

faith & freedom

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Summer 2020

Race and the Church

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Cup Foods, the site of Floyd's street corner arrest now festooned with flowers and art, feels like a pilgrimage site. See story on page 6. (Photo: Chris McFarland/McFarland Crew LLC)

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Cover: Minneapolis activist and self-described "freedom fighter" Spike Moss, like many we talked to during our visit to Minneapolis, blamed white supremacist groups for the destruction in their neighborhoods. (Photo: Chris McFarland/McFarland Crew LLC)

America Is Not an Apartheid State

Some protesters marched by our office in downtown Washington, D.C., this week. One young man carried a sign declaring: “The U.S. Is an Apartheid State.” He likely was in his twenties, so he doesn’t remember when South Africa’s white minority regime fell nearly 30 years ago, along with many other repressive regimes around the world. He also likely doesn’t know much about Apartheid.

Under Apartheid, South Africa’s whites, who were about 16% of the population, disenfranchised the rest of the country and kept virtually all power to themselves. Blacks couldn’t vote and were mostly precluded from owning property or major businesses. They could only live in certain regions or neighborhoods. Choice jobs were precluded to them. They could not marry whites, and they were segregated in public places. The nation was nearly exclusively run by the Afrikaner whites, while British whites were in opposition. Mixed race and Indian persons had separate categories and restrictions. This racial, political, and economic system was kept in place by a police surveillance state.

It’s not clear exactly how this young D.C. protester thought America resembled South Africa under Apartheid. Firstly, he would not be permitted to protest under Apartheid. He was marching through the streets of the nation’s capital, protected—not harassed—by police, in a city that’s had black mayors and progressive government across 50 years. D.C. was desegregated nearly 70 years ago.

The young man likely thinks because America, like all countries, has injustices and prejudices that therefore it equals Apartheid. He doesn’t understand what Apartheid was. Likely his only experience is of America, full of freedoms and opportunity, whose liberties include a penchant to fixate on and exaggerate America’s failings.

America is always self-critical, reforming, and striving to self-correct. It’s never satisfied with itself, nor should it ever be. America’s energy and moral authority depend on this constant drive for self-improvement, which dates to our Puritan and revivalistic past. We as a nation identify our sins, repent, and seek atonement. The cycle is always repeating. Sometimes, like St. Paul, we think of ourselves as the chief of sinners.

This stance can be good for humility as a starting point for repentance. Not many other countries think this way. Not many other countries think of themselves as a spiritual enterprise. And not many other countries obsess over their sins in their constant search for moral improvement.

Obsession over national sins helps preclude arrogance and hubris. But if lacking perspective and a sense of proportion this obsession can itself become egotistical. Nobody sins as much as we do! We are supreme at sin! Americans, even the most guilt-ridden, anti-American ones, are often obsessed with America.

America is special and unique. But in its proclivity towards sin it is not exceptional. We have no monopoly on injustice. However, our obsession with confronting and correcting injustice on a grand scale is fairly unique. Sometimes our crusades against injustice (domestic or global) can themselves become hubristic.



A demonstrator carries a sign in downtown Washington, D.C. during a Black Lives Matter protest in June 2020 (Photo: Mark Tooley / IRD).

Our repentance and quest for atonement can sometimes be worse than the original sins.

Confronting national sins is imperative but it must start with realistic self-appraisal, not myopic self-hatred. And it must be pursued with appreciation that all humanity, in its intrinsic sinfulness, is starting from the same place. Repentance also assumes that atonement is available; otherwise, renouncing sin has no positive outcome.

The young protester who thinks he’s in an Apartheid state is not starting from reality. He’s effectively negating many

Continued on page 15

Mark Tooley



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

Anglicans Receive Favorable Court Rulings in Texas, South Carolina

Anglicans who departed the Episcopal Church are the legally recognized Diocese of Fort Worth and control its corporation, according to a unanimous ruling issued May 22 by the Texas Supreme Court. As a result, Anglicans there will likely continue to hold tens of millions in real estate and other ministry assets.

"We are grateful for the Court's hard work on this decision and for the clarity with which it was rendered," read a statement issued by the diocese. "Above all, we thank God for his eternal provision and protection for his Church and the people he has called to serve him."

The Texas ruling was followed by an order June 19 by Circuit Court Judge **Edgar W. Dickson** in South Carolina finding that no parish there acceded to the church's Dennis Canon—a denominational rule dating from 1979 that all property is held in trust for the Episcopal Church. If the judge's order is ultimately upheld by the South Carolina Supreme Court, it would mean that local trustees—not the national church—hold title to the disputed properties and a diocesan camp, valued at \$500 million.

In response to the ruling, Anglican Diocese of South Carolina Bishop **Mark Lawrence** expressed his gratitude in a diocesan press release. "We give thanks for this ruling. It is a day to rejoice. It is a day to move forward in Christ's mission to the world. Thanks be to God."

The Texas ruling winds down litigation between the departing diocese and the Episcopal Church that was set in motion more than a decade ago after the national church filed suit against departing Anglicans. South Carolina Anglicans separated from the denomination in late 2012.

In both dioceses, approximately 80 percent of members remained within parishes that separated from the Episcopal denomination. Smaller "renewing" Episcopal dioceses were reconstituted for those parishes that remained affiliated with the national church.

"Presiding Bishop **Michael B. Curry** joins me in acknowledging our disappointment and urging all of us to be gentle with one another during this trying time," wrote the Rt. Rev. **Scott Mayer**, provisional bishop of Fort Worth in a letter to his Episcopal Church-affiliated diocese. "Now I, other diocesan leaders, and our

legal team have to make decisions about our next steps."

The Diocese of Fort Worth became a founding jurisdiction of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and is the third largest diocese by membership. The diocese, which holds to an Anglo-Catholic form of churchmanship, disagreed with the direction of the Episcopal Church in matters of scriptural authority and human sexual expression. The Diocese of South Carolina affiliated with ACNA in 2017 and is the largest diocese in its new denomination. ✚

United Methodists Reschedule as Presbyterian Go Online and Episcopalians Wait

The governing body of the United Methodist Church will meet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 29-September 7, 2021, according to an announcement made in May by the Commission on the General Conference.

