

faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Fall 2015

Who Are America's Transgender Clergy?

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Hundreds of Episcopalians at the denomination's triennial General Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, participated in a festive Eucharist June 29 hosted by Integrity USA, the church's unofficial LGBT caucus. The event took place the same day that bishops approved a new gender-neutral marriage rite. (See page 15.)

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*Deacon Vicki Gray of the Episcopal
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(Photo: occupiedusa.wordpress.com)*

Evangelical Focus on the Smart, Young, and Beautiful?

Recent years have seen much laudable Evangelical conversation about expanding Christianity's reach to attract diverse demographics through creative branding, which is especially (but not exclusively) aimed at Millennials.

These exertions have led to rhetorical, liturgical, and sometimes theological innovations whose goal is greater persuasive impact on the unchurched and unevangelized. Sometimes the tweaking is primarily about packaging, like the preacher shedding his shirt and tie for skinny jeans and t-shirts. Sometimes and more problematically it is about the substance of the Gospel, particularly sexual ethics but also about the exclusivity of Christ, the full authority of Scripture, and emphases on Christian social justice.

This ongoing conversation disproportionately focuses on reaching a particular kind of fairly narrow demographic: typically very educated, overwhelmingly Caucasian, white-collar, socially liberal, urban-minded, and upwardly mobile young people. Coincidentally, this well-heeled and fashionable social subset is also a preoccupation for secular commercial advertising. It's an important group, as its members wield or will wield influence over our culture for decades to come, influencing millions. But does this demographic merit preoccupation to the near exclusion of others in Evangelicalism's public conversation?

Other major, often unreached for the Gospel demographics are maybe not as prestigious but no less spiritually important and in some cases far more numerous. A gun-owning middle aged white man in West Virginia or central Pennsylvania who's a truck driver or living on disability is not a major part of the Evangelical conversation. A near retirement age housewife who works part-time at Wal-Mart in a small Midwestern city is typically not part of the conversation. A Millennial unwed mother who dropped out of high school is typically not part of the conversation. Working class or unemployed black people are typically not part of the conversation. Nor are Asian or African immigrant families who come from traditional cultures, especially if they're not doctors or engineers and are instead driving cabs or working retail. Hispanic immigrants are often topics of Evangelical public conversation because of immigration politics. But evangelistically appealing to a 35 year old Guatemalan construction worker or restaurant cook is not typically central to the conversation.

A Bolivian woman in her 30s who cleans my house each month recently told me of her spiritual struggles after her mother's unexpected death. This married mother of young children was raised Catholic, had been attending a Spanish-speaking Pentecostal church, but now is not regularly worshipping at any church. She still has her faith, believes in the Bible, but like many believers at times, is now ambivalent about the church. I doubt immigration politics or other political advocacy will speak to her spiritually.

So much of Evangelical public conversation about expanding outreach assumes that parts of Christianity must be liberalized or deemphasized to appeal to the religiously non-practicing. But so much of what is suggested or offered as the supposed solution may appeal to sophisticated young urbanites who read *The New York Times* online but would be highly ineffective if not repellent to tens of millions of other unchurched and unevangelized persons. Touting some version of LGBTQ themes will not appeal to the middle aged West Virginia gun owner, the 65 year old Wal-

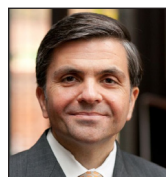
Mart cashier, the 20 year old unemployed urban black man, the female Iraq War veteran struggling to start a new career, the Nigerian cabbie, the Korean business owner, or the Hispanic parents working several jobs to support their family. Most of these people don't spend lots of time in urban coffee houses, don't read *The Times*, don't listen to NPR, and didn't attend prestigious colleges.

Environmental or anti-war advocacy by churches won't appeal to the West Virginia truck driver or the military veteran.

Pushing for higher minimum wages would antagonize the Asian business owner and may cost the job of the Wal-Mart cashier. Themes of sexual liberation or ultra-feminism may repel the Nigerian cabbie and the Hispanic mother. The unemployed urban black man or young suburban unwed mother likely will be bored or put off by self-important intellectual appeals to abstract social justice. Many of these people, like most people, are busy surviving day to day, or lost in apathy through addictive diversions (booze, drugs, porn, gambling, reality TV, online cavorting). But they will respond to direct Gospel appeals about the basic meaning of life that will give them purpose, comfort, challenge, and goals.

Of course the church must specifically appeal to the very smart, sophisticated, attractive, and well-placed. God loves them too and can deploy them to expand the Kingdom. But the church can't obsess over these golden people. Most hearers to the Gospel are not, by worldly standards, materially or physically exceptional. Yet God loves them no less, and many of them will occupy some of the most exalted mansions in Heaven. For every sophisticate like St. Paul in the economy of God there are probably 20 or 50 ordinary laborers like St. Peter, or Mary and Martha, who don't gleam in the world's eyes, but they will through faith glow forever in the eternal constellation of the saints. ✝

Mark Tooley



Mark D. Tooley is the President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy

Episcopalians Choose First Black Leader in Landslide

Episcopal Church Bishops gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah, for their denomination's General Convention elected a new Presiding Bishop to lead the 1.8 million-member U.S.-based church.

Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina was chosen in a landslide on the first ballot, a first for any Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Curry is also the first person of African-American descent to be elected to lead the denomination, whose membership is overwhelmingly white. Curry will serve a nine-year term in office.

"This is a good and wonderful church, and we are good and wonderful people," Curry enthused as he greeted the denomination's House of Deputies following a confirmation vote of 800-12 by the body of clergy and laity.

While Curry is known for quoting evangelist Billy Sunday and using the language of both the black church and evangelical

Christianity, he has firmly established himself among Episcopal Church liberals. Under Curry's leadership, the Diocese of North Carolina began permitting blessing same-sex unions in 2004, long before most dioceses embraced the practice.

Curry has also participated in the "Moral Mondays" protests held by progressive clergy and political activists upset by the direction of his state's legislature.

Asked about the church's litigation strategy against departing Anglicans in the United States, which has reportedly cost the church in excess of \$42 million, Curry did not place any daylight between Katharine Jefferts Schori and whatever policy he might pursue.

