

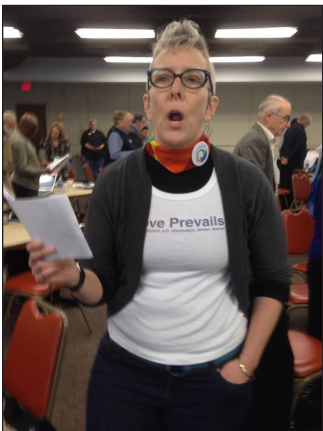


Liberal Caucus Quits UMC

In June the “Love Prevails” caucus group urged LGBTQ activists and their allies to quit the United Methodist Church. They admit having “failed to effect positive change” and said “we cannot counsel anyone of good conscience to remain in this denomination.”

They further “repent that our presence and persistence sent a damaging message to Queer folx and our allies that hate and spiritual harm should be endured.”

This self-described “radical sexual liberationist” group enjoyed public support from prominent denominational officials and other liberal caucus leaders. Its outrageous tactics of disrupting denominational meetings were sometimes actually rewarded, with the agendas of Connectional Table meetings and the 2012 General Conference revised to pander to Love Prevails protesters.



Dr. Julie Todd disrupting a 2013 meeting of the UMC connectional table. Todd has since departed from the ranks of United Methodist clergy. (Photo: United Methodist News Service)

The main Love Prevails leader was the openly same-sex-partnered Rev. **Amy DeLong** of Wisconsin, who was infamously acquitted in a 2011 church trial. But DeLong permanently retired this summer (despite only being in her mid-50s), telling a newspaper that “she doubts she’ll ever be part of an organized, institutional church again.”

Another prominent Love Prevails activist was **Julie Todd**, an adjunct professor at the UMC’s Iliff School of Theology. She surrendered her ordination credentials in the New England Conference shortly after the 2019 General Conference.

While small, the Love Prevails departure may resonate. The open letter decries the “moral bankruptcy” of “segregationist” proposals to allow some parts of the denomination to bless and others to ban same-sex unions. If other liberal leaders really believe their own rhetoric about “heterosexism” being as evil as racism,

why should traditionalists staying in the liberalized post-separation UMC expect toleration?

The longer our denomination’s inevitable split is delayed, the more pain and losses there will be on all sides. ✚

Fall 2021

Inside:

Amending UMC Protocol?	2
‘Non-Binary’ Church Members?	2
Bending Knees to ‘the Queer God’?	4
Bullying Liberal Bishop Tries to Seize Megachurch ‘Out of Love’.	4
‘United’ Methodism’s Seven Churches	5



Bishops Judith Craig (left) and Rosemarie Wenner (center) negotiate with the Rev. Amy DeLong (right), after dozens of demonstrators took over the floor of the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Fla. These bishops talked with DeLong in an attempt to resolve the situation without resorting to arrests. (Photo: UMNS)

Amending UMC Protocol?

Although widely supported, the “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation” proposal to split the United Methodist Church in two includes hard pills for everyone to swallow.

Normally it would be natural to expect amendments to any proposal at General Conference.

But these are NOT normal times. United Methodists across the theological spectrum feel hurt and stuck. The Protocol is a unique, painstakingly negotiated peace treaty for a decades-long civil war. Routine General Conference legislative processes, of hundreds of delegates rushing through divided votes on numerous proposals on a wide range of topics, are simply not equipped to match the months of careful, narrowly focused, professionally mediated negotiations that achieved consensus on the Protocol.

Even one amendment to seek greater advantage for one “side” could unravel the whole fragile peace process, destroying our best chance for an amicable, comprehensive separation that allows free choice for conferences and congregations while avoiding the brutal ugliness of property lawsuits costing tens of millions of dollars seen in other denominations.

