

Evangelical United Methodists Urge Revival

Prominent evangelical United Methodists touted biblical beliefs and spiritual revival at a “Rekindling the Flame of the Laity” conference at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina on June 30 - July 3, 2011. They urged remembering Jesus Christ as the foundation of the United Methodist Church and not replacing biblical truth with new agendas.

Speakers included Eddie Fox, Director of World Evangelism for the World Methodist Council, Holston Bishop James Swanson, and retired large church pastors John Ed Mathieson and Bill Bouknight.

Fox preached from Matthew 6:13-20, where Jesus says that Peter is a rock his church will be built upon, and that Hell shall not prevail against it. “We must have a living foundation to have a living church,” Fox proclaimed. “If our movement is alive, it will rest upon Christ Jesus the cornerstone,” which is an “absolute necessity or else we are simply a dead sect.”

“We live in a culture that thinks that if you get enough people that have the same opinion, that equals truth,” Fox warned. What really matters “is whether we are faithful to the authority of scripture and the teaching that is given to us in this book.” He was “rather tired of political jargon in the church.” Fox has “believed for a long time that if we teach people what Jesus taught, if we baptize them in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this world will be transformed.”

Bishop Willimon Talks Politics

United Methodist Bishop Will Willimon of North Alabama talked about “Christians, Religion and Politics” at Methodist affiliated Wofford College in South Carolina on November 2. He aligned himself with liberal political causes while warning of the limits of politics.

Recently Willimon has controversially condemned Alabama’s new law against illegal immigration. He asserts this law, which targets human smugglers and employers, threatens the church’s ministry among illegals.

Willimon opened by discussing the Apostles’ Creed, where Christians cite “Pontius Pilate—a political hack—who used to brag about how many people he executed in Texas, erm, Palestine.” The bishop wondered why a political figure made it into such a foundational church creed.

“Jesus, as far as I know, wasn’t too interested in politics,”

Bill Bouknight, former pastor of Christ UMC in Memphis, TN expressed similar concerns about the current state of United Methodism. “Some modern folks are offended by talk about the blood of Jesus ... they wish God had found a more antiseptic way to save the world.” He asked: “If you take the heart of the Gospel out, what have you got?” To renew the United Methodist Church he said, “We must stop denying the atonement.”

Bishop James Swanson of the Holston Conference preached on the necessity of a “serving faith.” He stressed that the “reason we do what we do is not just because we want to be good, but because a good man died.” He emphatically said that “if we are really serious about rekindling the flame [we need to] use what God has already placed in us.” Serving others is not about creating new agendas and programs, but Christians ought to serve “because Jesus has touched your life, you now cannot get away from the responsibility that God is calling you to touch the lives of somebody else.” ✝

ACTION: Pray for revival in United Methodism. Volunteer to serve on the evangelism committee of your local church. If there is not such committee, start one!

Willimon said. “But in three years the government was very interested in Him.” In the end, Christ’s main commandment was to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God those things that are God’s. Christians, however, were left with a horrifying example of how the government treats Christ and His Body.

Although admitting he always votes Democrat, Willimon professed little faith in government. “We are enmeshed in an overwhelming bureaucratic structure,” he complained. Americans used to look to clergy and God for spiritual purpose. Now “we ask all of that from the government,” Willimon observed. “The government has become for all intents and purposes God for us.” He said he had supported Obamacare until he realized that it rested on a “fantasy of immortality.”

“Jesus Christ just doesn’t mesh well with the politics of the right or the left,” Willimon warned. Clergy may engage “pro-

UM “Peace” Convo at Lake Junaluska

The annual peace conference hosted by the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina featured the usual liberal political themes from U.S. church officials and inspiring preaching from African church leaders.

Called “Poverty, Abundance, and Peace: Seeking Economic Justice for all God’s Children,” the interfaith gathering was also sponsored in part by The United Methodist Foundation of Western NC, the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, Duke Divinity School, and Bread for the World, a Washington based lobby group for larger federal social welfare programs. Also a sponsor was Lake Junaluska, which is the retreat center for the Southeast Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

Congolese Bishop Nkulu Ntambo preached on Genesis 12:1-3: “Whoever is blessed is sent on a mission from God to be a blessing.” He humorously contrasted the poverty and difficulty of his nation with the abundance and power of the United States. Ntambo encouraged his prosperous American listeners, “Be a blessing!” Afterward, retired Bishop Kenneth Carder interviewed Ntambo

in a Q&A section, where Ntambo shared about his successful interfaith efforts and private charitable endeavors in his hometown of Kamina. Carder observed, “All the examples you have given all come from a local community.”

