



faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Summer 2016

All Tied Up?

A Report from United Methodist General Conference

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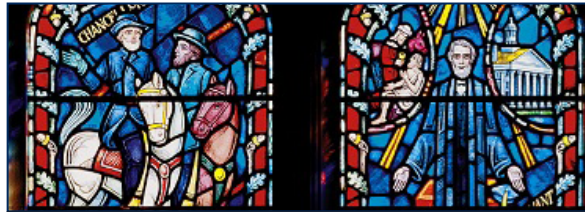
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Page 8: The Rev. Will Green lies on the floor of the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, OR, with his hands and feet bound to protest the denomination's policies on human sexuality. Delegates returning from their lunch break passed protestors lying on the floor and lining the entryway to the meeting area. (Photo: Mike DuBose/UMNS)

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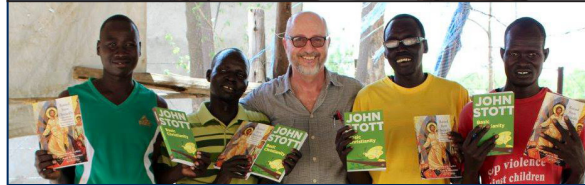
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Cover Photo: Demonstrators bind their wrists while singing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" to protest what they believe is an attempt to silence LGBTQ voices during the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, OR. In the foreground is the Rev. Will Green from Ballard Vale Methodist in Andover, MA. (Photo: Kathleen Barry/UMNS)

Methodist Perseverance

On May 19 history was made. The United Methodist General Conference, representing a 12-million-member denomination, voted to withdraw its church agencies from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), a Washington lobby that opposes all restrictions on abortion.

In 1973 the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) organized what was then the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, which for many years was housed in the Methodist Building on Capitol Hill. The group from the start opposed any restrictions on abortion including parental consent laws. Support for abortion rights was conventional wisdom for mainline Protestant elites in the early 1970s.

United Methodists have debated RCRC for much of the past 40 years, with especially close General Conference votes in 1992 and 2008. GBCS and the New York-based United Methodist Women, which also belonged to RCRC, have long vigorously rebutted any attempts to withdraw.

When John Lomperis, who now directs IRD's United Methodist program, first became my assistant over 12 years ago he had already several years before as a college student made United Methodist membership in RCRC his special concern. One cold January he had even ridden coach overnight on Amtrak from Chicago to attend a pro-life Methodist worship on Capitol Hill as a witness against RCRC.

John worked hard at the 2004 and 2008 General Conferences for RCRC withdrawal, organizing delegates for the debate. Attending Harvard Divinity School did not slow his passion. At the 2012 General Conference for the first time a legislative committee okayed RCRC withdrawal. Victory seemed near until church authorities removed it from the plenary calendar, effectively killing it. John was undeterred. In 2015 he was miraculously elected as a 2016 General Conference delegate from Indiana, an honor that eludes many much more senior church members. RCRC remained ever in his sights. Exceeding the brief of a typical delegate, John tirelessly documented RCRC's record and

informed other delegates around the world in preparation, traveling to Africa and the Philippines.

In Portland, Rev. Beth Ann Cook, an Indiana minister and John's colleague, adroitly and persuasively made the present-

ing argument to the delegates for withdrawal from RCRC. Also here as volunteers are the Rev. Paul Stallsworth and Cindy Evans, longtime faithful leaders of Lifewatch, United Methodism's pro-life caucus, whose annual Capitol Hill worship John once rode overnight on Amtrak to attend. These United Methodists never wavered across many years, despite overwhelming opposition.

During the floor debate a GBCS official unsuccessfully urged the delegates to reject RCRC withdrawal. The vote was not even close. Sixty-one percent approved withdrawing church agencies from RCRC. John's 15-year campaign to extract his

denomination from abortion advocacy had finally prevailed.

Complacency, cynicism, and despair are too common. Devoting many years to struggle for a just cause is unusual and is the vocation of unique souls. John, with the help of many others, has extracted America's third largest church from an affiliation unworthy of the Gospel and its preference for life. Thank you, John, for your Methodist perseverance. God has honored your labors and those of so many others who refused to quit. 🌸

Mark Tooley



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



UMAction Director and Elected General Conference Lay Delegate John Lomperis of Indiana speaks during the May 10-20 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon. (Photo: Mark Tooley / IRD)

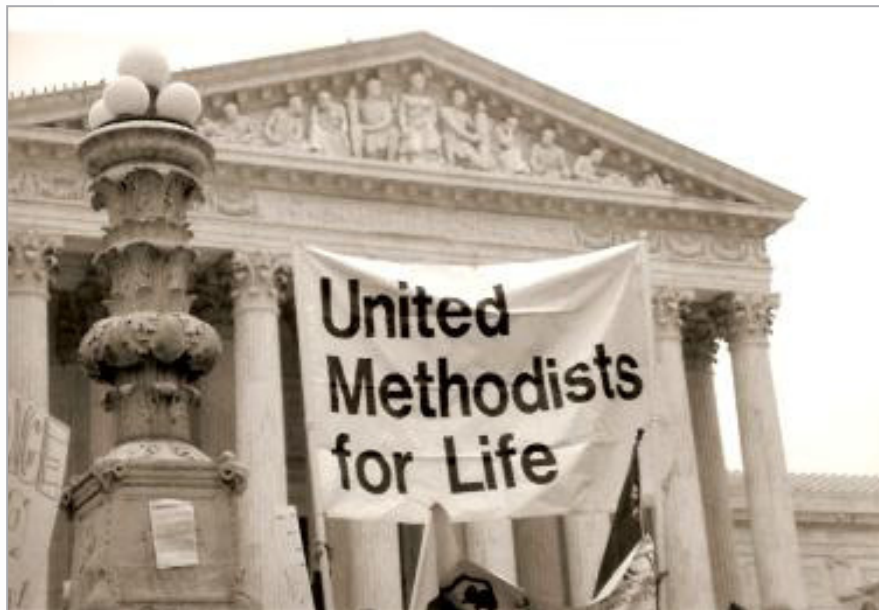
United Methodists Repeal Previous Endorsement of *Roe v. Wade*

United Methodists took major steps toward affirming the sanctity of all human life during their denomination's quadrennial General Conference in Portland, Oregon.

