going to continue as a nation to mark Christmas—and it would be very hard to expunge it from our national life even if we wanted to—then public organizations should mark other religious festivals, too."

The report also suggests recasting existing oaths and public ceremonies to make them more secular. It refers to the presence of Anglican bishops in the British House of Lords as an "anachronism" that ought to be eliminated.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a Conservative Party spokeswoman, criticized the report: "You don't build community cohesion by throwing out history and denying the fundamental contribution Christianity has played and does play in our nation. As a British Muslim I can see that, so why others can't just stagger me." 📖

### Pope, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Warn of the Decline of Christianity in Europe

The spiritual leaders of the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches have criticized the growing secularization of Europe, warning that Christians face obsolescence by abandoning their historic teachings and traditions.

"Modern Europe will not create a new post-Christian culture and civilization, but will simply vanish from history," predicted Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II in an address on December 5. "Losing their Christian roots, the people of Europe will sign their own death warrant."

In his second encyclical, *Saved by Hope*, Pope Benedict XVI criticized the atheistic philosophies that took root in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Examining the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Marxism, Benedict concluded that the humanistic idea of creating salvation on earth apart from God is "both presumptuous and intrinsically false."

"[Karl Marx's] real error is materialism," wrote Benedict. "Man, in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and it is not possible to redeem him from the outside by creating a favorable economic environment."

"It is no accident that this idea has led to the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice," according to the Pope. "A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope." 📖

Andreas Solaro/AFP



**AGAINST ATHEISM** Pope Benedict XVI and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II criticized the secularist culture in Europe, calling the continent to return to its Christian roots.

## Church News

### Anarchist Collective Helps Save Baltimore Church

Fighting to keep its doors open, a struggling United Methodist congregation in Baltimore has partnered with a collective of radical anarchists in a space-sharing agreement. The tiny St. John's United Methodist Church, still not fully restored after a 1981 fire, now hosts meetings of Red Emma's Collective, a self-described anarchist group. Payments from the anarchists have allowed the church to continue paying its utility bills. Red Emma's speakers at the church have included a former Black Panther imprisoned for armed robbery and an official of the Northeast Federation of Anarchists-Communists.

"That a United Methodist congregation would have to rely on Red Emma's anarchist collective to survive speaks to the complete failure of liberal theology to attract a vibrant membership," commented UMAction Director Mark Tooley.

St. John's garnered attention earlier this year when its pastor, Ann Gordon, announced her change of gender identity from female to male, taking on the name Drew Phoenix. The change ignited controversy over transsexual pastors in the United Methodist Church.

In October, the United Methodist Judicial Council declined to intervene in Phoenix's re-appointment to St. John's, citing the lack of a formal complaint against the transsexual minister. The denomination's highest court said Phoenix still was qualified for a church appointment. The court said it was not ruling on the permissibility of transsexuality among the clergy because that specific issue was not before the court. The 2008 General Conference meeting in Fort Worth, TX, is expected to take up the issue.

"Supporters of St. Paul's transsexual pastor, including the local bishop, have praised the radical church's supposedly

### Court Rules against Public Funding for Prison Fellowship Program

The state of Iowa cannot fund an evangelical Christian prison ministry program, according to a federal appeals court ruling in December. Doing so would advance or endorse religion, said the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in a unanimous decision.

The ruling has been greeted favorably by both sides of the dispute. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State praised the end of public funding for the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) at Newton Correctional Facility. Conversely, Mark Earley of Prison Fellowship Ministries, sponsor of the initiative, was pleased that the appeals court found that the initiative itself is constitutional, provided that it is paid for with private funds. The court also overturned an earlier ruling that Prison Fellowship would have to repay \$1.5 million to the state of Iowa.

Prison Fellowship operates privately funded IFI programs in five other states. It has highlighted the program as effective in reducing recidivism by helping inmates turn their lives around.

Americans United has slammed the program as religious indoctrination. "You simply cannot give government funds to a religious group for its evangelism program," said Lynn. 🗣️

Andrew Council/KRT



**WALLED OFF** Barry Lynn, President of Americans United for Separation of Church and State celebrated the ruling that Iowa could not fund the Prison Fellowship program, which Lynn criticized as religious indoctrination.

thriving congregational life," said Tooley. "But in fact, the small congregation's preference for identity politics and radical causes has been a poor substitute for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why are churches that boast most loudly about their 'inclusivity' almost always dying?" 🗣️

### Sojourners Leader Learns to Forgive

Religious left figure Jim Wallis often speaks in terms of peacemaking and reconciliation, but occasionally his temper catches up with him. In a November

posting on his "God's Politics" blog, the *Sojourners* editor characteristically railed against the Bush administration. Treating erroneous intelligence about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as proof that the administration deceived the American people to satisfy its supposed bloodlust, Wallis contemplated the appropriate punishment for President Bush and his aides.

"If they are found guilty of these high crimes, I believe they should spend the rest of their lives in prison—after offering their repentance to every American family who has lost a son, daughter, father,

mother, brother, or sister,” advocated Wallis. “Deliberately lying about going to war should not be forgiven.”

Wallis’ furious condemnation was greeted with puzzlement by some supporters, who in subsequent blog postings pointed out that the heart of the Gospel is forgiveness. Later that week, Wallis posted an apology and volunteered that he meant to say that any Bush officials found guilty in a “legal context” should not be pardoned.

“I do indeed believe in God’s grace and forgiveness for anyone who repents,” clarified Wallis. 📖

### **Global Warming Skeptics Face Divine Judgment, Suggests NAE’s Cizik**

Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), spoke November 18 at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Cizik expressed frustration with fellow evangelicals who disagree with him about global warming, as well as confidence that his own perspective would soon be vindicated.

The NAE official relayed an encounter with Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS), who had questioned the efficacy of unilateral American measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Cizik had replied: “Well, Sam, God isn’t going to ask you whether China or India did their part. He’s going to ask you did you do your part, and he’s going to hold you to a higher standard than even me.”

Cizik commented, “And frankly, I would wish that the White House and even the President of the United States would get that picture, that he would be held accountable.” He added an ominous warning, borrowing words from the letter to the Hebrews (10:31) about the damnation of those who forsake the faith: “It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Cizik compared politicians who are not environmentally active to the Persian

King Darius, portrayed as indecisive and malleable in the Old Testament book of Daniel. Just as Darius was forced to choose between abiding by the letter of his kingdom’s law and saving his friend Daniel’s life, the NAE official stated, “I would say, tragically, until we see some grudging admission here by our own leaders, that we have a lot of Dariuses in this town that want to save their friends.”

Indulging in some accusatory speculation about the motives of these politicians, Cizik asked, “And who are some of their friends? Some of their friends are in the big utility, oil, and gas industries ... and in saving their friends they sacrifice not only the empire, but also the entire planet.” Cizik did not acknowledge that some politicians might have principled reasons for opposing steep government-mandated reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. 📖

### **Lesbian Ordained in ELCA**

The 4.8-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

has ordained its first lesbian pastor since last summer’s ELCA Assembly advised church officials to “demonstrate restraint in disciplining” violators of the celibacy requirement for gay clergy.

Jen Rude, 27, was ordained at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Lake View, IL, which made her its associate pastor in a November 17 ceremony.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Rude’s ordination allows her to offer the sacraments. But she still will not be on the official roll of ELCA clergy. Instead, her name will be added to the list of gay clergy ordained by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, an independent group that supports homosexual Lutheran clergy and the congregations that call them.

Rude, the daughter and granddaughter of Lutheran pastors, will not vow a lifetime of celibacy because she considers the rule discriminatory. Her bishop in the Chicago Metropolitan Synod was not present at her ordination service. But he has stated his agreement with her dissent against the celibacy rule. 📖

## **Outrageous Quotes**

**“There are not many churches that would reach out to a bunch of crazy anarchists, and there are not many anarchists that would reach out to a bunch of crazy Methodists.”**

– Kate Khatib, a member of a group of self-described anarchists who run Red Emma’s, a nonprofit bookstore and cafe in downtown Baltimore. Red Emma’s has partnered with St. John’s United Methodist Church (whose pastor, Drew Phoenix, recently underwent a sex change procedure) to rent the church building to house its expanding bookstore.