"I am supportive of our Presiding Bishop and the policies of our church," Curry noted, while allowing that he was unfamiliar with the details of ongoing court cases involving the denomination and several of its former dioceses and congregations. ✚



Presiding Bishop-elect Michael Curry of the Diocese of North Carolina speaks to a packed House of Deputies hall after deputies confirmed his election as the 27th presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church. Curry's family and others joined him on the dais. (Photo: Cynthia L. Black/ENS)

Pennsylvania United Methodists Call for Accountability

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church rebuked renegade clergy at its annual session this spring.

Self-described "Christian agnostic" Pastor Frank Schaefer engulfed the conference in controversy, as did the actions of the "Philadelphia 36" clergy who performed a same-sex union in defiance of the denomination's covenant.

This year a sizable evangelical congregation in Quarryville, PA, left the denomination altogether, citing exasperation with bishops' failures to enforce standards on marriage.

The conference addressed several petitions that would have opposed the UMC's stance that homosexual practice is inherently "incompatible with Christian

teaching," and requirement for clergy to behave accordingly. All were rejected by majority vote.

Most notable was the adoption of a resolution entitled "Affirming our Covenant and Accountability" that was submitted by the Eastern Pennsylvania Evangelical Connection (EPEC).

All attempts to modify it failed, and it passed by a 60 percent majority.

With this strongly worded resolution, the Eastern Pennsylvania conference publicly affirmed its commitment to "abide by the rules of our common covenant as outlined in the *Book of Discipline*, and ... [to] hold one another accountable to that covenant." In a clear rebuke of the clergy-disobedience movement besieging the denomination, including the

Philadelphia 36 within the Eastern Pennsylvania annual conference, the resolution notes that "clergy within the United Methodist church have voluntarily promised in ordination to uphold our church's teachings and keep its disciplinary rules." The resolution also "declares that there is no necessary contradiction between love and law; and that holding one another accountable to promises made" is "an act of love, however painful, to maintain both order and unity in the body."

The resolution calls on clergy of diverse views to honor community covenant and work through proper channels to promote any changes, while calling on those clergy who will not honor the covenant to leave the United Methodist Church. ✚

Episcopalians Scuttle Anti-Israel Divestment

The Episcopal Church will not follow in the footsteps of the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (USA) in adopting a policy of divestment from companies that do business with Israel. On the same day that the Mennonite Church USA voted to delay consideration on a divestment proposal for another two years, bishops in the Episcopal Church meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in July rejected similar resolutions.

Speaking on the day of the vote, Bishop Sean Rowe of the dioceses of Bethlehem, PA, and Northwest Pennsylvania cited the opposition of Jerusalem Bishop Suheil Dawani as influential in the defeat of divestment proposals.

"The conflict in that part of the world is very complex," Rowe assessed.

"Divestment would aggravate the peace process. This convention has adopted a number of calls including for restorative justice; divestment would work against that."

"There is a desire not to do unintentional harm to the people we are trying to help," said Bishop Dean Wolfe of Kansas. "Divestment harms the most vulnerable people."

Resolution D016 "Being Socially Responsible Investors in Palestine and Israel" would have directed the church's Executive Council Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to "develop a list of corporations that provide goods and services that support the infrastructure of Israel's Occupation." The list would have been updated annually.

The resolution called upon the Executive Council to "identify a list of products made and businesses present in illegal settlements" and direct the Council to "continue to monitor its investments and apply its CSR policy to any possible future investments in companies identified."

Another divestment-related resolution, C012, was discharged. The resolution proposed by the San Francisco-based Episcopal Diocese of California would specifically divest church holdings in Caterpillar, G4S, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions. The four companies all provide non-lethal products and services to the Israeli Defense Forces.

A third resolution proposed by the Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii, "Work for Justice and Peace in Israel-Palestine," C003, was also discharged by bishops. The resolution called for the church to adopt a policy of "selective divestment or a No Buy policy of any holdings in Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Motorola Solutions." ✚

NCC Supports Iran Deal

The National Council of Churches (NCC) has organized a letter of religious voices praising the Iran nuclear deal and urging Congress to support what it describes as the "most robust monitoring and inspection regime ever negotiated" that "moves us a step closer to a world without nuclear weapons."

Signer Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* has separately commented that there should be "no illusion that Iran will instantly change its destructive and disruptive behavior because of this agreement." And he urged the U.S. to "insist that Iran cease funding armed groups throughout the Middle East, improve its human rights record, and end its hostility toward Israel," through "focused diplomatic and economic pressure."

The NCC letter does not acknowledge any shortcomings in the deal with Iran's government. Instead it insists that "rejection of this deal would be a rejection of the historic progress our diplomats have made to make this world a safer place." ✚

CHURCH NEWS (continued):

Wheaton's Rodgers Resigns, 'Evolving' on Same-Sex Relationships

A counselor who has identified as a "gay celibate Christian" has resigned from her post at evangelical Wheaton College amid her shifting viewpoint on same-sex relationships. Julie Rodgers, who served as a ministry associate for spiritual care for the Illinois school, wrote and spoke often of her commitment to remain celibate. Now Rodgers says her commitment "has evolved through the years."

"Though I've been slow to admit it to myself, I've quietly supported same-sex relationships for a while now," Rodgers explained on her personal blog.

As recently as May, Rodgers expressed orthodox convictions during a conference panel in Boston.

"I believe that our bodies matter — that gender complementarity matters, that our bodies tell us important things about reality, about ourselves and how we should live," Rogers said to the Q conference's evangelical audience. "I trust that the boundaries God put around sexual expression are for our flourishing."

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Denny Burke noted that a biblical basis is absent from Rodgers's statement. "Rodgers's explanation of her change of heart is long on personal experience and short on Bible," Burke continues, "If she has a reasoned biblical rationale for her views, she didn't share it. It shouldn't be lost on readers that other considerations seem to be driving her embrace of gay relationships, not God's word."

"If it turns out that I'm wrong," wrote Rodgers, "I trust God will be faithful to catch me." ✚



Julie Rodgers

Liberal Clergy Praise Planned Parenthood for ‘Doing God’s Work’

by Jeff Walton

A group of liberal clergy who advise the largest abortion provider in the United States have praised employees of the organization for “doing God’s work.”

