

# faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Spring 2015

## *Robert George: Marriage and Religious Liberty*

*2014 Diane Knippers Lecture*

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See page 18: Sudanese activists share information about Sudanese government officials outside the National Prayer Breakfast. (Photo: Faith McDonnell/IRD)

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Catholic philosopher Robert P. George of Princeton University delivered the Institute on Religion & Democracy's annual Diane Knippers Lecture. George chairs the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and is a prolific writer on the topics of marriage, life, and religious liberty. (Photo: Napp Nazworth/Christian Post)



# Sanctity of Human Life: The Ignored Social Justice Issue

The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., on January 22 was a tremendous day both as a demonstration for human rights and a display of Christian unity. Catholic bishops marched with Anglican bishops and Orthodox clergy, along with Lutheran and Southern Baptist leaders.

In the morning I attended an Evangelicals for Life seminar co-hosted by the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Commission, featuring its leader Russell Moore and Hispanic Evangelical Samuel Rodriguez. March for Life President Jeanne Monahan, a Catholic with an angelic disposition, thanked evangelicals for their ecumenical solidarity. Moore smilingly explained that future matches don't need fewer rosaries but do need more evangelicals. A fiery young Southern Baptist pastor shared his testimony of complicity in the "murder" of his own child by abortion at age 21, after which he sought God's mercy.

Back at the IRD office, 12 Anglican bishops, including Archbishop Foley Beach, joined us for brunch in what has become a cherished annual tradition. Afterwards, IRD staff and bishops together joined many thousands for the march down Pennsylvania Avenue.

Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, the unofficial pro-life caucus of United Methodism, Lifewatch, hosted its annual service in the Methodist Building chapel. United Methodist theologian Edgardo Colón-Emeric of Duke Divinity School delivered a thoughtful message on the "luminosity of life," citing St. Thomas Aquinas. General Board of Church and Society chief Susan Henry Crowe, even though her agency is not pro-life, courteously attended the service.

Sadly, one of her colleagues was less courteous. Her agency's "Director of Civil and Human Rights" Bill Mefford tweeted a sarcastic photo of himself outside among pro-life marchers with a sign proclaiming: "I March for Sandwiches." His tweet further explained: "I was inspired by the march for life to march for what I believe in!"

Har-har-har, and no doubt he did. Mefford's bio on the GBCS website explains his job entails opposing the death penalty. But while defending several hundred convicted murderers evidently is imperative, the nearly 1 million unborn children destroyed every year in America are a topic of mirth.

Unfortunately, Mefford's sign and tweet embody the lack of moral seriousness in much of modern Methodism's social witness. Someday, this church's social witness will be redeemed. Someday.

But Mefford's antic in no way detracted from the powerful Christian witness of more dignified church leaders. It did create much online controversy, which resulted in Mefford's apologizing and removing himself temporarily from social media. The General Board of Church and Society issued a statement noting

that Mefford's action was at odds with "the culture of respect" that Henry-Crowe was trying to foster.

Lifewatch's Paul Stallworth responded that Mefford's sandwich "sign—while not sanctioned by the GBCS staff—reflects its limited moral vision." Stallworth continued:

*But the real, continuing problem is abortion—actually, over 1,200,000 abortions per year in the United States—and the silence of The United Methodist Church about abortion. That sign will soon be forgotten. Unfortunately, countless unborn children lost to abortion will continue to be forgotten. But now The United Methodist Church is given an opportunity to forget, and overcome, its silence on abortion. By that sign.*

Indeed, and United Methodism's silence if not support for abortion rights through GBCS membership in the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (now Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice) is a scandal that dates to 1970, when United Methodism first officially backed unrestricted legalized abortion. Participating in this disgrace are virtually all Mainline Protestant denominations, which broke with historic ecumenical Christian consensus when they decided to sanction abortion on demand.

Today's liberal leaning "social justice" evangelicals are tempted to join in this scandal by remaining silent on abortion, which is uncomfortably controversial. For example, the annual Justice Conference that is hosted by the National Association of Evangelicals' World Relief and endorsed by other prominent evangelical institutions, is designed to "celebrate the beauty of justice"; its next meeting is this June, but it typically ignores the destruction of unborn life as a social justice issue for Christians, even though NAE is officially pro-life.

How do evangelicals who won't uphold the sanctity of human life have any social justice credibility? I hope the Justice Conference organizers and other Christians who remain mute on abortion will reconsider their silence and join us and hundreds of thousands of others for next year's March for Life, which is more genuinely ecumenical and more interfaith than any self-styled social justice jamboree. ✿

*Mark Tooley*



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



IRD staffers (left to right): Faith McDonnell, Chelsen Vicari, and Jeff Walton participate in the 2015 March for Life in Washington, D.C. (Photo: IRD)

# Murder of Egyptian Christians Prompts International Outcry

The beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in February by the Islamic State is drawing international condemnation and highlighting the precarious position of Christians in the region.

The men from the Upper Egyptian city of Samalut were among thousands of Egyptians who came to Libya seeking employment to support families who live in grinding poverty. Abducted in the coastal city of Sirte in two separate incidents in December and January, the men are seen on a beach in orange jumpsuits with their hands cuffed behind them in a slickly produced video showing the mass execution.

The 21 were specifically chosen for their Christian faith, and one prominent Egyptian religious leader is warning that the video of their beheading expressed the Islamic State's intention to increasingly target the Copts of Egypt.

"Please pray the churches of Egypt will comfort their sons and daughters, encouraging them to resist fear and hatred," wrote Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis of the Anglican Diocese of Egypt. "And please pray for the perpetrators of this terrible crime, that God would be merciful to them and change their hearts."

Quoting Jesus in John 16:33, Anis writes, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' Such cheer may seem impossible, but it is God's promise. Please pray for us, that we may live lives worthy of his name, and hold to the testimony exhibited by the brave Egyptians in Libya." ✝



رجال الصليب من أتباع الكنيسة المصرية المحاربة

The people of the cross, the followers of the hostile Egyptian Church

*Islamic State jihadists prepare to behead 21 Coptic Christians, identified as "people of the cross," on a Libyan beach. (Photo: ISIS propaganda video)*

## Clergyman Suggests 9/11 Perpetrated by Israel

A controversial Church of England cleric has issued an apology after sharing a web site over social media that asserted Israel was responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The Rev. Stephen Sizer linked to an article entitled "9/11 Israel did it." Sizer, who regularly speaks at conferences with a sharp critique of Christian groups that are supportive of Israel, has in the past been accused of anti-Semitism by the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Sizer's apology comes after the Diocese of Guildford, where he is licensed, announced an investigation of the matter. The Church of England issued a statement concerning Sizer:

"These comments would rightly be seen as unacceptable whenever they were posted. It is a matter of deep sorrow and shame that they have been posted in this week of all weeks."

The Bishop of Guildford, Andrew Watson, has instructed Sizer not to engage in "writing or speaking on any theme that relates, either directly or indirectly, to the current situation in the Middle East or to its historical backdrop" and also cannot use social media for six months without being relieved of his position. ✝



*The Rev. Stephen Sizer was investigated by the Church of England after he seemingly blamed Israel for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. (Photo: Video capture/UK Mirror)*





The bell tower of Duke chapel, where a call to Friday Islamic prayers was to be broadcast. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

## Duke Reverses Course on Muslim Call to Prayer

Plans to begin issuing the Muslim call to prayer from a bell tower at North Carolina's Duke University have been withdrawn after public outcry, the Associated Press reports.

The Duke Muslim Students Association planned to chant the call, or *adhan*, from the Duke Chapel bell tower on Fridays. The *adhan* signals the beginning of the weekly prayer service. The call was to last three minutes and be "moderately amplified," according to the University.

