



Wide Support for Protocol Split Continues

Despite a delayed General Conference, wide support for the “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation” continues across the spectrum. The Protocol splits United Methodism into at least two churches. One will abandon longstanding bans on same-sex unions and actively gay clergy. The other will maintain traditional doctrinal and moral standards with a smaller bureaucracy.

ALL major factions found the Protocol acceptable but not wonderful. Negotiators included top bishops as well as leaders of traditionalists, liberals, LGBTQ activists, the denominational bureaucracy, and all three of the UMC’s non-U.S. regions.

Early endorsements came from the Filipino College of Bishops, unanimous votes of the Sierra Leone Conference in West Africa and the Cavite Conference in the Philippines, General Conference delegations, and the governing boards of major conservative and liberal caucuses—the Confessing Movement, Good News, Mainstream UMC, the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), Uniting Methodists, UMC Next, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA). In late January 2020, most delegation chairs and co-chairs in the U.S. Southeast urged that “the Protocol be among the first legislative items considered” at the next General Conference.

Well into the pandemic, a theologically and geographically wide range of leaders have continued support for the Protocol.

But the COVID-19 pandemic caused General Conference to reschedule ultimately to August 29–September 6, 2022. Some fret this delay could imperil the Protocol. But well into the pandemic, a theologically and geographically wide range of leaders have continued support for the Protocol.

Last fall, the ultra-liberal leadership of the U.S. Western Jurisdiction launched a campaign of “promoting the Protocol” and offering their vision for the liberal post-separation United Methodist Church (psUMC). In early 2021, the liberal RMN and UMC Next caucuses each publicly re-affirmed the Protocol. Then in March, the very liberal Michigan delegation publicly

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On May 21 Korean American United Methodists and others protested Bishop Grant Hagiya’s decision to move three Korean American pastors. See story on page 2. This photo was taken outside the California-Pacific Conference office in Pasadena. (Photo: Ted Smith, III)

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Three Liberal Bishops Bully Orthodox and Korean Pastors

At least three heavy-handed liberal bishops are widely accused of using General Conference's delay to, in the words of Professor **Scott Kisker** of United Seminary, "rearrange the pieces on the ecclesial chessboard to their advantage through the power of appointment."

In the UMC, bishops appoint ministers. But the *Discipline* requires bishops and district superintendents to consult with pastors and congregations' staff-parish relations committees before moving clergy, saying that "consultation is not merely notification."

This is especially important for megachurches like Mt. Bethel UMC, the largest congregation in the North Georgia Conference, which has over 300 employees and its own private K-12 school.

salary reduction) in another part of the state (potentially problematic for Lee's daughter finishing her last year of high school).

Liberal Bishop **John Schol** has vowed to block church trials for gay weddings and partnered gay clergy. Lee later shared that Schol told him to publicly denounce reporting by evangelical *Good News* magazine—in a way that "would have been used against other traditional church pastors"—as one of several conditions "to even consider the possibility" of letting Lee stay in place.

Instead, Lee quit the UMC and started a new congregation. One Bethany leader, Mr. **Sang Chul Shin**, told *Good News* he thinks Schol was trying "to separate the pastor from the church to weaken the congregation, so it decides not to leave

The United Methodist Church for the Global Methodist Church." Schol wanted "to push out Pastor Lee because he has taken a vocal stance against the bishop's position about homosexuality."

In the California-Pacific Conference, Bishop **Grant Hagiya** had three orthodox Korean pastors, including **Jae Duk Lew**, who chairs our denomination's Korean National Caucus, told on the same day that they would be moved away from their larger-church appointments. It was made clear that these moves resulted from these pastors informing people within and beyond their

congregations of their options under the coming separation.

Bishop Hagiya was charged with overseeing complaints in 2016 against **Karen Oliveto** serving as Denver bishop despite having a lesbian partner, in defiance of church law. Five years later, Oliveto remains illegitimately in office. After the 2019 General Conference, Hagiya offered to help congregations redirect their apportionments away from theologically traditionalist United Methodists overseas. His apparent targeting of Koreans provoked accusations of racism, including in an open letter from all five jurisdictional chairs of the Korean UMC Network as well as dozens of live protesters at an ordination service in Hawaii and outside the conference headquarters.

In all five cases, neither the congregation nor the pastor requested a move, the bishops reportedly failed to offer meaningful consultation ahead of time, and every pastor and congregation asked the bishops to reconsider.