**“Mary, Red Bull is an energy drink which gives you wings. How else could the heavenly host keep it up?”**

– A “fourth wise man,” giving the baby Jesus the gift of a popular energy drink in an advertisement appearing on Polish television. A Roman Catholic bishop in Warsaw has objected, calling “such exploitation of Christmas traditions ... scandalous.”

# NCC Receives New, Liberal Social Creed

by Alan F.H. Wisdom and Ralph A. Webb

**T**he National Council of Churches (NCC) received a new “Social Creed for the 21st Century” at its November 6–8 General Assembly in Woodbridge, NJ. The council is promoting the new creed, scheduled for public release in 2008, as a successor to “a prophetic ‘Social Creed’” adopted a century earlier by the Federal Council of Churches, a forerunner of today’s NCC.

The new creed proclaims “a message of hope for a fearful time.” That hopeful message, according to the NCC, is “a vision of a society that shares more and

consumes less, seeks compassion over suspicion and equality over domination, and finds security in joined hands rather than massed arms.” What follows is a list of 20 broad social

**The new creed is a list of 20 broad social and political goals that reads like a laundry list of primarily progressive causes.**

and political goals that reads like a laundry list of primarily progressive causes.

There is a call for “an end to the death penalty.” There is a demand for “binding covenants to reduce global warming.” Blessings are pronounced upon “alternative energy sources and public transportation.” Censure is directed at “greed in economic life.” The United Nations must be “strengthened,” according to the new NCC social creed.

On the other hand, the creed makes no mention of any causes usually identified with more conservative Christian viewpoints. There are no concerns expressed about burdensome taxes at home, rogue regimes abroad,

the abortion of unborn children, or the erosion of marriage as a fundamental social institution.

## **Statist and Utopian Solutions**

The 2008 NCC creed avoids prescribing detailed legislative solutions to the problems it addresses. Nevertheless, the creed’s principles are often described in ways that clearly look to the state for solutions to public ills.

For example, churches are urged to work not just for education and health care, but for “public education for all, and universal, affordable and accessible healthcare.” Private education and private healthcare—even when offered by the churches themselves—are apparently not satisfactory to the NCC. It instead seems to place its trust in “universal” systems that could be operated only by the government.

Some of the domestic goals in the creed seem utopian. For example, the creed insists on “[e]mployment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work.” Moreover, all workers are to enjoy “time and benefits to enable full family life.”

Everyone would agree that this situation would be ideal. But here’s the rub: Who will guarantee “employment for all”? Who will determine what is a “living wage”? Who will decide how much time and benefits are required for “full family life”? The NCC would likely turn to the government to settle all these questions.

The 2008 social creed seems unfriendly to private property and free enterprise. Its disparagement of “greed in economic life” comes out of a leftist lexicon that rejects the profit motive as inherently unjust. The demand



for “[t]ax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor” rests upon an underlying quasi-socialist worldview. Forced redistribution of wealth (as opposed to giving the poor opportunities to grow their own wealth) can be justified only on one of two assumptions: Either all wealth belongs ultimately to the government, and government may distribute or redistribute the wealth as it sees fit; or rich people must have accumulated their wealth unjustly, and therefore the government is entitled to punish them with high taxes.

The creed’s foreign policy is as utopian as its domestic policy. It would commit the churches to “a culture of peace and freedom that embraces non-violence.” Peacemaking would be pursued “through multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateral force.” Nations would undertake “[n]uclear disarmament and redirection of military spending to more peaceful and productive uses.”

All of these phrases have a distinctively pacifist ring—despite the fact that the vast majority of the council’s church constituency is not pacifist, but stands within the just war tradition of mainstream Christianity. Nowhere is there an acknowledgment that force, or the threat or force, may sometimes be necessary to preserve or restore peace and justice.

### Mixed Messages Concerning Theology

The fact that the NCC has a 700-word social creed is telling when juxtaposed with the absence of a theological creed. The only agreed doctrine among the member communions is a single line from the preamble to the NCC constitution. There, the council is described as a “community of Christian communions, which, in response to the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, as Savior and Lord.”

One would think that a body pursuing Christian unity might be able to affirm more common theology than that single line. And one would expect the NCC’s member communions to find much greater agreement on basic Christian teachings (e.g., the sort of affirmations contained in the Apostles’ and

Nicene Creeds) than on political questions such as tax rates and defense spending. But, sadly, the priorities are reversed in the NCC.

A 2006 NCC background paper asserts that the new creed “is more explicitly theological than the 1908 statement.” That assertion is true, but less meaningful than it might seem at first glance. The 1908 creed contained only one reference to God.

By contrast, the 2008 creed uses theological beliefs as a framework for its social goals. It is Trinitarian in its structure: between its introductory and concluding paragraphs, one paragraph each is devoted to describing a social witness influenced by, in order, “our Creator,” “Jesus,” and “the Holy Spirit.” The creed connects “our Creator” with six goals related to human and worker rights. Jesus is associated with seven goals dealing with hunger, poverty, education, health care, social security, taxes, national budgets, immigration, housing, and public works. The Holy Spirit is identified with seven goals concerning the environment and peacemaking.

This Trinitarian structure unfortunately provides superficial, rather than robust, doctrinal content. There is a bit more substantive theology in the first paragraph of the 2008 creed. In looking at a world desperately in need of radical transformation, the drafters turn to Isaiah 65 and John 10:10 as scriptural theme verses. The creed derives its call for “compassion over suspicion and equality over domination” from Isaiah’s vision of a “peaceable kingdom” and Jesus’ promise of abundant life for all.

But while the council finds inspiration for its own social goals in the teachings of Scripture and the example of Christ, it ignores doctrine not directly related to those goals. There are two unfortunate effects of this focus. First,

the NCC arguably places only subsidiary importance on the big biblical picture of God’s work in Jesus Christ; the council’s social goals are its primary concern in this document. Second, the achievement of the goals appears to rest more on the members of the NCC than God. “We Churches of the United States” seem to be doing most of the work, with the Godhead cheering from the sidelines.

So while the 2008 creed undoubtedly is more theological than its century-old predecessor, the theology of the new creed is fairly minimal and bent toward a liberal social action perspective. That same combination—theological laxity and political one-sidedness—led the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America to leave the NCC in July 2005. The new social creed does *not* address the doctrinal or social policy differences between the member communions of the council.

### Reception of the Creed

The creed received a positive and unanimous welcome at the NCC assembly. United Methodist ethicist J. Philip Wogamon called it “a splendid piece of work” and praised it for tackling the issues of racism and the peace movement, both of which he said were overlooked in the 1908 creed. New NCC General Secretary Michael Kinnamon commended the new creed for “celebrat[ing] our history, look[ing] to the future, ... and help[ing] us understand what our part can be.”

But does the creed give enough “common ground” to the 35 NCC member communions? Will the members of every communion agree with the creed’s government-centered solutions to complex social issues? Will they agree to the NCC’s near-pacifist stance on matters of defense? Is liberal social action really a center of unity for the different branches of the body of Christ? ■



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BUILD  
BRIDGES  
NOT WALLS  
PROMOTE  
JUSTICE  
PREVENT  
APARTHEID

## Israel = South Africa

The Dubious Analogy that Drives Pro-Palestinian Church Activists

by Jeffrey H. Walton

Speakers faulted Israel for injustices, while apparently holding the Palestinian leadership blameless.

Meeting last October 26–27 at Old South Church in Boston, the Friends of Sabeel North America brought together proponents of a “liberation theology” for Palestinians. Two themes ran through their annual conference: an insistence on equating democratic Israel to the white-ruled South Africa of the 1980s, and a determination despite recent setbacks to target Israel with the same strategy of economic isolation that had been employed against apartheid South Africa.