Duke has historic ties to The United Methodist Church, and the chapel's associate dean for religious life defended the initial plans as representing "a larger commitment to religious pluralism that

is at the heart of Duke's mission." Evangelist Franklin Graham was among those critical of the proposal.

Various Christian denominations hold prayer and worship services in the chapel. Approximately 700 of Duke's 14,800 enrolled students identify as Muslim. ✚

## Maryland Bishop Indicted in Baltimore Hit-and-Run

The second highest ranking official in the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland has been indicted on 13 charges in a December 27 crash that killed a cyclist. Bishop Suffragan Heather Cook is accused of driving under the influence resulting in a homicide, vehicular manslaughter, criminally negligent manslaughter, texting while driving, and fleeing the scene of an accident. A breathalyzer test showed Cook's blood alcohol level was 0.22 following the accident. If found guilty, Cook could face a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment for each charge of manslaughter and for driving away from the accident.

The Episcopal Church has launched its own investigation under the church's disciplinary canons. Church spokeswoman Neva Rae Fox told the *Baltimore Sun* that church officials will look at the process used for vetting candidates for bishop positions. The Maryland Standing Committee wrote to Cook in late January calling for her resignation.

Diocese of Maryland officials acknowledged that delegates who elected Cook in May were not told that she had been charged with driving under the influence of alcohol in 2010, an incident in which her blood alcohol level was 0.27 and she was found in possession of an open whiskey bottle, two bags of marijuana, and marijuana smoking paraphernalia. The information was disclosed to a search committee that vetted candidates, but was not relayed to the diocesan convention that elected her.

The *Washington Post* reports that diocesan officials suspected Cook was drunk at a dinner before her September consecration. ✚



From left, Maryland Bishop Eugene Sutton, Bishop Suffragan Heather Cook, and Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori following Cook's consecration service in September. (Photo: Richard Schori/Episcopal News Service)

# Episcopal, United Methodist Churches Continue Shedding Members

Two denominations that pride themselves on inclusivity are including significantly fewer people in their 2013 U.S. membership and attendance figures.

Statistics released this autumn by the Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church reveal that the denominations are struggling to find their footing.

The Episcopal Church, especially, has faced increasingly steep losses since the early 2000s in a perfect storm of changing demographics, low fertility, and departures by traditionalists. The 2013 reporting year saw membership drop 27,423 to 1,866,758 (a 1.4 percent decline) while attendance dropped 16,451 to 623,691 (a 2.6 percent decline). Losses were not evenly distributed, with rural and Rust Belt dioceses struggling, and the Northeastern United States experiencing the most widespread losses.

The new numbers do not factor in the departure of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, despite the majority of congregations there leaving the Episcopal Church at the end of 2012. If South Carolina departures were factored in, the membership loss would be closer to

50,000 persons.

Overall, the church has declined from a high of 3.6 million members in the mid-1960s to 1.8 million today, even as the U.S. population has more than doubled. The church has lost a quarter of its attendance since 2003.

In The United Methodist Church, the vast majority of annual conferences also saw a membership and attendance decline in 2013.

The 49 reporting U.S. annual conferences reported over 83,000 fewer members combined, with more than 68,000 fewer members attending weekly services. While membership losses continue at roughly the same pace, the decline in worship attendance has jumped by more than one-third. Only

one conference, Tennessee, grew in both membership and attendance.

Negative outliers included the Pacific-Northwest Annual Conference, with a 5 percent drop in membership and an 8.25 percent drop in weekly attendance. The church's entire Western Jurisdiction did poorly in membership losses, as did the left-leaning North Central Jurisdiction with attendance losses.

Of the 16 fastest-declining conferences, at least 12 have passed resolutions at recent annual conference sessions stating their support of the LGBTQ movement. Meanwhile large and growing United Methodist annual conferences have overwhelmingly rejected such resolutions. ✚



*Winged Skull Gravestone at Cramond Kirk (Photo: Calum McRoberts/Wikimedia Commons)*

## Retired Methodist Bishop Escapes Penalty for Blessing Same-Sex Union

A long-retired United Methodist Bishop won't face a penalty after performing a 2013 same-sex union. Melvin Talbert disregarded the request of North Alabama Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett and conducted a same-sex blessing service for a homosexual couple that had earlier been married in Washington, D.C.

The United Methodist Church's governing *Discipline* forbids same-sex union ceremonies.

Active United Methodist bishops voted overwhelmingly last year to call for

formal complaints to be filed against Talbert by Wallace-Padgett and Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany, then the Council of Bishops President.

United Methodist Church officials have announced a "just resolution" to protect Talbert from any penalty, while he vaguely agreed to "live according to the *Book of Discipline*" without apologizing.



*Bishop Melvin Talbert outside the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Florida, at a gathering in support of clergy who officiate at same-sex weddings. (Photo: Paul Jeffrey/UMNS)*

Other bishops participating in this process included Robert Hoshibata of Phoenix, who had publicly defended Talbert, and Elaine Stanovsky of Denver. ✚



# “High Priestess of Abortion” to Exit Episcopal Divinity School

by Jeffrey H. Walton

A controversial Episcopal seminary dean is stepping down following several years of friction with faculty and disagreement about the future of the school.

Dean Katherine Hancock Ragsdale announced her decision not to continue as dean and president of Episcopal Divinity School in an e-mail earlier this year.

“I write to tell you that I have informed EDS’s board of trustees of my intent not to request a renewal of my contract when it expires at the end of June 2015. Further, I have asked them, if possible, to expedite the process of naming a successor so that I may explore new opportunities,” Ragsdale wrote. “Of course I will do everything I can to insure a smooth transition.”

Ragsdale’s announcement was immediately followed by a statement from the seminary’s board.

“President Ragsdale undertook a deep and real challenge when she began her tenure at the helm of EDS, including arriving at a difficult time in the wake of the sale of iconic property to secure the institution’s financial future, and during a time of challenge in the broader field of theological education,” the board wrote. “With this leadership transition, we ask all members of our community to offer their gracious prayers to our departing President and to contribute to a welcoming and prayerful community for our next leaders.”

Ragsdale’s infamous rallying cry “abortion is a blessing,” declared in front of a Birmingham, Alabama, abortion clinic in 2007, raised her profile beyond Episcopal Church circles and earned her the nickname “The High Priestess of Abortion” by conservative detractors for her enthusiastic backing of unrestricted abortion rights.

Ragsdale has served on the board of NARAL Pro-Choice America and as past chair of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), a group founded to provide religious cover for

abortion-on-demand and which counts the Episcopal Church among its affiliates.

Ragsdale’s announcement follows two especially rocky years at EDS in which the dean faced a canceled governance assessment project in which faculty protested that they were shut out of planning. In 2013, Ragsdale was given a vote of “no confidence” by faculty, the kind of action that she waved off as “a dime a dozen.”

“It’s just a way of doing business, especially for places that are facing the need to potentially make significant change,” Ragsdale asserted in an interview with *The Living Church*. “It goes with the territory.”

The Cambridge, Massachusetts, seminary sold property worth over \$33 million to neighboring Lesley University just before Ragsdale’s term in office in an effort to pay off outstanding debt and regain the school’s financial footing. According to *The Living Church*, EDS annually draws 7 percent from its \$66 million endowment to cover operating costs; 5 percent or less would be considered sustainable.

Ragsdale became president of Episcopal Divinity School in 2009, one of the Episcopal Church’s most liberal of 10 accredited seminaries. The seminary’s board describes EDS as “leaders in educational programs that are enlivened by theologies of liberation, especially the many voices of feminist, congregational, ecumenical, and global studies.”