A statement released in July by the Planned Parenthood Clergy Advocacy Board attacks what it portrays as “politically motivated, heavily edited, and secretly recorded” videos released by the California-based organization Center for Medical Progress (CMP).

The videos reveal Planned Parenthood officials discussing compensation for the potential sale of organs from aborted pregnancies. Widely shared over social media, the videos sparked uproar

continued government funding of the organization in jeopardy.

“As faith leaders committed to justice, honesty, and liberty, we are troubled by the decades-long campaign of harassment against Planned Parenthood and those they serve,” the clergy statement reads. “Our faiths demand care for those marginalized by poverty and other oppressions. Faith leaders have supported Planned Parenthood for nearly 100 years because of our shared goals: every person — regardless of income, race, or religion — deserves access to safe, affordable, high-quality health care.”

The statement does not mention abortion, instead portraying Planned Parenthood as an indispensable provider of “high-quality care” that “does the best of what religious traditions do.”

The clergy also appeal to religious liberty and individual conscience, portraying the abortion provider’s opponents as seeking “to impose their values and work obsessively to limit access to health care by individuals.”

“Our religious traditions call us to offer compassion, not judgment,” the clergy declare. “People who work for Planned Parenthood give care and respect to those in need, doing God’s work. For this we are grateful.”

The Advocacy Board includes clergy from the United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and American Baptist Churches as well as clergy from Reformed Jewish and Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Hardly a rogue’s gallery of Religious Left boogymen, the list is more likely to evoke a collective “huh?” from readers who are familiar with activist clergy. Stocked with assorted retired and small-church pastors, the list presents an image of oldline Protestantism: older, disproportionately concentrated in the Northeast, and almost entirely white.

Among the clergy listed are Episcopal Priest Susan Russell of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California, a prominent lesbian activist within the Episcopal Church who is listed as Vice Chair.

The clergy board also lists Ani Zonneveld of Muslims for Progressive Values among its members. Zonneveld served as a board member of the short-lived Progressive Muslim Union of North America and has presided over same-sex weddings.

Planned Parenthood Washington State Chaplain Vincent Lachina is also on the board. Lachina earned notoriety in 2011 when he proclaimed at a Mississippi legislative hearing on a state personhood amendment that “I am an ordained Southern Baptist minister.” Lachina is actually affiliated with the United Church of Christ and American Baptist Churches USA. His chaplaincy is full-time and he does not pastor a congregation.

Two other board members, Kevin Jones of Greenacres, Florida, and Scott Sattler of Eureka, California, are also former employees of Planned Parenthood abortion clinics.

The abortion provider has acted to limit the impact of the videos, with Planned Parenthood Federation of America President Cecile Richards calling congressional efforts to defund the organization as “attacking women who need preventive health care” in an opinion piece published in *The Washington Post*. Planned Parenthood has annual revenue of \$1.3 billion, of which more than \$500 million is provided by federal, state and local governments. The organization has contracted with a New York-based public relations firm in order to shape media coverage of the controversy, and media outlets have been warned by the organization not to air footage from the videos.

Despite limited coverage from the mainstream media, the videos have had an impact: Since their release, five states have canceled their funding of Planned Parenthood. Additionally, StemExpress, a company that transfers fetal tissue from abortions performed at Planned Parenthood and other clinics to medical researchers, cut its ties with the organization after a temporary injunction stopping CMP from releasing video showing officials from StemExpress was lifted. ✚



Episcopal Priest Susan Russell speaks at the July 10 Integrity Eucharist at the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church. (Photo: Episcopal News Service)

among abortion opponents and some medical ethicists because the sale of fetal tissue for profit is illegal under U.S. law. CMP simultaneously released unedited footage of conversations with the officials.

To date, 12 states and six committees in the U.S. Congress have launched investigations into the practices of Planned Parenthood, seeking to determine if the organization broke U.S. law, and placed



Jeffrey H. Walton is the Communications Manager and Anglican Program Director at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

'This May Be Our Last Communion'

by Faith J. H. McDonnell

What goes through the minds of American Christians going to church on Sunday? Perhaps something along these lines:

- “So glad it’s Sunday! I get to worship the Lord together with everybody!”
- “I hope the visitors that were there last week come back again.”
- “Oh no! I’m going to be late again! I should have taken the back way!”
- “I hope there’s some good stuff for coffee hour today.”
- “The service had better not run late this week!”
- “I’ll go bonkers if we sing that same song again!”

There have been tragic attacks on American churches, such as the recent horrific murder of nine African American Christians at Emmanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, but I don’t know any American Christians who go to church consciously thinking, “I may die today, but I am going to church; I don’t know what will happen, but Jesus is with me.”

Not so for our Christian brothers and sisters in northern and central Nigeria. Since the advent of attacks by jihadist terrorist group Boko Haram — and, to be honest, even long before then, from other Islamists who still are committing atrocities — no Christian can know for sure that if they go to church, they will return home alive.

Christian human rights organization Jubilee Campaign monitors attacks on Nigerian citizens by Boko Haram and Fulani Islamists. In their recent report to the U.N. Human Rights Council they stated that “approximately 42% of all the attacks that occurred in the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the year 2014 were on Christian communities, while Muslim communities, the government, schools, media and medical personnel, and random civilians comprised approximately 6.8%, 10.9%, 4.1%, 0.5%, and 35.4% respectively.” A few years ago, data compiled by

Jubilee Campaign indicated that in 2012 Nigeria alone accounted for over 60 percent of Christians killed globally. And the situation has not improved.

Jubilee Campaign’s 2015 U.N. report documents attacks on churches with hundreds being killed and tens of thousands displaced from their homes. This reality was brought home to the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) in a more personal way in August when we hosted two Nigerian Christian leaders from a region particularly targeted by both Boko Haram and the Fulani. (To protect the identity of these leaders I will call them Reverend O and Reverend M.)

Reverend O told how he had been leading a service of Holy Communion when his church was attacked by Muslims from the local mosque. “I don’t like telling this story because it makes me cry,” he admitted, but added that he thought it was important for us to hear. He continued that the Muslims had left their mosque and surrounded the church where they began stabbing and slashing at people with knives, and committing “all kinds of attacks.”