Sudanese “lost boy” Michael de Kuany recounted his struggle as refugee in war-torn Sudan. “I grew up in the refugee camps and the jungle,” he recounted, his tribe having become “targets because they were Christian.” He condemned the Islamist regime of northern Sudan. “In Sudan, religion is a problem. Freedom is not to be seen,” he complained. When United Nations officials asked about his needs, he pleaded for learning: “My people would not have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ without education.”

In contrast, David Beckmann of Washington-based liberal advocacy group Bread for the World emphasized politics, complaining about “conservative” and “not well-informed” congressmen advocating federal spending limits. “We shouldn’t let a recession and the Tea Party get us down,” he urged. “More people who experience God as a loving presence are more likely to support food stamps.”

Former Democratic congressman Bob Edgar recalled having “fought fear, fundamentalism, and Fox News” while heading the National Council of Churches. He denounced U.S. sanctions against Saddam Hussein in the 1990s and U.S. support for anti-Marxist rebels in Nicaragua in the 1980s, praising the “nuances of liberation theology,” while bemoaning “conservative Catholics...and fundamentalists.” He also recalled his July 2011 arrest at the U.S. Capitol to protest possible federal spending limits. “If there’s one thing I regret,” he contemplated, “it’s not getting arrested enough.” ✝

ACTION: Thank Lake Junaluska Conference Center for hosting the Congolese bishop and Sudanese “lost boy.” E-mail Jack Ewing, Executive Director & CEO: [jewling@lakejunaluska.com](mailto:jewing@lakejunaluska.com); address: Lake Junaluska Assembly, PO Box 67, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745.

ACTION: You can follow Bishop Willimon at his blog: <http://willimon.blogspot.com>.



Michael Ayuen de Kuany, founder of Rebuild Sudan, shares his story during the annual Peace Conference at Lake Junaluska, N.C. (UMNS/Jessica Connor)

Liberal UM’s Tout Alternative Sexualities

Arally for sexually liberal United Methodists featured retired Bishop Joe Sprague, recently suspended minister Amy DeLong, and Garlinda Burton of the General Commission on Religion and Race. They all encouraged hundreds of listening liberal activists to lobby against United Methodist teaching about marriage and sexual ethics in preparation for the 2012 General Conference.

The “Sing a New Song” (SANS) conference, August 25-27, was sponsored by the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) and the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN).

Most SANS speakers targeted United Methodism’s *Book of Discipline* instruction that homosexual behavior is “incompatible” with Christian teaching. But activists also denounced Israel, defended the Welfare State, and touted pacifism.

The Gay Galvin Jazz Trio provided entertainment, but drag singer Carmen Di Va failed to appear as promised.

“I was unwilling, in an environment that meant me harm, to share intimate and sensitive information about me,” explained Amy DeLong of her refusal to answer a church court’s question about her sexual practice. She recently was suspended for a month from ministry for conducting a same sex union. The church trial declined to convict her for homosexual practice after she declined to confirm in court her previously announced lesbian partnership that is registered in Wisconsin. Amid hisses from the crowd, she mocked the church prosecutor who offered her “conditional acceptance” if she pledged celibacy.

Retired Bishop Joe Sprague mocked claims about Jesus’ exclusivity: “Ain’t no way but the Jesus way? Come on, Jesus would have puked at that.” He smilingly warned amid laughter:

“Mark Tooley [of IRD] will come looking for me!” Sprague, who retired in 2004, infamously as bishop renounced traditional beliefs about Christ’s deity, virgin birth and resurrection. He was briefly arrested in protests against the church’s beliefs at the 2000 General Conference.

Sprague was the only United Methodist bishop present. But

West Ohio Bishop Bruce Ough wrote “Sing a New Song” supportively: “It is difficult to sing a new song when the church you love refuses to love you back... Thank God that God is not yet done with the United Methodist Church.”

The most senior active United Methodist official present was Garlinda Burton, General Secretary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. She compared opponents of full acceptance of homosexual behavior to the disbelieving crowds

from Jesus’ ministry. She longed for when the church’s *Book of Discipline* reads: “Homophobia and heterosexism are incompatible with Christian teaching.” At that point, Methodists could truly praise God, “dancing to Her amazing grace,” Burton predicted. ✝

ACTION: Prayerfully encourage Garlinda Burton to uphold the biblical stance that sex is for marriage between man and woman. E-mail: gburton@gcsrw.org; Address: 77 W. Washington, Suite 1009, Chicago, IL 60602.



Retired United Methodist Bishop C. Joseph Sprague (center), arrested for blocking the entrance to the 2000 General Conference as a protest of the church’s discipline on sexuality. (UMNS/Mike DuBose)

United Methodists Hail "Occupy Wall Street" Protests

Directors of the United Methodist Women's Division, during their October meeting in New York City, marched down to Wall Street to join the Occupy Wall Street demonstration. They carried their own protest placards endorsing the Occupation's assorted demands, which typically include cancellation of all private debt, open borders, massive tax hikes, elimination of credit rating agencies, complete government control of health care, and free college for everyone.