Ragsdale is only the second ever female Episcopal seminary chief and the first who is a professed homosexual. She is also the former director of Massachusetts-based Political Research Associates, a watchdog of conservatism in America.

In 2011, EDS issued an 800-word press release acclaiming the “historic” wedding of Ragsdale and her partner, The Rev. Mally Lloyd, Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Ragsdale and Lloyd were married in a ceremony at St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral in



Outgoing Episcopal Divinity School Dean Katherine Ragsdale appears in a 2014 Advent Meditation Series. (Photo: YouTube/Episcopal Divinity School)

Boston by the late Bishop Thomas Shaw in the presence of 400 family and friends.

The developments at EDS come as similar turmoil at the Episcopal Church’s General Theological Seminary (GTS) in New York appears to be quieting down. Dean Kurt Dunkle of GTS faced opposition from a majority of faculty whose “resignations” were accepted by the GTS board despite not being offered. Eight of the nine dismissed faculty were later “provisionally” reinstated.

Episcopal Divinity School Chair Winnie Varghese wrote this winter about the search for an Interim President and Dean to serve an eighteen-month period beginning March 2015. Among the qualifications listed is for an applicant “who can ‘hit the ground running,’ to increase enrollment and institutional development during this time of transition.”



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

# PCUSA Defrocks Esteemed Evangelical Pastor

by Jeff Gissing

**T**he Presbyterian Church (USA) has defrocked a well-respected minister for the role he played in helping a congregation leave the denomination. Joseph B. Rightmyer—an honorably retired member of Grace Presbytery—served as a Teaching Elder for more than forty years, serving most of his career as Chief Administrative Officer of Presbyterians for Renewal.

Rightmyer served as Interim Pastor at Highland Park Presbyterian Church since 2013. He was brought up on disciplinary charges in October after the influential Dallas congregation chose to leave the PC(USA) in order to affiliate with the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO).

In January, after an investigation and ecclesiastical trial, the Permanent Judicial Commission of Grace Presbytery found him guilty of eight charges and acquitted him on three more.

Thomas Tickner, Chairman of Grace Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, charged with providing oversight of Teaching Elders, initiated the disciplinary case.

The eight charges on which Rightmyer was *convicted* are grouped around actions related to Highland Park's decision to depart the PC(USA). Each was alleged to violate vows taken by ministers upon ordination:

1. "Will you be **governed by our church's polity**, and will you **abide by its discipline**? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?" (W 4.4003e)
2. "Do you promise to **further the peace, unity, and purity** of the church?" (W 4.4003g)

The first charge is advocating and facilitating the church's departure inconsistent with the presbytery's dismissal policy. The presbytery alleged that Rightmyer knew the policy and directed the congregation toward ignoring it and unilaterally leaving.

Further, Rightmyer was charged with presiding at meeting(s) at which Highland Park's session and later the entire congregation voted to depart. Rightmyer was acquitted on three other charges related to procedural matters regarding an Associate Pastor.

As a result of the guilty verdicts, Rightmyer was stripped of his ordination in the PC(USA).

The verdict raises the question of whether the case was strictly necessary.

Any member in good standing of a presbytery may file disciplinary charges against another member of the presbytery. In this instance there is nothing that *required* Tickner to file charges, but if he hadn't then someone else would have.

People familiar with the case claim the presbytery's leadership hoped Rightmyer would renounce the jurisdiction of the PC(USA) rather than go to trial. In Presbyterian polity, a renunciation of jurisdiction is a unilateral act by a minister that has the effect of giving up his or her ordination. Rightmyer chose instead to undergo the trial, to have his day in court, and to respond to the charges against him.

There was, in truth, a case to be answered. Highland Park *did* depart the PC(USA) inconsistent with the dismissal policy. If the policy was fair, reasonable, and just, then it appears that Rightmyer and Highland Park acted improperly.

Grace Presbytery has a reputation for dealing harshly with churches that desire to leave the denomination and for vitriol toward Teaching Elders who lead churches from the denomination. Grace Presbytery would rather take over a church, fire a pastor, and change the locks, than bless a departing congregation.

The Supreme Court of Texas has established that Neutral Principles apply in disputes over church property and corporate governance. When Highland Park—a Texas corporation—held a meeting of the corporation to make changes to the way it governed itself and to elect to depart the PC(USA) the Court established

that such decisions were entitled to be ruled on by the Court using state law with no reference to the Constitution of the PC(USA). In short, Highland Park had every right to choose to unilaterally depart the denomination with its property intact. Courts would not recognize the trust allegedly created by the *Book of Order* as enforceable.

It is understandable that Highland Park should decide to leave the PC(USA) with minimal interaction with Grace Presbytery. In the end the church and presbytery agreed to a settlement of \$7.8 million.

What will happen to Rightmyer? An appeal can be filed to the synod's permanent judicial commission, but the decision is unlikely to be overturned for legal and political reasons. Rightmyer received the highest possible censure that the church can enforce, which seems to be more serious than the charges warranted when weighed against Rightmyer's 40 years of pastoral service.

This trial reveals the state of the PC(USA), which has refused to try or to punish Teaching Elders who have violated the Constitution by engaging in same-sex sexual relationships, performing "marriages" for gay couples, or teaching doctrines that cannot be called Christian. As former director of the PC(USA) Office of Theology and Worship Joseph D. Small, who has held a number of key leadership roles in the PC(USA) for more than two decades, has noted, the PC(USA) as a church has come to value procedure over theology, polity over the principles. When a diverse community is attempting to hang together by a single string—polity—any attempt to navigate around or compromise that strand must be violently defended. ✚



Jeff Gissing is a Presbyterian teaching elder based in Pennsylvania.



# Sexual License Mandates Attack Christian Educational Institutions

by Rick J. Plasterer

*Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, is finding that its policy requiring sexual abstinence outside of heterosexual marriage is becoming a barrier to accreditation and acceptance in the community. (Photo: Gordon College)*

Not content with dismantling the laws and policies that made Judeo-Christian morality the framework of society, social liberals now seek to deny traditional Christians the right to maintain their own private, voluntary institutions in which Christian sexual morality is taught. The drama of institutions struggling to maintain their Christian identity in a hostile legal and social environment is being played out by two Christian collegiate institutions: Gordon College in Massachusetts and Trinity Western University in British Columbia.

Several years ago a similar drama played out in Canada, and it seemed to have been resolved in favor of religious freedom. In 2008, the Christian Horizons Evangelical charity in Ontario was told by the Ontario Human Rights Commission that it could not require Christian morality of its staff (even though employees signed a promise to abide by common Christian moral standards). Once outside the purview of the OHRC, however, Christian Horizons prevailed in the regular court, with the court recognizing the charity's purpose was Christian ministry to the public and thus it must require Christian faith and morality of its staff.

Fast forward to today. Trinity Western University's covenant, among other things (such as cultivating Christian virtues and addressing problem areas such as drugs and lewd entertainment), requires that sexual expression be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. With "equality" now understood to mean

that sexual license is a right and opposition to it is oppression, such "discrimination" can no longer be tolerated. "Canadian values" (never formally consented to by the people of Canada but assumed by the cultural left) demand this. Applying this standard across the board would mean that no institution in Canada could function on a Christian basis.

Opposition is especially fierce from the legal profession. Early in 2013, the deans of Canada's law schools opposed accreditation of the proposed TWU law school for no other reason than TWU's prohibition of homosexual activity. Having initially acquired the essential approval of the Federation of Law Societies in Canada (FLSC) in 2013, TWU has continued to encounter stiff opposition, and it seems unclear whether the university will prevail in opening a law school. After the law societies of Ontario and Nova Scotia declined to accept Trinity graduates, Trinity headed back to court, citing the Canadian Supreme Court's 2001 decision in favor of its teaching program, which was the basis of the 2013 FLSC decision. Meanwhile in British Columbia, a special meeting of that province's law society was called to overturn its earlier approval. Voting remotely, this was achieved.