“We tried to gather up the children and get them out or hide them,” Reverend O said. His voice faltered and he was silent for a moment as a tear rolled down his cheek. “My daughter was among them,” he told us. Then he asked the people, “Do you want me to close the service so you can escape?” After pausing to remove his glasses and wipe his tear-filled eyes, Reverend O continued, “They said to me, ‘You taught us that Jesus is worthy dying for. This may be our last Communion. We will take it and die.’”



One of many burned churches in northern and central Nigeria (Photo: Sharia Unveiled)

As we all sat in silence, grieving along with Reverend O, our other guest, Reverend M, revealed, “By some miracle, they were saved.” Reverend O’s congregation did not die that day, thanks be to God. But many church congregations in northern and central Nigeria have not been spared. Islamist mobs have set church buildings on fire and prevented the men, women, and children from escaping — standing at every door and window with automatic weapons. Suicide bombers and car bombs have killed dozens of churchgoers — a new phenomenon in Africa’s most populous country.

On IRD’s blog I have shared more about the lessons learned from Reverend O and Reverend M, and about what we Christians in the West can actually do to help our brothers and sisters in Nigeria and elsewhere who are suffering for the sake of the Gospel. But for now, when you are getting ready to go to church each Sunday, let the experience trigger the memory of Christians who attend services in northern and central Nigeria not knowing whether they will survive the day. Thank the Lord for your ability to worship him in freedom, and pray for our Nigerian brothers and sisters. ✝



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

Who Are America's Transgender Clergy?

by Matthew Maule



The Reverend Asher O'Callaghan was the first regularly ordained transgender minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

Transgender clergy now serve openly in several mainline and progressive Christian denominations. Churches that espouse traditional Christian theology have not allowed transgender persons to be clergy as they do not accept transgender identity as a biblical expression of personhood. Several of the transgender clergy listed below caused disorder in their churches and denominations when they insisted on recognition. Several of them have left diminished or destroyed churches in their wake. Below are brief biographies of the openly transgender clergy serving in the United States today.

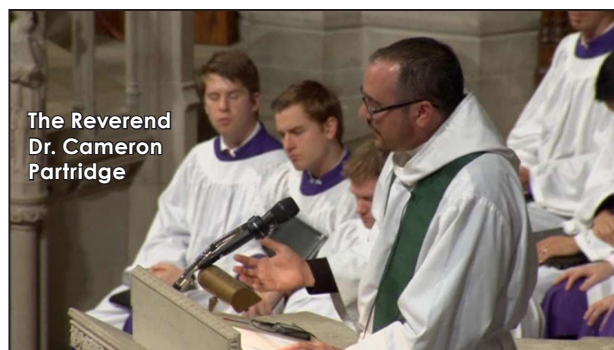
The Episcopal Church (approved ordination of transgender clergy at its 2012 General Convention)

The Reverend Carolyn Woodall is a deacon in the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, California. Formerly the Deputy Public Defender in Sonora, Woodall now has a small criminal defense practice in addition to serving as deacon for St. James Episcopal Church. Woodall serves as the Chair of the Stakeholders' Council of Integrity USA, "the leading grassroots voice for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Episcopal Church."

The Reverend Vicki Gray is a deacon at Christ the Lord Episcopal Church in Pinole, California, in the Episcopal Diocese of California. A Vietnam War combat veteran and retired Foreign Service Officer, Gray also serves on the Executive Council and Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of California. Gray assists with Open Cathedral, an open-air weekly worship service that ministers to the poor and homeless taking place in the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco.

The Reverend Dr. Cameron Partridge is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese

of Massachusetts, functioning as the Episcopal Chaplain at Boston University and a lecturer and counselor at Harvard Divinity School. Partridge was the first transgender priest to preach at the Episcopal Church's National Cathedral in Washington D.C., speaking during "Pride Month" 2014.



The Reverend Dr. Cameron Partridge

The Reverend Carla Robinson is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. Robinson is the Director of Children and Youth Ministries at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Seattle. Before transitioning, Robinson was an ordained minister in the conservative Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Previously, Robinson was the priest of All Saints Episcopal Church in Seattle, which has seemingly ceased to exist as they no



The Reverend Carolyn Woodall



The Reverend Dr. Carla Robinson

longer have a website and are no longer listed in the diocesan directory. Robinson then became a non-compensated priest at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle before moving to the Church of the Ascension.

The Reverend Gwen Fry is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas. In 2014 Fry shocked his parish, Grace Episcopal Church, by identifying as a transgender person and was removed from his position by the Bishop of Arkansas, Larry Benfield. Fry is a Diocesan Coordinator for the aforementioned Integrity USA and is a member of TransEpiscopal, representing the group at the 2015 Episcopal General Convention in Salt Lake City. Fry was a panelist at a Wild Goose Festival 2015 session entitled "LGBTQ Lives: Hurt & Healing."

The Reverend Christopher Fike is the Priest in Charge at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Wilmington in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Before transitioning, Fike was the Episcopal Chaplain at Tufts University, the Priest in Charge at St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston, and the Interim Episcopal Chaplain at Boston University. The film *Too Cold Out There Without You* details Fike's experience.

The United Methodist Church (the denomination's Book of Discipline does not address the issue of transgender clergy)



The Reverend Christopher Fike

The Reverend Drew Phoenix, formerly pastor of St. John's United Methodist Church, a "primarily LGBT congregation" in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, now serves as the Executive Director of Identity, whose mission is to advance Alaska's LGBT community through advocacy, education, and connectivity. Phoenix' transition while an ordained and active pastor caused controversy at the 2007 Baltimore-Washington annual conference and at the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The Reverend David Weekley is the pastor of St. Nicholas United Methodist Church in Hull, Massachusetts. Weekley transitioned from female to male in 1975, seven years before becoming an ordained UMC minister; he did not reveal this transition until 2009 while pastor at historic Epworth United Methodist Church in Portland. While that church, begun as a mission in 1890, had 220 members in 2011, it has now shrunk to 30 members according to the UMC website. One hopes that St. Nicholas will not suffer the same fate.



The Reverend Gwen Fry

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) implicitly recognized transgender persons in 2009 in their social statement on human sexuality.