Speakers repeatedly faulted Israel for injustices and threats to peace in the Middle East, while apparently holding the Palestinian leadership blameless. They directed harsh criticism at “Christian Zionists” who support Israel unconditionally.

### Implicit Apologies for Terrorism

The opening address came from the Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, president of the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem that is backed by the North American friends’ group. “Today the government of Israel is obsessed with domination and by a deep desire to ethnically cleanse the Palestinians,” thundered Ateek. He explained that the apartheid label was applied

because “the racism of the government of Israel has become more obviously clear.” Ateek added, “This [Israeli] racism is a crime against God and our fellow human beings.”

A former canon of St. George’s (Anglican) Cathedral in Jerusalem, Ateek stated that Sabeel condemned all violence and terrorism, whether coming from the Israeli government or Palestinian extremists. He went on to rattle off a list of Israeli transgressions, with no mention of any corresponding violence instigated by Hamas, Fatah, or other Palestinian groups.

Author Leila Farsakh of the University of Massachusetts compared the Palestinian territories to South African “bantustans” that placed native peoples into small, semi-independent states that were not economically viable. Farsakh said that because of Jewish settlements on the West Bank, it was no longer possible to have separate Jewish and Palestinian states. The situation could be solved only by a one-state solution, she contended. “Everyone living on the land has a right to that land in one state,” said Farsakh.

Left unremarked was the near demographic certainty that a single-state solution would soon leave Jews as a minority, at the mercy of a Palestinian majority led by militant groups such as Hamas and Fatah.

Dr. Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions agreed with Farsakh, claiming that by its “settlement enterprise” Israel had effectively prevented a two-state solution. Halper opposed the “false equivalency” between the two parties. “Israel in fact is the strong party in this occupation,” he said. “Israel is more culpable than the groups we call the terrorists.”

**APARTHEID (ABOVE)** One conference attendee passed out signs equating Israel’s policies with those of apartheid-era South Africa. Israel’s wall, while an imperfect and temporary solution to the problem of terrorism, has saved the lives of both Israelis and Palestinians. (IRD/Jeff H. Walton)

Halper deflected a written question about the prevention of suicide bombings, dismissing the attacks as a mere “symptom” of the Israeli occupation. “There is a correlation between violence and resistance and what we call terrorism [and the policies of Israel],” he argued. “People have a right to resist oppression and occupation.”

### **Taking Stock of the Divestment Movement**

“We need to use the tools used to dismantle apartheid in South Africa,” said Palestinian-American legal activist Noura Erekat. Erekat argued that a three-stage process employed against South Africa—first divestment, then boycotts, and finally sanctions—was needed to “take on Israel’s character as an ethnocratic state motivated by demographic ambitions.”

“Are we having an impact?” asked David

Wildman, Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. “I’ll let you

decide; it’s slow.” Wildman noted a series of divestment resolutions presented in various churches and universities, often with little success. “Anyone who has taken part [in divestment advocacy] knows how slow and painful a process it can be,” the United Methodist official said.

Erekat bemoaned media attention shifting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to “the so-called war on terror.” She said that the divestment movement “appears to be muted” on campuses. “We have lost so many times that we have internalized a defeatist attitude,” she lamented.

Several North American denominations have recently addressed the divestment issue, most prominently the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The 2004 PCUSA General Assembly authorized “a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel.” But the 2006 Assembly issued new instructions that avoided singling out Israel as a target.

“We need to thank our Presbyterian brothers and sisters for all the criticism

they have faced” for the 2004 divestment mandate, said Wildman. Within his own United Methodist Church, several local conferences have passed pro-divestment resolutions, but there is no such policy on a denominational level.

The idea behind divestment resolutions is that Israel is able to continue its occupation of the Palestinian territories only through aid and trade from the United States. Wildman denounced “increased and repeated [U.S.] arms shipments to one side [Israel].” He claimed, “We [the United States] are saying the violence committed by [Israeli] settlers and colonists is good and violence by the indigenous [Palestinians] is bad.”

“Erosion doesn’t happen overnight,” counseled Wildman. “We need to erode apartheid.” He insisted, “We do not need a

**“We have lost so many times [on divestment] that we have internalized a defeatist attitude,” Erekat lamented.**

program for peace in Israel/Palestine; we need a program for justice.”

### **Repudiating Christian Zionism**

The Friends of Sabeel conference featured a teach-in on “Christian Zionism: A Theology in Service of Empire.” The principal speaker was Dr. Donald Wagner, a professor at North Park University in Chicago and a self-styled “Sojourners-type” evangelical.

Wagner defined his target, Christian Zionism, as “unconditional support of modern Israel.” He traced it back to a theology of premillennial dispensationalism that equates the modern secular state of Israel with the ancient Hebrew people.

Wagner, who grew up as a fundamentalist Christian, vehemently rejected this theology. “Christian Zionism presents a crusader, Zionist, western Christianity that undermines the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his Church,” he charged. “It’s a theology of colonialism and empire.”

While Wagner prefaced his statements

by saying that only 15-20 percent of American evangelicals subscribe to a premillennial dispensationalist theology, he said its ideas can have farther-reaching implications.

“Young people in Presbyterian, Methodist and even some Episcopal churches are being drawn into this by youth ministers,” alleged Wagner.

“Dispensational theology is also growing in the culture of fear and militarism in western societies,” claimed Wagner. He asserted that Christian Zionism draws its political power “from its current alignment with the pro-Israel lobby, neo-conservative ideologues, the arms industry, the military (Israeli and United States), and the far right Israeli parties and the settler movement.”

Wagner lamented that “Christian Zionism ignores the Palestinian Christians and the indigenous Arab Christians while it idolizes the state of Israel and its policies of occupation and militarization.” He accused Christian Zionism of being “inherently anti-Semitic” because it envisions large numbers of Jews converting to Christianity in the end times.

Wagner also made reference to the steep drop in Christian population in the Palestinian territories. He insisted that the “primary onus” for the decline had to be placed upon Israel’s “apartheid policies” rather than upon the rise of Hamas and other militant Islamist groups.

In order to counteract Christian Zionism, Wagner advised that younger people be sought out. “We have to get into the evangelical colleges and universities; this is a long haul,” he said. The professor suggested that “massive organizations like World Vision” be courted for the pro-Palestinian cause. He also advised working to better the image of Islam so that evangelicals would not be anti-Islamic. 📷



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## The Archbishop of Canterbury's “Worst of All Worlds”

by Ralph A. Webb

The Anglican Communion’s “first among equals,” Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, declared in a recent interview with *Emel*, a British Muslim magazine, that the United States “has lost the moral high ground” (the interviewer’s words) in the War on Terror. Launching a harsh, sweeping attack, he described the United States as a “global hegemonic power ... [that] is trying to accumulate influence and control” rather than “territory.” He called U.S. policy “the worst of all worlds”—worse even than British colonialism.

same-sex relationship, is being constantly questioned. The reaction may have been “the worst of all worlds” for the archbishop.

Williams’ critique was not unexpected given his consistent and well-publicized opposition to the war in Iraq and the War on Terror. The archbishop recognizes that military action is sometimes necessary and gives some credence to Christian just war theory. Nevertheless, he believes that other options must be exhausted first and that war probably should only be undertaken after an international consensus regarding its necessity has been gained.

Williams has at times taken the complexities of the war into account. In December 2006, BBC News reported that Williams credited the government of Great Britain with “act[ing] in good faith” in making the decision to go to war. The archbishop’s view of the war had not changed, but he was willing to give the British government the benefit of the doubt in terms of its motives.

So it was surprising that Williams delivered an uncharacteristically blunt, ill-considered commentary on America and its motives in *Emel*. The archbishop did not extend the same confidence to U.S. intentions in his recent comments that he did to Great Britain’s almost a year earlier. Instead, he described the United States as a “global hegemonic power. ... [that] is trying to accumulate influence and control” rather than “territory.” Williams gave no backing for this assertion, nor did he define either what type of “influence and control” he believes the United States desires or how far-reaching it would be.

