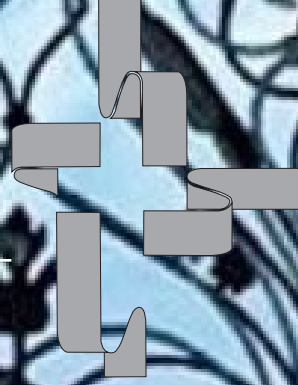


faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Spring 2020



Do Virus Church Closures Violate Religious Freedom?

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The Rev. M Barclay (lower left) is commissioned as a deacon in 2017. See story about non-binary clergy on page 9. (Photo: Northern Illinois Annual Conference UMC)

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faith & freedom

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 1



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Cover: Algerian authorities seal the door to a Protestant church. Is the current move by officials in the U.S. to ban church services in response to the coronavirus a similar example of religious oppression? See page 6. (Photo: Église Protestante d'Algérie / Facebook)

Of Course America Will Survive the Coronavirus —We've Survived Far Worse Many Times

Christians, our churches, and our faith will help make this survival possible. Strong and faithful churches are central to sustaining our strong democracy.

Typically America emerges from turmoil and crises stronger and more robust than before. Pessimism is always safer and more fashionable, but it's also more cynical.

I've noticed lots of pessimism and cynicism of late. Its only sure antidote is Gospel hope. God is in charge.

America is intrinsically a hopeful country because it is providential in its self identity. From the start Americans have understood their national mission as purposeful, universal, and almost cosmic. Lincoln called Americans the "almost chosen people." The caveat of "almost" is important. We aren't the ancient Hebrews bearing redemption for the whole world.

Yet the ancient Hebrews were models for the Puritan settlers, the Founders, and the Civil War generation who saw their conflict as a divinely ordained fiery trial. Seeing America as a nation in covenant continued through the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement.

America's self-understanding as being a guardian of democracy propelled it to victory in the Cold War. Whether we admit it or not, we still think of ourselves as "almost chosen."

Being "almost chosen" is not easy. The actual Chosen People suffered plenty. They were not always faithful, forgot who they were, got impatient, self-indulgent and lazy. Consequences befell them because the standards levied on them were uniquely high. They sinned, then they repented. They prevailed, because they were part of God's plan.

God has a plan for America as he has a plan for all peoples and individuals. That plan has typically included a great deal of hope and confidence about the future and our role in it. Other more angst ridden nations often have admired, however grudgingly, this confidence. Some have feared it. Others, in their malevolence, realized its repercussions only too late.

Christianity rejects cynicism, recognizing instead that while sin is pervasive, divine redemption is even more pervasive. This historic perspective of the church universal offers constant hope in our fallen world. Pessimists and fatalists wallow in the fallenness while ignoring Calvary and divine grace.

Some chirpy optimists, who are far fewer in number, pretend there is only kindness and misunderstanding in the world. However, thinking providentially requires more exhaustive nuance. Yes, the world is in a bad place, but its Lord is redeeming it. We are called to discern the always ongoing acts of his redemption. Sometimes it's hard, not because those divine acts aren't obvious,

but because our rebellious natures too often resist recognizing his power and authority.

So how is God revealing himself during the suffering and fear of the novel coronavirus? There are of course the innumerable acts of sacrifice, service, and mercy by health care workers who risk their own lives to tend to the ill. Many others in science and pharmaceuticals are laboring valiantly to create treatments and vaccines.

Countless unrecognized laborers in service industries are working long hours to ensure we all have food and basic needs.

Many in government toil on behalf of public order and public health. Clergy, church employees, and lay volunteers continue to steward their congregations with spiritual and material resources necessary for life and hope.

You know many of these heroic people! You may be one. God is working through all of them.

Ironically, churches, whose sanctuaries are largely closed to public worship, are now more

important than in tranquil times. They are called to offer the hope of the Gospel, of course, which is their supreme mission. But they also have a divinely ordained duty to advocate for the public good in society.

Meeting this social obligation is why public worship is largely closed, both to protect the health of worshipers and the wider public. But more widely, churches should inspire hope and confidence in the nation as our community, reminding us to be faithful to our highest callings and best attributes.

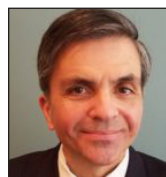
Churches were and are central to American character and culture. G. K. Chesterton famously said America has the soul of a church. This spiritual soul is key to American optimism, pluck, and resolution. At their best, Americans don't despair. They don't look back. They don't doubt that God has a purpose for America.

After the terrible losses of coronavirus, we should hope for and expect providentially good news ahead for America. We

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You know many of these heroic people! You may be one. God is working through all of them.

Mark Tooley



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

Samaritan's Purse Draws Religious Left Fire in Coronavirus Resonse

Evangelical Christian humanitarian aid organization Samaritan's Purse opened a 68-bed emergency field hospital April 1 in New York City's Central Park to care for patients in partnership with Mount Sinai Health System. But even amidst the COVID-19 crisis, Progressive Christian columnist **Jonathan Merritt** found fault with the relief organization.

"New Yorkers have plenty of good reasons to feel uncomfortable about this new coronavirus hospital," Merritt wrote in a *Daily Beast* column. The son of former Southern Baptist convention President **James Merritt** is critical of Samaritan's Purse and its president.

"Of chief concern is the person overseeing the Central Park ward: Samaritan's Purse's president and CEO **Franklin Graham**. He is the son of famed evangelist **Billy Graham** and a spiritual adviser to President **Donald Trump** who has a

surprisingly long history of controversial comments and hate speech," Merritt wrote. He cited comments made by Graham referring to same-sex relationships as "detestable" and Islam as an "evil and wicked religion."

"That's the man running Samaritan's Purse's coronavirus hospital, so yes, Muslim New Yorkers are right to be skeptical," declared Merritt.

Merritt is uncomfortable that an Evangelical Christian organization would require its personnel to agree with its Statement of Faith, lamenting the statement's inclusion of traditional Christian sexual ethics, which define human sexuality "to be expressed only within the context of marriage."

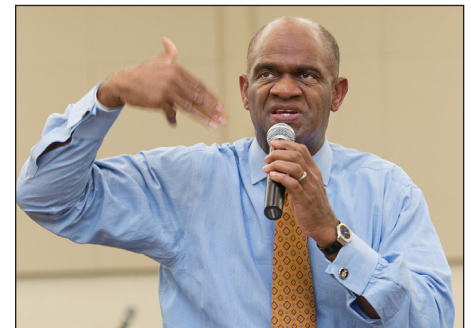
Despite Merritt's question of whether or not Samaritan's Purse would treat LGBTQ patients with care and respect, the organization signed a written pledge to Mount Sinai to treat all patients equally.