The recent Wesleyan Covenant Association assembly overwhelmingly voted to condemn these bishops' actions. The assembly declared: "we call on [United Methodist] Church bish-



(Photo: Ted Smith, III)

Both the congregation and senior pastor **Jody Ray** have made clear their theological conservatism.

But in April, Ray was somewhat abruptly told that he would move to a new, not clearly defined conference staff position. Both Ray and Mt. Bethel resisted, citing how disruptive such a sudden, unwanted move would be. Ray surrendered his ordination and was hired directly by the congregation, with Mt. Bethel now seeking to leave the UMC.

Ray publicly explained that "we would likely be in a very different place" if Bishop **Sue Hauptert-Johnson** had approached him earlier and given him a chance to discuss, shape, and pray about the new conference staff position, but "there was no conversation or consultation at all." Multiple knowledgeable sources in that conference report an atmosphere of pastors feeling intimidated against publicly dissenting from the liberal vision Hauptert-Johnson has been aggressively imposing on North Georgia.

Meanwhile, traditionalist Korean Pastor **James Lee** was told he would be forcibly moved from the Greater New Jersey Conference's largest congregation, Bethany Korean UMC, to a much smaller congregation (potentially meaning a significant

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ops, district superintendents, and others to respect the right of self-determination for conferences, campus ministries, congregations, and clergy around the world. Conferences, campus ministries, congregations, and clergy must be allowed to make their own fair, free, and informed choices of which denomination to continue their ministries within, without facing any bullying, harassment, or mistreatment to punish or manipulate their actual or expected choices.” ✝

ACTION: *Respectfully urge your bishop to PUBLICLY promise to respect the right of each conference and congregation to choose its denomination in the coming split, and to challenge their fellow bishops' bullying.*



The Rev. Dr. Jody Ray (Photo: Wesleyan Covenant Association)

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“affirm[ed] its original support for The Protocol...” In April, liberal North Georgia Bishop **Sue Hauptert-Johnson** and her like-minded cabinet declared their support.

Roughly two-thirds of the Indiana delegation, the largest in the Midwest, are supportive of same-sex unions. But in a March 2021 straw poll, 92 percent of Indiana delegates present and voting supported the Protocol.

It is not just Americans. In February 2021, leaders from all four Nigerian annual conferences affirmed the Protocol. In March, United Methodist leaders from across the Philippines expressed their expectation of the Protocol’s adoption and their intent to join the new traditional Global Methodist Church (GMC).

Meanwhile, in February 2021, an international group of orthodox bishops, caucus leaders, and prominent pastors (including IRD President **Mark Tooley**, UMAction Director **John Lomperis**, and UMAction Steering Committee chair **Martin Nicholas**) released our own statement strongly “support[ing] the passage of the Protocol’s implementing legislation that would allow for an amicable separation of the UM Church into two or more new

churches.” Then in April, the WCA’s Global Legislative Assembly overwhelmingly passed resolutions supporting the Protocol and the Global Methodist Church.

In a recent meeting with Wisconsin delegates, New York Bishop **Thomas Bickerton**, president-designate of the UMC Council of Bishops, said, “It is frightening to think about what would happen if the Protocol is not passed. The failure to adopt the Protocol would leave the church mired in a continuation of the conflict that has undermined the health, vitality, and witness of the UM Church for years. I believe that the Protocol is the best way to peaceably resolve the conflict. We have a clear choice—a continuation of the conflict that has been clearly demonstrated at the recent gatherings of the General Conference or an amicable and orderly separation that clearly witnesses to the world the Christ-like way to deal with irreconcilable conflict.” ✝

FOR REFLECTION: Amos 3:3.

ACTION: *Urge General Conference delegates from your annual conference to publicly support the Protocol as the very first order of business at the next General Conference. If you need their contact information, please email umaction@theird.org with “WHO ARE MY DELEGATES?” in the Subject line.*



The Protocol Mediation Team, together with Kenneth Feinberg (front row, third from left), the Jewish Attorney who facilitated the landmark agreement. (photo: gracethroughseparation.org)

Much of Africa Will Join Global Methodism

As our denomination prepares to split, key African leaders have indicated that they will continue their ministries into the Global Methodist Church.

At March's Liberia Annual Conference meeting, Bishop **Samuel Quire** declared, "When division happens, the Liberia Annual will look forward to partnering with other United Methodist traditionalists all around the world to create a truly global Methodist church that is rooted in Scripture, and the great teachings of the Christian faith down through the ages."