The United Methodist Women's directors, who represent over a half million members, carried signs declaring: "United Methodist Women Say: Turn the World Right Side Up;" "Scripture Warns Us of the Sin of Greed and its Devastating Effects;" and "There is Enough in the World for Everyone's Needs. There is not Enough for Everyone's Greed."



United Methodist Women Directors visit Occupy Wall Street during 2011 Annual Board Meeting in New York city. (UMW/Lynne Gilbert)

United Methodist chief lobbyist Jim Winkler in Washington, D.C. also hailed the Occupiers, whose protests spread to numerous U.S. cities throughout the Fall. "There is no question in my mind that Wesley would have protested greed and the neglect of the poor," he told a reporter. "He would support the goals."

Winkler told another reporter: "The Occupy forces are really challenging the very tenets of capitalism and asking whether or not it's the best system. In our *Social Principles*, we say corporations are responsible not only to their stockholders but to their other stakeholders."

ACTION: Ask the United Methodist Women's group in your local church if they are aware of the New York-based United Methodist Women's Division's political activities.

New Study Spotlights UM Lobby Office

A new study of religious lobby groups in Washington, D.C. ranked the \$5.6 million United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) one of the 20 top largest. GBCS has 21 staffers, 6 of whom focus on legislation, comprising the largest Protestant denominational lobby office in the nation's capital. It is housed in the prominent Methodist Building on Capitol Hill.

Originally built in the 1920s by Methodism's old Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals, it is now owned by GBCS. "The profile of the building has been raised considerably this year alone as a series of prayer vigils and press conferences for a just federal budget have been held in front of the building," boasted GBCS chief Jim Winkler to *The United Methodist Reporter*.

Besides GBCS, the Methodist Building also houses lobby offices for the United Methodist Women's Division, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT). MPAC and ISNA have been criticized for ties to radical Islamists. CMEP organizes ecumenical criticisms of Israel. NRCAT was founded to oppose U.S. enhanced interrogation of captive terrorists.

"I can tell you that the vast majority of [GBCS] members and practically all of the staff are liberal to very liberal in their own political views," the Rev. Rob Renfroe, a former GBCS board member and current head of the evangelical Good News group, told *The United Methodist Reporter*. "So, not surprisingly, they lobby for the most liberal causes in the most liberal way."

ACTION: Inform your church's administrative council that the World Service apportionment is funding one of the largest religious lobbies Washington, DC.

UMAction Briefing

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UM Lobbyist Banned from U.S. Capitol after Arrest

United Methodism's chief lobbyist in Washington, D.C. was banned from the U.S. Capitol for 6 months and must submit to drug tests after his July 28, 2011 arrest for civil disobedience protesting potential spending limits on federal social welfare spending.

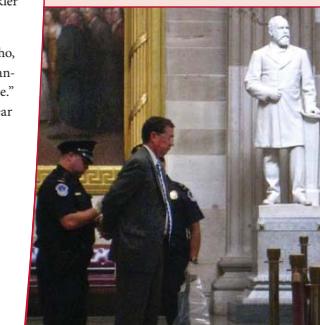
"The voice of people of faith on behalf of the last, the least, and the lost must be heard in the halls of power," Jim Winkler later explained to the *United Methodist Reporter*. "I have been gratified to discover the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from United Methodists across the church."

Winkler was arrested with 10 other religious activists, together known as the "Rotunda Eleven," engaged in "civil disobedience" by praying and refusing to leave the U. S. Capitol Rotunda on July 28, 2011.

A D.C. court on October 11 ruled the misdemeanor charges against Winkler and the others will be dropped as long as the protesters "stay out of the Capitol building for six months and complete a drug screening program." After the court appearance, Winkler and his fellow activists held a press conference on the court house steps.

In a news release, Winkler explained he was inspired by a Vietnam War pacifist who, when asked if he truly thought he could change national policies through his protests answered, "I don't do this to change the country; I do this so the country won't change me." Winkler has mentioned that he previously has been arrested for protesting U.S. nuclear weapons and the Iraq War.

ACTION: Contact Jim Winkler and prayerfully encourage him to avoid future arrests so long as he is heading the United Methodist Board of Church and Society. E-mail: jwinkler@umc-gbcs.org; Address: 110 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC 20002.



Jim Winkler of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society was among church officials arrested in the U.S. Capitol in July. (UMNS/Jewel DeGuzman)

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YOUR OPINION, PLEASE!

Does the United Methodist Board of Church and Society or the United Methodist Women's Division represent most United Methodists when they lobby for controversial political causes?

Yes.

No.

Unsure.