"The vast majority of New Yorkers are not evangelical Christians, and if they find themselves wheezing for air due to COVID-19, they don't want to be proselytized while receiving treatment," Merritt wrote.

"We are the hands and feet of Christ here. We are showing compassion just like the Samaritan did," said **Ken Isaacs**, Vice President of Samaritan's Purse Programs and Government

Relations in a video highlighting the organization's work in Central Park. "We're here bandaging people's wounds. The wounds are inside the lungs. But we also know that the wounds are in the soul." ✝

Pastor of Largest United Methodist Congregation Faces Jail, Church Discipline



The Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell leads a Bible study at Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston in 2011. Caldwell pleaded guilty Wednesday, March 11, 2020, to conspiracy to commit wire fraud. (Photo: Mike DuBose/UM News)

One of the most prominent pastors in the United Methodist Church (UMC) has pled guilty to "conspiracy to commit wire fraud in connection to his role in a multimillion-dollar investment scheme." The Rev. **Kirbyjon Caldwell** faces both discipline within the church and several years in jail.

Senior pastor of 18,000-member Windsor Village United Methodist

Continued on page 5



Staff gather to pray as the day shift team prepares to step in for the night shift at a Samaritan's Purse Emergency Field Hospital in Manhattan's Central Park. (Photo: Samaritan's Purse)

Church Conventions Disrupted by Coronavirus

Concerns centered on coronavirus containment are disrupting major gatherings for several church denominations.

Both the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the two largest Protestant denominations in the United States, have altered plans.

The UMC's quadrennial General Conference, the global legislative gathering, is being postponed with a future date yet to be announced. The conference's venue, the Minnesota Convention Center, canceled all events through May 10, following guidelines issued by the Minnesota Department of Health. That prompted the Commission on the General Conference to postpone the event, which was scheduled to occur May 5-15.

In a statement released March 18 by the commission, Executive Committee Chair **Kim Simpson** said "This news is not unexpected based on the current guidance from health officials and we expect to move forward with new plans as quickly as possible."

With COVID-19 disrupting General Conference plans, proposals to

split the denomination are on hold. Given travel restrictions, a delay provides opportunity for delegates from outside the U.S. to participate in church decision-making. The General Conference delay also gives leaders in the UMC more time to iron out details of a church split.

In response to the pandemic, the SBC canceled its Annual Meeting for the first time in 75 years. A unanimous vote on March 24 made by a body of SBC officers, the SBC Executive Committee, and leaders of the SBC's boards and institutions drew from a provision in the SBC Constitution allowing the cancellation "in the case of grave emergency."

"We are a people committed to keeping the Gospel above all, and our sole purpose in coming together is to support one another in that mission, catalyzing our collective mission efforts. This year, our unusual circumstances mean we can best meet that goal by not meeting together," wrote SBC President **J.D. Greear**.

Organizers for this year's Annual Meeting, scheduled June 9-10 in Orlando, thought that it might draw the largest number of messengers (the SBC equivalent of delegates) since 12,000 participated in the 2010 Annual Meeting.



Promotional banner for the 2020 United Methodist General Conference with the Minneapolis, Minnesota skyline (Photo: umcsc.org)

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) had not at press time announced a cancellation or postponement of General Assembly, set for June 16-19, but is actively monitoring the public health situation and guidelines set by authorities. The church is to reevaluate as its Administrative Committee meets virtually on April 23.

Similarly, Archbishop of Canterbury **Justin Welby** has postponed the Lambeth Conference, a decennial gathering of bishops invited from every officially recognized province in the worldwide Anglican Communion. The Lambeth Conference will instead take place in the summer of 2021. ✝

Pastor Faces Jail, Church Discipline

continued from page 4

Church, Caldwell has been a spiritual advisor to both Presidents **George W. Bush** and **Barack Obama**. He officiated the wedding of Bush's daughter, Jenna.

United States Attorney **David Joseph** describes "a multimillion-dollar investment scheme" perpetuated by Caldwell along with Louisiana investment advisor **Gregory Smith**.

"Caldwell and Smith conspired to use their influence and status to persuade multiple victims to 'invest' approximately \$3.5 million with them. The victims' investments were purportedly in historical Chinese bonds, which are bonds issued by the former Republic of China prior to losing

power to the Communist government in 1949. These bonds are not recognized by China's current government and, accordingly, have no investment value," Joseph wrote. "Caldwell used the approximately \$900,000 that he received to pay down personal loans, mortgages, and credit cards, and maintain his lifestyle."

Public accusation of wrongdoing two years ago made national news, with Caldwell insisting on his innocence. *Christianity Today* reported on the support Caldwell received from within and beyond his congregation, as well as on his lawyer **Dan Cogdell's** speaking at Windsor Village's Easter 2018 worship service.

Cogdell drew parallels between charges against Caldwell and those against Christ, receiving applause after declaring, "I know the truth and the truth will set *him* free!"

Caldwell's partner in the scheme, Gregory Smith, pleaded guilty in July 2019. On March 11, Caldwell also pled guilty. Joseph declared that Caldwell and Smith, "used their positions as religious leaders and investment advisors to defraud Louisiana residents—many of whom are elderly and retired."

Under the terms of his plea agreement, Caldwell faces between five and seven years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and up to three years of supervised release. Caldwell, who has already made partial restitution to the victims,

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Do Virus Church Closures Violate Religious Freedom?

by Paul Marshall

Several religious freedom issues emerge in our responses to the coronavirus pandemic. One is restricted access for chaplains, among others, to health care facilities and homes for the elderly. But the most contentious issue has been outright government bans on most religious gatherings, as in the United Kingdom, or restrictions to groups of

Are These Restrictions Limits on Religious Freedom?

On the first issue, whether these are restrictions on religious freedom, we can define such freedom in two (and probably many more) ways. One is to define religious freedom normatively as a freedom that, like all freedoms, is inherently subject to many restrictions—such as others' rights to life

the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Authoritarian governments often misuse such limits as a pretext for repression, but this does not mean that they are in themselves wrong. Every right is always related to other rights and may be balanced by them. If we take this approach, and if we believe that most current demo-

cratic governments' actions are proper, then we would conclude that restricting larger religious gatherings does not violate religious freedom.

An alternative view defines religious freedom in very broad terms without including any possible restrictions in the definition. We could then add that religious freedom may legitimately be restricted in certain circumstances but that we need to call these restrictions what they are: actual (if justifiable) limits on religious liberty.*

In the first position, we would say that if government actions are proper then they are not a real restriction of religious freedom. In the second position, we would say they are restrictions on religious freedom but that they are justifiable.

There are risks in each of these positions, but they often lead to the same practical conclusion. Many of the differences may be largely semantic. Here, the major need is to be clear about what we actually mean: Several of our disputes about religious freedom stem simply from using the term in these different ways.

**Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights can be read to support this position also.*



Lee Man-hee, founder of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, offers an apology at a news conference for the spread of coronavirus in Gyeonggi, South Korea on March 2. Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon announced a lawsuit against church executives holding them responsible "for murder, injury, and violation of prevention and management of infectious diseases" according to a translation from NBC News. (Photo: Yonhap)

fewer than ten people. In South Korea, over half the COVID-19 cases are connected to the semi-cultic Shincheonji Church of Jesus, and hundreds of Protestant churches held services last Sunday despite government orders against large public gatherings.

Some have argued that such restrictions are a violation of religious freedom, while others maintain that they are responsible and legitimate government actions. I believe that both positions are, or can be, correct.

or health. Under this definition, religious freedom is, like all others, necessarily restricted by other freedoms, and also by the duties that we all must follow.

This is similar to the position taken in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or

Are These Government Restrictions Legitimate?

On the second matter, about whether such government action is legitimate, the key question is not whether these restrictions limit religious freedom per se, but whether these restrictions are just, proper, and constitutional.

Those who object to enforced government restrictions usually maintain that they assert the power of the state over the church and other religious bodies, and are therefore both normatively wrong and, in America, violate the First Amendment.

However, churches and states are nearly always and inevitably intertwined. In the U.S., people often use the non-constitutional metaphor “the separation of church and state” as shorthand for the First Amendment itself. It is usually a simple if naïve restatement of the respective different authorities of these bodies, ultimately reflecting Pope Gelasius I’s description of the two swords in his AD 494 letter to the Emperor Anastasius:

There are two powers, august Emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, namely, the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power... If the ministers of religion, recognizing the supremacy granted you from heaven in matters affecting the public order, obey your laws, lest otherwise they might obstruct the course of secular affairs by irrelevant considerations, with what readiness should you not yield them obedience to whom is assigned the dispensing of the sacred mysteries of religion.

But at times the loaded word *separation* is taken in a literal sense to mean that these two bodies can somehow be sealed off from one another, and neither has any authority over the other. But church and state are not two atoms that never touch: They interact with each other according to their own jurisdiction. As Gelasius noted, the emperor has supremacy in temporal matters, which members of the church should follow, and the church has authority in the “sacred mysteries of religion,” which the emperor should follow.

Each has authority according to their respective missions. For example,

churches have criticized and denied communion to politicians whom they believe are violating church teachings, and it is not, so far, in dispute that a church can decide for itself who may receive communion. This is an authority over politicians, not the power of the sword but a discipline over the sacraments. Our secular age may regard this as minor opprobrium, but many politicians with eyes on polls may take it more seriously. It is the power not of the sword but of the word.

On the other side, a government may legitimately close buildings, including church buildings, if a fire marshal properly pronounces the structure unsafe. Even in actually constructing church buildings, churches do and must follow government fire and building codes. They accept proper government restrictions on the nature of their sanctuary.

Church and state have legitimate authority over each other in their respective spheres as long as they do not seek to usurp the proper role of the other. A church cannot try to take over governmental power or use physical coercion. A government cannot dictate a church’s doctrine or mission.

Governments internationally, and federally within the U.S., have imposed

widely varying restrictions, and there can certainly be arguments about the range and prudence in each particular case. But, as a matter of principle, I believe that in Western democracies most of the disputed government actions around the coronavirus are necessary, somewhat like the fire marshal example writ large. Such restrictions are for a limited time, even if we do not now know what that time limit is. They also do not single out the church—these rules apply to almost any gathering. And they do not seek to usurp church teachings or mission.

Each individual case needs prudential judgment but, in principle, I believe that restrictions on religious gatherings are legitimate government actions, and that churches and others should as a matter of conscience follow them. ✚



Paul Marshall is Wilson Professor of Religious Freedom at Baylor University, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and the Religious Freedom

Institute, and Chair of the Institute on Religion & Democracy Board of Directors.

Pastor Faces Jail, Church Discipline

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has agreed to pay the remaining balance, \$1,951,478, before sentencing.

Windsor Village is the largest U.S. United Methodist congregation in membership. In attendance, it ranks fourth.

In a statement, Caldwell’s bishop, **Scott Jones** of the Texas Conference, said that he was “deeply saddened by this admission of guilt.” Jones announced that although the annual conference leadership had previously treated Caldwell as innocent until proven guilty, “We do not tolerate crimes being committed by our clergy and it is now clear that Kirbyjon Caldwell has violated our standards of conduct. The United Methodist Church’s disciplinary process aims at a just resolution of the complaints against him and will begin immediately.”

An official announcement made during Windsor Village’s March 22 virtual worship service reported that “As a result of Pastor Kirbyjon’s current legal situation, his official relationship with the United Methodist Church has changed” so that he is now a layman and no longer the senior pastor of the congregation.

The congregation’s website now identifies Caldwell as a “lay preacher” who remains on the congregation’s staff, where he will “continue preaching, teaching, serving as visionary, and doing the same sorts of things that he’s done for the past 38 years.” Bishop Jones appointed Caldwell’s wife Suzette as interim senior pastor. It is not clear how long this arrangement will last.

Caldwell’s sentencing hearing has been scheduled for July 22. ✚

Paul White's Controversies

by Mark Tooley

As I'm a traditional Mainline Protestant, evangelist **Paula White** seems to me kind of crazy and probably semi-heretical. She gets lots of attention because she's a prominent Trump supporter. But her flamboyant charismatic form of big dollar Christianity, with claims of direct interaction with God, is not particularly unusual in American religious life.

Most recently White's critics are circulating a preaching video in which she claims she was, in a vision, taken to the "throne room of heaven," where she saw God's face, though it was apparently cloudy and obscured. There she received a new "mantle" of authority or divine blessing.

"I literally went to the Throne Room of God," she said. "There was a mist that was coming off the water, and I went to the throne of God, and I didn't see God's face clearly, but I saw the face of God ... I knew it was the face of God."

Her last major controversy was in January, over a video in which she prays for "miscarriages" of "satanic pregnancies." Many on social media, who seem to think White is a monster, angrily denounced her, apparently assuming she was urging literal miscarriages of literal pregnancies. As White later explained, she was deploying charismatic language of spiritual warfare to describe opposition to wickedness in its early stages, not literal pregnancies.

Most Christians outside White's particular brand of charismatic faith would not recognize the term "satanic pregnancy" or much of the other lingo from her preaching. With her high political profile as a member of Trump's Faith Advisory

Council and advisor to the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative, there's now a much larger audience for her esoteric pronouncements. In some ways she's replaced the aging **Pat Robertson**, another charismatic Christian, as a favorite for oddball Religious Right quotes.