The only clue to Williams’ thinking on these matters came in the form of a comparison of U.S. actions with

Archbishop of Canterbury  
Rowan Williams attacked U.S.  
foreign policy only to find that his  
comments angered people on  
both sides of the aisle.

The archbishop charged that, in invading Iraq, the United States and Britain had “turn[ed] to violence” as “a quick discharge of frustration.” He accused the United States of proceeding on “the assumption that a quick burst of violent action will

somehow clear the decks and that you can move on and other people will put things back together.” He believes that the United States wanted to conduct a short war in Iraq and leave to other countries the work of restoring the war-ravaged country.

Williams may have been surprised by the resulting backlash. His remarks succeeded in angering both the right *and* the left at a time when his leadership of the worldwide Anglican Communion, deeply divided over issues such as the consecration of a bishop living in a

Great Britain's past colonialism. Here, Williams gave credit to his homeland for staying in the land it "[took] over ... and then pour[ing] energy and resources into administering it and normalizing it." He did not defend British colonialism as good or just. Incredibly, however, he elevated it above U.S. actions in Iraq.

It is one thing to hold, as many do, that the United States did not have an adequate plan for the post-war restoration of Iraq. But Williams went further by suggesting that the United States had little-to-no interest in rebuilding Iraq and, implicitly, little concern for the Iraqi people. That caricature ignored the nearly \$29 billion in aid that the United States gave to Iraq from 2003 to 2006—a practice consistent with the billions of dollars in U.S. aid to rebuild Germany and Japan after World War II.

Williams' critique, sadly, was nothing less than an unwarranted exercise in broadbrushing that satisfied no one. Conservatives, of course, were outraged. The left was not happy that Williams downplayed (from its point of view) the evils of

colonialism, even if some were delighted by his attack on the United States. Andrew Brown perhaps summed it up best in his November 27 column in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper:

To say that the British Empire was a better model of imperialism than what the Americans have done in Iraq is absolutely guaranteed to offend almost everyone in the US, whether or not they oppose the war....

He has pleased no one... It was possible, before these remarks, that there were some American Anglicans who were not feeling disappointed or betrayed by him. There will be fewer now.

Even *The Living Church*, an independent Anglican news magazine that mostly studiously avoids political issues, printed a December 16 editorial that chastised Williams for weighing in on U.S. foreign policy when the Anglican Communion was in turmoil:

With the Anglican Communion threatening to implode, it would seem that the Archbishop of Canterbury could serve people under his care more effectively if he were to address the current crisis rather than criticize another nation's foreign policy. It's one thing for the archbishop to oppose the war in Iraq, but quite another to rail at another nation's leadership.

At a time when the Archbishop of Canterbury was being criticized on all sides for his handling of church matters, his foreign policy pronouncements only seemed to add more fuel to the fire of negativity about his job performance. ☒



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## Episcopal Church Works to Bring Iraqi Refugees to the United States

**A**t a session of the Episcopal Church Executive Council's National Concerns Committee, Richard Parkins, Director of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), revealed that the denomination is working heavily to bring more Iraqi refugees, a group he called "[o]ne of the major casualties of [the War on Terror]," into the United States. The session took place during the Executive Council's fall 2007 meeting held in Dearborn, MI, last October 26–28.

EMM's strategy, according to Parkins, is twofold. First, it is pushing bipartisan legislation with Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Gordon Smith (R-OR). This legislation would:

- Give refugees with ties to the United States priority for resettlement.
- Establish special immigrant visas for refugees who worked in the United States for one year prior to the start of the Iraq War.
- Provide refugees whose resettlement in the United States was either refused or ended with a six-month period in which to plead their case.

Second, EMM has been given a few grants to assist small parishes in aiding "undocumented persons with their legal

rights and some transitional aid."

Parkins, in a followup interview with Anglican Action, expressed concern about the effect of the refugees on the Middle East as a whole. He worried that they are "adding immensely to the volatility of the region" by straining the resources of "politically and economically fragile" nations such as Jordan and Syria. The EMM director does not believe that the United States should be solely responsible for refugee resettlement, but does expect that it "will take the overwhelming majority."

Parkins expressed his desire to see the U.S. government, the American people, and the Episcopal Church "[m]ake an initial commitment to being generous and welcoming to as many people as you possibly can." He did not propose limits to admitting "as many people as you possibly can," save for security checks. Parkins views refugee resettlement as a means of saving lives and, consequently, a moral imperative.

Many Christians might agree that the United States should play a leading role in granting asylum to refugees from persecution and war. But given the fact that even a nation as prosperous as the United States needs to set priorities, an open-as-possible admissions policy seems highly unrealistic. Nations can (and arguably *must*) justly distinguish between the claims that various classes of immigrants can place upon charity. ☒



# The Anglican Church of Nigeria: Bearing Burdens Near and Far

by Faith J.H. McDonnell

**J**os is a city marred by some of the worst violence directed at Christians in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria. But this capital of the central belt's Plateau State, where tens of thousands have been killed and left homeless by Muslim militants in the past six years, recently became the gathering place for Nigerian Anglicans praying for worldwide revival. In November 2007, Anglican bishops, clergy, and laypeople from all over Nigeria came to a "prayer convocation" led by the Bishop of Jos, now Archbishop-elect of the Province of Jos, the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Kwashi.

According to the Church of Nigeria website, [www.anglican-nig.org](http://www.anglican-nig.org), the Nigerians were joined by Anglicans from neighboring countries to pray that they might make God's name "great among the Nations." They prayed for the work of evangelism. And they prayed for more intercessors who would "pray intensely for the Nigerian Church to [live out] her prophetic and apostolic mandate in Africa and the Anglican Communion globally."

The convocation coordinator, the Rt. Rev. Sosthenes Eze, spoke about Africa's place in God's purposes throughout history. "God has always depended on Africa to bring about deliverance to His people," Eze said. But, according to the website, "he warned that for the African Church to conform totally to the mind of God in fulfilling His purpose, the continent must strip itself of immorality, oppression, occultism, injustice, tribalism, corruption and war."

The Rt. Rev. Henry Ndukuba, Bishop of Gombe, told the biblical story of Malachi, who confronted corrupt priests.

"God raised Malachi as a prophet in the days when the word of God was lacking," Ndukuba said. He explained that the priest's job was to offer sacrifices and to kindle the altar fire. Today, he said, a pleasing sacrifice is to raise up God's people. And kindling the fire means to provide light and purity, and to attract those who have never heard the Gospel. This activity will bring persecution, Ndukuba warned, but "the more the church is put under persecution, the more the fire spreads."

The fire has certainly been spread by Christians of all denominations in Nigeria. Within Anglicanism alone,

Although they have enough of their own burdens to bear, Nigerian Anglicans are burdened with grief for the Episcopal Church in the United States.

the church has grown from five million in the 1970s to almost 18 million today. In March 2007, 19 missionary bishops were consecrated to begin new dioceses throughout Nigeria. According to the Rt. Rev. Martyn Minns, bishop of a Church of Nigeria missionary arm called the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), the Nigerian church is "planting dioceses" faster than western churches are "planting congregations."

The Nigerian website reported that Bishop Eze "asserted that the pivotal role played by the Church of Nigeria in defending the truth that has been distorted in some parts of the worldwide Anglican family is part of God's plan and purpose to preserve a remnant for Himself." The "truth that has been distorted" undoubtedly includes the actions of the Episcopal Church in legitimizing homosexual relations, as well as other departures from

orthodox Anglican faith and practice.

Nigeria's archbishop, the Most Rev. Peter Akinola, is "well aware of the pastoral crisis that [the Episcopal Church] has caused for Anglicans of all races and ethnicities in the U.S.," says Minns. Akinola has welcomed U.S. Anglicans unable to stay within the Episcopal Church to join CANA, which had started as a pastoral response to the needs of Nigerian Anglicans living in the United States.

Just as it takes evangelism seriously, the Nigerian church takes seriously the biblical injunction to bear one another's burdens. During the November convoca-

tion, according to the website, "prayer warriors who knelt with tears flowing prayed that God will heal the torn fabric of the Anglican Communion and restore holiness

and righteousness in His Church."

