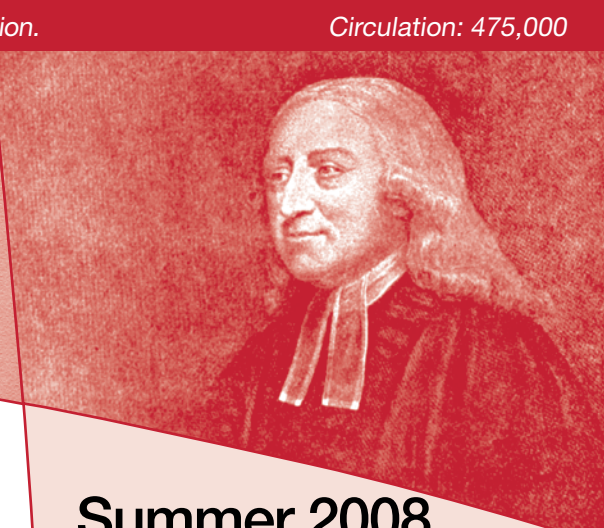


UMAction

Briefing



General Conference Reaffirms Biblical Standards on Marriage & Sex

In its most closely-watched votes, the 2008 General Conference decisively maintained and strengthened The United Methodist Church's Biblical standards on marriage and sex. This UMC governing conference in Fort Worth, Texas, April 22-May 2, voted to:

- Continue to "support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman." (Book of Discipline, par. 161C.)
- Retain this strong stand: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." (Discipline, par. 161G.)

This General Conference report brings you much good news and some bad news. The United Methodist Church is recovering from its over 40 year decline. The growing reform movement has many victories and some defeats. Please encourage fellow United Methodist to STAY in this church and PRAY and WORK for reform and renewal, that God's will be done in His church!

- Adopt this new, stronger stand: "sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage."
- Maintain the current prohibitions of same-sex unions and ordination of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals."

The UMC avoided the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ's courses, whose liberalized poli-

cies on sexual ethics and Scriptural authority have caused splits.

In the 2012 General Conference, about 40 percent of the delegates will come from outside the U.S., mostly from Africa. Support for traditional Christian sexual ethics should be stronger in 2012; most overseas delegates are theologically conservative. Some pro-homosexuality activists said 2008 was their last chance to change the church's stand.

One pro-homosexuality publication declared: "Gays and their allies struggle with decision on whether to stay and fight or leave UMC after church reaffirms anti-gay policies."



ACTION: Bible-believing United Methodists still have work to do: defeat dangerous Constitutional amendments to be voted on at the 2009 Annual Conferences; hold the new Judicial Council majority accountable to uphold church law; and encourage our church to stop acting like a political party.

Summer 2008

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Photo: Activists protest the vote maintaining the Biblical standards on marriage & sex. (IRD/Rebekah Sharpe)



More Good News: Positive General Conference Votes

UMAction celebrates that the 2008 General Conference:

- Defeated a Discipline change that would have required pastors to grant immediate church membership and eligibility for congregational leadership positions to anyone who demands this.

- Overwhelmingly rejected the proposals for divestment against Israel.

- Greatly strengthened the UMC's recognition of the negative consequences of divorce.

- Called for "assurances" that the politicized National Council of Churches (NCC) will "remain faithful and accountable to the purpose defined in its Constitution," which is for member communions to "make visible their unity given in Christ" through means including "[f]urther[ing] their vocation to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord."

- Condemned sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel.

- Approved a UMC Constitutional amendment that, if approved by the Annual Conferences next year, will allow non-ordained UMC pastors to vote for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates. Most of these Local Pastors serve small

or rural churches. UMAAction believes this is the only positive Constitutional amendment approved by the 2008 General Conference.

- Elected three evangelical UMs to the University Senate, which oversees the seminaries.

- Voted \$2 million for theological education in Africa.

- Required that Ministerial Education Fund payments to United Methodist seminaries "only be used for" the benefit of United Methodist students (rather than general operating expenses).

- Reduced the number of U.S. Bishops by 4, beginning in 2012.

- Preserved the right of any individual United Methodist to submit petitions (proposed legislation) to General Conference.

- Overwhelmingly rejected resolutions to condemn UMAAction.

- Adopted a UMAAction resolution urging restraint in church political involvement, including a call for Christians "to have the humility to be cautious of asserting that God is on their side with regard to specific public policy proposals."



Bad News: More Left-Wing Political Resolutions

Again in 2008, the General Conference adopted dozens of left-leaning political resolutions with little debate, including resolutions to:

- Support "sanctuary churches" and amnesty for all past and future illegal immigrants.

- Declare that minors "must never have access to or opportunity to use guns."

- Support the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming, which the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly rejected.

- Demand that the U.S. military welcome openly "gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender" soldiers.

- Call imprisoned Puerto Rican terrorists "political prisoners" and demand their release.