White is an American original, raised in poverty, mother to an illegitimate child, working her way up from church custodian to Florida megachurch pastor, bestselling author, television personality, and presidential advisor. She met Trump years ago as a Trump Tower neighbor. Not many preachers have Manhattan suites. Her prosperity Gospel validates the millions of dollars she earns through her evangelistic empire. Her followers presumably are inspired by her financial success as evidence of God's blessing, which they understandably hope for themselves.

Most high profile preachers are men. White, as an attractive and stylish woman with flawless delivery, stands out among Religious Right figures. Her political prominence has won her alliances and endorsements from other conservative preachers who otherwise oppose female preachers and charismatic Christianity. Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, with its strong focus on direct interaction with the Holy Spirit, has historically been more embracing of women preachers than much of the rest of evangelicalism.

It's become popular to mock White for her puzzling spiritual pronouncements. Her theology is not easily comprehensible to Christians outside her charismatic community, much less to secularists. Traditional Christians are certainly right to critique her when she

Megachurch Pastor and Evangelist Paula White is a member of the White House Faith Advisory Council (Photo: PaulaWhite.org)

strays from orthodoxy. And her health and wealth focus invites criticism from non-Christians anxious for evidence of religious hypocrisy.

But White should be seen as part of a long tradition of American self-help enthusiasts who find success by extolling happiness and material blessing. She's not altogether different from **Oprah Winfrey**, who's made many more hundreds of millions of dollars with her self-empowering therapeutic spirituality. And then there are successful New Age self-help gurus like **Deepak Chopra** and **Marianne Williams**, among countless others.

America's penchant for sunny spiritual guides dates back at least to **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, the New England transcendentalist who was endlessly optimistic about each individual's ability to seize happiness through individual self-realization and initiative. He preached morality and goodness without an orthodox version of God, but many religionists were unconsciously inspired by his promise of empowerment and success. Emerson himself was a post-Protestant who preached personal redemption through introspection and diligent worldly accomplishment.

Some of Emerson's evangelistic heirs rechristianized his message. Although not charismatic, **Norman Vincent Peale** was firmly in this tradition, proclaiming the Power of Positive Thinking. The late **Robert Schuller** of the soaring Crystal Cathedral was also in this mold. More charismatic versions include Pat Robertson, an enormously successful entrepreneur who stressed the material prosperity gained by unlocking the secret of God's blessing. Skankier versions of charismatic Prosperity Gospel include **Jim Bakker**, who's PTL empire collapsed in the 1980s amid epic financial and sexual scandal. He now unashamedly hawks survivalist tools on TV and even a purported remedy

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

Transgender Passé, Meet the Non-Binary Clergy

by Clare Hepler

An increasing number of individuals who identify as “gender non-binary” have emerged among the clerical ranks in mainline Protestant denominations.

Following the ordination of transgender clergy in the United States, non-binary clergy appear to be the next wave of sex and gender revisionism.

While clergy already ministering within Christian communities have come out to their churches as non-binary, a number of non-binary identifying individuals have made headlines as the first to be ordained openly within their denomination.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, being non-binary means relating to or being

a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female.

In the United Methodist Church, The Rev. **M. Barclay** is the first non-binary transgender individual to be

commissioned and to be ordained a deacon. Barclay first made news when commissioned as a deacon in 2017. Initially Barclay, then known as **Mary Ann Kaiser**, was denied a commission by the board of the Southwest Texas Conference in 2014 due to being a “self-avowed, practicing” lesbian in a same-sex relationship. Later in June of 2017, Barclay was commissioned in the Northern Illinois Conference as a provisional deacon.

Barclay explains a change in identity to non-binary, saying: “For me, once I

was exposed to the reality of non-binary gender, it was for the first time recognizing who I am ... and what made sense for me in how I carry my body, how I explain myself to the world and how I know myself to be internally. It’s certainly not man nor woman.”

Barclay now specifies the pronouns “they/them/their.”

In the summer of 2019, Barclay moved from provisional clergy and was ordained in the Northern Illinois Conference as the first non-binary United Methodist deacon.

The Rev. **Anna Blaedel** is another member of the United Methodist clergy who identifies as queer and uses “they/them” pronouns. She was a pastor in Iowa before taking a leave of absence and is now the theologian in residence for the organization Enfleshed, which authors liturgies for non-binary persons.

Another notable member of the non-binary clergy is **Jess Cook**. Cook was the first non-binary Minister of the Word and Sacrament to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in June of 2019.

Speaking about her ordination, Cook says, “I’m acutely aware of the people who worked tirelessly to make it possible for an openly non-binary person to be ordained in the PC(USA), and of the young people who feel a call to ministry and will now see themselves in a person leading worship.”

Cook is currently the Program and Communications Manager at More Light Presbyterians, the unofficial LGBTQ caucus within the PCUSA.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), **Megan Rohrer** is a pastor and writer. In 2006, Rohrer was ordained and became “the first openly transgender/non-binary person to be ordained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” She is currently the chaplain of the San Francisco Police Department after pastoring Grace



United Church of Christ clergy The Rev. Ryan Dowell Baum participates in a “Pride Prom” as an out transgender pastor. (Photo: Ryan Dowell Baum / narratively.com)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Francisco for three years.

In the United Church of Christ, according to the UCC 2019 Statistical Profile, 0.2% of ordained ministers are transgender/gender variant. Among the commissioned ministers, 0.9% are transgender/gender-variant.

A few years ago, The Rev. **Ryan Dowell Baum** came out as non-binary to his church in Iowa. But, according to an article Baum wrote, “The Holiness and Heartbreak of a Nonbinary Pastor,” his church asked him to resign a few months later in 2018.

The circumstances surrounding Baum’s resignation from his position are in dispute. An interim pastor currently serving his former UCC congregation weighs in that there was “a lot more going on” before Baum came out to the church as non-binary. Baum, she suggests, was a new pastor and inexperienced. According to the Pastor’s Report for 2019, his

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The Rev. Megan Rohrer (Photo: Pax Ahimsa Gethen / Wikimedia Commons)



Clare Hepler served as IRD’s winter 2020 intern and is a recent graduate of Christendom College in Front Royal, Virginia.

Asbury University Draws Criticism for Maintaining Christian Sexual Ethics

by Chelsen Vicari

Each season it seems another Christian university is heaved into news headlines for doing nothing more than maintaining biblical sexual ethics. It's one of the most demanding queries facing Christian academia: Which schools will

than Jon being LGBTQ affirming. His contract was not breached, and there was no budget cut."

Chilton states he was one of the first to hear Roller's account. "Those of you who know him know he would never

if this is happening at the seminary," he said, "I can't imagine what it's like to be LGBTQ or LGBTQ-affirming at the University."