Quire confronted pressures on Africans, admitting "we may lose some of our current partners who are supporting some of our major projects." But "we would rather stand on the side of the Scripture and truth, than to compromise our faith in the Scripture and disobey Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord." In an overwhelmingly adopted resolution, the conference reportedly committed to "align itself with the wing of the church standing for the upholding of Scriptures in general," especially biblical standards on sexuality.

That same month, Bishop **Kasap Owan** of the South Congo issued a lengthy declaration critiquing those who promote a "unity of the church" based on finances and property rather than doctrine and Scripture. He named the Global Methodist Church as consistent "with the spiritual and doctrinal aspirations" of his area and vowed, "The South Congo will follow a denomination which has total confidence in the love of God, the teachings of God, respect for the commands of God, that is to say, the authority of the Bible."

In February, leaders from across Nigerian annual conferences released a manifesto affirming the "Protocol" and "dissociat[ing]" themselves from a much smaller group of Africans opposing the Protocol and promoting the Christmas Covenant. The latter is a recycled idea to allow America and each overseas region to set its own standards on sexuality and other matters.

Later, Nigerian Bishop **John Wesley Yohanna** pointedly criticized the Christmas Covenant's moral incoherence. After separation, when the psUMC is expected to remove the UMC Discipline's bans on same-sex unions and adopt something like the Christmas Covenant, Bishop Yohanna vowed that he "will cease to be a part of a church that claims to be traditionalist in Africa and progressive" elsewhere. At that point, "maintaining our conservative Christian identity will take precedence above the name UMC," he said.

Bishop Owan's five conferences in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have over 1.1 million church members. Nigeria has over half a million. Liberia includes nearly 300,000. Combined, these three areas alone include nearly a third of all African United Methodists. And the Global Methodist Church also has much support in other non-American regions. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: Revelation 7:9-17.



Bishop Quire preaching at the March 2021 session of the UMC's Liberia Annual Conference (Photo: WestAfricanWriters.org)

Additional Liberal Congregations Leaving UMC

Earlier this year, we reported on liberal congregations in Maine, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and California leaving our denomination.

Since then, at least four more congregations, all affiliated with the LGBTQ-affirming Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), made the same decision. In February, the members of Chebeague UMC voted to leave. They were later joined by Tuttle Road UMC and HopeGateWay Church. All three are in Maine. Then in April, Bering Memorial UMC voted to transfer into the liberal United Church of Christ.

This new departing group has had some outsized prominence. HopeGateWay was the church home of retired Bishop **Clifton Ives** (past president of the General Board of Church and Society and former co-president of the Methodist Federation for Social Action) and RMN's national communications director **Ophelia Hu Kinney**. Bering had been a main liberal force in the Texas

Conference, and served as **Troy Plummer's** launching pad before his tenure as RMN's CEO.

HopeGateWay Pastor **Sara Ewing-Merrill** correctly observed that even in ultra-liberal New England, remaining United Methodist subjects them to potential discipline for violating the *Discipline's* ban on gay weddings. Pastor **Diane McGehee** likened Bering's departure to leaving an abusive marriage. Bering has over 700 members, with two-thirds reportedly identifying as LGBTQ.

Some complaints of liberals leaving the UMC echo orthodox United Methodists. A much larger number of conservative congregations have recently left or are in the process of leaving. But current church law makes this very costly and difficult.

This ongoing bleeding proves that we cannot stay united. The Protocol offers a flawed but much less painful path for conservative and liberal United Methodists to go our separate ways, while staying united with like-minded believers. ✚



Bering Memorial Church's choir singing at the 2004 United Methodist General Conference. It is one of several progressive congregations now leaving the UMC. (Photo credit: Mike Dubose/ UMNS)

WCA Assembly Supports Separation, Without Prematurely Quitting

On April 30, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) held its hybrid Global Legislative Assembly (GLA) in Montgomery, Alabama. Similar to a General Conference, this assembly featured votes on resolutions by delegates elected by annual conference WCA chapters around the world.

It also included reports on ambitious plans for Global Methodism in church planting, campus ministry, global partnerships, and rebuilding a culture of accountable discipleship in every congregation. There were inspiring speeches the next day from Bishop **Eduard Kheday** of the Moscow-based Eurasia Episcopal Area and UMAction's own Steering Committee member **Krystl Gauld**.

The GLA overwhelmingly endorsed the Protocol separation proposal and the ongoing work to establish the Global Methodist Church.