TWU has defended its position as being in line with Canada's 2005 Civil Marriage Act, which says that holding diverse views on marriage is not against the "public interest." (TWU's covenant restricts sexual activity to the marriage of one man and one woman; it does not

specifically refer to homosexuality.) But the advancing contrary opinion in Canada holds that traditional Christian morality is offensive and should not be enforced, even in private Christian environments.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Gordon College is experiencing a similar crisis. The school's policy requiring sexual abstinence from all sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage is becoming a barrier to accreditation and acceptance in the community. In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Gordon's president Michael Lindsay indicated that his institution will spend the next year to 18 months reviewing its policy, including its prohibition of homosexual behavior, while reserving to itself the final determination, despite the threat to its accreditation.

The LGBTQ polemic against Christian morality is far-reaching; it has carried the day against enormous odds because people are willing to "open-mindedly" listen to stories of suffering. However, a counter-polemic could be mounted about the suffering that permissive sexual behavior has caused. More importantly, indeed, decisively for Christians,

*Continued on page 16*



Rick J. Plasterer is a staff writer for the Institute on Religion and Democracy



Robert P. George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton, where he lectures on constitutional interpretation, civil liberties, and philosophy of law. (Photo: brandonvogt.com)

## 2014 Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture by Robert George: Marriage and Religious Liberty

*Professor Robert George, an IRD emeritus board member, holds Princeton University's McCormick Chair in Jurisprudence and is the founding director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. He is vice chairman of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Dr. George delivered the fourth annual Diane Knippers Lecture on October 16 in Washington, D.C., honoring IRD's late revered president.*

I regard it as a great honor to be giving this lecture in honor of the late Diane Knippers. Not only was Diane one of my dear friends, she was also one of my heroes. She dedicated herself sacrificially to the fight to defend moral sanity and Christian orthodoxy. She was a warrior princess for the sanctity of human life,

the dignity of marriage, and religious freedom and other basic human rights. She had all the right friends and all the right enemies. In fact, her friends and her enemies were alike a tribute to her. She did not seek conflict, but she never shrank from a fight when the principles she believed in were under assault. She could not be bought, nor could she be bullied into acquiescence or silence. She feared God, not men. And so she served him faithfully and well, all the days of her life. She was taken from us too soon—far too soon—and yet her spirit lives on in the work of the IRD, and we draw daily inspiration from the example of Christian discipleship she set for us.

It was only yesterday, was it not, that we were being assured that the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex partnerships would have no impact on

persons and institutions that hold to the traditional view of marriage as a conjugal union. Such persons and institutions would simply be untouched by the change. It won't affect your marriage or your life, we were told, if the law recognizes Henry and Herman or Sally and Sheila as "married." It's all just a matter of "live and let live."

Those offering these assurances were also claiming that the redefinition of marriage would have no impact on the public understanding of marriage as a monogamous and sexually exclusive partnership. No one, they insisted, wanted to alter those traditional marital norms. On the contrary, the redefinition of marriage would promote and spread those norms more broadly. No one was seeking to re-define marriage, we were assured; the goal was merely to broaden



the pool of people eligible to participate in the institution.

When some of us warned that all of this was nonsense, and pointed out the myriad ways that Catholics, Evangelicals, Mormons, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and others would be affected, and their opportunities and liberties restricted by the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships (and, relatedly, by the insertion of the concept of “sexual orientation” into anti-discrimination statutes and ordinances), our liberal friends accused us of “scaremongering.” When we observed that reducing marriage to a form of sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership (which is what happens when sexual-reproductive complementarity is banished from the definition) removes any principled ground for understanding marriage as a sexually exclusive and faithful union of two persons, and not an “open” partnership or a relationship of three or more persons in a polyamorous sexual ensemble, we were charged with invalid slippery-slope reasoning. Remember?

No one, they assured us, would require Christian foster care and adoption services to place children in same-sex headed households. No one, they said, would require religiously affiliated schools and social-service agencies to treat same-sex partners as spouses, or impose penalties or disabilities on those that dissent. No one would be fired from his or her job (or suffer employment discrimination) for voicing support for conjugal marriage or criticizing same-sex sexual conduct and relationships. No business owner would be required to provide services for same-sex ceremonies

that were contrary to his or her moral beliefs, or punished if he or she declined to provide them. And no one was proposing to recognize polyamorous relationships or normalize “open marriages,” nor would redefinition undermine the norms of sexual exclusivity and monogamy in theory or practice.

That was then; this is now.

I must say, though, that I still can’t fathom why anybody believed any of it—even then. The whole argument was and is that the idea of marriage as the union of husband and wife lacks a rational basis and amounts to nothing more than “bigotry.” Therefore, no reasonable person of goodwill can dissent from the liberal position on sex and marriage, any more

grasp to consciously consider and reject it—they uncritically conceive marriage precisely as sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership, and they can’t fathom how anyone could possibly understand it in any other way. This is despite the fact that the idea of marriage as conjugal has historically been embodied in our matrimonial laws, and explains their content (not just the requirement of spousal sexual complementarity, but also rules concerning legal consummation and annulability, norms of monogamy and sexual exclusivity, and the pledge permanence of commitment) in ways that the sexual-romantic domestic partnership conception simply cannot.

Still, having adopted the sexual-romantic domestic partnership idea, and seeing no alternative possible conception of marriage, they assume—and it is just that, an assumption, and a gratuitous one—that no actual reason exists for regarding sexual-reproductive complementarity as integral to marriage. After all, two men or two women can have a romantic interest in each other, live together in a sexual partnership, care for each other, and so forth. So why can’t they be married?

Those who think otherwise, having no rational basis for their view, they discriminate invidiously. By the same token, if two men or two women can be married, why can’t three or more people, irrespective of sex, in polyamorous “triads,” “quadrads,” etc.? Since no reason supports the idea of marriage as a male-female union or a partnership of two persons and not three or more, the motive of



*The fourth annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture was held in the beautiful sanctuary of Mt. Vernon Place United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., on October 16, 2014. (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD)*

than a reasonable person of goodwill could support racial segregation and subordination. And this, because marriage, according to the re-definers, consists principally of companionship of people committed to mutual affection and care. Any distinctions beyond this one they condemn as baseless.

Since most liberals and even some conservatives, it seems, apparently have no understanding at all of the idea of marriage as a conjugal relationship—a one-flesh union—not even enough of a

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# Marriage and Religious Liberty

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those insisting on these other “traditional” norms must also be a dark and irrational one.

My point that redefining “marriage” as sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership to accommodate same-sex relationships erodes the basis

can have legal marital relationships with more than one person, reciprocally or asymmetrically, themselves determining the sex and number of parties, the type of relationship involved, and which rights and responsibilities to exchange with each.”

Western marriage and seek...small group marriages.”

In their statement “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage,” more than three hundred “LGBT and allied” scholars and advocates, including such prominent and influential figures as Gloria Steinem, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Kenji Yoshino, call for legally recognizing as marriages or the equivalent sexual relationships involving more than two partners. Nor are such relationships unheard of: *Newsweek*

reports that there are more than five hundred thousand in the United States alone. In Brazil, a public notary has recognized a trio of people as a civil union. Mexico City has considered expressly temporary marriage licenses. The Toronto District School Board treats polyamorous sexual partnerships as among the many valid forms of family structure in its curricular materials.

And what about the connection to family life? Writer E. J. Graff celebrates the fact that recognizing same-sex unions would change the “institution’s message” so that it would “ever after stand for sexual choice, for cutting the link between sex and diapers.” Enacting same-sex marriage “does more than just fit; it announces that marriage has changed shape.”