The column also quotes **David Wheeler**, a former Asbury University journalism professor who supposedly left the school for another job due to the university's position on human sexuality: "It is a tragedy for an institution of higher education to be so closed-minded that they would deny someone tenure for being LGBTQ-affirming," Wheeler said. "But that is clearly the direction Asbury is going. No room for nuanced views. Only anti-LGBTQ hysteria."

The "direction" Asbury University is going? How frustrating to have Asbury University accused of "anti-LGBTQ Hysteria" and being "closed-minded" when their mission is to tell of Christ's love and redemption of sins. All sins. It is revisionists who have changed

course, and determined repentance is not necessary for sexual immorality.

Asbury University was established in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition and currently enrolls 1,900 students from more than 20 different nations, according to the school's website. The "Asbury University Statement on Human Sexuality" makes the school's faithfulness to traditional sexual ethics abundantly clear. The statement reads, in part:

A faithful interpretation of Scripture affirms the principle that sexual purity honors God and that all forms of sexual intimacy that occur outside the covenant of heterosexual marriage are sinful distortions of

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The Asbury University Hager Administration Building in Wilmore, Kentucky (Photo: Amannelle / Wikimedia Commons)

uphold their Christian values and which will cave to cultural pressures?

On March 4, a column in the Lexington *Herald-Leader* placed Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, under a microscope after the school allegedly refused to renew the contracts of two professors who are "LGBTQ affirming."

The two Asbury professors named in the column are **Jill Campbell**, assistant professor of music education and voice, and **Jon Roller**, professor and founder of the school's Worship Arts program.

The column quotes worship leader **Derek Chilton**, who started a GoFundMe page for Roller, saying, "Jon was told in his tenure meeting, 'you do not belong here.' There was no thank you. No appreciation. And no reason for the non-renewal other

exaggerate, or make himself look better in any way," tweeted Chilton.

Bill Mefford, a former United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) staff member who infamously disrespected the March for Life with an "I march for sandwiches" sign, is quoted in the column too.* Mefford asserts that Asbury University is more conservative than Asbury Theological Seminary (a separate institution). "So I always thought

**In August 2019, Mefford signed an open letter—alongside some 70 other Asbury Seminary alumni and current students—chastising seminary faculty, students, and President Emeritus Rev. Maxie Dunnam for their support of the United Methodist Church's Traditional Plan at the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference.*

the holiness and beauty for which God intended. As members of a larger community, we recognize that stewarding one's expression of sexual intimacy is a trust that reaches beyond ourselves, extending even to those who may disagree with our beliefs. Therefore, we understand our responsibility to uphold biblical truth in our belief and practice, but in a way that reflects the grace that holiness produces.

We believe that the sin of sexual immorality (e.g., pre-marital sexual behavior, adultery for the heterosexually married person, polygamy, polyandry, pornography, incest, and all forms of same-sex practice) is about the behavior. As sinful fallen creatures, we are all tempted to sin, however, we do not claim those areas of temptation as right and good—and worthy of embrace and celebration. Rather, we unashamedly insist that by the grace of God we are called to live within the biblical boundaries of our sexuality, and are empowered to live in obedience with God's will and alignment with His purposes as revealed in Scripture. We do not surrender the biblical standard of sexual purity to the prevailing secular culture, nor the definition of "male" and "female" to mean something more or different than a individual's sex at birth. At the same time, we do pledge to extend compassion and care, providing accountability and assistance as we support all members of our community—students, staff and faculty—in their desire to live consistently with the Christian teaching on human sexuality as described above.

Few university statements on human sexuality are as robust and thoughtful as this pronouncement from Asbury University. Notice the language "we do not surrender the biblical standard of sexual purity to the prevailing secular culture..." I pray more Christian schools would be so bold.

The world waits to see which Christian schools will uphold traditional sexual ethics and which will accommodate

cultural trends. It will pounce on those that, like Asbury, refuse to compromise.

Why sexual ethics? Why does the LGBTQ issue always land Christian schools in the headlines and not the innumerable acts of community outreach, service projects, and academic achievements?

"LGBTQ is not being singled out by churches and institutions who hold to the historic biblical witness but rather by those who seek to legitimize it as normative in the church and Christian academy," wrote **David Prince**, pastor of preaching and vision at Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, and assistant professor of Christian preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Other sins, which must be unapologetically called what they are as well, do not have constituencies seeking normalization and affirmation."

Prince was one of the first Christian leaders to comment on the *Herald-Leader* column in his article "Asbury University Chooses the Bible and Institutional Integrity Over the Spirit of the Age."

"Let us be clear, the Bible-believing church and academy does not believe that sexual sin is beyond the scope of the gospel or carries a greater moral weight than

a host of other sins," explained Prince. "Nevertheless, we rightly resist without equivocation, when anyone suggests that we stop calling sin, sin, and instead start calling it sacred."

In her column, *Herald-Leader* columnist **Linda Blackford** argues that younger Christians "don't adhere to such narrow perspectives any more," and she is right. According to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, 47 percent of Generation X/Millennial evangelicals favored gay marriage, compared to only 26 percent of boomer and older evangelicals.

A generational divide on the LGBTQ issue does not mean young people's sentiments outweigh Scripture or the sacrament of marriage. It merely means Christian parents, churches, and schools like Asbury University must continue doing their jobs well and teaching the Gospel *without* compromise and *with* love. There are young people who will listen. ✚



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Transgender Passe, Meet the Non-Binary Clergy

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decisions and those of the church council led to the deterioration of the church's internal structure and support system. During turmoil following Baum's unexpected announcement, the church provided him and his family (he is married to a woman and has two children) more than \$52,000 in support, including his "transition," in the seven months before his resignation.

These few individuals indicate a move towards a wider acceptance of non-binary clergy in mainline Protestantism. Time will tell if this trend makes it beyond that confine. ✚



The Rev. Jess Cook delivers a keynote speech during the More Light luncheon at the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly on June 19, 2018. (Photo: Danny Bolin)

'A Great Cloud of Witnesses in the Cloud' as Anglicans Worship Online

by Jeffrey Walton

Sunday evening the Rev. **Robbie Pruitt** tapped his phone and began a livestream for the youth gathering of Christ the King Anglican Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

"I'm in my daughter's bedroom doing Facebook Live because it is actually the quietest place in the house," Pruitt, the Pastoral Associate and Director of Youth Ministry, explained to the virtually assembled. He launched into a talk about Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in John chapter 4 and the "social distancing" that culture prompted between Jews and Samaritans.

