

faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

October 2008

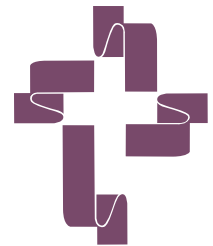
What Would Jesus Think of the Presbyterians?

Reflections on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
General Assembly in San Jose

ALSO INSIDE:

- ▶ Zimbabwe: Devoid of Justice, Praying for Peace
- ▶ Anglican Conservatives Create 'Confessing Movement'





The Institute on Religion & Democracy

1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202.682.4131
Fax: 202.682.4136
Web: www.TheIRD.org
E-mail: info@TheIRD.org

PRESIDENT

James W. Tonkowich

EDITORIAL

Alan F. H. Wisdom
Executive Editor,
Vice President for Research and Programs

Loralei G. Coyle
Managing Editor,
Director of Communications

Kristen M. Seda
Communications Intern

STAFF

James D. Berkley
Director of Presbyterian Action

Joshua Calo
Intern

Nalani E. Hilderman
Senior Executive Assistant

Faith J. H. McDonnell
Director of Religious Liberty Programs

Steve R. Rempe
Website Coordinator

Rebekah M. Sharpe
Administrative Assistant

David P. Sheaffer
Director of Development

Anna Speckhard
Intern

Mark D. Tooley
Director of UMAction

Jeffrey H. Walton
Communications Manager

Jerald H. Walz
Vice President for Operations

Contents

Joseph Williams/ Presbyterian News Service

Features

6 Christians Confer in an Election Year

by Anna Speckhard, Rebekah M. Sharpe, and Nalani E. Hilderman

All sorts of groups try to capitalize on the interest generated in an election year. In 2008 we have seen various attempts to rally religious voters, especially evangelical Christians, on behalf of a cause or candidate.



8 Zimbabwe: Devoid of Justice, Praying for Peace

by Faith J. H. McDonnell

Zimbabwe seeks peace after a violent election. Churches strive to bring healing to a wounded land where Christians have been especially hard hit for siding against the oppressive dictator.



Programs

Presbyterian Action James D. Berkley

10 **Presbyterian General Assembly Stirs Discontent** James D. Berkley and Alan F. H. Wisdom

UMAction Mark D. Tooley

12 **Prominent UM Pastor Endorses Obama** Mark D. Tooley

13 **Charismatic United Methodists Rally at Aldersgate 2008** Rebekah M. Sharpe

Anglican Action

14 **Anglican Conservatives Create 'Confessing Movement'** George Conger

Articles

3 **From the President: Election 2008: Faithfulness, Prudence and Conscience** James W. Tonkowich

15 **IRD Diary: Notes from an Impending Marriage** Steve R. Rempe

COVER: Commissioner Daniel Moore from Donegal Presbytery in Pennsylvania participates in the 2008 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Joseph Williams/ Presbyterian News Service). Moore is related to our Lord and Savior only by adoption.

Election 2008: Faithfulness, Prudence and Conscience

by James W. Tonkowich

We're running out of time and can only put off the necessary decisions a little longer. After Tuesday, November 4, Election Day 2008, those decisions are final. Every candidate for every office at every level has been working hard to tell us for whom we should vote. The gist of every message is basically the same: "Vote for me, and all will be well, and you'll be *really* happy." The candidates' political futures depend on you and me pulling their levers. Our political futures, on the other hand, depend on you and me pulling *the right* levers. At every level – from the president to the proverbial dog catcher – we need to make wise choices.

The key word is "wise." Since we never have perfect candidates, we never have perfectly clear-cut decisions. We need wisdom, and for the Christian voter, wisdom is invariably linked to faithfulness.

That is why I was glad to come across a document put out by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility."¹ The document, while written from a distinctly Roman Catholic point of view, contains basic principles applicable to us all.

Some Christians will decide not to vote at all or will vote in some races, but not others. For example, someone may decide that the major parties have fielded candidates for senator who represent an intolerable choice and so will vote for neither.

While there may be a "principled abstinence," as a rule, such abstinence is a dubious choice. The bishops state that in "the Catholic tradition" – and I would add in the Christian tradition generally – "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." That obligation is rooted in our "commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do."

By God's providential design, we live in a country where we can vote. As voters we are in a position to promote the common good and the just ordering of our society. Neighbor love requires that we do so.

But how do we decide between imperfect options? The bishops suggest that we begin with a well-formed conscience, one rooted in theological and moral truth. They write:

Conscience is not something that allows us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere "feeling" about what we should or should not do. Rather, conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil. Conscience always requires serious attempts to make sound moral judgments based on the truths of our faith.

A great deal of political advertising is aimed at our emotions. Campaigns create ads to make us feel favorably toward one candi-

date and not the other. And we live in a culture that encourages us to rely on feelings rather than reason. Yet feelings can cause us to act rashly and to judge by appearances rather than hard facts, concrete policies and the dictates of reason.

Conscience requires facts and the virtue of prudence to think those facts through. The bishops write:

Prudence enables us "to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1806). Prudence shapes and informs our ability to deliberate over available alternatives, to determine what is most fitting to a specific context, and to act decisively.

One of the principles prudence must keep in mind is the fallacy of moral equivalence. The bishops note that a well-formed conscience guided by prudence "recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that moral obligations to oppose intrinsically evil acts have a special claim on our consciences and our actions."

They outline seven moral priorities that begin with the most important: "The right to life and the dignity of the human person" and "Call to family, community, and participation." Life and family – which includes marriage – are central to a Christian approach to politics. To these they add, in order: rights and their corresponding responsibilities, care for the poor and the vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, solidarity with all humans, and caring for God's creation.

In "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" the bishops go on to apply conscience, prudence and their seven moral priorities to current issues. It is no small task, and even if you or I disagree with their conclusions, the bishops have given us an example of thoughtful consideration of the issues. The alternative to such thoughtful analysis is voting based on our feelings or the dictates of others. These may or may not reflect scriptural truth, reason and prudent judgment and thus may or may not be faithful voting.