On the final day of the May 10-20 gathering, delegates voted to delete a four-decade-old statement from the denomination's *Book of Resolutions* that affirmed the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision striking down state laws restricting abortion.

A resolution to continue using *Roe*-affirming language that encouraged access to abortion under the guise of "responsible parenthood" was defeated 445 to 310 (59% to 41%). In committee, another resolution was overwhelmingly re-adopted 56 to 2 (97% to 3%) decrying the global crisis of gender-selective abortion (choosing abortion solely or primarily because of the unborn child's sex), while also describing abortion as "violent" and opposing abortions done for "trivial reasons." This resolution passed the plenary as part of an omnibus "consent calendar."

A 16-year-old official UMC resolution on hospital mergers was not considered in committee and was therefore allowed to expire. That subtly anti-Catholic resolution claimed that there was "a crisis in health care" in parts of the U.S. due to hospital mergers reducing availability of "abortion services" and other procedures, and committed United Methodist denominational agencies to political activism on "this critical issue of reproductive and end-of-life health care."



A United Methodists for Life banner appears in front of the U.S. Supreme Court during the annual National March for Life in Washington, DC. (Photo: John Lomperis / IRD)

"It is exciting to see America's second-largest Protestant denomination, the United Methodist Church, following the good example of America's largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, in moving away from earlier support for abortion towards historic

Christian pro-life values. This shows my church helpfully moving away from the other liberal, so-called 'mainline' Protestant denominations to embrace a new global, faithful identity," commented UMAction Director and Elected General Conference Delegate John Lomperis. ✝

United Methodists Quit Abortion Coalition

United Methodists have voted to require church boards and agencies to withdraw immediately from an organization that advocates for abortion on demand. Delegates from across the 12.1 million-member denomination adopted a proposal ending affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) by a vote of 425 to 268 (61% to 39%) during their General Conference meeting.

Two United Methodist agencies, the General Board on Church and Society (GBCS) and United Methodist Women (UMW) are coalition members of RCRC.

The legislation's rationale states that RCRC "is a one-sided political lobby that opposes all disapproval or limitation of abortion. RCRC's advocacy often directly contradicts our Social Principles on abortion, but it still uses our Church's name. Several annual conferences and many United Methodist leaders have urged the Church to end all association with RCRC."

The General Conference subsequently voted 561 to 197 (74% to 26%) to delete a previous resolution that had broadly affirmed the work of RCRC. ✝

National Cathedral to Remove Confederate Flag from Windows

One year after Washington National Cathedral Dean Gary Hall called for the removal of stained glass windows featuring the Confederate flag from the Gothic church, cathedral officials have announced an intention to remove two small flags from the windows, but not replace them entirely.

A five person Cathedral task force charged with studying the matter released a recommendation on June 2 that the windows not be removed at this time, but to revisit the matter within two years. The Episcopal Cathedral's governing body, known as the Chapter, voted to receive the report and to remove the flags.

The windows, which feature depictions of Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, were installed in 1953.

"After considering the Task Force report, the Chapter came to a consensus that the Confederate battle flag—whatever its history—has become, for many Americans, an image of hatred and racial supremacy," wrote Episcopal Diocese of Washington Bishop and interim Cathedral Dean Marianne Budde. "As such, it represents values in direct opposition to the gospel of Christ and the Cathedral's mission. Thus the Chapter directed that the two depictions of the Confederate

battle flag be immediately removed from the windows; the flags will be replaced by plain glass."

Budde wrote that Cathedral officials are determining the timeline and cost for the removal, "which will be paid for by private donors." No further information was given about who the potential donors might be.

The cash-strapped cathedral already is seeking tens of millions of dollars to complete a second phase of needed earthquake repairs. Complete removal and replacement of the windows would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. ✚



The Lee-Jackson windows were installed in the Washington National Cathedral in 1953. (Photo: Washington National Cathedral)

Jesus in the Land of Kim Jong-Un

North Koreans are not permitted to believe in any authority beyond Kim Jong-un and the two predecessors in his family line. However, according to an international charity to protect persecuted Christians, Open Doors UK, an estimated 300,000 North Koreans choose to believe that Jesus, not Kim Jong-un, is their savior. They

practice their faith despite the potential consequences of torture, execution, or a life spent in labor camps.

For the 14th consecutive year, Open Doors ranked North Korea as the world's most dangerous place for Christians, estimating that some 70,000 North Korean Christians are currently held in labor camps. Figures for how many have been executed are unknown.

The Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights reports that 99.7% of refugees said that there is “no religious freedom in North Korea.” And yet Christianity apparently is *on the rise* in

North Korea, growing at an annual rate of 5.2%, according to *Operation World*.

“Hopelessness is rampant. The so-called gods that lead North Korea have died,” says Todd Nettleton, the Director of Media and Public Relations for the U.S.-based Christian rights group Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). He adds that, “North Koreans see the cracks in what the regime is telling them, and they are open to a different message.”

Even though their government is the most hostile to Christians on earth, “the North Korean Christians that we deal with don’t talk about it in those terms,” he says. “They focus instead on serving the Lord and walking in his footsteps.” ✝



The statues of Kim Il Sung (left) and Kim Jong Il on Mansu Hill in Pyongyang in April 2012 (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

United Methodists Vote to Encourage Disaffiliation from Anti-Israel Coalition

United Methodists have voted to encourage church boards and agencies to end their affiliation with an organization that promotes boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. Delegates from across the 12.1 million-member denomination adopted a proposal asking to conclude agency affiliation with the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation on a vote of 478 to 319 (60% to 40%) during their General Conference meeting in Portland, Oregon.

The General Conference was asked by its public policy arm, the General Board on Church and Society (GBCS), to divest its financial holdings from companies that do business with Israel. Instead, the conference voted to encourage the United Methodist mission board, the General

Board on Global Ministries (GBGM), to divest itself from the anti-Israel coalition, one that GBGM itself was heavily involved in helping establish.

