

### UMC Lobby Office Continues Divisive Liberal Direction

The United Methodist Church's official D.C. lobby office, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), has long promoted far-left political agendas, demonized more moderate and conservative United Methodists, and enjoyed little to no accountability when it breaks its own rules. With the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe now leading the agency and its \$7.3 million annual budget, there is little sign of substantial moderation so far. Among the many resolutions directors endorsed at their September meeting was a denunciation of "heterosexism" (disapproval of homosexuality). Bishop Christian Alsted of northern Europe unsuccessfully lobbied fellow directors to first seek dialogue with United Methodists in regions where homosexuality is culturally taboo. Those observed voting against the anti-"heterosexism" resolution were all from the American South or overseas. Other motions adopted with little dissent would delete current official UMC statements against unnecessary destruction of human embryos, delete current UMC teaching against "the new eugenics" (aborting children with undesired genetic traits), call for government-run "single-payer" healthcare, and amend an official UMC resolution strongly supporting workers' rights by deleting

current language asking labor unions to "be truthful about employers." "bargain in good faith," operate by "democratic process," and have "financial integrity." Such resolutions do not become official unless adopted at the next General Conference.

At their spring meeting, GBCS directors approved a statement praising their president, Bishop Robert Hoshibata of the Desert-Southwest Conference, for his "prophetic" lobbying against a widely misrepresented Arizona bill designed to protect individuals with wedding-related businesses from facing fines, loss of livelihood, and even threats of jail for refusing to



Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe addresses the September GBCS directors meeting while Bishop Robert Hoshibata, seated behind the red table, looks on. (Photo: John Lomperis/IRD)

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### GOOD NEWS: Asbury Seminary Launches Church-Planting Initiative

While independent of any denominational control, Asbury Theological Seminary is a solidly evangelical Wesleyan Methodist school in its theology. More American United Methodists ordained last year graduated from Asbury's Kentucky or Florida campuses than any other seminary (equal to more than seven of the UMC's official seminaries combined).



Asbury Theological Seminary's main campus in Wilmore, Kentucky (Photo: IRD)

A \$5 million gift last year helped launch Asbury's new domestic and international Church Planting Initiative. It offers three new degree programs: a Master of Arts in Church Planting, a Master of Divinity with a Church Planting Specialization, and most recently, a hybrid Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies with an Emphasis in Church Planting. The third of these is designed to equip church planters as they continue serving in mission around the country or across the world, with significant scholarship support.

Officials from multiple United Methodist annual conferences have begun partnerships with Asbury and are now sending students there to be trained as church planters. Plans envision 40 percent of Asbury's large student body receiving church-planting training each year by 2023. Lord willing, over time this new pipeline of evangelical church planters will seed our denomination with more and more biblically grounded United Methodist congregations and make many new disciples of Jesus Christ!

FOR REFLECTION: Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 14:23.

ACTION: Pray for God to empower Asbury's Church-Planting Initiative to bear much fruit within and beyond the UMC.

## UMAction Briefing

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## UMAction Briefing

### Liberal UMC Officials Whitewash North Korea's Brutal Oppression

July 25 ecumenical roundtable discussion devoted to "peace" in the Korean Peninsula avoided any direct criticism of North Korea's tyrannical government, instead focusing blame on the United States, and to a lesser extent, Japan. The D.C. panel and subsequent rally were organized by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) from South Korea and co-sponsored by the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Women, and Korean American Assembly, along with other oddline liberal Protestant denominational bodies.

The NCKK's Rev. Jung Sun-Noh blamed Korea's division on a "hidden agenda of capitalist control and profit-maximizing sinful greed" and proposed that Koreans sue America for 10 trillion dollars in "compensation and reparations." Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, the Ecumenical Officer of our denomination's Council of Bishops, decried

### [He] did not acknowledge how North Korean Christians are targeted for torture, execution, and enslavement.

"demonizing and propaganda" against North Korea's brutal Big Brother-style government. When Sun-Noh protested the exclusion of the Korean Christian Federation from the World Council of Churches (WCC), Swenson, a WCC vice-moderator, pledged: "we're going to change that." The Federation is one of several religious federations the North Korean government runs to facilitate channels for dialogue and foreign aid as well as to present gullible foreigners with a misleading impression about religious freedom existing in the totalitarian state. These government federations are widely understood to be "shell church" fronts for the regime. The Korean Christian Federation's church building in the capital city of Pyongyang was observed closed and locked on an Easter Sunday morning when there were no foreign Christian visitors to impress.

Bishop Swenson claimed that some forget that "there are Christians in North Korea." But she did not acknowledge how North Korean Christians are targeted for torture, public execution, and mass enslavement in concentration camps.