We're running out of time and can only put off the necessary decisions a little longer. So before Election Day, set aside time to think through the issues and the candidates. We have the privilege of deciding; we should strive to decide faithfully. ☞

Jim Tonkowich



James W. Tonkowich is the President of the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

International Briefs

Tanzanian Bishop Rebukes World Lutheran Leaders on Homosexuality

Leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) gathered in Arusha, Tanzania, received a rebuke from the host bishop on the matter of same-sex relationships.

Bishop Thomas O. Laiser of the Arusha region criticized conference attendees for failing to address the issue of homosexuality. “What is the witnessing and the stand of the LWF at the moment as the whole question of homosexuality and lesbianism is concerned?” asked Laiser. “It is an undeniable fact that this question is not even discussible, and therefore it is not acceptable.” Earlier in the month, the Lutheran World Federation announced that it would not be taking a position on the candidacy of an openly homosexual man for the office of bishop in Germany.

Laiser said that homosexuality “violates all the principles of what we know about the teachings of the word of God,” adding, “This matter does not only violate the teachings of the Bible, but it is also against the principles of nature.”

The Rev. Mark Hanson, President of the Lutheran World Federation and Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, responded that the federation is addressing the subject in a manner that does not stifle conversation. “I do not think it’s helpful for the LWF as a communion to take a stance on issues that are being discussed in the member churches – discussed in the context of Scripture, discussed in the context of our Lutheran confessions and theology, [and] discussed in the context of our varied [views on] marriage, family, and human sexuality.” ☞

Christians in Algeria Sentenced

On July 3, two Muslim converts to Christianity in western Algeria were convicted of “distributing documents to shake the faith of Muslims,” reports Compass Direct. The case is the most recent example of government efforts to restrict

World Council of Churches (WCC) Criticizes South Korea for ‘Hostile’ Position toward North Korea

World Council of Churches (WCC) leaders have expressed their apprehension to newly-elected South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak concerning his administration’s tough stance against human rights abuses in North Korea.

In his inaugural address, President Lee outlined his “Denuclearization, Opening, and Vision 3000” plan in dealing with North Korea and leader Kim Jong Il. The plan requires North Korea to eliminate its nuclear program and improve its human rights record before receiving financial assistance from the South Korean government. The policy is a reversal of the “sunshine” policy of the two preceding administrations, which resulted in increased investment by South Korea in North Korea, even as North Korea’s record of human rights abuses continued unabated.

WCC General Secretary Samuel Kobia has objected to the new policy as a “cause for

concern and disappointment,” claiming the policy “negates the spirit” of the policies of the previous administrations and could prove a barrier to the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. In a July 1 letter to Lee, Kobia implored the president “to take urgent measures to strengthen inter-Korean relationships without any pre-conditions being demanded by your government.” ☞



OUT OF ORDER! South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak (L) presides over the National Security Council meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul on July 18, 2008. (Dong-a Ilbo/ Republic Of Korea Out Afp Photo/ Newscom)

Christian evangelism.

Rachid Muhammad Essaghir and Djallal Dhamani each received six-month suspended sentences and were fined 100,000 dinars (\$1,660 U.S.). The men were arrested in June for transporting Christian literature between two churches. A law passed in 2006 allows for fines up to one million dinars and up to five years imprisonment for printing, transporting, or storing materials intended to convert Muslims.

In June, four Christians in Tiaret received similar suspended sentences and fines for seeking to convert Muslims. A female convert to Christianity, also in Tiaret, was given a full body search and

interrogated by police regarding her conversion. She has been charged with “practicing non-Muslim religious rites without a license” – a charge her attorney says does not exist in Algerian law.

Dr. Abu Amrane Chikh, head of the government-appointed Islamic Higher Council, has claimed that Christianity is “unacceptable” because it challenges the faith of the majority of Algerians. “[Evangelists’] distant political goal is to create a Christian minority coupled with some foreign institutions,” Chikh said. “This is a new form of colonization that is hidden behind freedom of worship.” ☞

Church Union Group Flounders

Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) has eliminated its director position and is struggling financially after the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church ended their participation in the group, reports the Religion News Service.

For decades after its inception in 1962, under the name Consultation on Church Union (COCU), the organization was the focus for dreams of a mega-denomination uniting America's then-mainline Protestant churches. But as those denominations have diminished and lost confidence, so has COCU.

When it became CUIC in 2002, it was supposed to concentrate on racial issues. But according to two African-American denominations within the group, it has failed to do even that.

Bishop E. Earl McCloud Jr., ecumenical officer for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, charged that CUIC has not supported black leadership within its work – tending to offer African-Americans vice presidential posts – and sometimes has not placed people on its racial justice task force who have the authority to act on behalf of their denominations. CUIC leaders acknowledge that the organization has

fallen short of its goals.

Other denominations affiliated with CUIC are the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the International Council of Community Churches, the Moravian Church Northern Province, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. ☞

Virginia Ruling Favors Departing Episcopal Parishes

A Virginia court has issued a second ruling in favor of seven departing Episcopal churches by recognizing the constitutionality of a Virginia statute on religious division. Judge Randy Bellows had already ruled in April that a religious division had occurred, and that the statute is applicable to this case. The Episcopal Church and the diocese are expected to appeal.

The case centers on a Civil War-era statute that allows congregations in the midst of a religious body division to determine with which branch to associate themselves through a majority vote. A majority of members in the seven churches had voted to sever their ties to the Episcopal Church following disputes

Church News

over reinterpretation of Scripture, but they had voted to remain within the Anglican Communion.

In April, the court recognized that the Virginia churches were part both of the Episcopal Church and the larger Anglican Communion. It determined therefore that they had the right to attach themselves to another body and had the right to take the parish property with them to another Anglican body. The court will hear the full case on the question of property ownership this fall.