Other proposals addressing denominational policy towards Israel, including a measure pushed by GBGS that would require church agencies to divest themselves of holdings in Motorola Solutions, Hewlett Packard, and Caterpillar, which all sell non-lethal equipment to the Israeli military, were defeated in committee.

The United Methodist Church previously rejected a policy of divestment by a 2–1 margin in 2012, while the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ adopted divestment policies at their respective governing conventions. ✝

Clinton: BDS ‘Not the Path to Peace’

United Methodist and U.S. Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton weighed in on the subject of anti-Israel divestment on the eve of her denomination’s governing body, criticizing activists’ efforts. On May 9, Clinton said that the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel was “not the path to peace” in a letter to the heads of the Jewish Federations of North America.

“I believe that BDS seeks to punish Israel and dictate how the Israelis and Palestinians should resolve the core issues of their conflict,” Clinton wrote.

She continued that peace could “only be achieved through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians; it cannot be imposed from the outside or by unilateral actions.” She concluded that that the BDS movement was “counterproductive to the pursuit of peace and harmful to Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

Although she never directly mentioned the UMC, Clinton is a life-long Methodist and the timing of the letter sent a clear message. ✝



Financial Crunch Hits United Church of Christ

by Jeff Walton

If times are tough for oldline Protestant denominations, they are dire for the United Church of Christ. The 60-year-old denomination announced staffing changes during the UCC Board of Directors meeting held March 17–19 in Cleveland. The changes follow the announced resignation of a top staff member in February and an internal report predicting an 80 percent decline in membership by 2045.

According to newly-installed General Minister and President The Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, there are “multiple financial challenges that could impact the well-being of the national setting” (terminology for the denomination’s national-level staff).

A staff report of the Directors’ meeting relayed that “In discussion about the staffing change, Dorhauer noted that the national setting staff has decreased from over 300 in 2000 to just over 100 today.” Dorhauer also assured the board that he would “distribute the workload fairly among the staff.”

Among the departures was the resignation of The Rev. Dr. J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister of the UCC’s Local Church Ministries and a member of the UCC’s four-person Collegium of Officers. Guess, the first openly gay person to serve as a national officer of the church, was elected to a four-year term in 2013. The departing official is resigning his position on April 8 to assume a role as vice

president of the UCC’s Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

Guess had worked for the UCC’s “national setting,” holding several positions since 2000, first as Justice and Witness Ministries’ communications minister and, later, as editor of *United Church News* and the UCC’s news director. In 2007, he was named the UCC’s communication director. The board voted not to immediately replace Guess, but to appoint Dorhauer as the acting executive of Local Church Ministries for a period of six months.

The staff cuts aren’t a huge surprise—oldline Protestant churches such as the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and others have been cutting national staff as their adherents’ numbers decline. But two-thirds of national staff gone in the past 16 years is a singular distinction even among the UCC’s struggling peer group.

According to *The United Church of Christ: A Statistical Profile (Fall 2015)*, last year the denomination had 5,116 congregations and a U.S. membership of 943,521 persons. Founded in 1957 as a merger of the Congregational-Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the United Church of Christ has lost more than half of its membership in the intervening years.

In June of 2015, the denomination announced that it had entered into an agreement with a Georgia-based property management firm to sell its headquarters

and an adjacent hotel that the church owned. The UCC will lease the building back for another two decades. The denomination relocated its headquarters to Cleveland from New York in 1990, a move that was expected to both reduce expenses and bring the church’s national leadership closer to the bulk of its congregations, which are concentrated in the upper Midwest and northeastern United States.

Last summer, UCC Center for Analytics, Research, and Data (CARD) studies were released that confirmed dire forecasts. The first, “Futuring the United Church of Christ: 30-Year Projections,” showed that over the next three decades, the number of UCC congregations will decline from over 5,100 churches today to approximately 3,600 churches. During the same time period, the number of UCC members will drop precipitously, from 1.1 million to just under 200,000 adherents.

The report does not forecast a corresponding decline in total ordained clergy (including retired and emeritus clergy), but does report a drop in those clergy that pastor churches from just under 4,500 in 1985 to 3,000 today, declining to a projected 1,250 by the year 2045.✝



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



GC2016 Recap: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

by John Lomperis

Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone preaches
May 19. (Photo: Mike DuBose / UMNS)

Highlights from the 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church held May 10–20 in Portland, Oregon, include the following observations by Conference Delegate from Indiana John Lomperis.

THE GOOD:

On sexual morality, we maintained our church's biblical standards on marriage and sex. While some liberal delegates may have felt optimism for their cause as early as the beginning of this General Conference, committee voting in the first week made clear that the votes were not there to liberalize our standards. So liberal delegates, in cooperation with an extraordinary intervention by our bishops, narrowly rushed through a little-understood motion that involved tabling all "sexuality" matters, which meant keeping our present, orthodox standards. Contrary to some misunderstandings and rhetorical smoke-blowing, this motion to refer such matters to a special commission did NOT call for a moratorium on enforcing our *Book of Discipline's* standards. Rather, it simply used similar language to what bishops routinely say, and the *Discipline* itself says, about wanting

to avoid complaint processes and treating them as last resorts, but then also expressed an explicit commitment to uphold our *Book of Discipline*. While there are many good reasons to be skeptical of this whole process, it is worth noting that this special commission to be appointed by our bishops will only have authority to make recommendations rather than actual changes in church teachings, and that when similarly called commissions or study committees have recommended liberalizing our sexuality standards, the church has rejected their advice. We also allowed the expiration of an embarrassingly bad resolution passed by the 2008 General Conference decrying "heterosexism and homophobia" so that that is no longer an official UMC statement.