What about sexual exclusivity? Andrew Sullivan, a self-styled proponent of the “conservative” case for same-sex marriage, has gone so far as to extol the “spirituality” of “anonymous sex,” and welcome the fact that the “openness” of same-sex unions might erode sexual exclusivity among those in opposite-sex marriages.



*IRD staff and family members of the late IRD President Diane Knippers gather at a reception following the fourth annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture at the Henley Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., on October 16, 2014. From left to right: IRD President Mark Tooley; Jeannette LeMasters, Diane Knippers' sister-in-law; Knippers' father Clarence LeMasters; IRD Religious Liberty Program Director Faith McDonnell; Robert P. George; Knippers' mother Vera LeMasters; Knippers' widower Ed Knippers; Knippers' nephew Erik LeMasters. (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD)*

for permanence and exclusivity in any relationship is increasingly confirmed by the rhetoric and arguments of advocates of this view themselves, and by the policies that they are increasingly led to embrace. University of Arizona philosophy professor Elizabeth Brake, for example, supports what she calls “minimal marriage,” in which “individuals

Judith Stacey—a prominent New York University professor who is in no way regarded as a fringe figure—in testifying before Congress against the Defense of Marriage Act expressed hope that the redefinition of marriage would give marriage “varied, creative, and adaptive contours ... [leading some to] question the dyadic limitations of



Similarly, in a *New York Times Magazine* profile, same-sex marriage activist Dan Savage encourages spouses to adopt “a more flexible attitude” about sex outside their marriage. A piece in *The Advocate*, a gay-interest newsmagazine, supports our point still more candidly:

“Anti-equality right-wingers have long insisted that allowing gays to marry will destroy the sanctity of ‘traditional marriage,’ and, of course, the logical, liberal party-line response has long been ‘No, it won’t.’ But what if—for once—the sanctimonious crazies are right? Could the gay male tradition of open relationships actually alter marriage as we know it? And would that be such a bad thing?”

Other advocates of redefining marriage have also embraced the goal of weakening the institution in these very terms. “[Former President George W.] Bush is correct,” says Victoria Brownworth, “...when he states that allowing same-sex couples to marry will weaken the institution of marriage.... It most certainly will do so, and that will make marriage a far better concept than it previously has been.” Michelangelo Signorile, another prominent advocate of redefining marriage, urges people in same-sex relationships to “demand the right to marry not as a way of adhering to society’s moral codes but rather to debunk a myth and radically alter an archaic institution.” They should “fight for same-sex marriage and its benefits and then, once granted, redefine the institution of marriage completely, because the most subversive action lesbians and gay men can undertake ...is to transform the notion of ‘family’ entirely.”

Thus, many advocates of redefinition, sensing that they have now won and there is no turning back, are increasingly

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The same-sex  
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open in saying that they do not see these disputes about sex and marriage as honest disagreements among reasonable people of goodwill. They are, rather, battles between the forces of reason, enlighten-

ment, and equality—those who would “expand the circle of inclusion”—on one side, and those of ignorance, bigotry, and discrimination—those who would exclude people out of “hatred” or “animus”—on the other. The “excluders” are to be treated just as racists are treated—since they are the equivalent of racists. Of course, we (in the United States, at least) don’t put racists in jail for expressing their opinions—we respect the First Amendment; but we don’t hesitate to stig-

matize them and impose various forms of social and even civil disability upon them and their institutions. In the name of “marriage equality” and “non-discrimination,” liberty—especially religious

liberty and the liberty of conscience—and genuine equality are undermined.

As I have said so often in the past, the fundamental error made by some supporters of conjugal marriage was and is, I believe, to imagine that a grand bargain could be struck with their opponents: “We will accept the legal redefinition of marriage; you will respect our right to act on our consciences without penalty, discrimination, or civil disabilities of any type. Same-sex partners will get marriage licenses, but no one will be forced for any reason to recognize those marriages or suffer discrimination or disabilities in employment, licensing, accreditation, government contracting, or any other area for declining to recognize them or become complicit in facilitating them.” There was never any hope of such a bargain being accepted. Perhaps parts of such a bargain would be accepted by liberal forces temporarily for strategic or tactical reasons, as part of the political project of getting marriage redefined; but guarantees of religious liberty and non-discrimination for people who cannot in conscience accept same-sex marriage could then be eroded and eventually removed. After all, “full equality” requires that no quarter be given to the “bigots” who want to engage in “discrimination” (people with a “separate but equal” mindset) in the name of their



*IRD President Mark Tooley offered an opening welcome to the fourth annual Diane Knipers Memorial Lecture. (Photo: Napp Nazworth / Christian Post)*

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# Marriage and Religious Liberty

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retrograde religious beliefs. “Dignitarian” harm must be opposed as resolutely as more palpable forms of harm.

areas) that, from the point of view of liberal secularist doctrine, cannot be made available to them if they refuse to



*Vera LeMasters (left) mother of the late Diane Knippers, at the lecture on defending marriage, life, and religious liberty. (Photo: Napp Nazworth/Christian Post)*

There is a reason for this: Liberal secularism never was and never will be what the late John Rawls depicted it as being and hoped it would be, namely, a purely political doctrine, as opposed to what he called a comprehensive view—a view of human nature, meaning, dignity, and destiny—that competes with other comprehensive views. Nowhere is the reality of contemporary liberalism as a comprehensive doctrine—a secularist religion—more plainly on display than in the moral-cultural struggle over marriage and sexual morality. Liberal secularism will tolerate other comprehensive views so long as they present no challenge or serious threat to its own most cherished values. But when they do, they must be smashed—in the name, for example, of “equality” or preventing “dignitarian harm”—and their faithful must be reduced to a dhimmi-like status in respect of opportunities (in employment, contracting, and other

conform themselves to the demands of liberal ideology.

Of course, there will be some within the liberal community—Rawlsians and others—who will try to make some room for meaningful dissent, even in practice and not just in thought and speech. And they will make various arguments—principled and practical—for why what might be described as the church of liberal secularism should avoid being too draconian in its treatment of heretics and dissenters. But they will lose the battle. The very success of the movement to which they have given their allegiance will reinforce the belief among their compatriots that the movement’s victories were victories of righteousness over evildoers, and expressions of dissent, even small ones, will increasingly be perceived not only as deeply wicked, but as presenting a grave and intolerable danger to the order of goodness that was, after a long struggle and at great cost, achieved.

And so, as Dean Robert Vischer of the University of St. Thomas Law School has observed, “The tension between religious liberty and gay rights is a thorny problem that will continue to crop up in our policy debates for the foreseeable future. Dismissing religious liberty concerns as the progeny of a ‘separate but equal’ mindset does not bode well for the future course of those debates.” That, in my opinion, is to put it mildly. But there is, in my opinion, no chance—no chance—of persuading champions of sexual liberation (and it should be clear by now that this is the cause they serve), that they should respect, or permit the law to respect, the conscience rights of those with whom they disagree. Look at it from their point of view: Why should we permit “full equality” to be trumped by bigotry? Why should we recognize a “right to discriminate”? Why should we respect religions and religious institutions that are “incubators of homophobia”? Bigotry, religiously based or not, must be eradicated. The law should certainly not give it recognition or lend it any

standing or dignity. Why should those who hold bigoted views be permitted to hold faculty positions at colleges, universities, or in law schools? Why should they even be permitted to speak or be heard on campuses? Why should they be tolerated in print or broadcast media, whether news or entertainment, in law firms, or in the corporate world?