The case was noteworthy outside of Anglican circles because of the attention it attracted from other denominations. Several denominations, concerned about property allocation and the maintenance of the hierarchical nature of their denominations, submitted or signed on to *amicus* briefs on behalf of the Episcopal Church.

These denominations included the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Worldwide Church of God. ☞

Man Sues over Bible Translation

An Ohio man is suing two Bible publishers, claiming some editions of the Bibles put out by the companies call homosexuality sinful, which has led him to suffer discrimination, emotional pain and mental instability.

The *Grand Rapids Press* reports that Bradley LaShawn Fowler is seeking \$60 million from Michigan-based Zondervan and another \$10 million from Thomas Nelson Publishing in the lawsuits filed in U.S. District Court. Zondervan publishes the widely used New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible while Tennessee-based Thomas Nelson produces the New King James Version (NKJV).

Fowler claims that the two publishers deliberately made changes to 1 Corinthians 6:9. (“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders...”) The translations’ references to homosexuality as a sin have made him an outcast from his family and contributed to physical discomfort and periods of “demoralization, chaos and bewilderment.”

The intent of the publisher was to design a religious, sacred document to reflect an individual opinion or a group’s conclusion to cause “me or anyone who is a homosexual to endure verbal abuse, discrimination, episodes of hate, and physical violence ... including murder,” Fowler wrote.

U.S. District Judge Julian Abele Cook, Jr., has refused to appoint an attorney to represent Fowler in his case against Thomas Nelson. “The Court has some very genuine concerns about the nature and efficacy of these claims,” the judge wrote. ☞



Christians Confer in an Election Year

All sorts of groups try to capitalize on the interest generated in an election year. In 2008 we have seen various attempts to rally religious voters, especially evangelical Christians, on behalf of a cause or candidate. Below are excerpted reports on three such events.

'Envision '08: The Gospel, Politics, and the Future' by Anna Speckhard

How should Christians engage the public square? This ever-timely question drew over 500 attendees to Princeton University on June 8–10. At the Envision conference, the primary answer to that question was negative: Christians should not engage in the manner of the “religious right.”

Barnard College professor Randall Balmer spoke of trying to “reclaim the term evangelical from the religious right.” Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, referred to the Republican Party as “one party of which I’ve been a part ... forgive me.” Cizik urged Christians to broaden their political agenda to include issues like poverty, war and global warming.

There is no question that the religious right ought to be critiqued. Too many Christians have ventured into the public square without a solid theological base, resulting in inconsistency and an injurious witness. Envision '08 had the potential to offer that kind of base. But this potential was never realized.

In a plenary session on “The Politics of Jesus,” the entire task of formulating orthodox theology was belittled. New York Theological Seminary professor Obery Hendricks, Jr., faulted conservative evangelicals for being too concerned with orthodoxy and not interested enough in “righteousness, justice and steadfast love.”

Outside the parameters of historical orthodoxy, what do those words mean? What are righteousness, justice and love? How do we practice them? The only way Christians can get thorough answers is to dig deeply into the Bible and the Christian tradition, but Hendricks discouraged that

endeavor by calling into question the integrity of the Bible itself.

Jesus and Paul, Hendricks asserted, are in fundamental disagreement: Jesus talked about the poor; Paul talked about sinners. Jesus went up against the Roman Empire and was crucified; Paul taught in Romans 13 that Christians need to submit to the governing authorities. Christians, Hendricks said, need to choose whom they are going to follow: Jesus or Paul. Not surprisingly, Hendricks encouraged people to choose Jesus. Also not surprisingly, the “politics of Jesus” looked a lot like American liberal politics.

The day after the conference, the organizers issued a statement emphasizing Envision’s contrast to other Christians in politics: “In recent times, some have used Christianity to divide us from one another and demonize others. They have placed Christianity on the side of the powerful against the powerless. *Envision* inaugurates a new relation between our faith and our politics. In a spirit of humility and hospitality, we seek to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God and each other.”

The statement sounds lofty, but again the Envision conference gave no hint of a theological framework to back up this claim of “a new relation between our faith and our politics.” During the conference, the religious right was consistently denigrated, but there were few reasons to hope that Envision and movements like it will avoid becoming the religious left, which, rather than broadening the evangelical political agenda, will merely attempt to shift it from conservative to liberal. ■



Anna Speckhard was a summer intern from the John Jay Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Sojourners' 'Pentecost 2008' by Rebekah M. Sharpe

Over 200 liberal religious activists gathered June 13–15 for Jim Wallis’ “Pentecost 2008” conference in Washington, D.C. This year’s Sojourners/Call to Renewal event focused on national and local networking to mobilize voters. The ambitious goal was to “Vote Out Poverty,” presumably by electing candidates who would further expand welfare state programs.

Peggy Flanagan from the “progressive” Wellstone Action instructed the crowd: “Voter registration and voter turnout are going to be the keys to us building this movement. Only half the people in this country turn out and vote, and are those the folks turning out right now that we want to make decisions for us? Nope, because there’s still poverty.”

Flanagan tutored her audience on how to register voters from local churches. She told participants to introduce themselves, comment on the problem of poverty, offer the solution of voting out poverty, and then make the “ask” – “Can I count on you to vote against poverty?” Flanagan asserted, “Being that this is faith-based, we have God on our side, and don’t be afraid to talk about it!”

Chuck Gutenson, previously an Asbury Seminary professor and currently Sojourners’ chief operating officer, instructed participants to “look at public policy to achieve the goals that God” has. Gutenson remarked that Christ was “not partisan ... but was concerned about the life of the *polis* [city].” He said that atonement for sin may not have been the “primary” reason for Christ’s incarnation, but more importantly, “Jesus comes to show us the life that pleases God.”