On pro-life issues, we overwhelmingly voted to end our denomination's scandalous 43-year affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) and voted by an even larger margin to delete an official UMC resolution expressing appreciation for RCRC. In other actions, we voted decisively to repeal a 40-year-old official "Responsible Parenthood" resolution very broadly defending abortion and endorsing the

infamous *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, re-adopted a resolution decrying sex-selective abortion while describing abortion as "violent" and criticizing those done for "trivial reasons," and allowed the expiration of a 16-year-old official UMC resolution bemoaning an alleged "crisis" of some hospitals not offering abortions. The petition to withdraw our membership in RCRC was submitted by several annual conferences from the Northeast to the Midwest to the South: Western Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama-West Florida. We also strengthened and re-adopted an existing resolution on human cloning and bioethics. And we re-affirmed our church's opposition to "mercy killing," while a dangerous petition from the California-Pacific Conference to promote the pro-assisted-suicide "Death with Dignity" movement died in committee. While much work remains in more firmly establishing a clear pro-life commitment in our denomination, these were HUGE steps in the right direction.

In terms of other harmful agendas, we decisively defeated variations of the "Global Segregation Plan" to create a new US-only structure in which pesky

orthodox overseas delegates would have been excluded (including one proposal advancing this from the once-formidable Connectional Table), rejected fossil-fuel divestment, protected guaranteed appointments for clergy, and did not adopt any of the liberal resolutions that would have put our church on the wrong side of recent religious liberty controversies we have seen in America.

We adopted a package of accountability reforms to make bishops more accountable to the global connection, rather than only to their respective regions, to end the impunity with which some bishops have flaunted our denominational covenant. We also adopted petitions to bring a little more transparency in our judicial accountability processes, and to require those appointed as counsel for the church to be willing to uphold our church law in pursuing charges against wayward clergy.

On Israel, anti-Israel divestment petitions were soundly rejected in their legislative committee. An 11th-hour attempt to resurrect this cause in the final day's plenary session was rejected in a vote of 559–167, or 77% to 23% (an even more lopsided margin than the 2012 General Conference's 2–1 vote rejecting divestment). A run-of-the-mill UMC petition to criticize Israel was gutted by an amendment, and much to my pleasant surprise, we actually adopted a petition calling on the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) to end its affiliation with an extreme anti-Israel group the GBGM itself helped establish—and the 60-40 vote on that was not even close.

On the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), we amended the *Discipline* to require that our denomination's notoriously liberal DC lobby office begin doing some work to advocate on behalf of Christians persecuted for their faith around the world.

On Proportional Representation, we adopted a plan that will add five new bishops in Africa by 2020 (partially addressing some serious imbalances), added a

few more African members to the powerful Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters as well as to the General Commission on Communications.

On Men's Ministry and Reclaiming Wesleyan Spirituality, we adopted a resolution encouraging men's groups to adopt the "class meeting" format as outlined by Professor Kevin Watson, modeled on the historic Methodist class meetings.

On Women's Ministry, we amended the *Discipline* to explicitly encourage a variety of women's ministries without granting the United Methodist Women (UMW) an absolute monopoly. Such explicit support for supplemental women's ministries has been a longtime goal of our friends at the Renew Network. Perhaps success on this matter after so



John Lomperis, a lay delegate from the Indiana Conference, speaks on May 18 at the United Methodist General Conference in Portland. (Photo: Jeff Walton/IRD)

many years was due in part to the Manhattan national headquarters of UMW finally overplaying its hand, not just in its longtime disregard for the values of non-liberal women in our churches, but also with its (failed) petitions submitted to this General Conference on the "crisis" of abortion-free hospitals and to make the "Responsible Parenthood" resolution even more callously pro-abortion.

Also from the Local Church committee, we adopted one petition allowing for more flexible structures for our local churches for the sake of reaching new people for Jesus Christ, and another petition, submitted by Rev. Riley Case

(Associate Director of the Confessing Movement and UMAction Advisory Board member), to promote "awareness of and concurrence with" our church's Doctrinal Standards within each of our congregations.

In distribution of resources, we doubled the funding to support theological education in our overseas central conferences, from the officially planned \$5 million to the \$10 million for which we pushed strongly.

On inclusion of non-US delegates, who constituted some 40 percent of all delegates, we saw a perhaps unprecedented level of non-Americans being engaged in discussions and elected as officers of legislative committees. The 71 elected committee officers included three Filipinos, three Europeans, and sixteen Africans. Furthermore, we adopted a petition requiring that from now on, the most important information that has been printed only in English in the *Daily Christian Advocate* to guide delegates in what we are doing each day at General Conference, will now also be translated and made available in French, Swahili, and Portuguese. In practical terms, this last change means that beginning in 2020, we should expect a new, unprecedented level of informed engagement on the part of African delegates, significantly beyond even what we saw this year.

In elections, evangelicals handily swept the elections for our denomination's Judicial Council (Supreme Court) and University Senate. Now the nine-member Judicial Council includes three Africans, one Filipino, one European, one African-American, one Vietnamese American, and two white American women—and eight of these nine were elected with the support of evangelicals because of their commitment to fairness, integrity, and upholding our *Book of Discipline*. Furthermore, while the powerful Commission on the General Conference has traditionally been stacked with liberal appointees of our Council of Bishops, a new rule allowing nominations and elections allowed us to elect three strongly evangelical Americans to this important

Continued on page 10

GC2016 Recap

Continued from page 9

body, in addition to the numerous non-Americans now serving on it.

On General Conference, we changed the *Discipline* to clearly mandate democratic processes in delegate elections (pending ratification of this Constitutional amendment). We also adopted a petition submitted by the Indiana Conference to require future General Conferences to actually take action on the petitions submitted to it. The latter means that liberals will no longer be able to rely on the cynical “filibustering” weapons they have used against us at this and the previous General Conference. In other words, in future General Conferences, when the orthodox majority has key petitions that we really want to pass, they now have much less ability to stop us.

THE BAD:

All of the major losses for evangelicals were “offensive losses”—as in we failed to gain as much new ground as we had hoped in some cases. I cannot think of a single major area in which progressives actually *gained* ground at this General Conference.

But I had been particularly hoping that we could have gained more ground in proportional representation (reversing the current over-representation of declining liberal regions of our church while more faithful and growing areas in the USA and globally are under-represented in denominational leadership structures) and accountability for wayward clergy. On the latter, the outgoing, liberal-dominated Judicial Council issued several frustrating rulings disallowing several of the key accountability petitions we supported.

Several silly, far-left political resolutions were passed, but that is nothing new—every General Conference does that.