The Reverend Asher O'Callaghan became the first regularly ordained transgender minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America on July 2, 2015. O'Callaghan was called to serve at Zion Lutheran Church in Idaho Springs, Colorado, in the Rocky Mountain Synod. He was ordained at the House for All Sinners and Saints and ELCA church where celebrity pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber ministers.

The Reverend Megan Rohrer is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in the San Francisco Conference of the ELCA. Rohrer is also the Executive Director of Welcome, "a communal response to poverty."

Rohrer also serves as Associate Pastor at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church and is overseen by both Lutheran and Episcopal bishops. Rohrer's passions include creating services from popular



The Reverend Drew Phoenix

music including a "Beatles Mass," a "Bob Dylan Folk Mass," and a "Lady Gaga Mass." Because the ELCA did not ordain transgender persons before 2009, Rohrer was ordained by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, an ordination mill for LGBTQ persons denied ordination by the ELCA. Their ordinations have now been recognized by the ELCA.

The Reverend Jay Wilson was also ordained by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries at First United Lutheran Church in San Francisco, an ELCA congregation. He was ordained to the aforementioned Welcome ministry and also led First United's Children's Ministry. According to his LinkedIn profile, he was only at the church for a year and a half before becoming a Data Management Specialist at MinnesotaHelp.Info and then an Access Consultant at the University of Minnesota's Disability Resource Center.



The Reverend David Weekley

Nicole Garcia is an ordination candidate in the ELCA's Rocky Mountain Synod, and serves as a seminarian at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Boulder Colorado. Garcia is now vice chair of the board of directors of ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation. *Huffington Post* reports "Garcia still wonders if a congregation will accept her as a minister just as she is. 'How can

Continued on page 10



The Reverend Megan Rohrer is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in the San Francisco Conference of the ELCA.

I feel comfortable as a Latina with dark skin in a denomination where inevitably at least 90 percent of the congregants in any ELCA church will be white?"

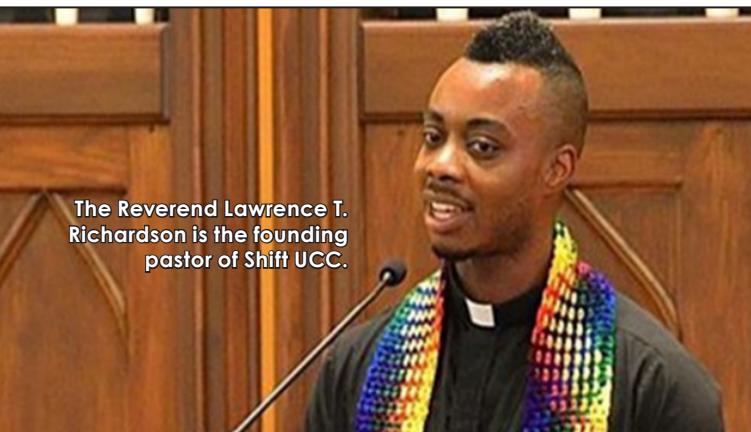
The United Church of Christ (UCC)

The Reverend Lawrence T. Richardson is the founding pastor of Shift UCC an "out of the box ministry for out of the box people" in St. Paul, Minnesota. Richardson is also the founder and CEO of Stand-To-Urinate, a transgender supplies company (no website could be found). Additionally, Richardson is a social media strategist for The Center for Progressive Renewal, a writer for The Salt Collective, and a "digital evangelist" for Extravagance United Church of Christ, "an online faith community."

The Reverend Malcolm Himschoot serves as the Minister for Ministerial Transitions at the UCC headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. His previous stints include three months as Interim Pastor at



Nicole Garcia



The Reverend Lawrence T. Richardson is the founding pastor of Shift UCC.

Community UCC in Boulder, Colorado, five months as adjunct professor at The Iliff School of Theology, fourteen months as pastor of Parker UCC in Parker, Colorado, four months as Interim Sabbatical Minister at Arvada UCC in Arvada, Colorado. Himschoot has also worked on the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns, serving as Interim Open and Affirming Program Coordinator and as the Open and Affirming director for the Rocky Mountain Conference of the UCC.

The Reverend Rebecca Steen is the pastor of First Congregational Church UCC in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Steen had been a longtime minister in the United Methodist Church's Baltimore-Washington Conference prior to transitioning in 2000. Because the UMC had no policy on transgender clergy, Steen was reappointed after a medical leave of absence, causing significant controversy in the conference. Charges were filed against Steen by members of the conference, and Steen resigned ministerial credentials in the UMC. Steen then transitioned into the more accepting United Church of Christ.

The Reverend Pat Conover is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Conover served with the Justice and Witness Ministries of the UCC. Conover also worked as Information Officer of Church and Society and as Policy Advocate for the Poverty Affairs Office. Conover is a member of Religious Committee International Foundation for Gender Education, the oldest international committee addressing concerns of transgender education.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Reverend Dr. Erin K. Swenson is a parish associate at Ormewood Park Presbyterian Church in Atlanta and pastoral psychotherapist at Morningside Presbyterian Church. Swenson serves the board of More Light Presbyterians, an organization devoted to the full participation of



The Reverend Dr. Erin K. Swenson

LGBT people of faith in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Transitioning in 1996, Swenson was the "first known mainstream Protestant minister to make an open gender transition while remaining in ordained office."

The Reverend Dr. Julie Nemecek is an elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Michigan, chairing the Discipleship Ministry Team. Nemecek was ordained a Baptist minister and served in several churches before transitioning. After transitioning, Nemecek was terminated from Spring Arbor University, a Free Methodist affiliated school, and filed a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Com-



The Reverend Malcolm Himschoot



The Reverend Dr. Julie Nemecek

mission. They eventually agreed on a settlement. Nemecek has served on the national boards of Soulforce and PFLAG and currently serves on the advisory board of Trans Youth Family Allies (TYFA) and is an honorary board member of Inclusive Justice Michigan. ✚



Matthew Maule is a student at Reformed Episcopal seminary in Pennsylvania.

Southern Baptists Chart New Course for Evangelical Political Engagement

by Chelsen Vicari



(Photo: Twitter @dougcarrison2000)

On August 5, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), assembled nearly 600 pastors and lay leaders in Nashville, Tennessee, for its second annual national conference.