The event, originally scheduled for May 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates are expected to vote to separate the denomination into separate churches that affirm and prohibit clergy from engaging in same-sex behavior.

"We're grateful that we were able to secure new dates while keeping the site of General Conference in Minneapolis," said **Kim Simpson**, chair of the Commission on the General Conference.

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St. Michael's Church in Charleston, South Carolina, is among the disputed properties in an ongoing lawsuit between departing Anglicans and the Episcopal Church (Photo: Cynthia M. Walton)

Ravi Zacharias, 1946–2020

Christian apologist **Ravi Zacharias**, founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM), passed away from cancer May 19 at his home in Atlanta, surrounded by his wife of 48 years, Margie, and his children. He was 74.

Zacharias was born in Madras (now Chennai) in 1946. His obituary on the RZIM website notes that his birthplace was “in the shadow of the resting place of the apostle Thomas, known to the world as the ‘Doubter,’ but to Zacharias as the ‘Great Questioner.’” It adds that Zacharias was always “more interested in the questioner than in the question itself.”

The author of 28 books offered a winsome presentation of the Gospel including his own personal testimony. The obituary tells the story that he shared:

“A transformation set in motion when Zacharias, recovering in a Delhi hospital from a suicide attempt at age 17, was read the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible by the apostle John: ‘Because I live, you will also live.’ In response, Zacharias surrendered his life to Christ and offered up a prayer that if he emerged from the hospital, he would leave no stone unturned in his pursuit of truth.”

He visited Louisiana State Penitentiary, the largest U.S. maximum security prison, three times. His last visit to pray with Death Row prisoners was in November.

“Zacharias believed the gospel shined with grace and power, especially in the darkest places, and praying with those on Death Row ‘makes it impossible to block the tears.’ It was his third visit to Angola and, such is his deep connection, the inmates have made Zacharias the coffin in which he will be buried,” the RZIM obituary reads.

A colleague summed it up that to Zacharias, “People weren’t logical problems waiting to be solved; they were people who needed the person of Christ.” ✝



Ravi Zacharias (Photo: Ravi Zacharias/Facebook)

Simpson said the effects would extend beyond finances.

“To meet in 2021, if at all possible, is very important,” Simpson explained. “Pushing [General Conference] to 2022 affects budgets, jurisdictional conferences, central conferences, the election of bishops, bishops’ retirement dates, terms of office of general agency boards and elected denominational leadership, and more.”

This is not the first health crisis to affect the timing of a General Conference. According to historical documents, the 1800 General Conference was moved from October to May because of the prevalence of yellow fever during the fall.

As Methodists look towards a 2021 gathering, bishops and deputies to the Episcopal Church General Convention, scheduled to meet July 2021 in Baltimore, may also see their meeting changed.

“Although we all pray that an FDA-approved vaccine or other safe and effective therapeutics will be available soon, we have concluded with regret that we must plan as if our traditional 10-day gathering of 10,000 people or more will not be possible in 2021,” wrote Presiding

Bishop **Michael B. Curry** and House of Deputies President **Gay Clark Jennings**. A decision from the Episcopal Church Executive Council on how to proceed is expected this autumn.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, scheduled to meet in Baltimore this summer, was moved to a two day online-only format with a shortened agenda June 26-27. ✝

Presbyterian Church (USA) Chief Claims No Decline, Contrary to Church Report

The Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has seemingly solved the problem of ongoing membership decline in the oldline denomination.

“For the first time in more than thirty years, the PC(USA) is not reporting membership losses,” cheered Stated Clerk **J. Herbert Nelson**, in comments made May 28 accompanying annual release of denominational statistics. “Our membership remains at 1.3 million. This is good news! We must celebrate while knowing that there remains work to be done.”

The same PC(USA) report shows membership losses consistent with reports from recent years: numbers dropped from 1,352,678 in 2018 to 1,302,043 in 2019.

Because of rounding, Nelson doesn’t count the vanishing of more than 50,000 church members. The denomination’s predecessor bodies once counted a combined 4.25 million members.

“Another factor is that the PC(USA) did not have any church dismissals in 2019. This is a sign that we have stabilized previous membership loss.”

Nelson’s comments do not align with 2019 statistics that list 24 dismissals to other denominations. The report itself lists a net drop of 120 churches, including dismissals and closures.

“We are not dying ... we are reforming,” Nelson concluded, revisiting a statement he first made in 2017 to accompany the denomination’s 2016 statistical report. ✝



Participants in a Philos Project trip to Minneapolis, Minnesota pray near the site of George Floyd's arrest and the outbreak of violence on June 11, 2020. (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD)

Minneapolis Residents See 'A Spiritual War'

by Jeffrey H. Walton

Racial injustice and unrest are a spiritual battle that must be fought with spiritual weapons, according to African-American leaders in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Earlier this month I visited Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, site of a massive food pantry for church neighbors. When some grocery stores burned, low-income residents without cars were especially hurt.

In at least one case, local armed residents defended a grocery and pharmacy from attack.

"I believe in the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms," noted Pastor **Jerry McAfee** of New Salem Baptist Church, who helped organize a neighborhood patrol guarding the establishment. "I'll be nonviolent with those who are nonviolent with me."

McAfee was one of many Black pastors who I met with for a fact-finding tour of the epicenter of protest, looting, and violence

unleashed after the death of **George Floyd** on May 26. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, died following an arrest. He is alleged to have used a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Floyd's name now appears among the long list of unarmed African-American persons who have lost their lives in police violence. Their names are painted on the Minneapolis street surface where I prayed with local Christians who minister among those who feel long-running hurt, suspicion, and mistrust. They are not surprised at what transpired; rather we were told that

listen to those facing conflict here in the United States.

We shared time with local pastors who have a ministry among majority-Black communities and across the Twin Cities. Not all of their views are the ones I have heard relayed by news sources.

I'm all too aware that law enforcement in minority communities is far outside my experience, raised in the suburban West, not to mention my upbringing in the Episcopal Church. I was mindful of this as we drove past a looted and burned Target store near Minneapolis' 3rd Precinct police headquarters; it was overrun and set aflame the night of May 28.