The General Conference failed to take time to even consider serious reforms to our U.S. seminary education system or our geographically unequal distribution of U.S. bishops, aside from establishing a group to study possible “changes to the jurisdictional conferences’ and episcopal area boundaries.”



Dorothee Benz, a lay delegate from the New York Conference, speaks on May 11 in favor of Rule 44 at the United Methodist General Conference in Portland, OR. The proposed rule would allow small discussion groups to be used to handle sensitive themes. (Photo: Paul Jeffrey/UMNS)

A petition to establish term limits for all UMC bishops failed to get the needed two-thirds super-majority for such a Constitutional amendment. But it did get over 59 percent support, suggesting momentum since a similar motion received only 50.05 percent of the vote at the 2012 General Conference.

THE UGLY:

There was much unhinged anger and stridency among protesters at the conference, in illegally storming the delegates-only area, in social-media trolling, and elsewhere. And it will be hard to forget that liberal clergy delegate who took to the microphone to angrily and confidently accuse a presiding bishop, who is known for having twitchy hands, of “telegraphing” how to vote on something with his alleged secret hand signals.

Some liberal delegates and activists stooped to blatantly misrepresenting the truth, particularly on issues related to abortion or Israel.

Our bishops took turns serving in the chair to preside over each two-hour segment of the General Conference plenary meetings. The system was clearly broken, however, because there was a lack of consistency in how the rules were applied from one presiding bishop to another. This led some to quip that our only governing rules were whatever the individual in the presiding bishop’s chair wanted them to be in that moment. Most of this I am willing to chalk up to parliamentary procedure not being something most of our bishops understand well, which highlights the importance of a

proposal made to hire a professional parliamentarian for future General Conferences. But there were several instances of liberal bishops blatantly disregarding the rules, or dramatically breaking with the consistent pattern of how the conference had handled similar parliamentary situations, in ways that clearly prevented conservative delegates from promoting perspectives with which these bishops are known to disagree. In one particularly bizarre scene, the new Council of Bishops president, Bishop Bruce Ough of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area, forcefully shut down a valid motion from the Rev. Mike Childs of Mississippi, later made a public show of seeming to apologize to Mike, but then did not actually give Mike the opportunity to make the motion Ough had illegally prevented him from making.

Overall, I am beyond elated and thankful for the great things God has done in this General Conference, not only in the positive actions taken but also the clear “writing on the wall” of the newly emerging global orthodox majority in our denomination, and the apparent inevitability of future General Conferences being able to establish even firmer standards of doctrinal and moral accountability. I look forward to seeing what God will do with our future. ✚



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

Maxie Dunnam: Don't Substitute Feelings for Truth

by Chelsen Vicari

Asbury Theological Seminary President Emeritus Maxie Dunnam is one of the most widely respected and recognized leaders in the Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church (UMC). Dunnam addressed the Renewal and Reform Coalition breakfast at United Methodist General Conference on the morning of May 18. In his remarks, the prominent evangelical renewal leader spoke on holy conferencing, the dangers of ignoring the Holy Spirit, and the expectation of revival in the UMC.

Dunnam opened his address by reading from what he called “one of the strangest verses in the whole Bible,” Isaiah 7:20:

“In that day, the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the river—the King of Assyria—to shave your head and the hair of your legs and take off your beard.”

Dunnam said, “Isaiah was saying to the Israelites that God was going to use this pagan king to exact his judgment upon them. Not a friend, but an enemy.”

“I believe that not just at this General Conference, but throughout our church God is shaving with a borrowed razor,” he continued. “What if all that which appears to be Satan’s work, what if all that, God is going to use in order to bring revival and renewal to the Methodist movement in the United Methodist Church? What if?”

If God really is shaving the UMC with a borrowed razor to accomplish his will, then what are faithful, orthodox Methodists to do in the meantime?

Dunnam offered an answer along with encouragement to a room filled with delegates who were feeling overwhelmed by long days of plenary sessions and nights short on sleep.

“First of all, we’re not going to be intimidated or manipulated by the hypocritical notion of holy conferencing. We’re going to stay at the table, but it’s going to

be the table of the truth of the Gospel and the historic Christian witness,” he said. “[We are s]taying at the table not to try some experience that we can all share. In fact, we’re going to call out the sentimental totally idolatrous kind of way that concept is being used. We’re not going to substitute feelings and experience for the truth of the Christian teaching.”

“We’re going to demonstrate that our loyalty and commitment to unity is not through structure and institutions, it’s through doctrine, discipline, and mission, rendering them through [the] support of structures and apportionments,” Dunnam continued. “We will pay attention to the Holy Spirit.”

Dunnam called on Methodists to return to their charismatic roots, listening and acting upon the Holy Spirit: “We’ve just almost completely ignored the Holy Spirit, which was so present in the movement at its beginning and it continued throughout Wesley’s life.”

Dunnam then read a note from John Wesley’s journal dated January 1, 1739: “About 3 o’clock in the morning when we were continuing instant in prayer the power of God came mightily among us so much that we cried out in joy and many fell to the ground.”

Dunnam noted that “The Church must live and thrive and do its work not by getting organized, but through responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. The power of ministry and mission is the Holy Spirit. Revival and renewal will not come by our



United Methodist theologian Maxie Dunnam addresses the Renewal and Reform Coalition Breakfast May 18 at the United Methodist General Conference in Portland, OR. (Photo: Chelsen Vicari/IRD)

own will, certainly not by our own efforts, but by our responsiveness and our surrender to the Holy Spirit.”

Before closing, Dunnam recalled a warning from Wesley to Methodists:

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

As delegates and renewalists faced upcoming battles at General Conference, Dunnam encouraged them to go forward “believing that God is shaving with a borrowed razor and maybe giving birth to something completely new that we’ve not yet imagined.” ✝



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

Pray for Gambela

by Faith J. H. McDonnell

Every day I check my friend Johann's Facebook page to see what is happening in Gambela, a city in Ethiopia near the South Sudan border. Because of violent conflict in South Sudan since the December 2013 coup attempt by former vice-president Riek Machar (now again in South Sudanese government through U.S. pressure), close to 300,000 mostly Nuer South Sudanese refugees have crammed into Gambela.