Homosexuality and the future of marriage headlined the ERLC's first annual national conference in 2014 in preparation for the U.S. Supreme Court's marriage ruling. With the presidential election now inching closer, the nation's largest Protestant denomination dedicated the bulk of this year's discussion to the gospel and politics.

"What does a new generation of political engagement look like for evangelicals?" asked Phillip Bethancourt, moderator of the panel discussion entitled "2016 and Beyond: Charting a New Course for Evangelical Political Engagement."

Panelists included Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, and Dr. Russell Moore, president of the ERLC and author of the new, well-timed book *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*.

"The optics of a white angry male serving as a spokesperson for Biblical

orthodoxy in evangelicalism, that ship sailed," declared Rodriguez. For evangelicals to achieve political and cultural reformation, Rodriguez called for intentional "multi-ethnic kingdom-culture" efforts that are willing to reconcile truth and love.

Dr. Moore agreed, arguing a successful evangelical political engagement in contemporary America requires an abandonment of what he called "the tribal mentality." He said, "You can't say 'what's my tribe and how do I make sure that I am safely in my tribe all the time?' Instead, you're on a mission with Christ, which means you're talking with people that disagree with you."

Dr. Moore continued, "You're doing so full of conviction and you're also seeing this person as someone you want to ultimately see reconciled to God and then reconciled to the body of Christ."

"The fact of the matter is people, we're not engaging those who don't see it our way," offered Daly. "So they have a caricature created by the news of what we stand for and what we are and how we see them."

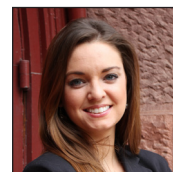
For Daly, a revived evangelical political engagement starts with reformation among Christian leadership. "You're not a Christian leader without humility. You need humility to lead. You need to have a

heart [that seeks] to be a servant both for the saved and the unsaved." He pressed on, "The Scripture says love your neighbor. How have you done that?"

Dr. Moore offered a practical guide for Christians to follow when they step into the voting booth. In addition to competence and clarity, Dr. Moore urged evangelicals to see the assault on religious liberty as the primary threat confronting America.

"What you want is somebody who will act justly and someone who will carry out competently what he has been given to do or what she has been given to do without overrunning conscience and disrupting the common good," urged Dr. Moore.

At the end of the day, said Rodriguez, charting a new course forward requires "a Christian evangelical community that will emerge not married to the agenda of the donkey or the elephant, but exclusively married to the Lamb." He concluded, "Uncle Sam may be our uncle, but he will never be our Heavenly Father." ✝



Chelsen Vicari directs the Evangelical Action program at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

Stop Trying to 'Attract' Youth. Go to Them.

by Chelsen Vicari

Off the top of your head, who do you think ignites crusades in America where 90 percent of the attendees are under 18 and have never been saved by Jesus Christ? I struggled to answer this question when it was posed to me recently by a 24-year-old Hispanic pastor named Brian Barcelona. Barcelona knew the answer. Actually, Brian Barcelona is the answer.

Barcelona is the founder of One Voice, a Los Angeles-based ministry that seeks to bring the gospel to local high school students by strengthening student Bible clubs. "The LGBT, Planned Parenthood, the Marines—all of these organizations understand one thing: if you get a student in high school, then you most likely get them for life," said Barcelona as he sat with me in the student center of Campbellsville University. "There are 14.7 million students that go to public high schools in America. That's something we have to understand as a Church."

The typical pizza party youth group is not Barcelona's style of student ministry. Instead of youth pastors hoping to attract teenagers to them, he asks, "What

happens if churches were to start sending youth pastors onto high school campuses?" Barcelona half-jokingly explained to me that there is no other mission field on the globe where the missionary knows exactly what time the sinners will arrive, when they will break for lunch, and what time they will leave five days a week, nine months a year.

As it happens, Barcelona's high school mission field includes entrenched Los Angeles and along the Pacific Coast, which a December 2014 Barna study found is the "home to the largest percentage of churchless per capita." But Los Angeles' being a secular cultural giant doesn't discourage One Voice's ministry team. The Holy Spirit has placed on Barcelona's heart that another Jesus Movement (a Christian revival during the late 1960s and early 1970s among America's youth that began along the West Coast) will start in California soon. "Be prepared, because these students aren't going to look like you. They're not going to act like you either." He added, "And what the hippies were for the Jesus Movement, I believe homosexuals will be for the next one."

Brian Barcelona, One Voice Student Missions gathering in California.
Photo: www.onevoicestudentmissions.com

Barcelona's strategy is simple and—praise God—it's also successful. By strengthening the student Bible clubs on Los Angeles' high school campuses, Barcelona is able to preach at weekly meetings on those campuses. Meeting at schools has allowed Barcelona to meet the students where they are, even leading local teenage gang members to Jesus Christ. At one particular campus meeting, nearly 2,000 students showed up in the school gym to hear about Jesus.

Passion for high school students stems from Barcelona's own conversion experience. He was raised in church, but watched his parents "backslide." He became disgusted by Christian hypocrisy. In high school he started challenging fellow believers and shares, "I was a depressed, atheist high school kid before I met Christ in 2007."

Continued on page 13

Stop Trying to 'Attract' Youth. Go to Them.

Continued from page 12

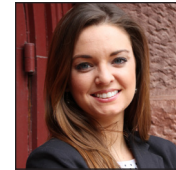
Barcelona believes that America's high school students are like the blind man Jesus heals in John 9:1-34. "Like the blind man who had never seen the light, these kids are born blind." Reading from the Scripture passage Barcelona explained, "The disciples asked Jesus, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' But instead of the Church asking, 'man, whose fault is this?' look at Jesus' response. 'It was not

this man sin or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed.'

"Reaching high school students is more than saying 'yeah, God wants to do something with the young generation,'" Barcelona continued. "Do you understand this generation actually needs you? Most of these students just want families. They are craving mothers, fathers... We need your prayer, your love, your funding, and your action."

So stop worrying about the latest cultural capitulation that will "attract" Millennials and Generation Z to your youth group and church. Just take the uncom-promised gospel to them.