Those we met with all referred to outside agitators causing trouble in their neighborhoods, although the identity of those agitators and their purpose varied depending on whom we spoke with. Some, like Minneapolis activist and self-described "freedom fighter" **Spike Moss**, blamed white supremacist groups, including but not limited



Pastor Carmen Means of The Movement speaks June 11, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD)



Pastor Mike Smith of Redeeming Love Church in Maplewood, Minnesota speaks June 11, 2020 (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD).

to the Aryan Nations, for violent, provocative incursions into Black neighborhoods. Others pointed to anarchist and far-Left groups like Antifa, blamed for inciting violence and committing arson on local businesses and even churches.

Either way, stories of cars with out-of-state license plates—or plates removed entirely—circulated.

In a north Minneapolis neighborhood near looted grocery stores and some businesses destroyed by fires, we were welcomed by the Man Up Club, a Christian mentoring program for young Black males age 12-24 that partners with local churches.

“We need young Black males to police their own communities” Man Up Club founder **Korey “Xross” Dean** shared about a “Black and Blue” program for those who want to pursue a career in law enforcement.

Dean’s comment recalls earlier concerns voiced in Ferguson, Missouri, about

difficulties accompanying a police force that does not reside in a jurisdiction they are tasked with serving and protecting. But a majority-Black police force in and of itself does not necessarily preclude inner city tensions, as conflict in Atlanta (58% African-American police force) has since showed.

There were significant opportunities for prayer.

“One thing we’ve heard over and over again from local Black leaders: ‘This is a spiritual battle that must be fought with spiritual weapons,’” Philos Project Executive Director **Robert Nicholson** noted.

Channeling the frustration of the Black community, Pastor **Carmen Means** leads a church known simply as “The Movement” and was direct: “There needs to be true repentance, and more than just conversation and dialogue. Repentance means action.”

Means runs a community center on the same block as Cup Foods, the site of Floyd’s street corner arrest now festooned with flowers and art, which had the feel of a pilgrimage site.

At the impromptu memorial fashioned by those seeking to remember Floyd, we prayed with **Alphonso**, a local resident who told of the challenges of both welcoming people to the memorial and also seeing that it does not transform into a street fair. He shared that they have a few times suggested to outsiders that

they move along, fearful that some have incendiary intent.

Minnesota and the Twin Cities are majority-white, and many of those are struggling to come to terms with racial conflict that has emerged into full view.

“Fruit of repentance will ask for something to die,” says Assemblies of God Pastor **Mike Smith** of the suburban Redeeming Love Church about the cur-



Pastor Jerry McAfee of New Salem Baptist Church speaks June 11 at Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD).

rent moment in Minneapolis. “We are approaching a time where everyone will be required to empty something from themselves.”

“To be woke is guilt-fed, awakening is conviction-fed,” Smith shared about what his own congregation is learning.

“This is a spiritual war. The devil is trying to destroy this land,” Moss declared. “It will not change until we change the hearts of the white majority. But the white majority has lost its belief in God.” ✚



Korey “Xross” Dean of The Man Up Club speaks June 11 in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Photo: Jeff Walton / IRD)



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

Critical Theory's Advent in the Christian World, and How to Respond

by Rick Plasterer

Critical theory, the ideology of the far left that analyzes the world in terms of power and oppression, has gained widespread acceptance both in the wider society and among young people from Christian backgrounds. It was



Clarke Scheibe of the L'Abri Christian Fellowship Canada
(Photo: YouTube screen capture)

discussed by **Clarke Scheibe**, Director of the L'Abri Fellowship in Victoria, British Columbia, at the annual L'Abri conference in Rochester, Minnesota, on February 15.

Scheibe first mentioned the increasingly popular idea that “social justice is the end goal of Christianity.” He said that “social justice” is a hot button issue in the Evangelical world because many young people from Christian backgrounds “have given up on biblical Christianity, and some have left the church, and some have left the faith.” He observed that in rejecting Christian faith and morals, converts to social justice doctrine regard Christian morality as immoral.

The line of thought that leads to the conclusion that orthodox Christianity is immoral begins with a “pursuit of justice,” Scheibe said. The kingdom of God is to be realized in our day. The result for those affected by this line of thinking has been that “over time, [it] corroded their beliefs, corroded their confidence in God and in the Bible.”

Scheibe considered several questions. “How did we get here?” “What is at work?” “How does it relate to biblical Christianity?” And finally, “Is there a way forward?”

In answer to the first, he said that the highest ideal of the generation of 1968 was “to see justice in all areas of their lives.” Left-leaning ideas and rhetoric are “hard to pin down, because oppression is polymorphous,” and so opposition to it has to be in many forms, too. The ideas of the New Left entering from the academic world also shaped beliefs. Some

chose to “live in communes” away from the “tyranny of capitalism.” A major influence was the thinker **Herbert Marcuse**, who proposed silencing conservatives in the interest of progress.

These ideas were sown in the second half of the twentieth century, and “came to fruition” in the 2000s, Scheibe said. The September 11, 2001, terror attacks came to be seen as an act of revenge by victims, not a heinous crime. “Hate crime” and “hate speech” doctrine took root in those moving to the left, moved by high profile crimes against people in groups held to be oppressed. The (generally judicial) enactment of same-sex marriage added

momentum, and the election of **Donald Trump** as President in 2016 was the last straw for many people affected by liberationist ideas. For many of the young who used the narratives of the Left to interpret these events, critical theory, or “cultural Marxism,” finally became an “interpretive grid” for looking at life generally.

Scheibe maintained that those who embrace critical theory do not so much reject “the American dream” (which after all involves prospering in this world) as they reject Christianity (which is self-denying). The church seems “to play a part” in “patterns of oppression.” People even speak of “conversion experiences” when they realize that critical thinking discloses the truth.

The heritage of liberation theology, which began in the 1960s, is being used by young, disaffected Evangelicals today to advance critical theory in Christian communities. The Bible is interpreted in a new way. Rather than using rhetoric of obedience and forgiveness of sins, liberation theology uses the theme of liberation and oppression to interpret the Bible. The moral imperative of liberation, rather than the fall of man, becomes the new hermeneutical key. The oppression of the poor is seen as “the number one consequence of idolatry,” while sinners are to be praised and religious authorities condemned. The result of this liberationist re-interpretation of the Bible is that the biblical text appears “fresh” and “full,” a source of truth relevant to the contemporary world.