Johann Vanderbijl, Dean and Principal at St. Frumentius' Anglican Theological College, documents the changing conditions in the region for his prayer partners. A peaceful day can be destroyed and chaos can ensue by either accidental or intentional violence. The former was the case in April, when a "highlander," an Ethiopian Gambela resident who was not Nuer or Anuak, accidentally hit and killed two South Sudanese Nuer refugees while bringing water to the refugee camp.

Gambela media reported two women and eight men killed in retaliation by the refugees. But this attack was considered minor when compared to one that took place just days before.

On Friday, April 15, a "massive, coordinated attack" was reported. Upwards of 200 Ethiopian Nuer people (not South Sudan Nuer) were killed, 75 wounded, and over 100 children abducted by South Sudanese Murle gunmen. Murle and Nuer ethnic groups have a long history of conflict.

There has also been so much violence between Anuak and Nuer ethnic groups that St. Frumentius, comprised of students from both these tribes, is forced to have two separate campuses. Johann is swift to explain that the students consider themselves brothers and sisters in Christ. The separation is due to threats from the wider community.

But even in the wider community there is evidence of peace and unity. Johann posted a photo of a "highlander" and a Nuer having coffee together in Newland (the Nuer land). Such moments keep hope alive that all of people of Gambela might one day be able to repent,

forgive, reconcile, and be restored.

At the New Wine-skins for Global Missions 2016 conference I met Johann and his wife Louise in person for the first time. Also there were old friends the Rt. Rev. Dr. Grant LeMarquand, area bishop of the Horn of Africa, and his wife, Dr. Wendy LeMarquand. The LeMarquands also live in Gambela where Wendy works to improve health, particularly nutrition and sanitation for the refugees and other residents.

Grant and Wendy spoke in the plenary about the many ways God is moving in Gambela, as well as requesting prayer for daily challenges. The thousand plus attendees at New Wineskins have *no excuse to not pray* for that troubled region. Grant gave me a simple memory device for morning prayer: Morning coffee → Coffee beans → Ethiopia → Pray.

One day, even before morning coffee, I woke up thinking about Gambela and, seemingly incongruously, the 1904 Welsh Revival hymn, "Here Is Love Vast as the Ocean." It seemed God was telling me to pray that song for Gambela. After all, Ethiopia was at the edges of the East Africa Revival of the 1930s and beyond. It's time to pray for another East Africa Revival that will extend not only throughout East Africa and the Horn of Africa, but beyond. Who's to say it can't begin in Gambela?

Please pray for Gambela. During heartbreaking conflict, this is how I pray:

- That Gambela will become a place where people from every tribe and tongue love each other and love Jesus Christ rather than a place marred by violent tribal conflict.
- That Christians there and throughout Ethiopia will never cease "to sing his praise."
- That revival will spread throughout



Dr. Vanderbijl and students at St. Frumentius Seminary
(Photo: Johann Wilhelmus Vanderbijl III)

Africa as "the floodgates of God's mercy" open with a "vast and gracious tide" of love."

- That "Heaven's peace and perfect justice" will kiss a guilty, angry, unforgiving, hurt people with God's love, and transform them into redeemed, joyful, forgiving, peaceful, healed people who witness to the power of the Cross.

Here's the "love-song of the Welsh Revival." The original Welsh lyrics are by William Rees and the translation is by William Edwards:

*Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.*

*On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love. ✝*



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Russell Moore to Justice Conference: Don't Be Silent on Unborn, Sexuality, and Hell

by Chelsen Vicari

You might say a Baptist dropped a bomb on the Justice Conference in Chicago on June 4. The annual gathering of young evangelicals is a project of World Relief and customarily invites members of the Christian Left to champion issues related to social justice. So it's a bit surprising that this year, wedged on the schedule between Jim Wallis and Tony Campolo, was Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

During his 28-minute discussion, Moore boldly outlined how to be Gospel-centered social justice warriors. He tackled issues ranging from racial injustice, human trafficking, and refugees. But it was his mention of the sanctity of unborn life, sexual ethics, and the reality of hell that had some in the room squirming uncomfortably in their seats.

Too often, Moore said, Christians are tempted to solely focus on the social issues that their peers or "tribe" approve. "When I'm speaking to people in my tribe of conservative confessional evangelicalism," explained Moore, "I often have to say you are pro-life, and rightly so, but because you recognize the image of God and the humanity of God in the unborn child and in his or her mother, you must also recognize the humanity and dignity of God in people who might not be politically popular with you right now: with prisoners, with refugees, with immigrants. And that works the other way too."

The bulk of Moore's discussion urged his audience to recognize the dehumanizing of the unborn as equally unjust as the dehumanizing of other vulnerable groups more popular among younger Christians. "There are other justice-oriented evangelicals who sometimes are very willing to speak out, rightly so, on these issues of trafficking and racial injustice, but who are afraid to speak up on the issue of abortion..."

"If we are unwilling to speak to what is happening not only in our country but around the world with the dehumanizing of children because they are hidden with the wounding that takes place with women and men and societies by an industry that promises people an easy fix," said Moore. "Then we will empower injustice and we will also signal to the rest of the world if you can just get the oppressed small enough and hidden enough and politically powerless enough, we will have nothing to say."

Moore's comments were indeed a change in tone for the Justice Conference. Moore even encouraged his young listeners "to be the people to stand up to Planned Parenthood and say there are no unloved women and there are no unwanted children" and to recognize women in crisis are being sold "a violent so-called solution to their problem and they're being told that all of this will happen in anonymity and with no consequences as an industry works to create both a supply and demand for this violent act."

Apart from unborn life, Moore briefly touched on Christian sexual ethics. He noted some evangelicals are "afraid to speak up on a biblical view of issues of human sexuality because they're afraid that somehow that means they will be associated with people in polyester somewhere that they don't want to be like. How cowardly."