FOR REFLECTION: Acts 9:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:26

ACTION: Visit the websites of Open Doors USA ([www.worldwatchlist.us](http://www.worldwatchlist.us)), which ranks North Korea as the world's worst persecutor of Christians, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom ([www.uscifr.gov](http://www.uscifr.gov)). Then tell Bishop Swenson your concerns about her using her office to whitewash the North Korean government and legitimize its Korean Christian Federation. 101 Melrose Avenue / Pasadena, CA 91105 / [bishopmas@gmail.com](mailto:bishopmas@gmail.com). Also write to her ecumenical staff officer, Rev. Dr. Stephen Sidorak: 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1200 / New York, NY 10115 / [ssidorak@oculr.org](mailto:ssidorak@oculr.org)



### Winter 2014

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North Korea's Kim Jong-Un inspects weapons at a field visit during his first year as the communist nation's top leader. (Photo: Korean Central News Agency)

## Where Are Our United Methodist Bishops?

Since 2012, our denomination has been under a spiritual siege by renegade United Methodist clergy seeking to overwhelm our accountability structures by betraying their own ordination vows to uphold the UMC's biblical policies in our governing *Book of Discipline*. The *Discipline* forbids "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions" and the ordination of anyone sexually active outside of man-woman marriage.



Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr., the new president of the Council of Bishops, accepts the gavel from Bishop Rosemarie Wenner. (Photo: Andrew Jensen/United Methodist Communications)

The fewer than 800 clergy (over 40 percent of whom are retired) who have signed a nationwide pledge to officiate same-sex unions constitute less than two percent of all United Methodist clergy. And only a rather tiny minority of these appear to have actually put their words into action.

But the disobedience movement is causing widespread disruption, confusion, and spiritual harm. A single church trial also costs tens of thousands of dollars. The costly, drawn-out, high-profile case of Frank Schaefer ended with the liberal-majority UMC Judicial Council overturning his earlier removal from ministry, based on intricacies of church law. (The Council did not change or rule directly on our marriage policies – its highly technical ruling focused on the process for punishing ministers, and will likely encourage future trials to impose more clear-cut penalties.)

Some bishops have been part of the problem. The disobedience movement faced setbacks in the recent health-related deaths of two of its most prominent champions, Rev. Dr. William McElvany, a Professor Emeritus at the UMC's Perkins School of Theology who performed a publicity-stunt same-sex union in March, and Bishop Martin McLee of New York, who last spring made clear that he would simply allow his clergy to perform same-sex unions or personally be openly homosexually active.

Other bishops have taken similar actions. Most recently, Bishop Deborah Kieseey of Michigan announced "just resolutions" with two of her clergy who conducted same-sex unions this summer. The resolutions involve no penalty or deterrent, but instead reward the offenders by empowering them to organize events with "the stated goal of reducing our church's harmful rhetoric and actions toward LGBTQ persons." Apparently, the trick of having liberal district superintendents submit the "complaints" helped Bishop Kieseey achieve a mockery of church discipline.

This came immediately after, and thus undermined the credibility of, a terse statement that the Council of Bishops released at their November meeting, in which, after several closed sessions, active bishops from around the world unanimously re-committed to the consecration vows they made when they became bishops "to guard the faith" and uphold the *Discipline*. Meanwhile, retired Bishop Melvin Talbert continues to public encourage the disobedience movement while the snail's-pace accountability process for his performance of a same-sex union over a year ago remains shrouded in confidentiality.

In response to a major statement calling for our bishops to lead (of which Mark Tooley and John Lomperis were among the original signers), Bishop Pedro Torio of the northern Philippines publicly declared his commitment to "the Biblical faith and discipline of the UMC." He pledged to uphold the *Discipline's* standards on marriage, prayed that the eight conferences he oversees "will be with me on this," and committed to respecting individuals who may disagree. In response to recent legal redefinitions of marriage, Oklahoma Bishop Robert Hayes, Jr. boldly declared, "Our law is made by God's Word and what we believe God wants us to do," and denied that "the laws of society supersede the laws of God." But these are rare exceptions.

One of the strongest ecclesial statements came from Bishop Peggy Johnson of Philadelphia. Despite her liberal personal views on the issue, she warned clergy in her area against taking the "unacceptable" action of conducting same-sex unions in the future, or else they will face swiftly processed complaints and then "significant consequences." This pledge was secured by local evangelical United Methodists through a negotiated settlement, in exchange for their agreeing to drop charges against a group of clergy who performed a publicity-stunt same-sex union last year.