Scheibe said that the truly “subtle but important shift” that occurs for those who embrace critical theory is that it becomes “not just a helpful lens” to interpret the Bible, but is recognized as “the interpretive key,” becoming the “foundation” to derive truth from the biblical text. The imperative of liberating marginalized groups becomes the point of departure in biblical interpretation, resulting in “black liberation

theology,” “feminist theology,” “gay theology,” etc.

Critical theory focuses on the thoughts and assumptions that reinforce oppression. This, Scheibe said, is called “internal oppression.” Freeing oneself from the oppressive ideas of dominant groups is to become “woke.” Everyone and everything fits somewhere into the hierarchical structure of power, and because nothing falls outside of it, critical theory is itself above criticism. In the analysis of “intersectionality,” one adds up categories held to be oppressed (black, female, infertile, LGBT, etc.) to gain advantage in the logic and rhetoric of liberation.

Scheibe said that Herbert Marcuse’s doctrine of “repressive tolerance,” advanced in the 1960s, is the proposed path of liberation. Changing language and facts will change consciousness, and thus change personality and culture to end the oppression of marginalized groups. It necessarily involves the suppression of conservative judgments, and the toleration of the radical claims of groups held to be marginalized.

Scheibe believes that critical theory will neither “eliminate oppressive structures” nor “create a unified society.” It results (as it did in communist dictatorships) in “a new oppressor class.” Since everything is based on raw power, violence is justified. Tensions are not relieved, and society is not unified, although it is transformed in a new hierarchical system. He referred to the new diversity slogan of a Canadian bank: “difference, the only thing we have in common.” But it would seem to be the natural result of a culture (really, an anti-culture) focused on different identities.

By the time one has fully accepted critical thinking, Scheibe said, one comes to see even “the Bible as a hegemonic power.” To respond to critical theory, it is necessary to get its adherents to at least consider the possibility that the biblical text, and not critical theory, is finally authoritative. He referred to the surprise of a Jewish lesbian who became a Christian after learning that even white men struggle with the Bible.

Several principles are important in understanding the Bible on its own

CAN YOU BE WOKE AND BE A CHRISTIAN?

terms. (1) “The world is God’s creation, and therefore good,” (2) “Human power cannot be the basis for understanding reality,” and (3) “There is a unified field of knowledge and morals, based on revelation, instead of the ‘facts of the dominant culture,’ or simply analysis of oppressors and oppressed.” All persons are equal, instead of an asymmetry of oppressors and oppressed. Scheibe said that while the Western liberal tradition has claimed that the equality of humans is self-evident, it is not, in fact, self-evident. It is known by divine revelation, and uncritically adopted by secular Western thought.

Another point Christians must make is that oppression is based on sin. “It does not originate externally, it originates internally.” Internal rebellion against God, Scheibe said, “is what creates unjust structures.” He referred to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s experience of wanting to kill the creators of the Gulag Archipelago, but his realization that he could not, because he would become like the oppressors. He recognized, Scheibe said, that “sin cuts through every human heart.” This, in fact, “equalizes us.” We are also equal in our need to respond to the call of Jesus. We all need forgiveness of sin. While “God has a special concern for marginalized people, they are also called to repent.” The freedom that the Bible offers is a freedom from sin.

In considering “a way forward,” Scheibe pointed to the social reform achieved by Evangelicals in the nineteenth century. He referred to James 1:27 as the proper approach to social justice by Christians: *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

A questioner asked if the categories of oppression identified by critical theory are

compatible with the idea of oppression presented in Scripture. Scheibe responded that he does see instances of structural injustice. Critical theory, however, by its very principles, uncritically accepts the claims that people in certain categories are deemed oppressed. The possibility that those classed as oppressed might in fact be oppressors in some situations is excluded.

Another questioner observed from his experience where critical theory is widely accepted that “no matter how kind you are, and gentle you are” people cannot be made to see the bad consequences of implementing critical theory. Scheibe responded that where critical theory is widely accepted, it may be difficult if not impossible to engage the situation from a Christian standpoint.

It was asked at what point it becomes necessary to leave an institution dominated by critical theory, and move, if possible, to new institutions. Scheibe said he encourages people to remain in their institutions if possible, but also said that there may be times when one has to leave institutions that have become pervasively corrupt with critical theory.

It was also observed that people from Christian backgrounds affected by critical theory tend to regard evangelism as a kind of aggression. Scheibe responded that the gospel can be truncated either by eliminating the effort to win souls to Christ or ignoring injustices in society. He said, however, that it is “really through the conversion of hearts those structural changes come.”

Finally, Scheibe observed the “cultural exhaustion” of many Americans with respect to critical theory. He said he had seen “pastors burn out,” and churches “lose many people.”

Scheibe’s review of the most striking consequence of critical theory—identity politics—is available on the IRD blog. Read more at: <https://juicyecumenism.com/2020/03/05/identity-politics-daniel/> 📌



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

D.C. Riots and Bishop Mariann Budde's Selective Episcopal Outrage

by Jeffrey H. Walton

Episcopal Diocese of Washington Bishop **Mariann Budde** has worked herself into a froth over a photo opportunity by President **Trump**.

Lafayette Square across from the White House was cleared of Black Lives

one of her churches, which according to the parish vestry incurred about \$20,000 in damages, mostly to the church nursery.

"The President of the United States stood in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, lifted up a Bible, and had pictures of himself taken. In so doing, he used a church building and the Holy Bible for partisan political purposes," Tweeted Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop **Michael Curry**. "This was done in a time of deep hurt and pain in our country, and his action did nothing to help us or to heal us."

The St. John's Parish House located on Lafayette Square had been briefly set afire the night before, after peaceful protesters departed for a curfew.

Some who remained in defiance of the curfew threw rocks at windows in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs building

and spray painted a statue of Revolutionary War hero Tadeusz Kościuszko with profanity. Storefronts were vandalized, including a looted sandwich shop owned by Pakistani immigrants below IRD's offices.

Graffiti was removed and windows were proactively boarded up to prevent further damage. A pole with an American flag had been yanked off the church building and thrown into a fire.

Would Budde have reacted similarly if right-wing protesters had torched the church? The bishop doesn't shrink from activism: She advocates for firearms restrictions and even weighed in on changing the name of the city's NFL team. Within her diocese, Budde defended a push for

"gender-inclusive" language "to avoid the use of gendered pronouns for God."