Although they have enough of their own burdens to bear, Nigerian Anglicans are burdened with grief for the Episcopal Church in the United States. American Anglicans' momentary afflictions cannot be compared with those experienced by our Nigerian brothers and sisters: the imposition of *shari'a* Islamic law in 12 Nigerian states, frequent physical attacks, and loss of property at the hands of Muslim militants. So U.S. Anglicans should, reciprocally, bear the burdens of the Anglican Church of Nigeria in prayer. ■



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# Bearing the Burden for Nigeria's Persecuted Church

by Faith J.H. McDonnell

Christians in northern and central Nigeria are on the front lines of “the bloody borders of Islam.” Over 50,000 people have died in the past ten years in inter-religious violence in that region. Although state religion is ostensibly a violation of the national, secular constitution of Nigeria, 12 out of 36 states have instituted *shari'a* (Islamic) law as the highest legal authority. And *shari'a* has opened the door to unchecked violence. Muslim mobs attack their Christian neighbors who allegedly insult Islam, and in some cases the Christians respond in kind.

On December 11, 2007, Muslim high school students in northern Nigerian Bauchi State attacked Christian students, accusing them of disturbing the construction site of a high school mosque. A faculty member told Compass Direct news service that Muslim students “broke chairs and desks” and “attacked their Christian colleagues with knives and daggers.” Area Muslims joined the attack when the violence spread outside. The mob burned three churches and set fire to dozens of houses belonging to Christians. Ten were killed, including a female Christian student who was beheaded in front of the house of the Muslim village head.

Late in 2007 Compass Direct reported that 19 Christians were killed in Muslim rioting in Kano, another *shari'a* state, when it was claimed that someone had drawn a cartoon on a high school mosque. Christian students told Compass Direct that no Christian would do something so foolish. The Islamic agitators burned down ten churches and 36 homes of Christians and looted and

destroyed 147 Christian-owned businesses during this particular incident. According to Compass Direct, not a single house belonging to a Christian is now standing in the village.

The Church of the Brethren in Kano State was burned down three times in the past ten years. In 2004, the state government demolished the church's fourth building, so the congregation purchased a hotel in which it now meets. Compass Direct reports that in 2001 when Christians attempted to defend their church,

**Early in 2006, an armed gang broke into the bishop's home in Jos. Bishop Kwashi was out of the country, or he probably would have been killed. Kwashi's wife, Gloria, and two of their sons were severely beaten.**

Muslim rioters set fire to the building with the Christians inside. “Those who tried to escape were chased down like animals and killed,” recalled one church elder who had his ears cut off.

A horrific case was reported by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) in March 2007 when Christiana Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, a teacher at the Gandu Government Day Secondary School in the northern state of Gombe, was stoned, stripped, beaten, and stabbed to death. Oluwasesin was falsely accused of having torn a copy of the Quran when she caught a student cheating on an exam and confiscated the paper which the student had hidden in a book. CSW notes that despite another teacher showing that the book was not the Quran and had not been torn, a mob of students assaulted Oluwasesin.

One church leader, the Rt. Rev.

Benjamin Kwashi, Anglican Bishop of Jos, has long been under threat. In the past two years, he and his family survived two deadly attacks.

Early in 2006, an armed gang broke into the bishop's home in Jos. Bishop Kwashi was out of the country, or he probably would have been killed. As it was, Kwashi's wife, Gloria, and two of their sons were severely beaten. Mrs. Kwashi's injuries left her blind. Her sight was restored later in the year after receiving treatment and prayer in the United States.

The Kwashis were targeted again in July 2007. This time Kwashi was present when a gang came in the middle of the night. The men forced him out to the backyard. Then, the bishop says, “They changed their minds”

and brought him back to the house. The bishop, believing he was going to die, knelt to pray. But instead of killing him, the gang looted the house and left.

The bishop believes that the prayer of brothers and sisters around the world protected him that night. The knowledge that he is being prayed for has given Kwashi strength to go forward. The suffering of our persecuted brothers and sisters is multiplied when they feel isolated from the wider Church, but their burden is lightened by our prayers and support for the Christians in Nigeria. 📖



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## A Not-So-Fair Food Fight

by James D. Berkley

**P**resbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leaders have invested an extraordinary amount of time, money, and vitriol lately in a labor dispute involving tomato pickers near the southwest Florida town of Immokalee. “Burger King and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE) are using their power to try and turn back the inevitable progress of human rights for farmworkers,” fumed Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick in a recent open letter. “And their coordinated tactics ... are as morally repugnant as they are in vain.”

Noelle Damico, the Associate for Fair Food Concerns, produced materials that accused growers of “utter intransigence ... in the face of a growing consumer and corporate demand that farmworkers’ human rights be respected.” She and Kirkpatrick threaten boycotts against Burger King unless it accedes to an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). That agreement, already accepted by Taco Bell and McDonald’s, would supposedly pay pickers an extra penny per pound harvested.

This case provides a textbook example of what is wrong with mainline social witness advocacy. Such accusatory statements by Kirkpatrick and Damico put them at odds with fair play and with Presbyterian Action’s plea that “church pronouncements about partisan political issues should be made rarely, tentatively,

and with full respect for others who reach different conclusions.”

### Something’s Not Right

There is no doubt that the tomato pickers have a hard life, with strenuous labor, unsure hours and seasons, and a tenuous legal status that makes them vulnerable to ill treatment. Field workers deserve a fair shake, and exploitation or abuse can never be countenanced. But there are salient facts that complicate this situation—and call into question the one-sided narrative that PCUSA members receive from their leaders in Louisville.

Consider the questionable impressions blasting from the fair-food bullhorn:

*Tomato pickers are virtual slaves.* Tragically, a few instances of indentured labor were uncovered by investigators, with the assistance of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. The CIW received an international anti-slavery prize for its excellent efforts. But every party around the table finds such slavery reprehensible, and it is neither typical nor condoned. It is prosecuted.

*Tomato pickers are paid below minimum wage.* A study of pay stubs showed an average remuneration of \$12.46 per hour. The problem is the vagaries of weather and ripening that cut into the work week and season. Workers must labor hard to make little, yet the harvest actually draws laborers who come a distance to seek out the jobs.

*National corporations underpay the pickers.* National corporations pay no pickers. It is the Florida

Kirkpatrick and Damico have become increasingly harsh in support of a crumbling Florida pay arrangement for tomato pickers.



growers who hire, supervise, and pay pickers what the market will bear.

*Targeted corporations must be the worst offenders.* Not so. The targeted fast-food corporations buy a lot of Florida tomatoes, but they neither dominate the market nor can they dictate to the growers. Indeed, the corporations point to strict internal policies to halt unjust practices. The corporations have been targeted largely because of their convenient nationwide availability for boycotts and demonstrations.

*An agreement with Taco Bell has greatly helped tomato pickers.* No, only the pickers for two growers were ever involved in the penny-a-pound plan that lasted only one season. The additional income earned was a drop in the bucket. The much-ballyhooed “gain” was only in the appearance of a major breakthrough for CIW. The agreement has now basically collapsed.

*McDonald’s is now paying pickers more.* McDonald’s pays no pickers. But even though in theory it agreed to pass on an extra penny a pound to pickers, it has not yet reached an agreement with any growers, so no picker has benefited. McDonald’s, however, is still buying Florida tomatoes from growers not involved in the CIW deal.

*Burger King abuses pickers’ rights.* Burger King hires no pickers. It does, however, point to its stringent policy that suppliers must treat pickers justly. It has offered migrant workers stable employment with a career path and has donated to migrant social causes. But because it will not bend to CIW’s demands, Burger King stays in the publicity bull’s eye and has been subjected to strident Kirkpatrick reprimands.