There was a sense of excitement about the coming election. Sojourners’ Senior

Political Director Adam Taylor remarked, "I believe many of you feel the electricity in the air of what I think is the most important election of my entire life." Emerging Church guru Brian McLaren echoed the sentiment: "I've got a lot of hope about this election. I think some things could change ... but you can't put your trust in human beings. We [Christians] put our trust in the living God."

Retired United Methodist minister and activist James Lawson discerned God's hand at work: "Whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not ... our nation is experiencing one of those things that I like to call an infilling of God." Lawson hailed a "convolution of history that no one understands – no one predicted this," which "caused a young, 46-year-old man [Barack Obama] to put his name forward."

Lawson warned that this moment of opportunity to elect Obama is also "a moment of peril and danger." He claimed that "according to sociologists, 50 million white Americans today live with this fundamental spiritual reality" of believing that black people were not "made by the same God." The Sojourners speaker decried "the Jim Dobson and Pat Robertson version of Christianity" that "is not about Jesus, it is about white male domination!"



Rebekah M. Sharpe is an Administrative Assistant for the UMAction program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



**Grove City College
'Church & State 2008'
by Nalani E. Hilderman**

This April 10–11 conference at conservative Grove City College did not feature any endorsements of candidates. It instead looked at larger issues in the relationship between Christian faith and public policy.

Michael Cromartie of the Ethics and Public Policy Center addressed the "God gap" that has appeared along party lines, with religious people voting more Republican and the non-religious voting Democratic. Cromartie noted that the gap now comes from a fundamental disagreement over the nature of religious faith and what role it demands of us "concerning the proper direction of our public policies." In an attempt to quell the conflicts over these differences, Cromartie suggested that Democrats need to calm and control the "secular warriors" in their party, while Republicans need to make sure that libertarians and non-believers in the party still feel at home.

Dr. Shawn Ritenour, Associate Professor of Economics at Grove City, offered a biblical perspective in support of private property and a free economy. The prin-

ciple of private property is found in the first few pages of Genesis and supported throughout Scripture, according to Ritenour. Therefore, intervention by the state is not only potentially harmful, but ultimately unethical. Ritenour argued that a proper biblical perspective is one in which "the Church is the Church" and does the work of caring for the less fortunate that the state has more recently assumed.

A panel of three Grove City professors explored the history of public education and its present problems. They suggested that a beneficial educational system is one that supports parents in the upbringing of their children. The public school system founded by progressive educators in the mid-19th century has veered drastically off course and taken control away from parents, according to the professors. They agreed that the U.S. educational system would be enhanced through a voucher program that allowed parents to make decisions about the education of their children.



Nalani E. Hilderman is a Senior Executive Assistant at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



Zimbabwe: Devoid of Justice, Praying for Peace

by Faith J. H. McDonnell

Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe's three decades of dictatorship in all but name seemed to be nearing an end on Election Day, March 29, 2008. Many voters were opposed to the 84 year-old president and head of the Zimbabwe Africa National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) winning yet another term.

Contender Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), offered hope for Zimbabweans. But hope faded throughout April as Zimbabweans waited for election results.

Finally, more than a month after the election, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) reported Tsvangirai with 47.9 and Mugabe with 43.2 percent of the vote. Lacking the outright majority required

by Zimbabwe law, Tsvangirai had to participate in a run-off with Mugabe, which the ZANU-PF hard-liners had no intention of losing.

"Deputy Information Minister Bright Matonga declared ... that while ZANU-PF had 'let the president down' in the first round, it would rebound to 'win' a decisive victory in the second: 'We only applied 25 percent of our energy in the first round ... [The run-off] is when we are going to unleash the other 75 percent,'" Dr. J. Pe-

ter Pham reported in the *World Defense Review*.

"Unleash it" they did, attacking, raping, torturing and murdering MDC supporters throughout the country. According to the U.S. Department of State even worship has "become dangerous for many Zimbabweans following a split in the Anglican Church between two bishops, one a loyal ZANU-PF supporter."

Dr. Nolbert Kunonga, who had been teaching liberation theology at Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Seminary, defeated the white archdeacon of Harare, Canon Tim Neill, in what has been described as a "racially-charged" election for bishop in 2001. Reportedly the country's secret police sought Neill's defeat because he had denounced the regime's human rights abuses.

As bishop, Kunonga aligned the Diocese of Harare with the government and "drove off the diocese's white Zimbabwean clergy and purged its ranks of those deemed disloyal to the regime," according to Anglican scholar George Conger in *Christianity Today*. This "thug bishop" then ordained members of the secret police, Zimbabwe's vice president and two members of Mugabe's cabinet – all of whom lacked theological training – to replace the clergy he had driven out.

In January 2008, Kunonga declared himself the head of the "Anglican Church of Zimbabwe," independent of Canterbury and the Central African Province. The province declared his seat vacant and appointed retired bishop Sebastian Bakare as interim.

The Mugabe regime retaliated against the churches. "Anglican worshipers in Zimbabwe are routinely being arrested and beaten, churches are being padlocked

"Anglican worshipers in Zimbabwe are routinely being arrested and beaten, churches are being padlocked by police..."

WHO'S DELUDED? (ABOVE): Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai should not "delude" himself into thinking the result of the June poll could be expunged from the record books and should renounce his claims to the presidency. (Alexander Joe/ AFP Photo/ Newscom)

by police, diocesan bank accounts have been frozen, and clergy vehicles are being seized,” reported the Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts, to the *Boston Globe*.

Shaw’s report echoes a May 16, 2008 *New York Times* report of a police attack on St. Francis’ Anglican Church, Harare, during a Sunday Communion service. “Helmeted, black-booted officers banged on the pews with their batons as terrified members of the congregation stampeded for the doors,” witnesses said.

“As a theologian who has read a lot about the persecution of the early Christians, I’m really feeling connected to that history. We are being persecuted,” Bishop Bakare told the newspaper.

Anglicans are the most recent church leaders who have spoken out courageously about Zimbabwe. In 2006 the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference issued a letter calling for a new national vision for the country.