The *Post* report noted both Budde and Curry "are among the pantheon of progressive religious leaders who have long been critical of Trump's political agenda." I was last present in the St. John's parish house for a press conference of the Religious Coalition on Reproductive Choice, a lobby that voices approval from religious officials for unrestricted abortion-on-demand, and which counts the Episcopal Church as a member.

Post religion reporters Michelle Boorstein and Sarah Pulliam Bailey cite data from the Pew Research Center showing 49 percent of Episcopalians lean Democratic, compared with 39 percent of church members who lean Republican.

Episcopalians have increasingly found themselves in roles difficult to maintain. Church officials embrace leftist causes, while also serving as a boutique chaplaincy to the affluent and as presiders over American civil religion in events of national importance.

For his part, President Trump is in close proximity to the Episcopal Church: his youngest son was baptized at an Episcopal parish and attends an Episcopal school. His family attends services at Bethesda-by-the-sea Episcopal Church when in Florida.

Budde draws a distinction between those engaged in peaceful protest, opportunistic looters and violent organized provocateurs like Antifa. Would she do the same if the partisan affiliations were flipped?

The danger of selective outrage is in exposing one's self as another partisan instead of acting like a senior shepherd. ✚



Episcopal Diocese of Washington Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde recites prayers at the first Way of the Cross station March 25, 2014 in Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. Diocese of Connecticut Bishop Suffragan James Curry, left, and Connecticut Bishop Ian Douglas listen. (Photo Credit: Mary Frances Schjonberg/ENS)

Matter protesters (with the use of tear gas or smoke canisters, depending on which report you read) the evening of June 1, seemingly for the purpose of facilitating Trump's walk to St. John's Episcopal Church for the photo op. The *Washington Post* described Trump briefly standing in front of the church with Bible in hand, neither entering the building nor speaking nor opening the Bible, which apparently signaled something by merely being raised like a talisman.

"I am outraged," Budde told the *Post* about Trump's posturing, pausing between words to emphasize her anger as her voice trembled. She had nothing critical to say about the arson committed on



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



Erin Hawkins discusses the social witness of The United Methodist Church during the 2020 Pre-General Conference Briefing in Nashville, Tenn. Hawkins leads the denomination's Commission on Religion and Race (Photo: Kathleen Barry/UM News).

United Methodist Anti-Racism Agency Promotes LGBTQ Pride Month

by Dan Moran

The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCoRR) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) posted on its website that it is observing LGBTQ Pride month this June, and invited the church “to consider the impact of intersectionality,” which is a theory that GCoRR defined as a “paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality (such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism).”

GCoRR is the denomination's official, apportionment-funded agency created to specifically combat racism and draw the UMC towards greater unity across racial and cultural lines. The agency is led by Dr. **Erin Hawkins**.

To highlight intersectionality, GCoRR shared a story of a lesbian couple who describe themselves as black, Southern, queer, and Christian. The short story centers around how they met and the challenges they faced in finding a church that was LGBTQ-affirming and rooted in an African-American church expression. The story concludes with an encouragement for congregations to engage in “social justice work that supports the liberation of LGBTQ+ individuals.”

Below this story, GCoRR specifically promotes Reconciling Ministries Network

(RMN) and links to its webpage. RMN has garnered headlines over the years not just for their LGBTQ advocacy, but for refusing to rule out polyamory as acceptable and engaging in disruptive protests.

GCoRR's promotion of LGBTQ liberationism goes directly against the established standards of the UMC. *The Discipline*, the denomination's official book of law and doctrine, prohibits United Methodist general agencies like GCoRR from using funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.” At the same time, however, the UMC has also committed “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.” The UMC finds the *practice* of homosexuality as immoral, so its ministers are forbidden from engaging in it or blessing same-sex unions. The church's *Social Principles* also remind us that “all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.”

In a time when unity is difficult to find in the UMC, and when the entire country is riveted by questions regarding race, particularly with discrimination and violence against African Americans, GCoRR is diverting some of its energy to promote LGBTQ liberationist ideology, which both contradicts church teachings and alienates many United Methodists from a broader anti-racist coalition the agency should be building.

While doing work on issues of race is relevant other social issues, GCoRR is going outside purpose and responsibilities established in the *Discipline* (§ 2002): “to challenge, lead and equip the people of The United Methodist Church to become interculturally competent, to ensure institutional equity and to facilitate vital conversations about religion, race, and culture.”

Nowhere in GCoRR's Disciplinary mandates is there any mention of gender or sexuality, let alone any authorization to directly challenge the denomination's official doctrinal and moral standards.

This is not the first time in recent memory that GCoRR has gone against the UMC's historic teachings on human sexuality. In 2019 after the passage of the Traditional Plan, Dr. Hawkins issued a statement accusing the General Conference of causing harm to LGBTQ people and tied it to the UMC's history of racial discrimination. The statement, which was officially endorsed by GCoRR's Board of Directors, said that “the action of the Special Called Session of General Conference to support the Traditional Plan serves as proof that our comfort with sanctioned discrimination and exclusion has never left.”

Our country is currently in a period when many Americans across all racial and political identities have been waking up to issues of racial injustice and are increasingly eager to confront the problems they see in their communities. By promoting unbiblical views on human sexuality that General Conference has repeatedly stood against, GCoRR is picking a fight that undermines its ability to build a broad coalition for combatting racism. GCoRR is needlessly alienating many United Methodists and squandering a great opportunity to lead, motivate, and organize the church around engaging questions of race from a Christian viewpoint. ✚



Dan Moran serves as a Research Assistant at IRD, working primarily with UMAction. He graduated from William and Mary with a Bachelor's in Government in 2017.

Absent UMC, 'Religious' Abortion Lobby Persists

by John Lomperis

United Methodism's 2016 disaffiliation, after more than 40 years, from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) was momentous.

Since then, the D.C.-based RCRC has continued to tout unrestricted abortion-on-demand with ostensibly religious arguments.

RCRC's 2018 Annual Report, released this Spring, along with its IRS Form 990 for 2018, validates United Methodism's disaffiliation. The 2018 report boasts: "For several years now, RCRC has performed blessing ceremonies at healthcare centers that provide abortion services." This Spring, RCRC organized "the first national virtual blessing of abortion providers and staff."