- Demand that the U.S. government "drop pending charges against other persons" if their



Photo: Activist protesting Biblical standards outside the convention center. (IRD/Loralei Coyle)

crimes were "related to their struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico."

- Decry the "colonialism" of Puerto Rico's commonwealth status.

- Demand an end to U.S. military aid to Israel.

- Endorse a recent "Mission Study" from the United Methodist Women's Division that likens Israelis to Nazis and terrorists.

- Urge cooperation with the International Solidarity Movement, which is devoted to "non-violent, direct-action" for the Palestinian cause.

- Accuse the U.S. of a "global economic agenda that is of, by, and for transnational corporations."

- "Support progressive income taxes."

- Criticize free trade agreements.



General Conference Marginalizes African United Methodists

United Methodism continues to grow in Africa, where nearly one-third of UM members now live. The 2008 General Conference included an unprecedented 192 delegates (out of 992) from Africa, up 84 from last time. There were 42 delegates from the Philippines and 42 from Europe.

The large number of African delegates was crucial for key votes affirming Biblical teaching about sexuality.

“We have feared this for years,” said a spokesman for the pro-homosexuality “Reconciling Ministries Network,” complaining that international delegates are in “clear alliance with the most conservative elements” of the U.S. church and “they are far more conservative than even the average American conservatives, on a wide range of social issues.”

Many U.S. liberals resented the growing African presence.

Some African delegates reported receiving “intimidating notes and pictures” on their desks. One African delegate was angrily told by a liberal US delegate: “Remember, the money for your conference in Africa comes from our conference here.”

Some African delegates had been given plane tickets mandating their departure before the end of General Conference,



Photo: A delegate from the Congo in front of the General Conference alter. (IRD/Loralei Coyle)

and were not present for many important votes on the last day. African UMs, unlike the U.S., could not afford to send alternate delegates.

And unlike U.S. delegates, most African delegates only received General Conference legislation after arriving in Fort Worth. Official daily updates about legislation were published only in English, which about half the African delegates do not speak. Display screen instructions for delegates appeared only in English. During debate on major Constitutional amendments, the simultaneous French audio translation stopped completely. Some overseas delegates said translations were of poor quality or tainted by the translator’s biases.

Elections to the Judicial Council and University Senate resulted in no African representation.



ACTION: Contact the General Commission on the General Conference and urge serious planning now for fair treatment of the African and other overseas delegates in the 2012 General Conference. Commission Chair is Gail Murphy-Geiss; email: gmurphygeiss@comcast.net.

Turnover in Church’s Top Court

United Methodism’s Judicial Council has 5 new members, creating questions about this top court’s willingness to uphold the church’s standards on homosexual behavior. Over the last 8 years, the Judicial Council’s traditionalist majority has enforced the UMC’s stand on Biblical sexual ethics.

All 5 new members were nominated by the Council of Bishops and supported by liberal caucus groups during the General Conference. The bishops declined to nominate any of the incumbents.

Although 30 percent of United Methodists live in Africa, no African now serves on the 9-member Council, which has 8 Americans and 1 Filipino.

The Judicial Council had to make a controversial decision in 2005, when it restored the Rev. Ed Johnson to his Virginia pulpit.

Johnson had been removed from his ministry by Bishop Charlene Kammerer for declining to accept an active, unrepentant homosexual into immediate church membership. The Judicial Council did not address the issue of homosexuality and church membership. But it did affirm the pastor’s authority to decide when a person is ready for church membership. Liberal critics assailed the Johnson decision as “exclusionary.”

Inevitably over the next 4 years, the new Judicial Council will receive cases involving the UMC’s strong stand on homosexuality. How it will rule remains uncertain.



ACTION: Please pray for all members of the Judicial Council, that they will uphold the church’s Book of Discipline and ethical standards.

Small Steps Defending Life and Unborn Children

The General Conference nudged the church in a more pro-life direction, but barely failed to end United Methodism's ties to an abortion rights lobby group, Delegates voted to:

- Affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion."

- Replace language about "devastating damage" from "unacceptable pregnanc[ies]" with the affirmation that "we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child."

- Oppose abortions done for "trivial reasons."

- Describe abortion as "violent."

- Call for action against the global problem of sex-selective abortions.

- State our church's concerns about eugenics, including opposition to fertility treatment practices that selectively kill embryos with undesired genetic traits.

- "Reject euthanasia and pressure upon the dying to end their lives."

In contrast, continued United Methodist membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) was sustained by 52-48%, the narrowest margin ever. RCRC opposes any restrictions on abortion. While RCRC prevailed by just 32 votes (out of 800 cast), the vote was scheduled on the last day, when over 100 African delegates (who tend to be more pro-life) were absent.

RCRC made a huge effort to woo delegates, but almost certainly would have been defeated if the vote had been taken earlier.