If you'd like more information on how to get started or support One Voice's ministry, visit www.onevoicestudentmissions.com. ✝



Chelsen Vicari directs the Evangelical Action program at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

EVANGELICAL

Millennials' Yearning for Sacrament

by Rachel Williams

It is reported Millennials are leaving evangelical churches and joining Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches across America. So, why the shift?

Some speculate that the generation is tired of attending "PowerPoint churches" where pastors try too hard to be cool in their predictable pastoral uniform complete with trendy jeans, a v-neck t-shirt, and hipster glasses. Others cite unease with contrived props like fog machines used during worship to create a concert-like experience for church attendees. Aside from these superficial reasons, many agree that Millennials are hungering for stability, tradition, and liturgy over signs of modernity.

In 2007, respondents to a Pew Research Poll claimed that 16.1% were unaffiliated with any church. By 2014, that number had climbed to 22.8% of respondents. In the latest poll, 35% of Millennials do not claim any religious affiliation (claiming they are either agnostic, atheist, or "nothing in particular"). Furthermore, in 2007, 78.4% claimed Christianity as their religion; today that number has dropped to 70.6% of the population.

It is encouraging to remember that the United States remains the most Christian nation in the world. After all, 7 out of

10 Americans claim some to follow some form of Christianity. Even better, two out of three Americans believe Jesus was the Son of God and rose from the dead. Yet, it is



important to note that overall, older generations of Christians are not effectively passing on their faith to the next generation.

However, those who are young and looking for a new church seem to be seeking a church grounded in tradition. In a 2010 address to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, Archbishop Robert Duncan called it "Anglican fever," much to the delight of attendees. The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) officially began in 2009, after a split with the

Episcopal Church over more liberal theology. Perhaps younger generations are attracted to Anglicanism for its sense of authenticity. After all, many Anglican churches stood up for their beliefs and lost their buildings as a result.

It appears young people are appreciating the sacraments and interactive liturgical prayers offered in more traditional churches. Perhaps Millennials are attracted to Orthodox churches because they offer a clear set of beliefs, doctrine, and dogma about what it means to live a full Christian life. It is also worth noting that there simply is not a lot of data available to support this widely reported trend among Christians.

Whatever the cause of these suspected trends, the next time a young person asks for a church recommendation, consider directing them towards a church with greater orthodoxy—it may be just what they are looking for. ✝



Rachel Williams served as the Media Marketing Manager at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

PCUSA: The Dying Denomination?

by Rachel Williams

In March of this year, the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to change the definition of marriage from “one man and one woman” to “two people, traditionally a man and a woman.” This change allows clergy to now perform same-sex marriages and also states that those clergy who are personally opposed may refrain from performing gay marriages.

This decision has been a long time coming for the PCUSA. In 2011, the largest Presbyterian denomination voted to allow gay clergy. Unsurprisingly, an exodus ensued as 60 congregations left the PCUSA that year and joined the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. After the initial vote, the

following year 110 congregations left the PCUSA to join different reformed denominations. The year before the vote only 21 congregations left the PCUSA. By 2012, the PCUSA had lost over 102,000 members. To put this loss into perspective, the PCUSA reportedly enjoyed 4.25 million in 1965 at its peak membership. In 2011, they maintained 1.95 million members. In 2014, the membership fell to 1.67 million. In fact, during 2014 the PCUSA dismissed more than 100 congregations to other denominations. Over the last several years, a total of 428 congregations have opted to leave the denomination. And furthermore, over the last 50 years, the PCUSA has steadfastly lost a large percentage of its members; the denomination is effectively on the decline despite enjoying large membership numbers.

A more in-depth analysis shows that from 2012 to 2014, the membership has declined by more than 15 percent. This simply cannot bode well for the future of the PCUSA. Also noteworthy, the donations by members also declined from

“No longer would a candidate be required, according to this new guidance, to practice fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness.” In 2011, the PCUSA responded to the shifting sands saying “many talk about this era as being like a wilderness experience

for the church, from which we can learn the lessons of being the vibrant people God leads from exile into life.” The full message issued by the denomination was filled with humility, graciousness, and kindness. Yet, it cannot be ignored that the PCUSA is simply not upholding the authority of Scripture. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 in particular, Scripture is especially clear about who can be considered an appropriate, capable, and effective leader in the church.

Today, the PCUSA is widely known for its evolving attitude on gay marriage. The change started gradually. A series of small decisions lead to a much larger impact on their attitude towards Scripture. The truth is—the gospel offends. It is not easy to uphold. And it is not a message that bends to our shifting cultural attitudes. The gospel is truth and authoritative over Christians’ lives. Let’s hope the PCUSA will

take note and there will be transformation to fight and uphold Scripture in its entirety. ✚



Rachel Williams served as the Media Marketing Manager at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.



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\$1,848,807,540 in 2013 to \$1,738,915,711 just one year later.

This most recent period of decline started in 2006, after the biannual General Assembly of the PCUSA, where there was a surprising change in the church’s approach to human sexuality. PCUSA officials decided that the governing bodies, which ordain church offices, could have a new approach when considering candidates for office.

LGBT Episcopalians Celebrate 'Disordering Our Boundaries'

by Jeff Walton

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Episcopalians marked 40 years of advocacy in the Episcopal Church during an evening Eucharist characterized by inclusive language, liturgical innovations, and prayers for “disordering our boundaries and releasing our desires.”

Hundreds of Episcopalians at the denomination’s triennial General Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, participated in a festive Eucharist June 29 hosted by Integrity USA, the church’s unofficial LGBT caucus. The event took place the same day that bishops approved a new gender-neutral marriage rite.

“We’ve been at this for 40 years—it’s a nice, Biblical number to be coming out of the wilderness,” declared former Integrity USA President Susan Russell of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles.

The caucus, founded in 1974 by six-time General Convention deputy Louie Crew, has had a presence at every such gathering since 1976.

Viewing screens projected rainbow-colored Jerusalem crosses as the congregation sang an opening hymn to the “Wind of God.” An aspergillum-wielding Bishop Suffragan Mary Glasspool of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles sprinkled the congregation with holy water while a dove and colorful streamers circled overhead at the tip of a liturgical gizmo resembling a long fly-casting rod.