It would be “great to live in a country where you can associate with any political party of your choice without fearing victimization, being tortured or raped, or having bombs thrown into your house,” says Dr. Roy Musasiwa, one of the contributors to the national vision discussion letter. Musasiwa told *Christianity Today* that, due to Zimbabwe’s Public Order and

Security Act, Christians who gather for prayer without permission face punishment, as it is a criminal offense for groups of more than three to gather without permission from the police.

In 2007, nine Roman Catholic bishops issued an Easter statement comparing Zimbabwe’s current regime to those in the colonial era that maintained through bloodshed “their privileges of power and wealth against those demanding democratic rights.”

Mugabe responded that these bishops had become “political entities” and would be dealt with as such. Not long after the letter’s release, one of the signatories, Pius Ncube, Archbishop of Bulawayo, an outspoken critic of Mugabe, was accused of adultery. The apparent truth of the allegations compromised Ncube’s bold moral opposition to Mugabe. He resigned as archbishop in September of 2007.

WCC Turnabout

Even the World Council of Churches, which in years past lent ideological and financial support to Mugabe, has denounced the country’s current violence and human rights abuses. Dr. Samuel Kobia, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, requested WCC member churches observe a day of prayer for Zimbabwe on Sunday, June 22, 2008, a week before the run-off election. “Events in the coming weeks will challenge the

people of Zimbabwe and the world to find means of overcoming violence in the exercise of democracy, and the results will influence the future of the nation and the region,” Kobia said.

The climate of fear caused by the violence, torture, rape and killing of his supporters forced Tsvangirai to pull out of the race. Mugabe “won” another term as president on June 29, 2008.

Despite the ongoing intimidation, however, Christian workers said the ministry of the church continues. Because Mugabe has banished outside humanitarian relief agencies, churches are working to provide food for the hungry, as well as to offer spiritual comfort and prayer for the country.

“There is such a huge need for love and care, and people are seeing the emptiness of political solutions. The Scripture suddenly comes alive when you’re in a situation of abuse and suffering,” said Tom Jackson, a missionary to Zimbabwe for 29 years, in an October 2007 *Christianity Today* article.

The churches are also taking the lead in courageously rejecting Mugabe’s victory as legitimate. While the WCC cautioned against sanctions, the Southern African churches expressed overwhelming support for targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe “as a practical strategy to loosen former President Robert Mugabe’s ‘illegitimate’ grip on power and to promote a negotiated political settlement,” Ecumenical News International reported on July 17, 2008.

When tyrants fall, we can be assured behind whatever political events have taken place, God has heard the prayers of his people. We should pray with our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe that peace and justice may finally come to their weary land. ☒



Faith J. H. McDonnell is the Director of Religious Liberty Programs at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

Presbyterian General Assembly Stirs Discontent

by James D. Berkley and Alan F. H. Wisdom

Difficult news emanated from the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, held June 21–28 in San Jose. Other than smatterings of hope about increased evangelism and missionary efforts, a number of other decisions were either predictably lame or deeply troubling. Here are a few topics in brief.

Ordination Standards Assaulted

Perhaps the most shocking news was the attempted wholesale dismantling of sexual standards for ordination. Four separate actions approved by the assembly were intended to pave the way for routine ordinations of persons neither chaste in singleness nor faithful in the marriage of a man and a woman.

The assembly rendered “of no force or effect” an “authoritative interpretation” (AI) that had barred the ordination of practicing homosexual persons. It then set in place a new AI to overrule a judicial decision that had prevented “local

option” on such unlawful ordinations. Moreover, the assembly set in motion a constitutional process to remove from the Book of Order the “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness” provision. It also sought to remove from the Heidelberg Catechism a citation of the 1 Corinthians 6 warning against “homosexual perversion.” Both constitutional changes will require presbytery approval.

Other than smatterings of hope about increased evangelism and missionary efforts, a number of other decisions were either predictably lame or deeply troubling.

Per Capita Money Secure for NCC, WCC

The General Assembly turned down three presbytery overtures that would have ended the practice of using per capita apportionments to fund large grants to ecumenical bodies. By a vote of 526-148, the commissioners decided not to “[t]ransfer any funding of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s involvement in ecumenical agency relationships from the Per Capita budget of the Office of the General Assembly to the Mission budget of the General Assembly.”

Thus, \$1.1 million in unrestricted grants will continue to flow to various ecumenical organizations. These include the World Council of Churches (WCC, slated to receive \$458,000 in the 2008 per capita budget), the National Council of Churches (NCC, \$300,000), and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, \$233,000).

Committee moderator George Kimm stressed the importance of the denomination’s commitment to Christian unity. “To be Presbyterian is to be engaged in ecumenical work,” he proclaimed.

“Since congregations are all but required to contribute their share of per capita budget,” one of the overture rationales countered, “the plethora of items currently included in the per capita budget – some of which are highly controversial – causes much of the greatest resistance to giving by congregations. While a congregation might be completely willing to supply the basic governmental functions our Constitution requires, they would not be willing to be forced to fund causes and activities not in keeping with their conscience.”

A parade of ecclesiastical notables lined up to defend

Assembly Leaves Marriage Intact

The General Assembly decided against an attempt to redefine Christian marriage. By a 540-161 vote, commissioners disapproved an overture from Baltimore Presbytery that would have substituted “two people” wherever the Book of Order now speaks of marriage between “a woman and a man.”



Proponents and opponents of same-sex marriage line up to testify before a General Assembly committee.

Proponents of same-sex marriage championed the overture as recognizing an equal “right to marry” whomever a person pleased. “We have every right—each one of us—to pursue happiness in any way we see fit,” said Youth Advisory Delegate Keith Coombs from Albany. Minister Commissioner Carl Mazza from New Castle Presbytery argued, “The world is moving ahead on this [same-sex marriage], and if we don’t engage it, we lose a lot of who we are as a church.”