A motion was offered to encourage the WCA to move forward “legally to form as soon as possible the Global Methodist Church or another new denomination and begin immediate operations,” if General Conference is delayed again. **But this was overwhelmingly rejected.** The discussion noted that staying in the UMC until General Conference would help the greater number

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Liberal UMC Caucuses Demonize Israel

In May, two unofficial liberal caucuses, the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) and United Methodist Kairos Response (UMKR), co-hosted a webinar on the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Hamas indiscriminately fired

hundreds of rockets at Israel, speakers blamed Israel. **Phyllis Bennis** of the Institute for Palestine Studies claimed that Israel “chose for this [conflict] to happen now,” in part to use Gaza as “a testing ground for Israeli weapons.” But actually, Hamas chose to first begin its rocket attacks, with Israel responding.

Philip Farah of Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace (PCAP) claimed that apartheid and settler colonialism “are the foundations of the Israeli state,” which’s Bennis echoed. Such rhetoric demonizes Jews as foreign invaders, as if they had no long history in the region.

An earlier March webinar hosted by the two caucuses called “Apartheid Then & Now” likened Israel to Apartheid South Africa. Such sloppiness ignores major differences, such as Arab Israelis’ voting rights. Speaker **Sandra Tamari** denounced Israel as “a regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.”

David Wildman, a longtime executive of our UMC’s apportionment-funded General Board

of Global Ministries (GBGM), urged singling out Israel for a comprehensive campaign of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS), saying “we need BDS.”

Wildman’s advocacy defies United Methodist policy. The 2016 meeting of the UMC’s highest governing authority, the General Conference, overwhelmingly rejected even milder proposals to divest from Israel. ✚

ACTION: Ask GBGM General Secretary Roland Fernandes to prevent Wildman and other employees from touting fringe causes like anti-Israel BDS: Roland Fernandes / GBGM / 458 Ponce de Leon Ave NE / Atlanta, GA 30308 / ogs@umcmmission.org.

WAKING the WORLD
2021's STUNNING REPORTS ON ISRAELI APARTHEID

12 MAY 2021

PRESENTED BY
MFSA
AND **UMKR**

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INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES;
RENOWNED POLITICAL ANALYST,
ACTIVIST, & AUTHOR ON THE MIDDLE EAST

PHILIP FARAH
PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE
FOR PEACE; LIFE-LONG ACTIVIST,
NATIONAL ORGANIZER & SPEAKER

Promotion for the anti-Israel webinar held last May

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

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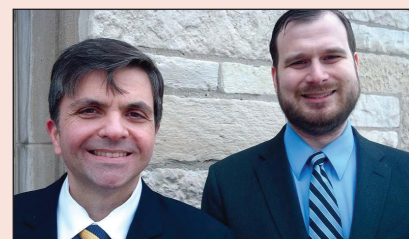
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Krystl Gauld
speaks at the
Wesleyan Covenant
Association's Fifth
Global Gathering in
May 2021 (photo:
YouTube screen
capture / WCA)

WCA Assembly Supports Separation, Without Prematurely Quitting

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of traditionalist believers (including many in situations where it may be too difficult to separate without the Protocol). And such a *public* declaration would weaken conservatives in future negotiations, effectively telling liberals they could abandon the Protocol and be more ruthless to conservatives who are leaving regardless.

Earlier, the GLA somewhat *narrowly* resolved that if the Protocol is not adopted in 2022, “the assembly encourages the Global Methodist Church to move forward without the Protocol and we urge the central and annual conferences to establish their own gracious arrangements for disaffiliation and transfers to new denominations.”

This narrowly adopted motion perhaps considers possible “comity agreements” in some annual conferences letting congregations transfer into another denomination in a less costly way. But without a comprehensive separation agreement like the Protocol, such amicable separation seems unrealistic for most.

Pastor **Carolyn Moore**, chair of the WCA’s governing Council, spoke to the anxieties of this interim period by assuring delegates that, one way or another, the Global Methodist Church WILL happen.

But we must do it right. In most cases, it would be poor stewardship for faithful congregations to pay massive exit fees to leave the UMC now, rather than waiting until next year’s likely passage of the Protocol to avoid such fees. Leaving now may involve violating 1 Corinthians 6’s prohibition of lawsuits against other Christians. It would undermine conservative United Methodists still awaiting the Protocol. And it could undercut impoverished African United Methodists who have already paid prices for helping combat unfaithfulness in American United Methodism. ✝

ACTION: Talk to other conservative United Methodists about the importance of faithfully serving the Lord and prayerfully waiting on the Protocol, rather than quitting prematurely.