“And now a word from the Prophet Louie,” a prayer leader introduced, beginning a video about Crew’s life. Following the video, the congregation was led in singing “Louie, Louie, Louie Hallelujah.”

Episcopal Church House of Deputies President Gay Jennings presented Crew with the House of Deputies Medal on behalf of his service to the Episcopal Church, which Jennings praised as “persistent, prophetic.”

“All I did was get in the way of the Holy Spirit, and she’s a fierce tornado,” Crew said in accepting the medal. Encouraging the assembled congregation to “be evangelicals for Jesus,” Crew emphasized his calling to open the church to groups that feel marginalized or excluded.

Integrity has been a powerful voice at General Convention, triumphing in 2003 with a successful vote of consent by Bishops to the election of openly partnered gay bishop Gene Robinson to lead the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire. The organization has sponsored legislation at past conventions adding gender identity and expression to the church’s nondiscrimination canons.

Despite achieving its goals, Integrity USA announced in March that most staff would be laid off due to “resource issues.” Both Development Director Sam Peterson and Executive Director Vivian Taylor—who had signed on with Integrity only two years prior—saw their positions eliminated.

But financial difficulties were not mentioned at the upbeat celebration.

“What a week, no?” Glasspool asked with a smile, listing new Supreme Court rulings enacting same-sex marriage and upholding the Affordable Care Act as well as the election of North Carolina Bishop Michael Curry as the denomination’s first African American Presiding Bishop.

“Bishop Curry knows what ‘all’ means,” Glasspool affirmed, noting that Curry had preached at an Integrity event two years prior. The bishop, who was the first openly partnered lesbian to be consecrated to the episcopate, also noted that the service was for the first time being held in the General Convention worship space as an official part of the church-wide gathering.

“We got to this place of redefining marriage by redefining two other words: home and family,” Glasspool declared in

her sermon. Recalling her early love of Homer’s *Odyssey*, the bishop summarized the book as encapsulating both a desire for adventure and later a desire to return home. Tying her sermon to the Gospel text of Luke Chapter 4 when Jesus reads at the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth, Glasspool explained that in the Gospel of Mark, the author implies that Jesus is already moving away from his natural family and into the home of Peter in the town of Capernaum.

“The concept of family is transformed. The reign of God transcends the closest of family trees,” Glasspool interpreted.

Following the sermon message, Priest Kimberly Jackson of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta read a prayer to begin the time of Communion:

“Spirit of Life, we thank you for disordering our boundaries and releasing our desires as we prepare this feast of delight: draw us out of hidden places and centers of conformity to feel your laughter and live in your pleasure.”

The service detoured significantly from the church’s *Book of Common Prayer*, instead drawing from several alternative resources. The Eucharistic prayer was taken from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* while the prayers of the people were adapted by transgender priest Cameron Partridge from *We Pray: Prayers to and for the Transgendered Community*. An opening invitation to worship was adapted from a *Post-Colonial Eucharistic Prayer* and Scripture readings were taken from *The Inclusive Bible*. ✚



Jeffrey H. Walton is the Communications Manager and Anglican Program Director at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

Walking Out on a Catholic Bishop

by Mark Tooley

In a *Washington Post* column called “Civilities,” a lesbian mother, worried about being “insulted,” asked the columnist if she and her partner with their daughters should walk out of their Catholic church if their bishop again preached against same sex marriage, as he did once before in their absence.

The columnist essentially advised yes: “Kids need to know that there are adults in the church who will stand up for them, their moms and their families. Who better than you to be the first?”

So does walking out on a sermon model “civility”? And is a sermon that provokes disagreement therefore insulting? How far does this line of reasoning go?

If I as a Methodist visit a Catholic Church where the homily stressed Catholicism as the true church and the Catholic mass as the only complete understanding of the Eucharist, should I feel insulted and walk out? If I attend a Baptist service where adults are being robustly dunked, should I storm out over the implication that my own infant baptism is invalid? If a Presbyterian sermon emphasizes the Calvinist understanding of election, should I bolt for the door, hurt by the suggestion that I may not number among the elect, or at least have no choice?

If I attend Jewish or Muslim worship, and upon confirming that my deeply cherished faith in Christ’s deity and the Trinity are not affirmed, should I huffily make a scene with an early departure? Would these hasty exits from places of worship model

“civility” with their expectation that long established religious groups not teach their historic positions if they disagree with my own convictions as a lifelong Methodist whose family has spent two hundred years in Methodism?

And should I interpret religious doctrinal and ethical teaching at odds with

If I attend a Baptist service where adults are being robustly dunked, should I storm out over the implication that my own infant baptism is invalid?.

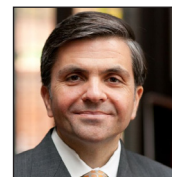
my own preferences as a personal insult mandating a retort? Or does civility actually call for respecting the theologies and ethics of religious communities while pursuing my own beliefs with kindred spirits?

The drama of stalking out of church as a public statement is appealing, but I’ve never done it. The closest was when I left before a service began, upon reading the congregational prayer in the worship bulletin directed at Mother and Father god. Joining in goddess worship seemed at odds with Christianity, so I quietly walked to another church.

Protesting sermons or worship profoundly at odds with the historic, official teachings of a religious body seems appropriate only for faithful adherents of that community. Becoming publicly angry when the clergy accurately present their longstanding teachings seems fatuous. In the Christian and Jewish traditions, the message is often supposed to challenge and even discomfit. Therapeutic affirmation is not typically biblical, and while superficially pleasing, it also fails to spiritually satisfy.

In the Jewish and Christian tradition, teaching God’s word sometimes results in martyrdom by decapitation or crucifixion, among other atrocities. But the prophets, apostles, and their successors remain faithful, in season and out.

In our current culture of the empowered self, disagreement and disapproval are increasingly interpreted as personal attacks. In a truly tolerant and pluralistic society, difficult views from the pulpit or elsewhere are heard, received, absorbed, and may be critiqued and ultimately rejected. But angry refusal to tolerate an institution’s or community’s message, or demanding it immediately surrender long-held beliefs to accommodate personal preferences of the moment, is unreasonable and uncivil. A column on “Civilities” might have so observed. ✚



Mark D. Tooley is the President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy



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