Opponents noted the lack of biblical justification for redefining marriage. Recalling Jesus’ citation of the Genesis 2 account of how “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,” Elder Commissioner Rick Boogard of Seattle declared, “I think we have to obey”

our Lord’s understanding of marriage.

Many worried that blessing same-sex marriage might provoke schism. Beloved former moderator Marj Carpenter warned commissioners in a trembling voice: “If you want to completely shatter this denomination, vote for that [Baltimore] amendment. . . . Please, God, vote no!”

These concerns probably made the full assembly vote more lopsided. The Church Polity Committee, by contrast, was more conflicted. It rejected by 30-28 a motion to respond to Baltimore with a reaffirmation of Christian marriage. Then it turned around and defeated the overture by 34-26. The committee commented that it “disapprove[d] the overture at this time, while trusting that the PCUSA will continue to seek ways and means to seek God’s blessing for alternative forms of covenant between two people.” Elder Commissioner John Sterner from Lake Michigan remarked, “What this comment really says is that we didn’t have the guts to pass it [same-sex marriage] at this time, but we hope somebody else will do it.”

Possibly toward that end, the General Assembly approved another overture establishing a special committee to study “the place of covenanted same-gender partnerships in the Christian community.” An amendment specified that this overture “does not seek to redefine the nature of Christian marriage.” But a determined study committee could easily overstep that limitation. Presbyterian Action, which spoke and wrote against the Baltimore overture, will be watching the study committee closely. ☞

the ecumenical grants, including former PCUSA moderator and NCC president Syngman Rhee, former NCC president and Presbyterian minister Michael Livingston, and the current NCC General Secretary Michael Kinnamon.

Social Creed for the 21st Century Approved

Despite Presbyterian Action opposition, the Social Creed for the 21st Century sailed by a mainly uncomprehending assembly by a 5:1 vote ratio. This “creed” is not a new Presbyterian confession, but rather is billed as “a synopsis of existing policy.” It originated in the PCUSA Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and came to fruition in the National Council of Churches.

The Social Creed is littered with one-sided political assertions itching for challenge by an alternative Christian perspective. For example:

- Churches are urged to work for “public education for all, and universal, affordable and accessible health care,” apparently demeaning private education

and health care.

- The creed insists on “[e]mployment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work,” despite silence about who will determine and guarantee such privileges.

- The 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 creed appears to be siding with the “fair trade” movement, which, with NCC support, has repeatedly rejected free trade agreements.

- The creed demands “binding covenants to reduce global warming,” without addressing the possibility that such covenants, if enforced, might do grave damage to the global economy without significantly altering temperature trends.

The creed makes no mention of concerns usually identified with more conservative Christian viewpoints, such as burdensome taxes, rogue regimes abroad, moral relativism, the abortion of unborn

children, and the erosion of marriage as a fundamental social institution.

Presbyterian Action sought to obtain a better result, went on record decrying the assembly’s actions, and will labor to undo and prevent the harm this faithless set of decisions could cause. ☞



James D. Berkley is the Director of the Presbyterian Action program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



Alan F. H. Wisdom is the Vice President for Research and Programs at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.



Prominent UM Pastor Endorses Obama

by Mark D. Tooley

Early this year, black megachurch pastor and presidential spiritual advisor Kirbyjon Caldwell endorsed Barack Obama. The endorsement seemed not to have hurt Caldwell's friendship with George W. Bush, whom he had endorsed in 2000 and 2004. Caldwell conducted the wedding for Bush's daughter at the Bush ranch in May. More recently, Caldwell unveiled a website initiative to enlist pastors nationwide for Obama.

Meanwhile, pro-Obama gay groups have complained about Caldwell's church and its stance on homosexuality. Caldwell pastors the largest United Methodist congregation in the world, with over 14,000

members at Windsor Village Church in Houston. After Caldwell's Obama endorsement, gay groups discovered that his church hosted a ministry that offers "Christ-centered instruction for those seeking freedom from homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, sex addiction

and other habitual sins."

Called Metanoia and headed by a woman on staff at Caldwell's church, the ministry advertised on its web link that its objective was "to assist participants in understanding that change is possible. In doing this, a safe, nurturing and accepting environment will be created whereby participants will be able to deal with issues without fear of judgment or rejection. Partici-

pants will be encouraged to exercise their faith in the saving, healing and delivering power of God through Jesus Christ and to see themselves as God sees them."

Gay groups warned against any Obama association with Caldwell. Politico.com contacted Caldwell, who apparently declined to defend the ministry. "I got to tell you, this is going to sound real stupid, but I didn't know it was on our website," Caldwell explained. "I was surprised and embarrassed by it. I'm embarrassed from the standpoint that I should have known. We have 120 ministries at the church. You can't be on top of everything."

Caldwell insisted: "It's not a ministry of the church. It is not supported financially by the church. It is not located at the church. That is pretty much where I am with it." Caldwell gave a statement to Americablog.com declaring: "Neither Senator Obama nor his staff knew of this outside ministry, nor have they expressed any agreement with my church's beliefs on gay rights. I support Senator Obama because of his ability to bring Americans together, not because of our agreement or disagreement on any one issue." Americablog.com reported that the Obama campaign had assured it that Caldwell would not be invited to campaign for Obama or appear with him.

When Politico.com asked Caldwell whether he supported same-sex unions, he responded: "I would need to check with the church." The Metanoia ministry was removed from the church's website, though the listed contact person for it, Barbara Hicks, seems to remain as part of the church's Prayer Institute. ■

Americablog.com reported that the Obama campaign had assured it that Caldwell would not be invited to campaign for Obama or appear with him.

California UM Retired Clergy Offer to Conduct Same-Sex Unions

Eighty retired United Methodist clergy in northern California have announced their willingness to defy United Methodism's ban on same-sex rites. In response, California-Nevada Conference Bishop Beverly Shamana, who is retiring, ruled an annual conference resolution in support of these clergy out of order.