Other than the date changes made necessary by General Conference’s being delayed until August 29–September 6, 2022, some of the Protocol’s biggest areas of potential amendment are:

1. The Name and Logo

As our denomination divides into the liberal post-separation United Methodist Church (psUMC) and the traditionalist Global Methodist Church (GMC), the Protocol legislation (which UMAction has endorsed, with some reluctance) is clear that only the former will keep the UMC’s official name and cross-and-flame logo.

Leading African delegates have urged amending the Protocol to allow the GMC, at least in Africa, to keep using the well-recognized and respected “United Methodist” name and logo, with which they have built their ministries and reputations, as long as this usage comes with distinguishing modifications. These delegates deserve to be heard, since Africans are now half of all United Methodists, but were indefensibly under-represented in the Protocol Mediation Team.

This is *not* a new or exclusively conservative idea. Even the aggressive UMC Next caucus, led by top progressive UMC bureaucrats, pastors, and caucus

officials, included the same basic idea in the plan they pushed in late 2019 for the next General Conference to dramatically liberalize our denomination and drive out conservatives. (Like other caucuses, UMC Next has since abandoned their plan in favor of the Protocol.) Any agreement on this issue would likely

Continued on page 3



‘Non-Binary’ Church Members?

United Methodism is preparing to divide between the Global Methodist Church, which alone will continue our historic doctrinal and moral standards, and the liberalized post-separation United Methodist Church (psUMC). Despite the fact that the psUMC will inherit the “United Methodist” name and our denomination’s top-heavy general agencies, it will be very different from the UMC as we have known it. Some are not waiting to make this a reality.

In June, the UMC’s General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) voted overwhelmingly to change our denomination’s annual U.S. statistical reporting to count laity and clergy in each church and annual conference who are “non-binary”—allegedly neither male nor female, in addition to our longstanding counting of men and women.

Some annual conferences have already been counting three genders in their membership statistics.

Efforts to put clear teachings on such matters, in one direction or another, into the UMC’s governing *Discipline* have failed

Continued on page 3

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP ETHNICITY (3a+3b+3c+3d+3e+3f+3g+3h+3i+3j+3k+3l+3m+3n+3o+3p+3q+3r+3s+3t+3u+3v+3w+3x+3y+3z=4)			
On the following lines, report for each member the gender with which she or he identifies. The total of the numbers entered in these two spaces must equal the membership total in Line 4.			
GENDER	6a	Female	6a
	6b	Male	6b
	6	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP GENDER (6a + 6b = 6 = 4)	6
	7	Average Attendance at all weekly worship services	7

During a June 25 online meeting, the General Council on Finance and Administration board voted to update local-church statistical forms to include the option of non-binary under the category of gender. Excerpt of the current church statistical form shown above is highlighted for emphasis (Image: UM News).

require liberal American delegates negotiating with African delegates ahead of time.

2. Voting Percentages

The Protocol only allows an annual conference to continue into the GMC, and thus *keep* current UMC moral standards, if it takes a 57-percent super-majority vote to do so. Rather unfairly, this means that a 43.1 percent minority can take over entire conferences for the liberal psUMC.

But this was reportedly the most difficult part of the negotiations, with the 57-percent figure being a late compromise.

More importantly, the Protocol allows individual congregations to enter the GMC by a simple-majority vote.

Trying to amend the 57-percent bar, upwards or downwards, risks upending the whole structure of carefully balanced, interlocking compromises.

3. Money

The Protocol negotiations designated \$25 million for the GMC. This is *not* a matter of liberals “giving” a generous gift. Rather, this is opposed to historic UMC doctrine *taking over* many of our denomination-wide assets while those who support the denomination’s official doctrine only *keeping* a little.

Some liberals claim \$25 million is too much. But conservatives can justly protest how this is only a minority share of the roughly \$120 million denomination-wide, unrestricted, net assets at the time of the Protocol negotiations. (This \$120 million is in turn a tiny fraction of the tens of billions of dollars in properties and other assets held by congregations and annual conferences across America.)

Both sides have more to potentially lose than gain by trying to amend this portion of the Protocol.

4. Zambian Amendments

Shortly before the postponing of General Conference, the Zambia Annual Conference in central Africa called for several amendments to the UMC Protocol.