### **Questionable Methods and Socialist Bedfellows**

In 2002, the Presbyterian Church hired Noelle Damico from the United Church of Christ to be an in-house labor promoter. It is her job to make people outraged at alleged abuses and to beat the drum for demonstrations and boycotts, all focused on a single cause for a single farm

product in a single state and a single labor organization—the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

But what qualifies Kirkpatrick and Damico to speak so severely on a many-sided issue? And why this issue among many, and why spend money on Damico at exactly the time missionaries were discharged for lack of funding? And what justifies a morally problematic secondary boycott—putting pressure not on the party that has committed an alleged offense, but on a party twice removed,



which is pushed to pressure the supposed offender?

Growers hire the labor and sell tomatoes to repackers, who sell to major regional and national corporations. Large corporate tomato buyers do not hire, house, supervise, or pay tomato pickers. Corporations like Burger King or Taco Bell buy from people who buy from people who do.

Pickers and activists have joined together to form CIW. It is not a union and cannot legally represent agricultural workers as a union. Rather, it is a coalition, attempting to advocate for the pickers, many of whom are migrant laborers—some illegal—from Latin America.

Many other supporting entities, such as religious groups, socialist factions, labor unions, student activist groups, celebrities, and liberal institutions, have coalesced into the Alliance for Fair Food. The cause is well publicized, making,

CIW quite the national *cause célèbre*. And at the front of the parade is the Presbyterian activist apparatus.

### **Preaching as Protest**

In late November, a few Presbyterians marched on the Burger King Miami headquarters. But a recommended “sermon” for Christ the King Sunday seemed the most outrageous tactic.

Damico suggested recruiting pulpits to harangue Burger King and enlist demonstrators. Bald accusation and outrage was thin gruel to feed Presbyterians on a Sunday meant to exalt our Messiah and King. The Word of God was to be hijacked to enlist people to a radical cause.

A proposed sermon did briefly glance at the text (Luke 1:68–79), acknowledging that Christ is the King. But the preacher apparently found that point not interesting enough to detain him for long. Of much greater importance was accusing Burger King of living “in that false world that proclaims that making profit and honoring people can’t go together.” The preacher urged worshipers to “march together with the farmworkers on Burger King this Friday. Let’s join in sharing this truth, in letting that truth free Burger King, to have it God’s way.”

Such rhetoric is social witness gone haywire! It is bad enough to toss aside common sense and even the unvarnished truth for glib propaganda and blistering censure. But it is simply unconscionable to promote misuse of the preacher’s obligation to deliver the Word of God, not the politics of the moment.

Presbyterian Action has long held that “the most powerful political message the church can deliver is simply the gospel of Jesus Christ, not any partisan agenda.” Here in the fair-food fight, that correction remains sorely needed. ■



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# Presbyterians May See through the FOG

by James D. Berkley

**H**e who writes the rule book, usually rules. And those who lose a substantive debate often turn to adjusting the rules to gain advantage.

Revisionists in oldline Protestant denominations have failed to directly drop the biblical standard confining sexual relations within marriage between one man and one woman, so now they are tinkering with procedural rules. The strategy evident at both the 2006 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly and the 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly was to leave the sexuality standard on the books, but facilitate local church bodies' ability to bypass that standard.

Thus, the staff-driven effort to get the 2008 PCUSA General Assembly to consider a complete replacement of the denomination's Form of Government (FOG) is raising plenty of eyebrows. Presbyterians are being told they need a shorter, simpler, and more flexible FOG than the current tome. But the lite version opens the door for significant changes—inadvertent or intended. Those Presbyterians with the patience to compare old and new FOG texts—139 pages side by side—find changes tucked into every corner of the new FOG.

For example:

- Currently governing bodies can request local churches to pay a “per capita assessment” only for administrative overhead, but the new FOG would allow governing bodies to run up a joint tab for all activities and then stick the congregations with the bill.
- Whereas currently interim and associate pastors cannot be called directly as senior pastor of the same congregation, the new FOG could allow such “inside-job” successions.
- The new FOG would eliminate all references to many currently

mandated committees and procedures (such as those designed to ensure representation of ethnic minorities), leaving to every governing body vague responsibility without tangible guidelines.

For Presbyterians, with Bible interpretation constantly in dispute and the Book of Confessions rendered feeble through neglect, the Form of Government (FOG) has been practically the lone slender thread keeping the denomination from totally unraveling. And now, even the FOG is in jeopardy.

## Lost in the FOG

Elected Presbyterian bodies often instinctively embrace what comes down from “headquarters.” Never mind the particulars, it seems. It just must be good, because so many official people spent time on it.

However, both the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the General Assembly Council (GAC) have already voiced some initial reservations about the proposed new FOG. Both COGA and GAC members worried about the frenzied pace for development and approval of a document they did not understand.

What's more, they did not like some of the particulars of the proposed changes. “The interim succession part is one that I cannot support,” declared the GAC member with the most knowledge of the new FOG. The GAC requested at least two more years for Presbyterians to investigate the implications of approving a totally new FOG. Likewise, one presbytery has joined that call for a delay to 2010. That the GAC chose to go against custom to counsel delay indicates that the new FOG may not receive warm acceptance.

The response from the church at large has been cautiously tepid, if not rather negative. Renewal group leaders,

who have more familiarity than most with the new FOG's nuances and implications, have voiced strong reservations. For instance, Bob Davis, a candidate for Stated Clerk in 2004, thinks that “the substitute Form of Government faces a steep uphill battle—that is, unless it can fly under the radar.”

What are the new FOG's weaknesses?

- Touted as “flexible,” the new draft is sketchy, incomplete, and unclear. It fails to provide the unfailingly consistent counsel needed in an era of failed trust.
- Sold as “missional,” it would instead tie up churches in “administrivia” for the next decade, as each governing body struggles to iron out polity wrinkles that formerly were neatly buttoned down.
- Presented as retaining the essential Presbyterian form of government, it instead leans in places toward a more idiosyncratic congregational form and in other places toward a more authoritarian hierarchical form.
- Hyped as an improvement because it is briefer, the new FOG has eliminated many wise practices gained by experience, only to substitute vague loopholes.

Presbyterians, steeped in doing things “decently and in order,” are on the verge of doing things deviantly and in haste. The present Form of Government reflects the starched Presbyterian awareness of total depravity. Why toss this brilliant lamp for a dim FOG lite? ■



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# Role Reversal

by Joel Belz

*This article is reprinted, with permission, from the December 1, 2007, issue of World magazine. World founder Joel Belz comments on an IRD conference entitled “God Is Great. God Is Green?” held November 13-14 in Washington, DC.*

When the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) in Washington, DC, decided recently to sponsor a day’s discussion on environmental issues (with an emphasis on global warming), they did something we should all learn to imitate. They invited several speakers who disagreed with IRD’s point of view.

All of us, I suppose, tend to listen most attentively to evidence and argumentation—on just about any topic—that supports our existing biases. We tend to forget that far better than repeatedly rehearsing our own worn-out arguments is the bold practice of taking our opponents’ best shots, analyzing them, and—if appropriate—turning them into our own ammunition.

(If, of course, in the process, we discover we really were wrong, so much the better. Our confidence in truth—whoever tells it—should be enough to get us by such temporary embarrassment!)

So I was gratified earlier this month when IRD went the extra mile in putting together its program. The schedule highlighted self-professed environmental conservatives like Calvin Beisner of Knox Seminary, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Roy Spencer of the University of Alabama at Huntsville, and Jay Richards of the Acton Institute. But also there, with the explicit task of responding to the headliners, were Jim Ball of the Evangelical Environmental Network, and originator of the “What Would Jesus Drive” campaign; Rusty Pritchard, also of EEN; Steve Fetter of the University of Maryland; and Steve Bouma-Prediger

of Hope College.

IRD calls itself “an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians working to reform their [usually mainline] churches’ social witness, in accord with biblical and historic Christian teachings, thereby contributing to the renewal of democratic society at home and abroad.” Implicit in that description is what IRD hopes is a biblically based challenge to typical radical and liberal positions on a host of social and political issues—including care for God’s creation.