Meanwhile, at their recent annual conference, the southern California United Methodists resoundingly supported California's new homosexual marriages. The California Pacific Conference "support[ed] same-gender couples who enter into the marriage covenant and encourage both congregations and pastors to welcome, embrace and provide spiritual nurture and pastoral care for these families." It also urged Californians to vote against the referendum measure this fall which would confine marriage to one man and one woman.

At least one southern California pastor seemed prepared to risk charges by conducting same-sex unions. The Church at Ocean Park, a small United Methodist congregation in Santa

Monica, announced that on July 6 it would host a "Love Celebration" to honor "all couples – gay and straight – and their commitments to each other."

However, no same-sex couples directly participated. The Rev. Janet McKeithen told the *Santa Monica Mirror*: "On reflection, I realize that it would be difficult [for homosexuals] to trust a church when churches have been oppressing gay and lesbian people for thousands of years."

The 84,000-member California Pacific Conference reported that it lost over 2,200 members last year, continuing a 45-year trend of decline. The California-Nevada Conference in the north has suffered similar losses. Methodism in California over the last 40 years, during which the state doubled in population, has lost half its church membership. ☞



Mark D. Tooley is the Director of the UMAction program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

Charismatic United Methodists Rally at Aldersgate 2008

Frontier Americans referred to John Wesley's adherents as the "shouting Methodists" because of their expressive worship. Aldersgate Renewal Ministries continued that tradition at its 2008 conference. The conference's theme, "Going Deeper: Re-digging the Ancient Wells," alluded to Isaac's use of the wells his father, Abraham, had dug and to United Methodism's rich but often untapped spiritual heritage.

Holston Conference Bishop James Swanson empathized with the many who "go to churches where you feel you are the only one who believes that God can still bring water out of a dry well." Swanson declared, "I do believe that God is telling us in the midst of those dead and dry situations, 'Don't lose hope!'"



The bishop preached from Ezekiel 27. There, God instructs Ezekiel to "prophesy" to the bones, observed Swanson, because "[t]he word gets them organized and they at least begin to look like they can function as a live being." But, he expounded, God must breathe life into the body before it moves beyond the mere appearance of the church. Swanson said, "We're trying to have a church without the spirit of almighty God.... [If] a man or a woman doesn't know God, they can't react. It is only by the Spirit of God that a dead person ... comes alive!"

The bishop said Methodists should "quit worrying about what the left side of the church is doing, and what the right side of the church is doing, and start worrying about what God is doing, and get of one accord!"

Dr. Gary Moore, Executive Director of Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, expressed the concern that "[a] whole lot of us are trying to be in ministry to the whole world without the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

J. Lee Grady, editor of *Charisma* magazine, emphasized, "Folks, we are in a war. It's not against flesh and blood; it's not against people. We have enemies in the spiritual realm." Grady advised, "God gave us spiritual gifts for spiritual war."

Over 1,100 people attended the July 2-6 event in Columbus, OH, which celebrated Aldersgate's 30th year of ministry. Aldersgate operates under the United Methodist Board of Discipleship in Nashville. ☞



Rebekah M. Sharpe is an Administrative Assistant for the UMAction program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

Anglican Conservatives Create ‘Confessing Movement’

by George Conger

Anglican conservatives have de-throned the Archbishop of Canterbury as spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion and have created a confessing movement body that centers upon common doctrinal beliefs rather than a common historical heritage within the 80-million member church.

Delegates attending the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) endorsed the “Jerusalem Declaration” – a 14-point manifesto that sets the foundations for a reform fellowship within the largest Christian denomination in the world after Roman Catholics and the Orthodox.

The 1,200 delegates, including 291 bishops, also denounced the Episcopal Church for teaching a “false gospel” and for having “defied” church teaching by denying the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and promoting a “variety of sexual preferences and immoral behavior.”

The conference announced the creation of a “confessing movement” that will provide a haven for traditionalists unhappy with the liberal tilt of the U.S. and Canadian churches, and a “Primates’ Council” of archbishops to oversee the new movement.

Greatest Crisis since the Reformation

“We are a global Communion with a colonial structure,” the delegates declared, sloughing off the control of the London-centered church in the greatest crisis within the Anglican Church since the Reformation. Called “pilgrims,” the delegates to GAFCON were at the forefront of a “new reformation,” Archbishop of Rwanda Emmanuel Kolini said – one that would take Anglicans back to the Bible.

While the situation remains dire, with Anglican churches breaking relations with one another and churches in the West in numerical decline, it was not past saving. “Jesus will never let down the Anglican Communion,” Archbishop Henry Orombi of Uganda averred, but will “send hope where hope is very small.”

No immediate changes would be seen in the United States, observed Bishop David Anderson – a former California Episcopal priest recently consecrated a bishop by the

Nigerian Church. However, he expected that over the coming year the structures would be set in place for the creation of a new province of Anglicans recognized by the GAFCON Primates’ Council.

A Bulwark against Revisionism

The Jerusalem Declaration restates traditional Anglican teaching on the Bible, ethics and church order – but also “rejects the authority” of church leaders and institutions that have “denied the orthodox faith in word.”

The failure of the Archbishop of Canterbury to discipline the U.S. church had made the situation worse, the GAFCON delegates argued. While recognizing his historic role, they said they did “not accept that Anglican identity” was “determined necessarily through recognition” by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Signers of the Jerusalem Declaration said the document was not the start of a schism or formal split within the Anglican Communion. “Anglicans we are, Anglicans we’ll remain until the Lord shall return in glory to judge each one according to his deeds,” Archbishop of Nigeria Peter Akinola affirmed in his June 22 opening address.

Africa would not succumb to the revisionist “apostasy,” Akinola proclaimed. “Having survived the inhuman physical slavery of the 19th century, the political slavery called colonialism of the 20th century, the developing world economic enslavement [of today], we cannot, we dare not, allow ourselves and the millions we represent be kept in religious and spiritual dungeon.”