Two of their amendments should *not* be contentious because they do not fundamentally re-negotiate any controversial provision.

First, the original Protocol petition says that after General Conference, conferences and congregations can only begin joining the GMC after the Council of Bishops grants conditional recognition to this new denomination. One Zambian amendment would require the Council of Bishops to grant that recognition “within 14 days of receiving application.” This would prevent the liberal-dominated Council of Bishops from indefinitely delaying the GMC’s full launch.

Another Zambian amendment would add: “No bishop, district superintendent, or pastor shall prevent or unduly delay a central conference, annual conference, or local church from taking a vote of alignment” or “suspend, withhold an appointment, or otherwise penalize a pastor or layperson due to that person’s position or decision on alignment.”

This amendment *equally* protects pastors and congregations considering the GMC or the psUMC, especially if their choice differs from their annual conference’s. ✚

ACTION: Urge your annual conference's General Conference delegates to support the Zambian amendments but also to beware of the risks of any other major amendments, which could derail the whole Protocol deal. If you need their names, email umaction@theird.org with “WHO ARE MY DELEGATES?” in the Subject line.

at General Conference. This GCFA decision effectively moves ahead without General Conference to affirm transgender ideology that sex is self-determined rather than a God-given physical reality.

The only board member to speak against this change was evangelical megachurch pastor Steve Wood of North Georgia, who expressed concern that “we are creating more angst than we are creating benefits.” GCFA’s board members are mostly selected by bishops. The GCFA and other denomination-wide agencies will be inherited by the psUMC. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: *Genesis 1:27.*

ACTION: Thank Pastor Steve Wood for being the only GCFA board member speaking against this change: Mount Pisgah Church / 2850 Old Alabama Rd / Johns Creek, GA 30022 / pastorsteve@mountpisgah.org



The Rev. M. Barclay is among those United Methodist clergy who identify as non-binary. (Photo: UMNS)

Bending Knees to ‘the Queer God’?

Rev. Dr. **Miguel De La Torre**, a prominent liberationist theologian at United Methodism’s apportionment-funded Iliff School of Theology in Denver, recently explained his radical theology.

In a June 6 interview for **David Dault’s** *Things Not Seen* podcast, De La Torre claimed faith in such core doctrines as the Trinity and the lordship of Jesus Christ are “not the markers of accurate, authentic Christianity.” And “for white Christians to get saved,” De La Torre said they must “reject the

white god they’ve been following and instead bend their knees to the black god, to the Asian American god, to the queer god.”



Miguel A. De La Torre is professor of social ethics and Latinx studies at Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

This trainer of future United Methodist clergy affirmed that “it’s not my job, given the fact that I’ve been privileged, I’ve been educated, to go and tell someone who is suffering what the good news is.” De La Torre relativistically described true faith as “the faith of the oppressed, and that faith may very well be Christian and it may not be Christian, it really doesn’t matter to me.” ✚

Bullying Liberal Bishop Tries to Seize Megachurch, ‘Out of Love’

Liberal Bishop **Sue Hauptert-Johnson** of the North Georgia Conference (the largest U.S. membership conference) has been waging war against her largest congregation, the 10,000-member, evangelical Mt. Bethel UMC. It began when she abruptly removed its senior pastor, reportedly without real consultation. In protest, Pastor **Jody Ray** surrendered his ordination credentials, the congregation hired him directly as a lay pastor, and they are now seeking to leave the denomination.

Since Ray became senior pastor in 2016, Mt. Bethel’s pre-pandemic membership, worship attendance, and giving have grown. The conservative church will be part of the Global Methodist Church after the split.

But rushing forward to bully out an effective pastor and one of the largest conservative United Methodist congregations was apparently not enough for Hauptert-Johnson. In July, her team announced that they were seizing control of “all assets of the local church” (reportedly some \$34.6 million) and assuming “direction and control” of all “[e]mployment, instruction, activities, and worship at the church” and its K-12 private Christian school. Even the secular *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* newspaper called this a “stunning decision” and “an extremely rare move.” The bishop claimed she was, somehow, acting “out of love for the church and its mission.”