Photo: A lobbyist for RCRC in front of the Convention Center. (IRD/Loralei Coyle)

The close vote was also influenced by misleading statements. An RCRC-produced flyer asserted that the group had "never" "supported the use of partial-birth abortion." Bishop Beverly Shamana of San Francisco asserted, "RCRC does not support late-term abortion." In fact, RCRC has since the mid-1990s consistently lobbied against all partial-birth abortion limits (working against the UMC, which opposes these abortions). Committee chair Fred Brewington of New York listed the American Baptist Churches as an RCRC member denomination. They actually severed ties with RCRC in 1988.



ACTION: To learn more about RCRC, visit the group's own website (www.rcrc.org) and the Renewal & Reform Coalition's web page on RCRC, now available at www.theird.org or check out CareNet CPC network.

ACTION: Study the United Methodist Church's Book of Resolutions. Respectfully tell your Bishop, your Pastor, and other church members your opinions about how your church is being used to promote a one-sided political agenda.

Liberals Denounce UMAction

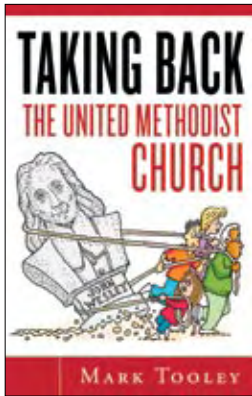
U.S. delegates were mailed a "Renewal or Ruin" DVD that attacks UMAction with fictional imagination – and even asserts that UMAction (a) is controlled by Roman Catholics and (b) is linked to the Ku Klux Klan (an amazing alliance, if it were true). It features Bishop Beverly Shamana of San Francisco, retired Bishop Ken Carder, and Jim Winkler, head of the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS). Winkler dramatically asserts that UMAction "is really a snake that's sunk its fangs into the paw or into the blood of the big dog [his metaphor for the UMC] and is slowly trying to poison it."

When the UM Renewal and Reform Coalition unconditionally gave cell phones to non-US delegates, some liberal church officials alleged "bribery" and "manipulation." African delegates expressed appreciation for the phones and said nothing was asked for in return.

After the conference, the GBCS angrily lamented its failure to change church teaching on homosexuality and denounced the Renewal and Reform Coalition which included UMAction.

ACTION: Contact GBCS General Secretary Jim Winkler and urge him to represent the whole church, not just his own views; email: jwinkler@umc-gbcs.org.

“Take it Back!” Says Tooley



After years of research, *Taking Back the United Methodist Church* by UMAction Executive Director Mark Tooley has been published by Bristol House.

Tooley chronicles nearly 20 years of struggle to restore the United Methodist Church to traditional Christian beliefs.

Tooley walks the reader through how church bureaucrats channeled missions dollars to pro-Marxist groups, how bishops have promoted homosexuality, how the church’s lobby office promotes radical political causes in the nation’s capital, and some seminary professors’ denial of Christ’s deity. Tooley’s book gives the story **BEHIND** the story.

You can read how the Holy Spirit is taking back United Methodism and restoring it to what John Wesley first envisioned.

We are pleased to be able to offer UMAction readers a special opportunity; with a donation to UMAction of at least \$50, we will ship *Taking Back the United Methodist Church* to you right away. This is the book that every United Methodist needs to read. Please call the UMAction office at 202-682-4131 or sign on www.TheIRD.org to take advantage of this special offer. ❖

“Mark Tooley has been one of the significant players in the renewal movement in The United Methodist Church. In this book he gives a clear overview of his work and the work of UMAction to restore United Methodism to its historic role as an Apostolic Church. Taking back The United Methodist Church is one of the markers in the Renewal Movement.”

– Dr. Ira Gallaway, former General Secretary of the Board of Evangelism



Photo: Mark Tooley signs books at a reception during the General Conference. (IRD/Loralei Coyle)

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

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

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

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

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"Trojan Horse" Coming Soon

Dangerous UMC Constitutional amendments were barely approved at General Conference – but won't be adopted unless they are ratified by two-thirds of the total votes at the UMC Annual Conferences in 2009.

One would amend paragraph 4 of the UMC Constitution potentially mandating automatic church membership to all applicants, denying pastoral discretion. Potentially, judicial activists on the UM Judicial Council could exploit this amendment to overturn the UMC's prohibition of homosexual ordination. This amendment originated with the pro-homosexuality Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN).

Also approved was a set of 23 Constitutional amendments on the global UMC, designed to create a new U.S.-only "regional conference" excluding overseas delegates. Liberals opposed to United Methodism's Biblical stance on marriage strongly support these amendments, which would reduce or remove the influence of Biblically-minded Africans and other non-U.S. United Methodists. The pro-homosexuality RMN hailed these amendments as "a positive development." Some opponents call them the "segregation amendments."



ACTION: *Urge your pastors and your church's lay representatives at next year's Annual Conference to study carefully these "Trojan Horse" amendments and their serious impact on our church and its teachings about marriage – and to vote "NO" in your 2009 Annual Conference.*

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