RCRC has long been extremely political. The 2018 report highlights political rallies, RCRC's supposedly "nonpartisan" efforts to influence the midterm elections, and how it "fought back" against pro-life public policies. Of RCRC's ten press releases that year, fully half were about opposing **Brett Kavanaugh's** Supreme Court nomination, while two were about the midterm elections and another opposed a lower-court nominee.

RCRC's 990 report shows that its donations and grants increased dramatically, from \$774,566 in 2017 to nearly *nine times* as much, \$6,869,436 in 2018. RCRC's 2017 Annual Report noted a much more modest increase of seven percent.

This dramatic change in funding makes more sense if understanding RCRC *not* as a "religious" but a *political* organization, which focuses on and responds to election cycles and court nominations.

Some of RCRC's strongest backers seem to see it that way. The Packard Foundation, thanked in RCRC's 2018 report, categorically declares that it "does not fund" any "[r]eligious organizations" while boasting it gave RCRC six-figure grants.

RCRC uses religion to advance a secular social agenda of defending and entrenching abortion, without restriction

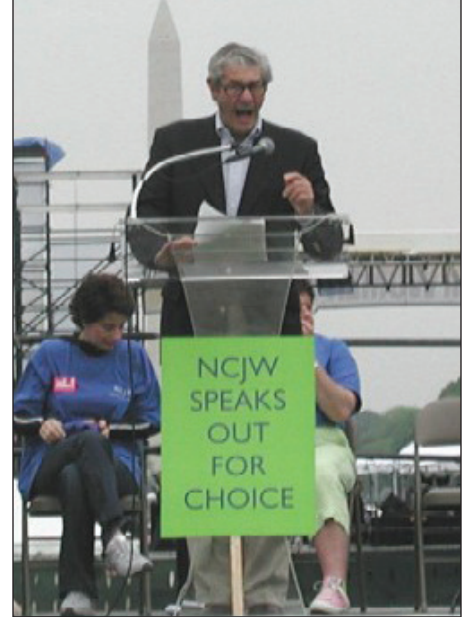
or disapproval, in both politics and culture.

The 2018 report exaggerated RCRC's support from United Methodism. Without a separate list for *current* member organizations, the report lists "Founding Members," including United Methodist Women (UMW), apparently to avoid admitting that two years earlier the denomination ended UMW's ongoing RCRC membership. The report has a "WITH GRATITUDE" section thanking grant-making foundations, individual "major donors," congregations, and a separate section for United Methodist annual conferences. This suggests that everyone listed gave RCRC money in 2018.

The United Methodist annual conferences listed were: California-Nevada, New England, New York, Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest, and Rocky Mountain. These conferences passed pro-RCRC resolutions right after the 2016 General Conference.

In seeking confirmation from conference leaders, the responses were consistent:

- Bishop **Sudarshana Devadhar** said, "I am not aware of any New England Conference monetary support of RCRC," after consulting conference officials.
- Bishop **Thomas Bickerton** said "we have done extensive research and can confirm that no conference funds in the New York Annual conference have been disbursed for support of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice."
- Bishop **Elaine Stanovsky** passed on a report from Oregon-Idaho and Pacific Northwest conference treasurers that "no contributions were made to RCRC from the Annual Conferences or bodies for whom we provide financial services in 2016 or since."
- California-Nevada Bishop **Minerva Carcaño**: "After much effort I am now able to report to you that the California-Nevada Conference made no contribution to the RCRC in 2018. In fact we find no financial contribution to this organization in any year in the financial records of the



Reform Rabbi Balfour Brickner condemns pro-life activists as "twisted ideologues" at a 2004 rally organized by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (Photo: John Lomperis / IRD).

Conference. We did inquire as to why we were thanked in their brochure that you sent us and found that the present RCRC leadership did not know. We have requested that our name be removed from their promotional brochures and other resources at this time."

Charmaine Robledo, Director of Communications for the Mountain Sky Conference said that Rocky Mountain gave RCRC a nominal \$500 in December 2016, but "no other funds have been sent to RCRC since." When asked how the conference funded RCRC, since its 2016 pro-RCRC resolution explicitly said there were no financial implications, the response was that the "leadership who made those decisions have since retired."

After inquiries to these annual conferences, RCRC *changed* the online version of its 2018 Annual Report to remove reference to them.

RCRC has praised *all* abortions as "holy" and published a self-described "Wiccan High Priestess" teaching that "[a]ll consensual sex is good, even when it is simply a pleasure shared between friends." But at least its extremist activities no longer officially reflect on United Methodism. ✚



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

Conspiracy Theories, COVID-19, and Christian Faith

by Karen Booth

Though I have a fundamentally skeptical nature, it almost failed me thirty-five years ago when I came close to converting to Mormonism. I was vulnerable and wanted to believe the non-Christian principles the LDS missionaries taught me. Instead, I learned that nicely packaged falsehoods can be seductive and that comfortable “echo chambers” can prevent the discovery of truth.

So, I usually don't pay much attention to conspiracy theories. But I just couldn't ignore some that were making the rounds on social media during quarantine this past spring. One was a splashy video production called *Plandemic*, which was viewed over eight million times. The other, with a half million views, was a video sermon entitled “Is This Coronavirus the End of the World?” Both generated fear of vaccines and undermined the credibility of national health experts. Ultimately, in the sermon, Christian believers were advised to reject “mark of the beast” vaccines, including one for COVID-19.

Lately, as social and political unrest has increased, I've seen more references to a three-year-old conspiracy theory called QAnon. It is masterminded by an anonymous, high-level government “insider” who claims to unmask an international cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles and institutional elites who control the world. President Trump was elected to expose and destroy their evil, and they, in return, are working within the “deep State” to defeat him. Sixty-two QAnon “believers” ran as candidates in congressional primaries this spring. Twelve of them will be on the ballot in November.

Many observers note that QAnon—as well as other compelling conspiracy theories—are comparable to religious

belief systems for many people. Which raises some significant questions for Christians. What is the appeal? Is believing in conspiracy theories compatible with biblical faith? How should believers respond to their prevalence in our culture?