Moore continued, "If we are silent about what the Scriptures and 2,000 years of Church history has taught us about human sexuality and what it means to be right with God and what it means for children to grow up with both a mother



Russell Moore addresses the Justice Conference in Chicago on June 4. (Photo: Jeff Walton/IRD)

and a father, if we are silent at any of those points then we're really not the justice people, we're really not Gospel people. We're just people who are protecting our platforms and we're just choosing on which one to stand."

Moore stressed that faithful Christians cannot neglect the reality of hell. "There is a great valley that separates the just from the unjust and the basis for that separation is the Gospel of Jesus Christ," he said. "We cannot be people who are concerned about Justice if we are embarrassed about the doctrine of hell."

Before closing, Moore urged young evangelicals to see the humanity "in those powerless faces [that] are on the other side of prison bars, or on the other side of a refugee camp, or on the other side of the sonogram" and not be embarrassed by the totality of the Gospel, because after all, "What we have to give is the Good News." ✝



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

Sorry, Jen Hatmaker: Christians Aren't Complicit in Orlando

by Derryck Green

Since ISIS-sympathizer Omar Mateen murdered 49 people and injured 50 more at an Orlando, Florida, nightclub, many Christians have offered their sympathy and prayers for the families who lost their loved ones during the shooting rampage early on the Sunday morning of June 12. Despite their good intentions, and doing the right thing—offering prayer, emotional support, and comfort for those in need while mourning the dead—Christians have had to turn the other cheek while defending themselves against accusations that they are the reason Omar Mateen targeted the LGBTQ community.

In the midst of grieving and attempting to make sense of the stark reality of true evil, Christians have become scapegoats for this ISIS-inspired mass murder. The argument is that since Christians, specifically evangelicals, have refused to redefine marriage to mean something it's not, and steadfastly refuse to be coerced into participating in or providing services for ceremonies and activities that

contradict their religious principles and beliefs, they are guilty of creating and nurturing a "climate of hate." It's claimed by an increasing cacophony of voices that Christian-based hatred motivated a *Muslim* to murder 49 people while claiming allegiance to *ISIS*, in the name of *Allah*.

So not only is being transgender real, so is transtheology.

Rather than directly confronting this religious bigotry and moral absurdity by defending their religious reputation—the foundation of which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ—some Christians have joined the "blame Christians" chorus.

One of those Christians is popular author and blogger Jen Hatmaker. In a

post on her Facebook page that went viral, she said,

I've been listening to my gay friends and leaders the last two days... and this is what I am hearing: It is very difficult to accept the Christian lament for LGBTQ folks in their deaths when we've done such a brutal job of honoring them in their lives. Anti-LGBTQ sentiment has paved a long runway to hate crimes.... We are complicit.

"We"? A "brutal job of honoring them in their lives"? "Anti-LGBTQ sentiment"?

Christians who stand against redefining marriage and the homosexualization of our culture are deliberately and dishonestly conflated with "hate," "dis-

honor," and being "anti-LGBTQ," none of which is accurate.

Everywhere one turns, one is inevitably confronted with LGBTQ propaganda that is forced upon society by those who are antagonistic toward the traditional sexual and

gender norms and ethics that came from the Judeo-Christian value system. These propagandists of the post-modern sexual revolution demand Captain America have a boyfriend. They send social media petitions to Disney suggesting that Elsa—a princess in the popular movie *Frozen*—be a lesbian. They celebrate Bruce Jenner's "transition." And they cheer J. J. Abrams as he boasts about featuring a gay character in the upcoming movies in the *Star Wars* franchise. This cultural gender-bending and homosexualization is in addition to attacks on the institution of marriage and the absurd belief that one can appropriate whatever gender one "identifies" with rather than one's actual physical gender

at birth, crystallized in the disturbing bathroom edicts of the Obama administration. Resisting secularized and culturally damaging sexual experimentation doesn't qualify as a "brutal job" of honoring the lives of LGBTQ individuals. And it doesn't implicate Christians in the acts of a murderous, radical Islamic madman either.

Further, as many examples demonstrate, most Christians aren't anti-gay or "homophobic." They simply don't want to be legally mandated to participate in actions that violate their religious sensibilities—sensibilities that are protected by the Constitution. Many people despise teachers' unions, myself included, but that doesn't mean all teachers are despised (only the incompetent ones). The same analogy applies here. Christians aren't afraid of gays, nor do they hate gays. They simply disagree with the overly aggressive movement to normalize homosexuality through compulsion combined with the cultural deconstruction of social institutions.

Hatmaker continues:

It seems like the only harm toward the LGBTQ community that will overcome Christian disapproval is a mass murder.

That's reprehensible. Mass murder is only a step worse than Christian fidelity to its central teachings and tradition? What moral compass is Hatmaker consulting?

The rest of Hatmaker's post is a list of straw-man arguments against Christians. Hatmaker knows it and should be ashamed of not defending her fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. Yes, Christians disagree with the homosexual lifestyle. Christians also believe in praying for one's neighbor, loving their enemies while praying for the people who curse them—many of whom are members

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Christians Not Complicit in Orlando

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of the LGBTQ community that Hatmaker defends at the expense of her fellow Christians. The idea that Christians can't walk and chew gum, or haven't done so, is ridiculous.

Christians can accept, love, and pray for the LGBTQ community (Orlando and elsewhere) and should do so. But Christians are under no cultural, moral, religious, or theological obligation to approve

of a lifestyle that contradicts a life lived in harmony with Christian teachings. They also shouldn't be compelled to accept the inversion of human sexuality. And they shouldn't be liable for what another person from another religion did of his own volition.

Because they have made the Christian boogeyman the representation of evil, the LGBTQ community has no idea how to confront the kind of real evil that disrupted their false sense of security and punctured their ideologically pretentious bubble.

Standing on religious and historical precedent—and common sense—doesn't

negate the sympathy and prayers of Christians for the victims and residents of Orlando.

Christians aren't to blame for what happened at that nightclub.

Omar Mateen is to blame for what happened, as is the radical theology and savagery advocated by ISIS. ✝



Derryck Green has an MA in Theological Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and a doctorate in Theology and Spiritual Leadership with a concentration in Identity Formation from Azusa Pacific University.