For our part, UMAction will not wait on our bishops to offer the leadership our church so desperately needs. With or without them, we are committed to:

- ▶ Promoting a positive vision of what our church, with God's help, can be
- ▶ Relentlessly insisting on accountability, helping ensure complaints are filed against covenant breakers

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- ▶ Reforming our accountability structures to impose strong deterrent penalties for rogue clergy, including bishops
- ▶ Ending the ideological skewing of denominational leadership that results from over-representing declining, liberal-dominated regions
- ▶ Inviting fellow United Methodists to expand our renewal work and join us in praying for revival

**FOR REFLECTION: Proverbs 12:22; Galatians 6:1-9; Colossians 3:5-9.**

**ACTION: Respectfully but firmly ask your bishop what s/he will do to offer biblically faithful leadership in response to these covenant-breaking challenges. Your bishop's contact information can be found by asking your church staff or going to [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org), clicking "Directory" at the top of the screen, and then selecting "Bishops/Episcopal Area."**

## UMC Agencies Rally Against Israel, Promote 'Boycotting All Things Israeli'

The world's lone Jewish state was singled out for demonization at a recent United Methodist rally for the Palestinian cause. The August 7-8 conference was hosted at Mike Slaughter's Ginghamburg UMC near Dayton, Ohio, and sponsored by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Other UMC agencies officially participating included the General Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women.

Official speakers and presenters focused on context-lacking stories of Palestinian suffering, portrayed the Israeli Defense

In their zeal to simplistically portray Jews as "the oppressors," some speakers seemed remarkably unconcerned about avoiding anti-Semitism. Zoughbi accused Israel of idolizing security like their ancestors worshiped the golden calf. Awad claimed the U.S. Congress "is an occupied Israeli territory" and suggested that the Jews' allegedly oppressive behavior was driven by their financial greed.

The conference pushed financial "divestment" from three targeted companies (Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola) for their business with Israel, despite this being rejected by a 2-1 margin at the last UMC General Conference. But multiple speakers also urged more radical "Boycotts, Sanctions, and Divestment" (BDS), which workshop leader Susan Hoeder defined as "boycotting all things Israeli" and described as a fruit of the same tree as more narrowly targeted divestment.

To their credit, officials of the UMC's General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBPHB) who were present resisted the often rudely



A panel discussion at the anti-Israel conference: From L-R, Rev. Bruce Robbins (one of the event organizers), GBPHB General Secretary Barbara Boilegrain, Rev. Susan Henry Crowe of the GBCCS, and GBGM chief Thomas Kemper (Photo: IRD)

presented divestment demands of attendees. But they remain under intense pressure from anti-Israel activists.

**ACTION: Balance the intense anti-Israel lobbying that has been occurring by letting GBPHB officials Barbara Boilegrain and David Zellner know that you and other mainstream United Methodists do NOT want official UMC agencies targeting Israel for divestment: / General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits / 1901 Chestnut Avenue / Glenview, IL 60025 / [bboilegrain@gbphb.org](mailto:bboilegrain@gbphb.org) and [Dave\\_Zellner@gbphb.org](mailto:Dave_Zellner@gbphb.org)**

## GOOD NEWS: UMC Missions Agency Moving to Atlanta and Overseas

The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) recently decided to move out of its longtime Manhattan headquarters to new offices in Asia, Latin America, French-speaking Africa, and, by late 2016, Atlanta.

Years ago, evangelical United Methodists fought hard to relocate GBGM from the infamous "God Box" building also housing other oldline liberal Protestant groups. In the heart of the notoriously radicalized New York Conference, staffers have had very limited nearby options for a biblically faithful United Methodist congregation to attend. United Methodism in GBGM's new North Georgia home is a much healthier spiritual environment.

Influenced by Liberation Theology in the 1970s and 1980s, GBGM shifted resources from missions evangelism to radical politics. Reforming GBGM has involved decades of hard work by conservative United Methodists, and initially sparked the renewal work of IRD President and UMAction founder Mark Tooley.

Now GBGM embraces United Methodism's increasingly global nature, plants new churches around the world, and



The "God Box," officially called the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside Drive in Manhattan, has long been a prominent center of liberal Protestantism. (Photo: Americasroof/Wikimedia Commons)

acknowledges the good work of evangelical churches. GBGM has even built bridges with the Mission Society, which was founded in 1984 by evangelical United Methodists as an alternative to GBGM. Aging radical executives have retired, often replaced by pragmatists. While some problems remain with left-wing politics (notably the agency's continued antagonism towards Israel), we have observed political themes to be dramatically toned down or absent from much of GBGM's recent work and gatherings. In 2012, GBGM organizationally parted ways with a chief radical influence, the now autonomous headquarters of United Methodist Women.

Such positive changes at GBGM would have seemed unbelievable 20 years ago. Thanks be to God!

**ACTION: Thank GBGM General Secretary Thomas Kemper and encourage him to continue shifting the agency away from left-wing politics to focus more on evangelism: GBGM / 475 Riverside Drive / New York, NY 10115 / [tkemper@umcmisson.org](mailto:tkemper@umcmisson.org)**

Please recruit other believers to sign our [www.methodistsaffirmingmarriage.com](http://www.methodistsaffirmingmarriage.com) online petition!

Yes, I (we) want to help UMAction inform United Methodists and their families about the urgent need for church reform and faithfulness

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## Your Opinion, Please!

What should be done about the UMC's present crisis of disunity?

- Those in the faithful majority should leave the UMC together.
- The minority who will not respect our biblical standards should leave.
- Things should continue as they are now.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_