Of course, people who hold conservative views on moral issues have long experienced discrimination in all these areas. But until recently, the discriminators felt it necessary to pretend that they did not practice discrimination. “Why are there no moral conservatives on your faculty?” “Oh, it must be because they aren’t bright or accomplished enough.” Or: “They love money more than ideas, so they gravitate towards business, not academic life.” Or: “Gosh, I don’t know. It’s just a mystery.” “Why are there so few people in Hollywood who hold, or reveal that they hold,



conservative views on moral questions?” “Oh, well, that’s another one of those impenetrable mysteries. Really just beats me. I mean, it’s not as if there is a black list or anything like that.” But increasingly it will be unnecessary to dissemble or maintain these pretenses. The answer will simply be, “we don’t tolerate bigots around here.”

The lesson, it seems to me, for those of us who believe that the conjugal conception of marriage is true and good, and who wish to protect the rights of our faithful and of our institutions to honor that belief in carrying out their vocations and missions, is that there is no alternative to winning the battle in the public square over the legal definition of marriage—however dark and even hopeless the cause looks, and even if the time horizon is fifty or a hundred years. The “grand bargain” is an illusion we should dismiss from our minds. And even if we won’t, it will soon be blasted out of our minds by the harsh realities that will now descend upon dissenters from the new liberal orthodoxy. There will be more Brendan Eichs [the CEO of Mozilla, developer of the Firefox Web browser, who was forced out of the company he co-founded by outrage over his support of the anti-same-sex marriage Proposition 8 ballot initiative in California], more people who are made examples of so that others, fearful of the consequences for their livelihoods and relationships, won’t even consider expressing dissent. Indeed, the ultimate goal of punishing the public dissenters is to marginalize and stigmatize dissent itself to the point that people will be deterred even from entertaining it in the privacy of their own minds.

Of course, with sexual liberalism now so powerfully entrenched in the established institutions of the elite sector of our culture (and fully embraced by the President of the United States and the Democratic Party and funded by innumerable hedge fund billionaires and corporate titans), some view the defense of marriage as a lost cause. That is particularly true in the wake of the recent shameful decision of the Supreme Court to let the lower

federal courts impose same-sex “marriage” throughout the country without our robed masters in the Marble Temple taking responsibility for the preposterous claim that Americans actually redefined marriage in 1868 when they ratified the 14th Amendment—without so much as the slightest awareness that they were or even might be doing it.

Anyway, I think that defeatism, though understandable in our current grim condition, is another mistake—one that sexual liberals have every reason to encourage their opponents to make, and ample resources to promote. We’ve

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all heard the argument (or taunt): “The acceptance of same-sex marriage on a national scale is inevitable. It’s a done deal. You had better get on the right side of history, lest you be remembered in the company of Orville Faubus.”

Of course, this is what we were told about the so-called “woman’s right to abortion” in the mid-1970s. And many demoralized pro-life people initially believed it. But it didn’t turn out that way. A greater percentage of Americans are pro-life today than in the 1970s, and young people are more pro-life than people of their parents’ generation. The idea promoted by the abortion lobby when their cause seemed to be a juggernaut—that

“the American people will inevitably accept abortion as a matter of women’s rights and social hygiene”—proved spectacularly false.

Or, speaking of “social hygiene,” let us think back to the 1920s and 30s when eugenics was embraced by the elite institutions of American society—from the wealthy philanthropic foundations, to the mainline Protestant denominations, to the Supreme Court of the United States. Affluent, sophisticated, “right-minded” people were all on board with the eugenics program. It, too, seemed like a juggernaut. “Three generations of imbeciles [was] enough.” Only those retrograde Catholics, joined by some other backward religious folk—the IRD-types of the day—resisted; and the thought was that the back of their resistance would soon be broken by the sheer rationality of the eugenics idea. The eugenicists were certain that their adversaries were on “the wrong side of history.” The full acceptance of eugenics was “inevitable.” But, of course, things didn’t quite turn out that way.

Note that my point here is not to say or imply that redefining marriage is morally just like abortion or eugenics. There are obvious and important differences. My point is about the claim by progressives and some others in each case that the triumph of the cause was “inevitable,” and that those who declined to go along were “against progress” and had placed themselves on the “wrong side of history.”

Does that mean that the reverse is true, that the conjugal conception of marriage, and the understanding of sexual morality and integrity of which it is part, will eventually prevail in law and culture? No. There is nothing inevitable in this domain. As the left-wing—but anti-Hegelian—Brazilian legal theorist Roberto Unger used to preach to us in courses at Harvard Law School, the future will be the fruit of human deliberation, judgment, and choice; it is not subject to fixed laws of history and forces of social determinism. As the Marxists learned

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Catholic philosopher Robert P. George of Princeton University delivered the Institute on Religion & Democracy's annual Diane Knippers Lecture. George chairs the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and is a prolific writer on the topics of marriage, life, and religious liberty. (Photo: Napp Nazworth / Christian Post)



## Marriage and Religious Liberty

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the hard way, the reality of human freedom is the permanent foiler of “inevitability” theses. Same-sex marriage and the assaults on liberty and equality that follow in its wake are “inevitable” only if defenders of marriage make their adversaries’ prophecies self-fulfilling ones, by buying into them.

So my call to supporters of marriage and religious liberty this evening is to stand up, speak out, fight back, resist! Do not be demoralized. Refuse to be intimidated. Speak moral truth to cultural, political, and economic power. Openly love what is good and defy and resist whatever opposes and threatens it. Be prepared, if it comes to it, to pay the cost of discipleship. Stand together with anyone of any faith—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain—who will stand with you to uphold marriage and defend freedom. Be gentle as doves, to be sure, but cunning as serpents. Be relentless in your determination to defend what is right in the courts and in the streets, on the blogs and in the legislative chambers.

Pray ceaselessly. Work to elect champions of life, marriage, and religious liberty. Fight to keep the Republican Party faithful to the moral principles that have drawn so many former Democrats into it over the past three decades. Remember

that our adversaries, having now won a complete lock on the Democratic Party, will now devote their attention and formidable resources to making inroads among Republicans. We must defeat those efforts, making clear to the Republican establishment that our loyalty to the Party is conditional on the Party’s fidelity to its principles.

Let us remind Republicans that their party was founded as a party of moral conviction—pledged to fight the twin relics of barbarism, slavery and polygamy. Standing for what is right and against

what is wrong is in the GOP’s DNA. Slavery was wicked because it denied the basic humanity and dignity of an entire class of human beings, just as the abortion license does today. Polygamy was unacceptable because it undermined the principle of marriage as a truly conjugal relationship—a permanent and exclusive one-flesh union of husband and wife. You see, the relics have not disappeared. They have simply taken on new forms. And we must stand against them today with Lincolnian conviction and determination to prevail—no matter the cost, no matter how long it takes. It will not be easy. And, to worldly eyes, the horizon looks bleak. But “mine eyes have seen the glory, of the coming of the Lord.” ✚

## Sexual License Mandates Attack Christian Educational Institutions

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God’s standard given in Scripture is obedience to him regardless of pain.

A Christian institution is, by its very nature, a follower of Christ, just as a Christian individual is, by definition, a follower of Christ. It cannot tolerate sin in its midst any more than a church can. Indeed, a Christian university, as a community of Christians, is a kind of church. Its primary duty is to God, and painful though it may be, a Christian institution

that can no longer carry out its function should close its doors. The free exercise of (not just belief in) Christian faith is clearly being denied if Christian institutions are prohibited from maintaining Christian standards. Freedom of religion means nothing if unpopular religious beliefs and practices are not tolerated; indeed, no freedom is needed for beliefs that offend no one. ✚



# Where Did New United Methodist Ministers Attend Seminary?

by John Lomperis

**W**hat sort of theological training has shaped the new clergy coming through The United Methodist Church's ordination pipeline?