ANGLICAN

Episcopal Priest Underwent Abortion to Finish Divinity School, Later Tanked Parish

by Jeff Walton

Whenver an activist Episcopal priest shows up in the news, as a general rule, scratch beneath the surface and you'll find a dead or dying congregation.

A recent example comes from the *USA Today* coverage of the March U.S. Supreme Court hearing about a Texas law requiring abortion clinics to meet the same regulatory requirements as ambulatory surgical centers. Pro-Life advocates argue that such health and safety regulation is necessary, especially in the wake of Philadelphia abortionist Hermit Gosnell's murder trial and the gruesome discoveries about his clinic. Abortion rights advocates counter that a rapid decline in the number of U.S. abortion clinics is placing an undue burden on women seeking to terminate their pregnancies.

Enter Episcopal Priest Anne Fowler, one of 10 women submitting an amicus brief, arguing that:

"If the Reverend Anne Fowler had not had access to an abortion when she accidentally became pregnant after enrolling in Divinity School, she would never have been able to graduate, to serve as a parish rector, or to help the enormous number of people whose lives she has touched."

As *USA Today* reports:

All the personal tales have similar morals: Without having access to

abortions, the women said, they might not have been able to achieve professional successes and contribute as much to their communities.

According to LifeNews.com's Micajah Bilger, Fowler is active in the pro-abortion movement and is a leader with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), an organization that exists primarily to provide a veneer of religious approval for abortion-on-demand. Fowler served nine years on the board of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, two as Chair. Currently, Fowler is a chaplain for Planned Parenthood, but until recently was rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

So how did Fowler "achieve professional successes" shepherding the flock at St. John's from 1992 until 2013? Contrary to a 2013 story in the *Jamaica Plain Gazette* on her retirement in which Fowler asserted that during her leadership the church has stabilized and grown, the opposite seems to have actually occurred.

In just the past decade, the parish lost about half of its membership and attendance. St. John's dropped from a membership of 400 down to fewer than 220; average Sunday attendance shrank from 110 down to about 50 persons in 2013, Fowler's final reporting year as parish rector.



St. John's Episcopal Church in Jamaica Plain, Boston, MA (Photo: EMW, Wikimedia Commons)

Fowler has since relocated to Maine where she works as a freelance spiritual director and pastoral counselor.

Fowler claimed in the *Gazette* piece that St. John's doubled in size and more than doubled in budget under her leadership. She said that she is most proud of "fostering a loving, creative, responsible and fun community of faithful people."

"I pray that that will be seen as my main legacy," Fowler told the *Gazette*.

Sadly, we know this legacy all too well: another decimated parish led by a liberal activist. ✝



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

Misattributing Evil

by Mark Tooley

United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the California-Pacific Conference responded to the Orlando gay nightclub mass murders by a self-reported pro-ISIS Islamist with the suggestion that her denomination's traditional marriage teaching is to blame:

As I have prayed for the victims of this latest shooting, for the shooter and his family, for the people of Orlando, and for us, I have been struck by a concern that has penetrated my heart. Is it possible that we United Methodists with such a negative attitude and position against LGBTQI persons contribute to such a crime? When we say that those who are of a homosexual gender identity are living lives that are incompatible with Christian teaching, that they are not to be included in our ordained leadership, and that they are not important enough for us to invest resources of the Church in advocating for their well-being, in essence when we say that our LGBTQI brothers and sisters are not worthy of the fullness of life that Christ offers us all, are we not contributing to the kind of thinking that promotes doing harm to these our brothers and sisters, our children, the sacred children of God?

United Methodism's definition of marriage as the union of man and woman is unexceptionably the official and historic stance of about 99 percent of organized Christianity, including Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and nearly every Protestant tradition except a handful of shrinking

denominations in northwestern Europe and North America.

The Orlando killer, Omar Mateen, was the son of a pro-Taliban Afghan immigrant. It's unlikely he ever heard of United Methodism. To the extent that he had any views about Christianity they were almost certainly hostile. Since he professed support for ISIS, he likely supported the persecution and murder of Christians by ISIS. ISIS practices tradi-

ISIS practices traditional Islamic law, which requires death for homosexuals.

tional Islamic law, which requires death for homosexuals. Several Islamic regimes stipulate death penalties for homosexuals, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. Bishop Carcaño in her blog about Orlando never mentions the killer or his ISIS or Islamist connection. She only faults the United Methodist Church.

A myopic vein of Western multiculturalism popular within liberal Protestantism assumes the world is safe and beautiful but for the crimes of Western Civilization and Christianity. Indeed many crimes are attributable to denizens of both, but neither invented nor has a monopoly on cruelty, which has always been endemic to the human experience. This vein of multiculturalism is typically incapable of admitting sins within other cultures and religions, preferring to see others only as victims.

In 2004 I submitted a series of resolutions to the United Methodist General Conference critiquing some of the world's worst human rights abusers according to groups like Amnesty International, such as North Korea, China, Iran, and Cuba, among others. They were all defeated in the Church and Society legislative committee. One critic complained I was targeting anti-American regimes. But I included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, and Pakistan, which are traditional U.S. strategic allies. My resolutions cited harsh penalties for homosexuals by both Islamic and communist regimes.

Yet there was no interest even by United Methodist activists who profess to support gay rights.

In this vein, a prominent pro-LGBTQ delegate from last month's United Methodist General Conference named Dorothee Benz has been tweeting in support of Bishop Carcaño's blog blaming United Methodism and Christianity for Orlando, plus expressing solidarity with Muslims, without citing radical Islam. She makes no criticism of the killer or his professed Islamist motivation.

Written hours after the ugly news from Orlando, Bishop Carcaño's blog may have been composed hastily. I hope she edits or deletes it. I also hope that someday within official United Methodism, among other places in our culture, there is a more grounded and universal perspective about human evil, embodied by ISIS and the Orlando killer.

Meanwhile, here's a heartfelt response to the Orlando horror by Upper New York United Methodist Bishop Mark Webb, who concludes:

Lord, in your mercy allow goodness to overcome evil and light to pierce the darkness, comfort those who mourn, touch those who need your healing and provide peace in the midst of fear. Lord, in your mercy allow goodness to overcome evil and light to pierce the darkness. ✝



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