“[W]hen we share health claims that we have failed to fact-check, they have the potential to harm or even kill.... On a spiritual level, we're bearing false witness, which is a sin.”

A few things need to be clarified first. Conspiracy theories can actually be “true” or “false.” People *do* plot together to take harmful or illicit action. Tobacco companies hid research linking cigarettes to cancer; celebrities colluded to get their kids in college or sexually assault underlings; China may bear some responsibility in the global pandemic. But false conspiracy theories are primarily based on lies, verifiable misinformation that has little to no basis in reality.

Which leads back to the first question: what, then, is the appeal?

Cultural observers offer their explanations. Our brains are genetically wired that way; making sense of patterns in our world helps us to survive and thrive. Connecting the dots also gives us a comforting sense of power or control over our environment, though too many dots—information overload—can

leave us feeling confused and fearful instead. (Conspiracy theories feed on that confusion and fear, playing on emotions rather than appealing to reason.) Wanting to belong, especially to an “insider” group, a basic mistrust of authority, and the desire to place blame can also make us susceptible to conspiracy theories.

How does any of this square with biblical Christian faith? In my opinion, not much at all.

Here is a fact: we live in uncertain times. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is called “novel” for a reason. It was unknown to science before December and health experts are learning something new about it almost every day. Likewise, our current political and social unrest will not be easily or quickly resolved.

As a *Forbes* article by **Tara Haelle** (“Why It's Important to Push Back on ‘Plandemic’—and How to Do It,” May 8, 2020) puts it, people tend to “seek alternative realities as some sort of ... ‘soothing balm’” when that reality becomes too overwhelming. Back in the day, “alternative realities” meant that the Kings of Judah preferred to listen to the “soothing balm” of lying court prophets instead of the word of the Living God. Today, it is believers who rely on false conspiracy theories. Either way, it is a form of idolatry that repudiates the sovereignty

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Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is the author of *Forgetting How to Blush: United Methodism's Compromise with the Sexual Revolution*.

A Huge Step for Advancing International Religious Freedom

by Faith J. H. McDonnell

IRD's International Religious Liberty Program is commending President Donald Trump's latest defense of persecuted Christians and other religious believers globally in an executive order "Advancing International Religious Freedom" issued Tuesday, June 2.

IRD has exposed global persecution of Christians and mobilized American advocates since our 1981 founding when the largest threat to Christians was Marxist-Leninist Soviet ideology and its appeasers in mainline churches. There's greater or lesser support on this, depending on the Administration. But this Executive Order prioritizes defending people persecuted for their beliefs in a way that was lifted as ideal, but never given teeth. It makes international religious freedom a foundational principle of our foreign policy and assistance.

Within 180 days of the signing, the Secretary of State is tasked with developing "a plan to prioritize international religious freedom in the planning and implementation of United States foreign policy and in the foreign assistance programs of the Department of State and USAID."

The U.S. government will provide at least \$50 million per fiscal year for programs that advance international religious freedom.

Other economic tools in the order include increasing funding for religious freedom programs, realigning foreign assistance "to better reflect country circumstances," and using economic sanctions against those who tolerate and perpetrate religious violence. All economic tools will help bring perpetrators

to justice and hold nations accountable for the way they treat religious minorities. In 27 years at IRD, I've never seen an initiative this broad.

I was part of the Washington based coalition to pass the 1998 *International Religious Freedom Act* (IRFA). It was groundbreaking, but some important teeth were knocked out to make it more palatable.

of God to every person and a right that is fundamental for the flourishing of our society."

During last year's meeting of the United Nation's General Assembly (not the friendliest place for persecuted Christians), the President hosted an unprecedented Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom. The Administration also partnered with global organizations to provide assistance to persecuted religious minorities and hosted two Ministerials bringing together thousands of international government and religious leaders committed to defending religious freedom. And the President signed an Executive Order establishing the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative to support America's faith-based organizations.

Now another step in protecting and advancing religious freedom internationally has been taken. In my work at IRD, as well as co-leader of the Anglican Persecuted Church Network

and Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) Suffering Church Network, I look forward to discovering how provisions of the Executive Order Advancing International Religious Freedom will lighten the burden and save more lives as we work with the Administration and partner organizations on behalf of the persecuted. ✝



President and Mrs. Trump visit the John Paul II Shrine prior to the President signing the Executive Order. (Photo: Office of First Lady Melania Trump/Facebook)

Recently the re-authorized *Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act* returned some teeth—and now the Executive Order will return more.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), created as a result of IRFA, welcomed the Executive Order. One commissioner said, "This order codifies the things we believe into law so that they will be long lasting." The commissioner said this means the Administration is now "looking at U.S. foreign policy through a religious freedom lens." And Trump declared "our Founders understood religious freedom not as a creation of the state, but as a gift



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Conspiracy Theories, COVID-19, and Christian Faith

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of God. As Matt Chandler wrote in a piece for *Christianity Today*: “While we are finite and frail, God is infinite and all-powerful. While to us it may seem like the world is spinning out of control, God doesn’t panic. There’s no triage in heaven” (“What God’s Name Can Teach Us About Faith During COVID-19,” May 12, 2020).

If only on a practical level, when we share health claims that we have failed to fact-check, they have the potential to harm or even kill people. Plus, doing so demoralizes the millions of health care providers who are on the front lines. On a spiritual level, we’re bearing false witness, which is a sin. Continuing to do so risks “hardening our hearts” to the point that we can no longer discern truth from lies.

Satisfying our need to belong by “joining” QAnon can easily devolve into an “us vs. them” approach to life, which is antithetical to a Church that strives for unity. It can also feed into the prideful seduction of “insider knowledge.” This was a key draw for the cults of Gnosticism, and still is, I would argue, for Mormonism as well. And if we perpetuate a worldview that cynically mistrusts almost all authority, how can we hope to convince a watching world to trust and submit to the authority of Jesus and His Word?

Finally, it undercuts our Christian witness. How can we wonder out loud whether children are being sex-trafficked in the basement of a pizza parlor in Washington DC and then expect anyone to take us seriously when we talk about the resurrection? I agree with Christian brother, **Ed Stetzer** (“On Christians Spreading Corona Conspiracies: Gullibility Is Not a Spiritual Gift,” *Christianity Today*, April 15, 2020): believers need to repent from spreading false conspiracy theories and then confront and correct those who continue to do so.