I recently obtained official statistics from The United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) about where United Methodists ordained in the United States in 2013 received their seminary education. This includes a relatively small minority (less than five percent of the total) who received their ministerial education via the denomination's "Course of Study" rather than the more traditional route of obtaining an M.Div degree.

A couple of summary observations are worth highlighting.

Asbury Theological Seminary, an independent, strongly evangelical institution in the Methodist tradition, maintains its dominant position. Of the 414 members of the ordination class of 2013, 64 (15.46%) went to Asbury, which is more than seven of our denomination's thirteen official U.S. seminaries (Boston University School of Theology, Claremont, Drew, Gammon, Iliff, the Methodist Theological School of Ohio, and United) *combined*, continuing a long-time trend on which I have reported earlier. This means between one-in-seven and one-in-six newly ordained United Methodist ministers are Asburians.

Meanwhile, Claremont School of Theology and Iliff School of Theology, arguably our denomination's most theologically radicalized seminaries, which we prop up with a lot of offering-plate apportionments each year, educated only 4 (0.97%) and 10 (2.42%), respectively, of the 2013 ordinands.

With 41 alumni entering the ranks of the ordained, Duke Divinity School maintains its position at the top of the UMC seminaries. Compared to a similar study of the ordination class of 2009 (which separately listed those ordained through the Course of Study), Duke saw

its numbers fall rather significantly in the intervening four years, while Asbury's numbers rose very slightly.

There is some inevitable lag time before differences in current student enrollment affect the proportion of alumni finally ordained a couple years or more after graduation. Thus, while United Theological Seminary has relatively unimpressive numbers for the 2013 ordination class, in the near future we can expect a very different picture, given how rapidly that seminary's enrollment has increased since its newfound and still rather recent institutional commitment to historic Christian orthodoxy.

The other denomination educating the most United Methodist ordinands is the Presbyterian Church (USA), whose seminaries educated 25 (6.04%) of the UMC class of 2013.

Another 13 (3.14%) attended either a Southern Baptist or an independent, expressly evangelical seminary (Ashland, Fuller, George Fox, and Gordon-Conwell).

Of course, plenty of people survive theological schools of a certain bent without ultimately reflecting the dominant perspective within their alma mater. After all, I'm an evangelical United Methodist who after three years of ultra-liberal Harvard Divinity School was no less theologically conservative than I was when I began.

Which non-UMC seminaries United Methodist seminarians choose is shaped in large part by our denomination's University Senate. This body regularly decides which non-UMC schools will have their degrees accepted for United Methodist ordination. Over the years, they have removed a number of schools from the "approved" list, with decisions seemingly driven by short-sighted institutional protectionism—and perhaps theologically liberal biases—rather than what is best for our seminarians or the long-term mission of our church. Rather than rushing to eliminate "competitors," the University

Senate would do better to actually look into why so few United Methodist seminarians want to go to liberal denominational seminaries like Boston University School of Theology, despite all the denominational pressure and financial incentives to do so. The University Senate's removing of evangelical Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary from the approved list 16 years ago—despite its being a major national seminary with many United Methodist ties and an impressive track-record in urban and multi-cultural ministry—was a significant blow against faithfulness and effective ministry within The United Methodist Church. To be fair, we probably did not lose much when liberal seminaries like Andover-Newton were also de-listed. ✚

School	Number of Ordinands	% of Total
Duke	41	9.90%
Perkins	38	9.18%
Candler	34	8.21%
Garrett	23	5.56%
Saint Paul	17	4.11%
MTSO	16	3.86%
Wesley	16	3.86%
United	12	2.90%
Drew	11	2.66%
Iliff	10	2.42%
Boston	6	1.45%
Claremont	4	0.97%
Gammon	4	0.97%
<b>Total UMC</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>56.04%</b>
<b>Asbury</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>15.46%</b>
<b>All other schools</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>28.50%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



John Lomperis directs the UMAction program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

# Breakfast Guests and Party Crashers: Protesting Genocidal Sudanese Leader at National Prayer Breakfast

by Faith McDonnell

*Sudanese activists share information about Sudanese government officials outside the National Prayer Breakfast. (Photo: Faith McDonnell/IRD)*

stand in witness against this outrage.

Our small band of protesters—including Sudanese from Darfur, Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile State, Nubia, and elsewhere—was dwarfed by hundreds of Buddhists either welcoming or protesting the Dalai Lama. We feared we'd be completely drowned out by the constant drum-

ming and chants of "False Dalai Lama, Keep Religion Free!" from protesters who were very possibly funded by the Chinese Communist government. But we managed to speak out strongly for two hours with signs and chants of our own. Then, after breakfast, when the presidential motorcade had taken off, six of us went into the hotel to attempt to tell Prayer Breakfast attendees the truth about one of their fellow guests. We had flyers to distribute to those who expressed an interest.

We did not get very far before we were stopped and told to leave by a hotel security officer. He herded us out of the hotel and down the driveway to the sidewalk, threatening that we would be arrested if we crashed that party again! The only bright spot was that our protests were noted. Karti's spokesman whined to the *Sudan Tribune* that the protesters were Sudanese opposition and pressure groups known for their hostility to Sudan.

IRD's Church Alliance for a New Sudan will continue to post information, counter the disinformation of the Khartoum regime, and hopefully open the eyes of Christians whose desire for reconciliation with certain individuals has blinded them to the truth that is known by millions of victims of those individuals. ✚

This year's National Prayer Breakfast, held on February 5, included issues that ranged from President Obama's mention of "Crusader" Christians and the presence of the Dalai Lama on one hand, to the stirring testimony of NASCAR driver Darrell Waltrip and the powerful prayer of Ebola Doctor Kent Brantley on the other. But another Breakfast guest at the huge event held at the Washington Hilton was even more controversial – if you consider participation in genocide and mass atrocities controversial, that is.

Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Karti, a hardcore Islamist with a long history of crimes against humanity, was invited by Breakfast organizers, The Fellowship Foundation. Karti not only attended the Breakfast, which is officially hosted by members of the U.S. Congress, but used the occasion to influence the thinking of Congress members, naïve Christian leaders, and others on his genocidal regime. Another regime leader, Ibrahim Ghandour, was also reportedly coming to town at the invitation of the State Department, but did not come to the Prayer Breakfast.

Karti's spokesman in Khartoum said that he briefed Prayer Breakfast participants about such issues as "the government efforts to end war in Darfur and the Two Areas [Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State]." Presumably he did not tell them that "government efforts to end war" include constant aerial bombardment of civilians, starvation, mass rape, and other egregious actions to obliterate the black, African populations in those regions.

Nor were most other Breakfast guests aware that before he was foreign minister, Karti was the commander of a jihadist militia, the Popular Defense Force (PDF) in the 1990s. The PDF was used by the Sudanese government to attack South Sudanese villages. In fact, as President Obama condemned slavery in America, Karti, the head of slave raids whose troops rode into South Sudanese villages on their "high horses" to kill the men and take the women and children for the slave trade, sat listening as an honored guest. And that was not the only irony connected to Karti's presence at the Breakfast.

Remembrance of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide was a Prayer Breakfast theme, but inviting an official from what is arguably the world's most genocidal regime was an insult to both the massacred Armenians and the millions of victims of religious, racial, and ethnic genocide in Sudan and South Sudan who share a common enemy. And this official is directly implicated in not one, not two, but three genocidal campaigns: South Sudan, Darfur, and today in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State.