Mt. Bethel’s leadership promptly protested the bishop’s choices to avoid “resolv[ing] quietly and amicably a crisis of her own making.... While [Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson] claims she is acting out of ‘love for the church and its mission,’ enlisting attorneys and the courts to seize assets is a strange way for a bishop to show her love for one of the healthiest churches in her conference,” they noted, while pledging

to “do all in their power to resist the aggressive actions against their church.”

After widespread outcry, Mt. Bethel and the Hauptert-Johnson regime announced that they “have jointly agreed to use their



Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson of the United Methodist Church’s North Georgia Conference preaches at her 2016 installation service.(Photo: NGUMC)

best efforts to resolve an ongoing dispute through a mediation process and will refrain from public comment until the mediation process has concluded.”

But Hauptert-Johnson has already given plenty of reasons to temper expectations. She has shown little regard for

See ‘Bullying Bishop’ on page 6

'United' Methodism's Seven Churches

The United Methodist Church is already divided into seven “churches,” each with distinct characteristics and important cultural differences:

Church #1: American Traditionalists

American traditionalists are united by their high view of biblical authority and belief in salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The Renewal and Reform Coalition of renewal caucuses, including UMAction, has provided leadership. Members want to uphold the biblical sexual ethic of either celibate singleness or monogamous, heterosexual marriage, which they see as loving for *all* people.

Given how some rather far-left individuals have misleadingly claimed the “centrist” label and the differences with the Genuine American Methodist Middle, it is best to stop using the word “centrist.” Revealingly, in the Protocol Mediation Team, the two leaders selected to represent “the centrists” and the two initially selected to represent supposedly distinct “progressives” were all members of the Convening Team of Adam Hamilton’s UMC Next caucus.

This “church” and American Traditionalists have often defined themselves against each other. Members of this “church” have prioritized putting aside their differences to battle traditionalists. But their internal differences may erupt after separation.

Church #4: Liberationist Progressives

The self-described “liberationists” get disproportionate attention and sometimes talk of forming a third denomination. They prioritize full LGBTQ+ liberation over institutional loyalty, sometimes pointedly criticizing those in Church #3 for reversing these priorities. Leadership was provided by the UM-Forward caucus, until its recent split into the Liberation Project and the Liberation Methodist Connexion (LMX). If the next General Conference fails to liberalize sexuality standards or ratify the Protocol, then some frustrated institutionalist liberals may want to split off with liberationists.

Church #5: Africa

Africa now has 6 million United Methodists, roughly half of our denomination. This region has very different social contexts and leadership cultures than America. United Methodists here have recently seen impressive growth and become increasingly vocal in denominational affairs, especially through the newer

Africa Initiative caucus. But Africans remain extremely under-represented in denominational leadership, and often heavily financially dependent on Americans. This sub-church cherishes United Methodist branding, unlike many Americans.

Africans are overwhelmingly theologically traditionalist, with a high view of Scripture, strong commitment to evangelism, and near-unanimity in disapproving of homosexuality. But some bishops and others in Africa seek to bring Africa into the more liberal psUMC, if allowed to continue traditionalist policies in Africa.

Church #6: Philippines

The Philippines Central Conference has three active bishops and just over 200,000 members. Talk of “schism” is particularly loaded for Filipinos given their own history with multiple



Image: The Battle of the Five Armies from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, illustrated by Michael Hague (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Church #2: The Genuine American Methodist Middle

As maybe the least understood “church,” it has no organized caucus or clear leadership. It is very different, and much less liberal, than most professed “centrists.” They are uncomfortable with the packaged-deal stances of the caucuses on either side. For some this is a transitional phase before evolving into one of the other “churches.”