The toe-to-toe debate at this IRD conference, however, was characterized more by tiptoeing. The exchanges were for the most part so mild and sweet-spirited that some in attendance may have thought they were a bit shortchanged. “I had hoped we’d really see what the big differences are between the conservatives and liberals,” said one woman. “But the differences at the end of the day really didn’t seem so big.”

Probably that was in part because the roster of participants didn’t include any real theological liberals. Slight differences surfaced over how the early Genesis mandate to “take dominion” of the creation ought to be interpreted; some complained that in the minds of too many conservatives, “dominion” has become exploitative “domination.” But no one really pointed to a significant biblical or ethical gap among those who spoke.

So—if I was happy with IRD’s sponsorship of such a gathering (and I was), and grateful to the global warming folks for their willingness to be part of a lukewarm discussion (and I was)—do I think the two sides managed to get any closer together?



**MILD ENVIRONMENT** Dr. E. Calvin Beisner delivers his address. The debate was, for the most part, mild and sweet-spirited. (IRD/Jeff H. Walton)

Not really. And the reason for that failure involves an unusual irony.

Usually, in discussions like this, conservatives tend to be the affirmers and liberals the skeptics. In many theological debates, for example, conservatives tend to be the ones who claim that “God has said it!” while liberals hold back and ask skeptically, “Has He really said that?”

In the global warming argument, however, those roles have been reversed. The orthodoxy of the priests of global warming is all but absolute. Al Gore’s propagandistic tenets have become Truth with a capital T. And anyone who doubts that Truth gets the condescending smiles typically reserved for the simple-minded and naïve.

The whole discussion would be helped if, in this case, the proponents of global warming as an urgent crisis for humankind would treat us like liberals who have brought to the table a healthy dose of open-minded skepticism. We’d just like you to do us the courtesy of offering your ideas as theory rather than as dogma. And we owe you the same.

The planet may or may not be in crisis. But certainly the Arctic glaciers aren’t melting so fast that we don’t have time to get adjusted to these sometimes oddly reversed roles. ■

## United Methodists Look Toward Pivotal General Conference

by John S.A. Lomperis

United Methodists are in the final months before their quadrennial General Conference, scheduled for April 23–May 2 in Fort Worth, TX. Looking toward that potentially direction-setting event, six United Methodist renewal caucuses came together in Memphis to chart steps that the General Conference might take toward reform of the denomination. Their conference, entitled a “A Hope and a Future through Our Wesleyan Heritage,” was held last October 26–27 in Memphis. Sponsors included the Confessing Movement, Good News, the RENEW Network, Lifewatch, Transforming Congregations, and IRD’s UMAction program.

The Rev. Rob Renfroe drove home his point about the direction of the United Methodist Church: “We are going the wrong way.”

About 100 recently elected General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates from around the United States and from every overseas region of the United Methodist Church (Africa, Europe, and the Philippines) were in attendance. In addition, there were about 150 other United Methodists,

including staffers of denominational agencies.

The Rev. Jerry Kulah, a district superintendent in Monrovia, Liberia, released an “Africa Declaration” calling the denomination to scriptural faithfulness and effective ministry (see p. 22). The declaration has been endorsed by the bishop and every district superintendent in Liberia as well as United Methodist leaders from other parts of Africa. The continent is now home to 32 percent of United Methodists.

The declaration calls for denominational

restructuring to ensure “fair, just and proportionate representation” in church leadership. It lifts up “missional priorities” such as funding African seminaries, “fighting deadly diseases,” “making disciples of the nations,” and “[d]efending the sanctity of all vulnerable human life, including the poor, the elderly, the terminally ill, the disabled, and the unborn.”

### ‘We Are Going the Wrong Way’

The Rev. Rob Renfroe, president of the Confessing Movement board, told participants in the opening session that “you don’t have to have a sense of direction as bad as mine to know the United Methodist Church is going the wrong way.” Renfroe drove home his point: “In terms of membership, we are going the wrong way; in terms of attendance, we are going the wrong way; in terms of being able to raise up young men and young women who want to give their hearts and their passion and their lives to the cause of Christ in ministry of the United Methodist Church, we are going the wrong way.”

The Rev. Eddie Fox, evangelism director for the World Methodist Council, praised the key role the overseas central conferences have played in promoting scriptural faithfulness in the denomination. Fox warned against a controversial new proposal from the Council of Bishops to establish greater division between the U.S. and overseas portions of the church. He asked, “Why change the constitution without knowing what the consequences are?”

Judge Ron Enns spoke on “The Critical Role of the Judicial Council.” He told fellow General Conference delegates that their decisions about whom to elect to the



**UNITED FOR RENEWAL** IRD's Mark Tooley and the Rev. Jerry Kulah, outside the reform and renewal conference. (IRD/Rebekah M. Sharpe)

Judicial Council “are the most important ones you will make,” as its five-member majority has the power effectively to change church law. Furthermore, this denominational supreme court is “the only group that can hold a bishop accountable.”

Dr. Les Longden, a professor at Dubuque Seminary, and the Rev. Greg Stover, a district superintendent in the West Ohio Conference, led a session on membership standards in the denomination. These have become an issue as many have challenged a Judicial Council decision affirming a pastor's right to delay church membership for a church attender unrepentantly involved in a homosexual relationship. Revisionists have argued that “inclusiveness” requires granting immediate church membership to any willing to take the vows.

Much of Longden and Stover's session refuted myths about this Judicial Council ruling, such as that “it will lead to a systematic exclusion of gay and lesbian persons from membership” in the denomination. Stover highlighted how proposed changes to limit the pastor's discretion in receiving individuals into formal membership would effectively place decisions about such matters “completely with persons seeking membership,” which has “never been the case in the history of Methodism.” Longden framed the debate as whether church membership signified “affirming tolerance” or “commitment to a community of repentance and holiness.”

#### **An Opportunity to Correct Flaws**

Retired Bishop William Morris noted that “we've got a lot of people in the church who've never accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior—and that's caused a lot of problems in the church.” United Methodists “riding on the coattails of others ... don't know Jesus, and it shows up on the administrative board meeting and the council meeting, because Christ is not in them.” Morris also lamented that he and his fellow bishops



have not done well in their task “to guard and protect the faith.” In a separate session on “Doctrine, Accountability, Leadership, and the Council of Bishops” the Rev. Dr. Maxie Dunnam, a former president of Asbury Seminary and civil rights advocate, declared that “the time has come to talk about term limits on the episcopacy and the ineffectiveness of guaranteed appoint-

**The Rev. Dr. Bill Bouknicht, a former Confessing Movement president, called on the 2008 General Conference to seize the “opportunity to correct [the church's] real flaws.”**

ment” for ministers.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Bouknicht, a former Confessing Movement president, called on the 2008 General Conference to seize the “opportunity to correct [the church's] real flaws.” Bouknicht urged delegates to resist the “tremendous pressure and temptation to just rearrange furniture on the decks of the good ship UMC.” He also exhorted fellow United Methodists to “reduce our hypocrisy,” which he saw manifested in ways such as condemning homosexual sin without addressing heterosexual cohabitation among church members.

Other forms of hypocrisy criticized by Bouknicht included holding local churches more accountable for paying apportionments than for making disciples, devoting more resources to maintaining denominational institutions than to direct relief of human suffering, and declaring children

to be a “priority” while mostly ignoring the unborn. The retired Memphis pastor also regretted the “neither credible nor courageous” way in which the General Board of Church and Society regularly denounces U.S. foreign policy while ignoring the abuses of such leaders as “the awful, tyrannical, racist dictator of Zimbabwe.”

Veteran General Conference delegates and regional lay leaders Dixie Brewster and Marget Sikes spoke about proposed General Conference legislation related to “Advocacy for Women and Children.” Brewster and Sikes commented on issues ranging from sexual exploitation to abortion to child soldiers to accountability for the national offices of United Methodist Women.

The Rev. Marc Brown, a Virginia district superintendent and General Conference delegate, told the *United Methodist Reporter* that he appreciated how the meeting's leaders clearly conveyed their concerns while stressing that “we are called not to demonize others, [but instead] to disagree without being contentious and to treat everyone with respect.”