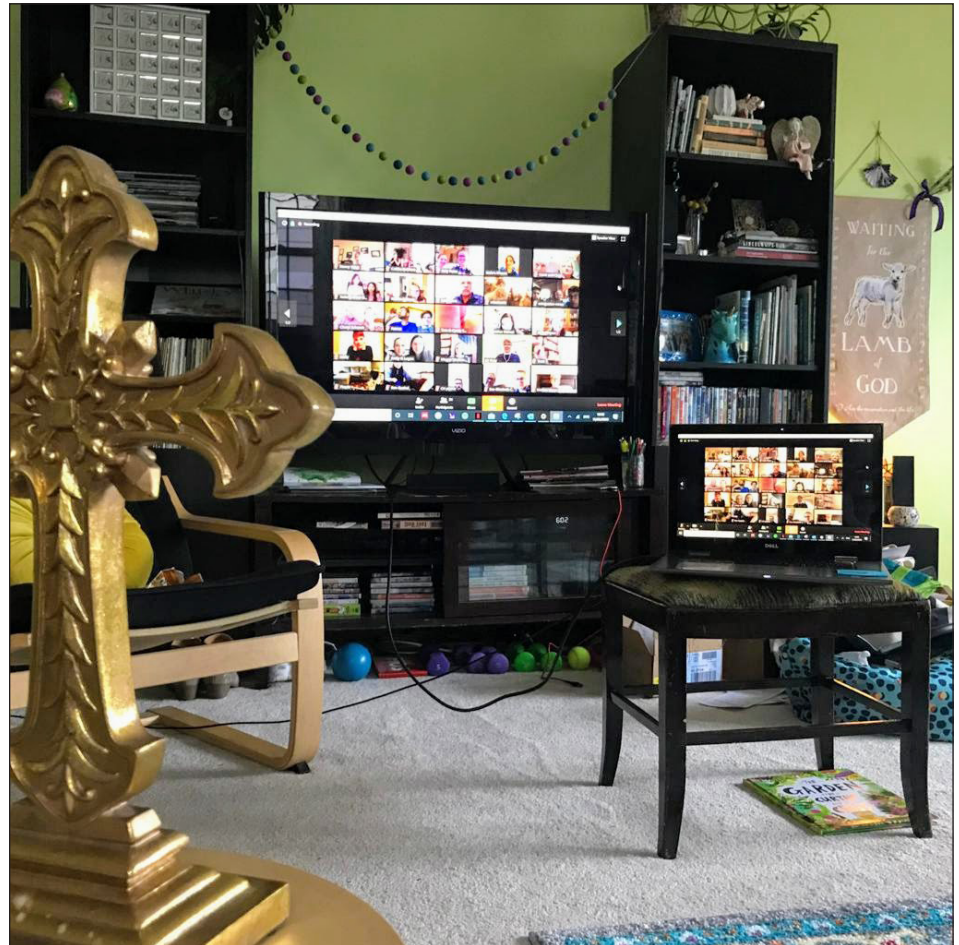
Amidst quarantines and "social distancing" enacted by civil authorities seeking to limit transmission of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), Anglican Christians have found themselves unable to continue worship services as usual. Christ the King (CTK) is among a widening number of parishes employing a patchwork of mobile technologies to keep church congregations connected.

What this looks like in practice varies by ministry. Smaller congregations are using video conference products like Zoom and Google Hangouts that facilitate a high level of interaction. Larger congregations are offering video via Facebook Live or Vimeo, which are mostly unidirectional but afford some interaction through comment threads.

"We had never actually done a service live, this was our first time out of the box," Pruitt explained of the main Sunday service earlier that day, with video enabling the priest to make the sign of the cross when giving a blessing. "As high-tech as we can be with high tech, the better."

From Pews to Phones

Anecdotal evidence points to an increase in church participation: Pruitt reports that CTK's Sunday service had 63 separate devices tuned in live, and altogether there were 250 unique views (CTK in 2019



Members of Incarnation Anglican Church in Arlington, Virginia take part in an online worship service using video conferencing technology on Sunday, March 15, 2020 (Photo: Erica Chapman)

had an average attendance of 245). Some connections represented more than one person; Pruitt estimated an average of 2–3 people participated per device.

"We had pictures of families," Pruitt reports, of parents and children gathered around a mobile device to worship together. "It was greatly successful."

That initial success has been shared by other Anglican congregations. **Amy Rowe** of Incarnation Anglican Church in neighboring Arlington was surprised at a sizeable virtual turnout, with

parishioners sharing that they felt amidst a "great cloud of witnesses in the Cloud."

"I think the emotional response that people had to the experience spoke to how desperate people were to be together during such uncertain times," Rowe, a seminarian at Trinity School for Ministry, reflected. "Perhaps more than any other Sunday, this experience emphasized to me that church is not a performance by the pastor, but a participation in the life of God by the community of believers." Rowe noted that Incarnation's attendance

increased 30%, with participants joining from Seattle, Costa Rica, and Jordan.

"Everyone got to see everyone in their natural habitat," described the Rev. **David Martin Hanke** of an online service conducted by Restoration Anglican Church. Hanke's video conference Sunday service drew people from beyond suburban Washington, where the church is based, with participants joining from North Carolina and even Michigan.

Larger churches shared that experience, including the Falls Church Anglican in nearby Falls Church, Virginia, which reported 420 households watched its live streaming service in its entirety. The service was then placed online, where more than 2,700 people have viewed it.

"There are inherent challenges with anything online that really is intended to be face-to-face, in community," shared Falls Church Communications Director **Zach Kincaid**. "It's rather like IMAX versus your home television, in a lot of ways, but we've heard from many people as to their thankfulness to worship even online."

'Embodied Participation'

This Coronavirus may be new, but internet connectivity to worship services is not. Evangelical megachurches have offered an "online campus" to far-flung congregants for years. The Edmond, Oklahoma-based Life.Church (formerly known as LifeChurch.tv) in 2006 established its "Internet Campus" broadcasting interactive worship services live. The congregation is now counted among the largest in the country.

But expectations differ between megachurches and typically much smaller Anglican congregations. Evangelicals tend to emphasize preaching and musical worship from a central stage, while those in liturgical traditions are accustomed to corporate prayer, recitation of creeds, physical movement, and sacramental worship.

"I think the challenge for many of our churches centers around the word *participation*," says the Rev. **Dan Marotta** of Redeemer Anglican Church. "We value embodied presence and communal participation in worship—which is directly

at odds with the online, live-streaming service experience."

Marotta's Richmond, Virginia, church set a goal to give people enough technology to make participation from their own living rooms and kitchen tables possible. Recorded video footage of a sermon and separate videos of Redeemer's Director of Worship Arts playing hymns and inviting people to sing along were

"Many of us didn't expect to be giving up quite so much for Lent," noted Dr. Joan Deeks of Church of the Ascension in Langley, British Columbia.

both embedded in liturgical text from the Anglican 2019 *Book of Common Prayer*.