“[We are] not saying we are the only faithful Anglicans,” explained Sydney Archbishop Peter Jensen. Nor does the movement form a “church within a church.” Jensen opined that the best historical analogy for GAFCON and the Jerusalem Declaration was the 19th century evangelical revival or the Anglo-Catholic movements within the Church of England – a “confessing movement” within the church that seeks to return the church to its essentials.

The movement also “creates order out of chaos,” Jensen contended, claiming that the church splits and lawsuits arising since the consecration of a gay priest as Bishop of

New Hampshire in 2003 have spiraled out of control. Jensen told IRD the GAFCON statement would provide a method for managing the crisis and provide a bulwark against “Western revisionist” theology by preparing a “fellowship” of Christians to “support each other in truth,” while “charting the way forward for a Gospel-centered future.”

Canterbury Sees Problems

On June 30, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, released a statement responding to the Jerusalem conference. While endorsing GAFCON’s underlying statement of faith, Dr. Williams described its attempts to reform the structures of the communion as “problematic.” He questioned GAFCON’s assertion that the Episcopal Church was “proclaiming another Gospel” and the “legitimacy” of a self-selecting council of archbishops to govern the movement.

“By what authority are Primates deemed acceptable or unacceptable members of any new primatial council?” Williams asked. “And how is effective discipline to be maintained in a situation of overlapping and competing jurisdictions?”

The Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, was less ambiguous in her criticism. Jefferts Schori ridiculed the June 29 statement, saying “much of the Anglican world must be lamenting the latest emission from GAFCON.” She added that the participants in the conference held a parochial view of Anglicanism, which had “always been broader than some find comfortable.”

For Jefferts Schori, the fight within the Anglican Communion is one of power, not principle, and was “merely another chapter in a centuries-old struggle for dominance by those who consider themselves the only true believers.”



The Rev. Canon George Conger is a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida and senior correspondent of *The Church of England Newspaper*.

Notes from an Impending Marriage

by Steve Rempe

Things change.

For all of my adulthood, I have lived my life as a relatively contented bachelor. With that comes the freedom that one usually associates with the single life. Freedom to set my own schedule. Freedom to spend my discretionary income as I see fit. Freedom to eat what I want when I want to eat it. Freedom knowing that the only human being whose approval I need for most of my decisions is me.

All that changed in April when I proposed to my fiancée, Beth.

The engagement process is at once very exciting, sometimes terrifying and occasionally exasperating. It is never dull. The learning curve is steep, as you are forced to re-examine your life, your priorities and your objectives through the lens of this other person – someone whose wants, needs and desires all of the sudden crowd those which up to this point had an exclusive reign. (In my case, this whole process has been accelerated by cramming it into a six month period.)

The experience has definitely been an education. I have learned much about this woman who will be sharing my life – what it is about her that occasionally irritates or annoys, as well as the things about her that make those irritants seem exceedingly small by comparison. Perhaps more importantly, though, I have learned much about myself. I now know how I deal with conflicting priorities, differing perspectives and approaches and even the occasional emotional meltdown. It has been far from easy, but I hope I have become a more attentive, loving and honest person as a result. I have changed much in the preceding

weeks, and I anticipate that by the grace of God, and with Beth's help, I will continue to change and evolve more and more into the husband (and potentially father) I am called to be.

Yet as everything about my life changes, I take comfort in one thing that remains the same: the institution of marriage itself.



Beth Friedrichs and Steve Rempe are to be married in October.

My parents were married over 41 years ago. Their parents were married a generation before. And before that, my various sets of great grandparents were married – my mom's grandparents in Sweden and my dad's in Germany. Beth and I are going to use a kneeling pad for our service that has been in my family for generations – a tribute to the value and importance of marriage to those that have gone before us.

Amazingly, there is an understanding of marriage that often transcends time, space, culture and religion. My mom tells the story of visiting the church in the Swedish village of her ancestry. While worship services at the old building had largely become an afterthought – she received rather quizzical looks when she inquired about the time of Sunday worship – the locals

were quick to point out that the birth and marriage records for many generations could be found there. Such remains the value of marriage and family even in a culture that has grown increasingly nonreligious in recent generations.

It is exactly this permanence that gives marriage its unique importance and value in society. Marriage is both a spiritual union blessed by God and a contractual agreement recognized by the state. It is both the linking of two families in one generation and the extension of those families across the generations. It is the joining of two into one and the expansion of that one into the next generation. Were Beth and I to redefine what constitutes marriage according to our personal whims, a portion of that intricate latticework would be altered. And if such redefinition were to become commonplace with couples (or other groupings) determining

what constitutes a marriage, cracks would begin to show in modern society that would extend across the ages.

As Beth and I continue to prepare for what will be a monumental change in our lives, we rejoice that we are embarking on a journey that many have taken before us. And we take comfort that the more things will change for us, the more things will remain the same. ☞



Steve Rempe is the Web Editor for the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

Looking for a speaker for an upcoming event? **IRD Experts are Available!**



Dr. James Tonkowich, President

If you are looking for a speaker on issues affecting Christians today, call IRD.

Are questions arising in your church about tough issues such as the environment, immigration, and poverty? Do you want to reaffirm Christian marriage in the face of those trying to legitimize homosexuality? Do you want to support the persecuted Church?

The IRD team can lead a thoughtful, biblical presentation for you.

Call us today at 202-682-4131.



Mark Tooley
Dir. UMAction



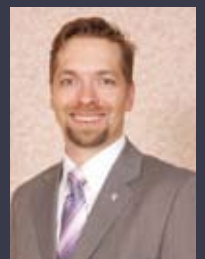
Faith McDonnell
Dir. of Religious
Liberty Programs



Alan Wisdom
Vice President



Jerald Walz
Vice President



David Sheaffer
Development
Director