An official from a designated Terrorist-List nation should simply not be given a visa to the United States. The Sudanese regime not only terrorizes its own civilians, but is a key player in global terrorism and jihad—another fact of which many people seem unaware. IRD's Church Alliance for a New Sudan sponsored a demonstration outside the Prayer Breakfast for Sudanese and American advocates to



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# Anglican Building Boom Quietly Underway

by Jeff Walton

Illinois Anglicans received welcome news recently: The state Supreme Court will let stand a lower court ruling that awarded a diocesan endowment and property to the Anglican Diocese of Quincy. The decision matches similar rulings in Texas and South Carolina that have favored Anglicans there. Anglicans' recent good fortune at the courthouse is a dramatic change from years of mostly losing property trials to the Episcopal Church.

But while property lawsuits have been newsmakers in Anglican circles, several congregations have quietly pursued new building projects. In a denomination in which school cafeterias and storefronts have been regular places of worship, the construction of new church spaces establishes a physical footprint in the communities these churches serve.

Construction of new church buildings by Anglicans runs counter to nationwide trends, in which the building of new houses of worship has decreased rapidly since 2002. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, construction of religious buildings in the U.S. has fallen to the lowest level at any time since records were kept beginning in 1967.

Much of the new construction has occurred in the southeast, which may be a consequence of both population growth there and a shortage of available existing church structures. In other parts of the United States, Anglicans seeking places of worship have purchased unused church properties rather than building entirely new ones.

The building activity ranges from small churches such as a \$2 million project by St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Heathsville, Virginia, where the departing congregation lost their former property to the Episcopal Diocese, to large parishes like St. Peter's Anglican Church in Tallahassee, Florida, which recently completed a \$12 million project for a congregation that was newly begun outside of the Episcopal denomination. Several of the newer congregations, including Restoration Anglican Church in Arlington, Virginia, which completed a \$4.7 million

church building in September, were not in existence during the height of Episcopal Church litigation.

A handful of other congregations, including All Saints Anglican Church in Charlotte, NC, Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Raleigh, NC, Trinity Anglican Church in Lago Vista, TX, and Saint John's Anglican Church of Americus, GA, have also announced building plans. This summer All Saints' Anglican Church in Springfield, MO, and All Saints' Anglican Church in Peachtree City, GA, completed and consecrated new church buildings.

The churches range from a modest colonial-revival brick building in the case of Restoration to a 30,000-square-foot gothic structure built for the congregation of St. Peter's.

In addition to making the churches more visible in their communities and accommodating growth in the size of congregations, the new structures facilitate new programs and events. St. Peter's is partnering with Trinity School for Ministry to offer theological education far from the seminary's Pennsylvania campus. Other congregations plan to use their new spaces for conferences, or to begin offering programs such as Vacation Bible School, which were impractical to host in leased spaces.

"Our new church is just the beginning of what we hope to build," explained Fr. Andrew Rowell, associate rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church. Rowell explained that the next phase of construction will be a parish hall that will accommodate a chapel, auditorium, gathering space for the parish, and expanded classroom space.

"In sum, we hope that we soon, by God's grace, have a campus that represents the new life that our Lord is breathing into Anglicanism in America," Rowell summarized.

Rowell shared that many Christians from other denominations have expressed joy and excitement as the new gothic church has been built, and he hopes the new structure will be "an encouragement



Parishioner Tom Syvertsen and grandson Jack Dinnie sign wooden boards before flooring is installed last June in the new sanctuary of Restoration Anglican Church in Arlington, VA. (Photo: Jeff Walton/IRD)

to all believers" and a sign of a vibrant Christian presence in Tallahassee.

The Anglican church buildings under construction each point to different parts of the Christian tradition. St. Peter's went with a more ornate design recalling classical English gothic structures.

"It struck us from very early on that modern churches strive far too hard to do 'contemporary worship' in a way that seeks to be 'relevant,'" Rowell explained of the design process. "Such efforts are not the nature of who we are as a community."

St. Peter's strove to design a building that was distinctively Christian and in keeping with worship rooted in ancient Anglican ways.

"We believe strongly that it is the distinctiveness of Anglican liturgy, when done with joy and energy and real faith, that draws people and so, of course, we wanted to build a building that reflects who we think we are," Rowell explained while describing the English gothic church. ✚



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

# Natural Family Planning's Surprise Comeback

by Chelsen Vicari

In preparation for my upcoming marriage, I am researching Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)—more commonly called Natural Family Planning (NFP)—in earnest. NFP is a birth control method based on the observation of natural signs and symptoms of a woman's ovulation cycle. No chemicals. No treatments. No devices. I'll be honest; NFP is a complex method that takes discipline and commitment. But it offers an alternative to the negative ethical, physical, and emotional effects that lurk behind the convenience of the Pill.

Most evangelical women haven't collectively considered NFP as a viable alternative to chemical contraception, so I was surprised to read CNN's report last January covering NFP's recent rise in popularity among secular women.

In the CNN article entitled, "For Birth Control, What's Old Is New Again," author Nadia Kounang notes the "growing movement of young women who are saying no to hormonal birth control and yes to a kind of birth control that sounds at first like a real throwback with a little extra high-tech twist."

Secular women are recognizing the serious health risks associated with chemical contraception that have been ignored for far too long. "I'm a healthy person," 25 year-old Aisha Mukooza told CNN. "I try to eat healthy food, so the idea of being pumped with synthetic hormones didn't appeal to me, in fact, it was scary."

Chrissy Wing, writing for *Ethika Politika*, offered this satiric comment on the paradox of women whose trendy healthy lifestyles include the Pill: "Eat the meat of a cow that has consumed

synthetic hormones? No! Take them yourself via a highly concentrated white pill? Yes, please, but I can only wash them down with organic juice. Chemical free."

The overall number of women using NFP remains small. However, CNN reported that a University of Iowa study found that if more women knew about NFP, one in five women would seriously

**They champion  
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conscience.**

consider the method as an alternative to the Pill.

The article addresses women's concerns regarding NFP's ineffectiveness. But with new technologies (yes, there is even an app for that!), tracking ovulation is becoming easier and more precise. A helpful 2007 German study tracking 900 women using NFP over a 20-year period showed a 98 percent effective rate, reported CNN.

Another sentiment shared by the women using NFP who spoke with CNN was that they felt a lack of support from their community. I and the few other women who opt for NFP instead of the Pill, have found this to be true in our evangelical circles as well.

Some of today's evangelical feminists, who are sometimes called Jesus Feminists, even tell us that chemical contraception is the best method. They champion taxpayer funded chemical contraception despite its infringement on health and conscience.

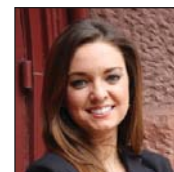
Sadly, an authenticity about contraception is generally lost among the evangelical feminists in our circles. Rarely do these

outspoken leaders on women's issues say, "Hey, because women are people, too, I believe they deserve to know that according to the National Cancer Institute, oral contraception increases women's risk for ovarian cancer, breast cancer, cervical cancer, and liver cancer."

This year the annual March for Life theme is "Every life is a gift." As evangelicals, our hearts agree that this message is true, but our flesh acts counter to it. Our society tells us that children are expensive, troublesome, and diminish our own goals and dreams rather than enhance them. We ignore the medical warning signs in the pursuit of independence, cleared acne, and lighter menstruation symptoms.

We may not disagree with these sentiments (in public at least), but just as the secular organic vegans ironically struggle to let go of their chemical contraception habits, so too do evangelicals. (Note: NFP can also be used with an immoral, selfish attitude. But for this discussion, we are focusing on NFP's use for spacing of children for optimal health as an alternative to chemical contraception.)

NFP certainly isn't a quick fix to the moral, ethical, and health dilemmas that accompany the Pill. But with its popular resurgence in secular society, perhaps evangelical women and their men will finally start talking about the benefits of Natural Family Planning. ✚



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