"That way—individuals and families could choose to set aside a bit of time and give their attention to worship and prayer," Marotta said.

"This is where being an Anglican is really helpful: we worship by the book," noted the Rev. **Barton Gingerich** of St. Jude's Anglican Church in Richmond. "I know my folks can pray the Daily Offices in their households in seasons such as this. That's an analog solution that we shouldn't neglect."

In some ways, Anglicans are perhaps the least prepared to provide virtual services: the liturgy emphasizes embodied participation and physical matter—most particularly in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

"I think for this reason most Anglican churches haven't ventured as far into virtual experiences as others because our worship is inherently anti-virtual; it is visceral and communal and participatory," Rowe proposed. "On the other hand, the ceremony of Anglican worship actually translates beautifully online, even in an empty sanctuary. There is color and

ritual and gesture to see and scripture and prayers to hear—it's not just watching a preacher deliver a sermon from a stage."

New Normal

What is happening now may become a "new normal" for some time.

"I don't think we will be back in our building until the end of April," assessed Hanke, who leads increasingly large online gatherings for morning and evening prayer. "Newness will wear off and the grind of quarantine will be significant for us."

"Many of us didn't expect to be giving up quite so much for Lent," noted Dr. **Joan Deeks** of Church of the Ascension in Langley, British Columbia. "We know that God is still in control whatever the future holds."

A challenging situation isn't without preaching application.

"We're all going to suffer and die. It might not be by COVID-19, but it's going to happen. Let's talk about that," Gingerich proposed. "Are we taking stock of our lives in repentance and faith? How are we to live in the midst of it all? Will we come to know God better, hope for a resurrection from the dead, and look in hope to the Incarnate Christ, like Job did?"

Times of trial can also present evidence of spiritual formation.

"One of the things that has been quite refreshing is that of the faith in God's providence that is being demonstrated by our parishioners," shared Bishop **Al Gadsden, Sr.**, of the Reformed Episcopal Church Diocese of the Southeast. "They recognize that God will deliver and protect them, but are also wise enough to know that wisdom is a necessary part of our walk with the Lord. They hold fast to the Word that tells us, 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'" (2 Timothy 1:7). ✚



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

Texas Church Embraces LGBTQ, Exits Assemblies of God

by Jeffrey Walton

A Texas church has made news as the first Assemblies of God (AG) congregation to announce that it is “fully LGBTQ affirming without an asterisk.”

Lead Pastor **Dan Matlock** of Eikon Church in Kyle, Texas, made the

tattoos across his left arm, a standard uniform for evangelical church planters. The church’s building, newly completed in September 2016, replaced rented space at a San Marcos middle school for the congregation.

The church’s motto proclaims “Everyone is welcome, nobody is perfect,

marriage, sexual orientation, and gender identity—which is the only permissible stance for Assemblies of God churches and ministers.”

Eikon is no longer listed on the Assemblies of God church directory, and a link to the church’s profile on the AG web site now ends in an error message.

“The North Texas District is committed to helping members of Eikon Church find church families that continue to embrace the biblical views consistent with the statement of faith originally embraced by Eikon Church,” Forrester added.

Neither membership figures for Eikon Church nor a list of the congregation’s elder board are publicly available. Email inquiries made to the church were not returned as of the time of publication. Matlock and his wife **Kelly** co-pastor the church, which they planted in 2012 and officially launched in 2013. The church web site lists five staff, including the Matlocks, and two service times. A sixth staffer with the title of Executive Pastor transitioned off the church staff the week before the announcement and did not respond to a request for comment sent to his Twitter account.

Matlock’s 54-minute Sunday sermon is the first of a multi-part series on engaging the LGBTQ community. Eikon Church directs congregants to a section of their web site featuring a series of LGBTQ affirming resources, including various advocacy organizations such as author **Matthew Vines’** Reformation Project, which promotes LGBTQ affirmation within evangelical churches.

Vines’ writing appears to be one of several Religious Left influences upon Matlock’s thinking on marriage and sexuality. Matlock also appears to have been shaped by the writings of post-evangelical author **Rachel Held Evans**.

Addressing scriptural prohibitions of same-sex practices, Matlock immediately

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Pastor Dan Matlock speaks at Eikon Church in Kyle, TX on February 9, 2020 (Photo: Eikon Church/YouTube screen capture)

announcement in a sermon Sunday, February 9, that the Austin-area congregation would now be open to LGBTQ persons on staff and that the church building will be available to host same-sex wedding ceremonies.

“There will be some pastors and leaders at Eikon that are willing to perform weddings ... the building Eikon occupies will be open for anyone to host weddings at regardless of gender or sexuality,” a statement on the church’s web site explains.

Matlock preaches in well-worn jeans and untucked shirts that reveal a sleeve of

anything is possible,” but remaining affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination will not be possible.

“Dan Matlock has announced that he and Eikon Church will no longer be affiliated with the Assemblies of God,” explained Assemblies of God Senior Director of Public Relations and Communications **Mark Forrester** in response to an email query. “The North Texas District moved swiftly and in accordance with processes outlined in the General Council Bylaws when first aware of the departure from the Assemblies of God’s position on

set aside verses from the Hebrew Scriptures. He insisted that Moses' words in the book of Leviticus were already disregarded, citing prohibitions against wearing mixed fabrics. He did not distinguish between Jewish ceremonial law, intended to indicate the people group from which the messiah would come (fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ), and the moral law, which remains in effect.

Matlock focused his biblical exposition upon the Apostle Paul's exhortations against sexual immorality in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians, and Timothy. The Texas pastor posited that Paul's words were to be understood in his cultural context and were aimed against predatory or exploitative relationships such as pederasty, not against romantic same-sex relationships.

"What Paul is talking about in the New Testament does not properly correlate to LGBTQ Christians that we know," Matlock preached. "Paul isn't talking about what we're talking about. They [LGBTQ Christians] would say that Paul seems to be addressing child molesters, idolatrous orgies in temple prostitution."

"I landed in a place of full affirmation that I do believe that God can and does bless same-sex relationships, that God can and does bless same-sex marriages," Matlock preached at the end of his sermon as tones swelled from a worship leader's keyboard.

Future installments of the sermon series were previewed, including a

differing view to be offered by a presbyter for the South Austin Section of the AG.

Reached for comment, **Anthony Scoma** of the Assemblies' North Texas District confirmed that he was originally scheduled to address the congregation.

"A denominational decision was reached early this week that I will no longer be speaking at Eikon this Sunday," Scoma shared, referring questions to the North Texas District office and District Superintendent.

Matlock's LinkedIn profile lists his theological training at the Rockford Master's Commission, a ten month Christian gap-year discipleship program now known as City First Leadership College. He is a certified minister, the lowest of three AG ministerial categories (ordained, licensed, certified). The certified level does not require the same education or training as the other two classifications.