Text and audio of the presentations can be accessed at [www.cumcmemphis.org](http://www.cumcmemphis.org) by clicking “MEDIA,” then “2007 Renewal



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# Recipe for Renewal and Transformation of Global United Methodism in the New Quadrennium (2009-2012)

## A Declaration from African Methodists to the 2008 General Conference

*Below are excerpts from the Africa Declaration, released at the Renewal and Reform Coalition's conference "A Hope and a Future Through Our Wesleyan Heritage" held last October in Memphis, TN.*

### Our Commitment to the Unity of United Methodism

Our uncompromising belief in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the whole world, and our obedience to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), is the primary reason for our commitment to "MAKING DISCIPLES FOR JESUS CHRIST FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD."

### Our Concerns

...We are saddened that some United Methodist Churches of the Euro-Western world have questioned over and over again the United Methodist *Book of Discipline's* biblical positions on such issues as homosexuality, abortion, and the authenticity of the Scriptures as the Word of God. Five years before his death John Wesley entertained the fear that in decades to come the Methodist Church would not cease to exist but would exist merely as a dead sect, having the form of godliness but no power to live for and proclaim Christ, unless they held fast to the Doctrine, Discipline and Spirit with which they first set out. We are painfully saddened that these current trends within the Euro-Western Church are, unfortunately, confirming the fears of John Wesley.

### Our Declaration

Therefore, we declare:

- That humanity willingly made a choice to sin against God, beginning with our original parents, Adam and Eve. As a result sin entered into the

human race, bringing all humanity and all creation under the damnation of sin (Gen. 3: 1-7, 14-19; Rom 3:10-12,23);

- That in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, God's Son was wondrously born of a Virgin and performed countless miracles (Luke 1:35; John 21:25);
- That Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, voluntarily submitted Himself to be crucified for us, under Roman authority, as a sacrificial offering, taking upon Himself the guilt of all humanity, standing in our place, atoning for our sins, forsaken as a criminal on a rugged Roman cross (Is. 52:13-53:12; John 10:18);
- That Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah, arose literally and physically from the dead, victoriously resurrected to life in indestructible bodily form, presenting himself to hundreds of eyewitnesses over 40 days (John 20:19-30; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:6);
- That Satan the adversary is alive and well, a personal and literal being who authored sin, who fomented rebellion against the Triune God, who vainly tempted our Savior in the wilderness, and who faces ultimate destruction in the Lake of Fire along with all persistent enemies of God (Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 20:7-15);
- ... we hereby call for a change of our plan from spending tens of millions of dollars on Church agencies to rather confronting the devastating poverty, disease and mortal suffering of our United Methodist brothers and sisters around the world, especially in Africa (Gal. 6:9-10; Heb. 6:10; Matt. 25:31-40);
- That we must plentifully equip our seminaries in Africa and elsewhere

with the human and material resources necessary for the effective spread of the Gospel of Christ, ... while those rich in spirit must vigilantly guard that our seminaries in Africa, America and everywhere adhere to God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2-5; Jude 1:3-4).

Faithfulness to the Word of God requires that we further declare:

- Our commitment to the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek its fulfillment within our generation (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8);
- That God created sexuality for lifelong marriage between man and woman **only** (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-24).
- ... that the church's schools and publishing agencies have a vocation for teaching the churches Scripture-based beliefs (Deut. 6:4-9; Prov. 22:6);
- That our Church's missional priority be directed to: declaring solidarity with persecuted Christians everywhere (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 12:15-16); defending the sanctity of all vulnerable human life, including the poor, the elderly, the terminally ill, the disabled, and the unborn (Gen. 1:26; Lev. 24:17; Matt. 25: 34-40); modeling and advocating the Christian virtues of voluntary charity; supporting the restructuring of church agencies to enact the above priorities.

### Conclusion

When the Baby Jesus was threatened by a vengeful King Herod, the Holy Family fled to Africa for sanctuary (Matthew 2:14-15). Today, the Church in Africa offers itself as a sanctuary for God's Word for the renewing of his Church around the world. 🌍

# Standing on Shoulders

by Jerald H. Walz

A dear friend has said, “We never make it on our own; we always find ourselves standing on the shoulders of others. And when we do, we discover that we can see farther, think more deeply, and engage more vigorously.” I have found that to be true. Many have been generous enough to allow me this privilege; I want to tell you about two of them.

When my dad attended Asbury Theological Seminary, two years of Hebrew were required. During his junior year, at one of the early classes in the quarter, a puckish middle-aged professor looked at the class and asked: “What do you think of trying to learn two years of Hebrew in one? At our current pace, we won’t finish the textbook material this year, and the library has a new audio lab that would help us. If you’re willing to study hard and do some extra work, I think we have a small enough class that we could do this. Let me know next time.” After considering the offer, the students answered, “Well, if you’re willing to teach us that much in such a short time, we’d be willing to try.” And so, a life-long association with “Prof” Dennis Kinlaw began.

While my dad studied his Hebrew, my mom taught elementary school and supported the family. During that time the seminary president’s wife became concerned about the wives of the future pastors: “Soon they’ll be preacher’s wives. They might need to know about what being a preacher’s wife will be like before they leave seminary. We ought to help them prepare for their ministry.” She organized other professors’ wives and they began meeting regularly with the students’ wives. Thus, the “Seminary Annes” (a word-play on “seminarian”) started.

My mom recalls one of their

meetings. Each professor’s wife brought something from home that she used to support her husband’s ministry. The items were displayed on tables around the room. One by one, each wife shared in simple show-and-tell fashion. One professor’s wife displayed a blue Delft porcelain tea set and teaspoons—noting the importance of social activities in a pastor’s ministry. Undoubtedly, another brought a Bible—indicating the importance of personal and family Bible study. But my mom remembers one item particularly: a framed photograph of the professor—the same professor who was teaching my dad Hebrew.

When the professor’s wife shared, she said simply and passionately: “My

**We stand on the shoulders of others—  
those who come before us.**

husband is my ministry. The Lord has called me to Dennis, and it is my role to support and encourage him, especially in prayer. I pray for Dennis every day.” To this day my mom tears up when she tells this story. I suppose she does because that’s where mom first learned to pray the way she does, regularly, every day, for my dad, his ministry, and our family.

When I attended Asbury College years later, I had the privilege of meeting Dennis and Elsie Kinlaw. I found the same warmth and glow that must have attracted a young seminary student and his wife. On one particular occasion, my best friend and I went to see the Kinlaws at their home just before Christmas break. With a stately grace, Mrs. Kinlaw greeted us, welcomed us in, and invited us to sit on the couch. Before long, the tea kettle whistled, the coffee table was set with fine china, and homemade sugar

cookies were brought to us. “Dennis is meeting with someone,” Mrs. Kinlaw said, “but I’ll tell him you’re here.”

At those visits, Dr. Kinlaw would eventually ask, “What are you reading these days?” I needed an answer, so I began to read more, and with more discrimination. When I had an answer, Dr. Kinlaw would ask more and deeper questions, challenging me to go further. After college, our discussions became somewhat more frequent when I worked at the Francis Asbury Society, the organization Dr. Kinlaw founded in the 1980s. When I went to tell him about an opportunity to work at IRD, he encouraged me, like a mother scooting a young chick out of the nest: “I think you should go. It’s a

good opportunity and you’ll gain experience that will be helpful for the future.”

In the ten years I have been with IRD since that conversation with Dr. Kinlaw, I have found his advice to be good and true. While my Asbury education had equipped me, it was time to experience things not to be found in Wilmore, Kentucky. Since then, I’ve had the privilege to work with Diane Knippers (an Asbury College graduate when Dr. Kinlaw was college president), meet with and learn from some incredible intellects (like Robert George, Michael Novak, Tom Oden, and others), and work with extraordinary colleagues. Yes, Dr. Kinlaw, we do stand on the shoulders of others—those who come before us. Thank you for allowing me to stand on yours! 📷



**Jerald H. Walz** is the Vice President for Operations at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



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