Church #3: Institutional Liberals

This “church” wants liberalized sexuality standards, at least somewhat liberalized theology to accommodate this shift, and institutional loyalty. Leaders include most U.S. bishops, older liberal caucuses, and newer caucuses and leaders claiming to be “centrists.”

Continued on page 6

'United' Methodism's Seven Churches

Continued from page 5

schisms. They have planted UMC congregations among overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East and elsewhere. A strong super-majority of this central conference is traditionalist, but it has a larger and more vocal liberal minority than Africa.

Church #7: The Central Conferences of Europe

Europe has only 50,000 members across 30 countries and is declining. The three Europe-based central conferences extend to small United Methodist presences in North Africa and central Asia. Interestingly, in some European countries, the UMC (along with other churches) is directly funded by the government.

The East generally has less theological liberalism but less wealth than the West. However, this "church" has been relatively less polarized in its theological divisions, and has not had the same experience as Americans with widespread defiance by liberal clergy of the denomination's official ban on gay weddings. ✚

A more detailed version of this article, authored by UMAction Director John Lomperis, can be found in the Spring 2021 (Vol. 76, No. 1) issue of The Asbury Journal, <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/>

Bullying Bishop *Continued from page 4*

1 Corinthians 6's prohibition of lawsuits against fellow church members. Her self-serving weaponization of the trust clause (through which congregations do not own their properties but hold them in trust for the denomination) against biblically faithful Methodists is extraordinarily hypocritical, given that the trust clause's historic purpose was to ensure consistent adherence to biblical, Wesleyan doctrine. From talking to multiple sources in the conference, it appears Hauptert-Johnson has been effectively intimidating North Georgia pastors to make their loyalty to Jesus Christ, Scripture, and our denomination's official moral standards all secondary to the loyalty Bishop Sue demands to *herself* and to her liberal, LGBTQ-liberationist vision for the church. ✚

ACTION: Urge Bishop Hauptert-Johnson to publicly repent and affirm the right of every congregation and pastor to disagree with her liberal vision. North Georgia Conference UMC / 1700 Century Circle NE / Atlanta, GA 30345 / bishop@ngumc.org. Be polite but firm!

Also urge your own bishop to issue a public statement (1) supporting the coming separation happening in a fair and amicable way, and (2) affirming the right of each pastor, congregation, campus ministry and conference to make its own choice between the two denominations, without being bullied.

UMAction Briefing

A newsletter for United Methodists working for Scripture-based renewal and reform in our denomination

The Institute on Religion & Democracy

1023 15th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005-2629

202.682.4131 • umaction@TheIRD.org

www.TheIRD.org

IRD PRESIDENT

Mark Tooley

UMACTION DIRECTOR

John Lomperis

STEERING COMMITTEE

Sara Anderson	Jane Bonner	William Bonner, Esq.
Dixie Brewster	Mary Byerman	Dr. Janice Crouse
Dan Fuller	Krystl Gauld	Rev. Dr. Philip Hardt
Dr. Richard Hoffman	Rev. Dr. Paul Jaw	Joe Kilpatrick
J. Robert Ladd	Rev. Ethan Larson	Charles Miller
Rev. Martin Nicholas	James Ottjes	Rev. Paul Stallsworth

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Karl Baumgardner, Esq.	Rev. Bill Bouknight	Rev. Riley Case
Rev. Dr. Ken Collins	Betsy Kersey	Gerald Kersey
Rev. Bob Land	Rev. Bob Parrott	Rev. Dr. Edmund Robb
Faye Short	Helen Rhea Stumbo	Dr. John Stumbo
Rev. Donald Wildmon		

UMACTION STAFF

James Diddams

Do you receive the UMAction Update E-Newsletter?

If not, just sign on to www.TheIRD.org and SUBSCRIBE to this timely and informative e-mail on the latest happenings affecting the United Methodist Church.

Our staff regularly provides key reporting and analysis of new developments of concern to faithful United Methodists.



IRD President Mark Tooley and UMACTION Director John Lomperis

Stay in the know! Subscribe today at www.TheIRD.org