Matlock is not the first AG clergy to run afoul of the denomination's orthodox teaching on marriage and sexuality.

In 2013, Society for Pentecostal Studies President **Paul Alexander** triggered an investigation by his AG District after proposing that the largest and most prominent academic society within the Pentecostal tradition should be open to the promotion of homosexual, transgender, and intersex "realities" as faithful representations of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Alexander was later that year dismissed from

the denominational clergy rolls, the AG equivalent of defrocking.

Alexander continued as co-president of Evangelicals for Social Action and on staff at Eastern Seminary until 2016, when he departed both organizations. Alexander and the mother of his three children divorced and in 2018 he publicly transitioned to a new transgender female identity. ✚



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

Paula White's Controversies

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for coronavirus. Perhaps even more outlandish is **Ernest Angley**, now age 98, the white-suited, black wigged faith healer who knocked supplicants to the stage floor as he administered their healing before jetting off to his next rally on his private plane. He's now charged with sexually abusing a young male pastor, which should surprise no one.

Multi-million dollar evangelistic empires built on a personality often degenerate into egotism, scandal, and heresy. But they raise money from willing supporters who find hope and empowerment in the offered messages of deliverance and prosperity. Some of these empires are evangelical Christian. Some are New Age or simply popular self-help spirituality, but equally evangelistic in their fervor.

Paula White has not fallen into ruinous scandal. She is, I'm told by people who have met her, a nice person. Her style and theology don't appeal to me nor I suspect to most traditional Christians outside her charismatic subculture. But she's not an anomaly in American spirituality. She's part of a long tradition of preachers of hope, Christian or not, who declare a path to individual enlightenment and blessing. They will always have a following. ✚

Of Course America Will Survive the Coronavirus

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might anticipate improved health care and enhanced medical technologies. We might expect that social isolation will lead to better appreciation of community, especially the spiritual camaraderie of the church, but also the neighborhood and civil society. We might hope for more focus on family as the central social network. We might experience a much needed baby boom after decades of declining birth rates. There could be a wider spiritual awakening that reminds Americans of our highest religious aspirations towards God and each other.

Let's pray it is so!

Of course, even in the best scenario, post coronavirus America will still be sinful. Even the best religious awakenings only persist for a season. Yet they produce fruit that is eternal.

Let's be confident that America after the present crisis will be renewed, more familial, more innovative, more creative, more dutiful, more compassionate, braver, and more daring. And may our moral and spiritual improvements, however uneven, exemplify our faith in a kind Providence, inspiring a needful humanity likewise to heed this hope. ✚

IRD Diary:

United Methodism as We've Known It Is Gone, No One Is 'Leaving' It

by John Lomperis

United Methodists and much of the media have been abuzz around a high-profile, carefully negotiated proposal that would end the denomination's decades of theological infighting through separation into two or more denominations.

Questions remain about details.

Will liberal United Methodists stick to their guns in insisting that regional votes be "rigged" so that *their side* would "win" with a mere 44 percent minority vote any annual conference currently subject to the traditional biblical standards of the United Methodist *Discipline*? Is a double standard requiring traditionalist believers to muster a 57 percent super-majority just to keep the same doctrinal and moral standards we already have fair?

Can bishops who have already broken trust act with honesty, fairness, and integrity in managing the transition and sorting processes?

It is guaranteed that what ultimately emerges from the General Conference will not be ideal in anyone's eyes.

It is increasingly likely that Methodists will find that the denomination now known as the United Methodist Church will evolve into at least two new denominations, with different standards on sexual morality.

Each annual conference and congregation will have a choice to make—to remain with this group of United Methodists, or join this other one. Choosing to let another make that choice, or choosing to passively default to the status quo, is still a choice.

The reality is that in any of the likely scenarios for separation, pieces

of our denomination—as well as conferences, congregations, and people—will be divided, with some continuing with one of the new denominations and some continuing with the other.

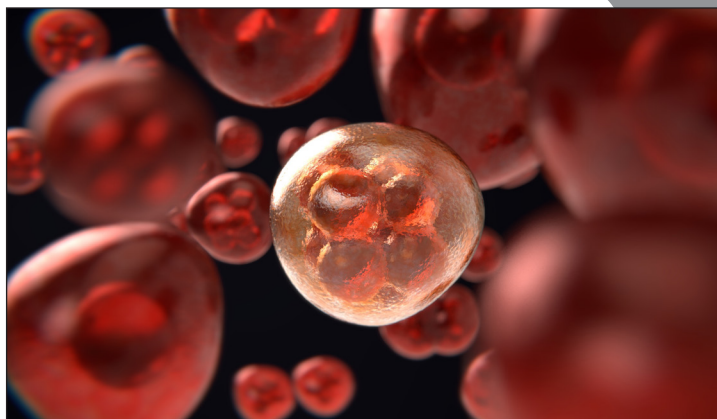
One denomination is likely to end up with most of the current hierarchy of general agencies while abandoning much of the doctrinal and moral standards. The other denomination will be the other way around: abandoning most of the bureaucracy while retaining doctrinal and moral standards.

No matter which denomination you choose, going with one or the other will separate you from much of the rest of the United Methodist Church as we have known it.

The end of our denomination as we know it is an occasion for sadness, and we will all need time to process and grieve.

Whatever may happen in terms of names and media narratives, the reality will be that the post-General Conference denominations will be fundamentally new and distinct. The United Methodist Church as we now know it—the whole packaged deal of the current structure, doctrine, moral standards, denominational culture, internal divisions, and people—will be no more, and two (or perhaps more) new denomination will be born, each inheriting different parts of the old denomination that birthed them.

Each denomination can be expected to move in different directions, unhindered by internal resistance from those now in the other denomination. It is now widely agreed that differences on sexuality are merely the presenting issue for



Mitosis is the process where a single cell divides into two daughter cells. The purpose of mitosis is for growth and to replace worn out cells (Image: Colin Behrens / Pixabay)

more fundamental disagreements. I expect that rather quickly, some of the most prominent differences between the new denominations would be over matters entirely separate from sexuality, such as the size of the denominational bureaucracy, or whether to support a bishop who publicly teaches that Jesus Christ needed to be converted out of sinful "bigotries and prejudices."

The rhetoric many use in framing some choices as "leaving the United Methodist Church" is misleading and should be avoided as much as possible. Rather than talk about "leaving" something that we will no longer actually have, the choice should be understood in terms of continuing. As our conference/congregation continues our ministry, do we want to continue our ministry in closer alignment with this one group of United Methodists with its package of beliefs, values, and structure, or with this other group of United Methodists with a different package of beliefs, values, and structure?

May God grant us grace and wisdom as we all seek to discern and choose wisely. ✚



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



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