Bottom line: Sharing fake news makes Christians look foolish, dishonors our Lord, and harms our witness. ✝

IRD DIARY: My Southern Baptist Pastor’s Wife Is an Infectious Disease Specialist

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will be subservient here.’ ‘The men are in charge—specifically, the white men.’ It’s such a constant state of gaslighting that you don’t even know that you have permission to challenge the system that is still keeping you disenfranchised.”

Kitty Horton is not interested in discussions of the patriarchy or disenfranchisement. She has too much work and ministry to do. These conversations seemingly only take place among the progressive left. Meanwhile, I can imagine Pastor Wendell’s laughter if I were to use the term “subservient” to describe his wife.

Kitty is a gifted teacher, worship leader, and a medical expert. Even so, she

is not interested in the spotlight, writing books, or speaking tours. This pastor’s wife is secure in her church leadership, having served alongside her husband for the past 25 years.

Her congregation and community cherish her not because of her titles or positions, but because of her love for her neighbors. Because despite working 14-hours shifts non-stop, she calls and text messages congregants to check in on their mental and physical health. She mobilizes mission outreach to glorify God. Her mission is, above all, to point lost souls toward their Savior. ✝

This article was originally published in the Christian Post.

America Is Not an Apartheid State

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generations before him who labored and sacrificed so America would be much better. He apparently thinks he and his kindred spirits have themselves discovered righteousness for the first time.

Here’s what’s key to national repentance. Its advocates have to admit they themselves are also part of the problem. They can’t just wag their fingers at others. True prophets admit they have unclean hands and lips. They pronounce themselves unworthy. They shudder when pondering their own frailty compared to their holy mission. Self-righteous crusades that blame others don’t achieve national repentance or reforms.

The young protesting man likely doesn’t know his history. But Apartheid fell amid a global revolution against dictatorship. Most spectacularly, the Soviet Union fell, with its proxies in East Europe. The Sandinistas were ousted in Nicaragua. **Mengistu’s** murderous regime in Ethiopia fell, as Marxist regimes in Angola and Mozambique abandoned their destructive doctrines. Right-wing authoritarian regimes surrendered to democratic elections in South Korea, Taiwan, the

Philippines, Indonesia, Chile, Argentina, and throughout Latin America. Thousands were released from prisons. Millions began to vote and claim political rights they never had before.

America played a central role in that global democratic revolution of 30 years ago as an example and advocate. But millions of people in their own countries sacrificed and labored to reform their nations. **Nelson Mandela** emerged from decades in prison to lead South Africa. Other formerly jailed dissidents likewise rose to leadership while former dictators slunk away.

There’s no dictatorship in America, nor is there Apartheid, thanks to countless generations across centuries who labored to construct, sustain, and improve our democracy. Protesters who with humility and earnestness wish to improve and expand our democracy will, we pray, receive heavenly blessing for success.

But ignorance, ingratitude, and self-righteousness will not be blessed. True social reformers seek mercy and depend on grace, recognizing they always build on the accomplishments of others. ✝

IRD Diary:

My Southern Baptist Pastor's Wife Is an Infectious Disease Specialist Shaping Ministry

by Chelsen Vicari

As a Southern Baptist pastor's wife and Director of Worship, **Kitty Horton** has long worked weekends. Her Saturdays and Sundays usually filled with choir practice, volunteer breakfast meetings, widow's banquets, and baby showers. Not lately. As the Manager of Infectious Diseases at a local hospital, Kitty spent her spring weekends working 12 to 14-hour shifts amid the COVID-19 pandemic. She did not take a day off of work from March 5 through late April.

The pastor's wife and infectious disease specialist has managed to merge her medical and spiritual roles into a unique mission-focused service to Sky View Missionary Baptist Church in rural Fancy Gap, Virginia, and to our rural Appalachian community.

Weeks before the U.S. Center for Disease Control recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public, Kitty told her husband, Pastor **Wendell Horton**, that there was going to be a shortage and high demand for face masks and shields, not only at the hospital but for the general public.

"There was a need for certain supplies like masks at the hospital, but we couldn't order them," Kitty told me over the phone late one Sunday evening. "We couldn't get them and everyone was going to need them."

Kitty tried to replicate a face shield purchased by the hospital using cut plastic, elastic, and contact paper. She was successful. When she showed her husband the face shield, they together

determined this was a crucial mission opportunity for the church.

"She said we need these shields and we are going to run out of face masks," said Wendell Horton during an interview with SBC of Virginia. "I just went to the



Nurses in Blacksburg, Virginia wear face masks and shields donated by Sky View Missionary Baptist Church (Photo: Sky View Baptist Church).

hardware store and got the supplies that we need to make those and we've made hundreds of them since."

Sky View congregants and church staff have crafted hundreds of face masks and shields. These vital personal protective equipment (PPE) are being donated to hospitals, nursing homes, and caregivers throughout Southwest Virginia.

From the pulpit, Kitty co-leads weekly Wednesday Facebook Live seminars alongside Dr. **Robert Pryor**, a local internal medicine practitioner (and my Sunday school teacher). These seminars offer updates and medical insights on the coronavirus spread and trends within our region. Nearly 1,000 viewers have tuned in each week.

Too often rural churches' abilities are underestimated simply based

on congregation size. Our church is extraordinary, in my opinion, but also an example of the effectiveness of a rural church.

Sky View is not a wealthy church. It ministers in one of the poorest counties in Virginia. Nor is it a megachurch, with an average weekly attendance of 300. But our church is mission-focused and executes those ministries well thanks in large part to the leadership of Kitty and Wendell Horton.

Kitty is also breaking down ugly caricatures of Southern Baptist women and, more broadly, traditional evangelical women.

Progressive Christian author **Jen Hatmaker** painted an exaggerated picture of conservative evangelical women during a recent interview with *Religion News Service* while promoting her new book.

"Now I can look in and just see all of these women who are so gifted, so intelligent, so wise and good and powerful, such incredibly talented teachers and preachers still following the rules of the patriarchy, still conceding their own gifts to the world," Hatmaker said.

She continued: "It's not even subtle inside that world. It's overt. It is: 'You do not have authority to lead.' 'You

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



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