

## Bishops Stage Arrest for Immigration Protest

On President’s Day, two bishops—Julius Trimble of Iowa and Minerva Carcaño of California-Pacific, co-chairs of our denomination’s Immigration Task Force—joined other activists in deliberately provoking, and achieving, arrest in a protest outside of the White House. This publicity stunt, promoted by United Methodist News Service and the UMC General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), was designed to call attention to the plight of those deported for choosing to break U.S. immigration laws. The activists demanded that President Obama take the same approach to civil law as some liberal UMC Methodist bishops are now taking to church law: refuse to uphold it, for the sake of a political agenda.

The bishops bizarrely boasted that they were committing “civil disobedience,” even though they cited no injustice in the regulations that the park police arrested them for violating. Among those joining their protest was GBCS staffer Bill Mefford, who expressed his apparent hope for completely open borders, blogging that “it is time for deportations to end for good.”



Bishop Minerva Carcaño getting herself arrested on February 17 (Photo: Jay Mallin / UMNS)

Bishop Carcaño has led one rapidly declining Southwestern annual conference after another, which for all of her energetic activism for liberalized immigration have failed to include more than a small minority of Hispanic members. ✚

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17.*

**ACTION:** *Explore how your congregation can better welcome and make disciples among immigrants in your community.*

## GOOD NEWS: Two Bishops Defend Biblical Standards on Marriage

At a January 15 gathering of the clergy of the Great Plains (Kansas and Nebraska) Conference, Bishop Scott Jones made clear that he, for one, would not be intimidated by the “biblical [dis]obedience” movement besieging our church. Even if faced with the overwhelming disobedience of 100 of his clergy “do[ing] same-gender unions,” he insisted that he would suspend the 100 offenders and subject them to church trials, since “not to hold a trial when a chargeable offense occurs and a just resolution cannot be achieved is to violate our United Methodist identity.”

While hoping to avoid costly trials, Bishop Jones told his clergy that this depended on their having the integrity to “abide by their sacred promises to live by the discipline of our church.” The church’s doctrine, mission, and policies (including our processes for how to change policies)—all of which those who have chosen United Methodist ordination have promised to support—are the “three fundamental, non-negotiable and basic characteristics of our unity,” the bishop said. He also declared, “If a disagreement with the Church’s teaching or discipline is highly important to you and if you have given up hope of changing the church’s doctrine or discipline, you have to decide either to live with it or to leave and find another church....”

## GOOD NEWS: Two Bishops Defend Biblical Standards on Marriage

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**ACTION:** *Write to these two bishops to THANK them for defending marriage:*

**Bishop Scott Jones / Great Plains Episcopal Area / 9440 East Boston, Suite 160 / Wichita, KS 67207 / bishop@greatplainsumc.org**

**Bishop Robert Hayes / Oklahoma Episcopal Area / PO Box 60467 / Oklahoma City, OK 73146 / rhayes@okumc.org**

## LGBT Activist Concedes: We’ve Lost the Argument in the UMC

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to a landmark development in The United Methodist Church. After over decades of fierce campaigning, support from outside the church, endlessly attention-hogging debates, and almost every imaginable accommodation and encouragement at all levels of the denomination, theologically liberal United Methodist leaders now openly admit that not only have they failed to persuade more than a radicalized minority of United Methodists to secularize their views of sexual morality, but they further admit that they will be unlikely to do so for the foreseeable future.

In December, Matt Berryman, who leads the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), explained to the *New York Times* that after four decades “of playing nice and attempting a legislative solution” (i.e., trying to respectfully persuade the majority of UMC leaders through our denomination’s established, democratic processes for communal discernment), the RMN “will not wait any longer” to force its way on the church. Then in February, he conceded “the brute facts” that “[m]ost folks, after 40 years of trying legislative solutions” of persuading United Methodism through respectful discussions “realize they won’t work.” He touted RMN’s current “biblical [dis]obedience” siege against the UMC as a way “to claim what we know to be true,” and vowed to pursue this campaign “in an aggressive way.”

Thus, while candidly admitting the “brute facts” of their failure to persuade the majority of United Methodists and openly despairing of doing so, RMN and its supporters who remain in the UMC have made clear their “any means necessary” commitment to either “aggressively” forcing their minority will upon the rest of us—or else being as destructive of the church as possible in the attempt. ✚

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Judges 17:5–6; Proverbs 12:15; Jude 3–8.*

**ACTION:** *Pray daily for our troubled denomination.*

# UMAction Briefing

The Institute on Religion & Democracy  
1023 15th Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005-2601  
202.682.4131 • [umaction@TheIRD.org](mailto:umaction@TheIRD.org)  
[www.TheIRD.org](http://www.TheIRD.org)

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# UMAction Briefing

## GOOD NEWS: Bishop Carter Urges Compassion for Unborn

Bishop Kenneth Carter, Jr., of Florida recently acknowledged the imperfections of the UMC’s current position on abortion and challenged The United Methodist Church to “abandon its present partisan political captivity and join the evangelical and catholic consensus in regard to life.”

Every year, Lifewatch ([www.lifewatch.org](http://www.lifewatch.org)) hosts a worship service on the January 22 anniversary of the Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion. Since that day

## The UMC should “abandon its present partisan political captivity and join the evangelical and catholic consensus in regard to life.”

—Bishop Ken Carter

Society (GBCS), which has long been notorious for ignoring and even opposing pro-life elements of our denomination’s mixed official position on abortion.

Bishop Carter blamed “[o]ur current incoherent social teaching” on the UMC’s “present theological chaos” and internal polarization. He called for re-engagement with our denomination’s “rich and deep theological tradition” to recover a “coherent theology of grace and holiness.” This would lead us to a “consistent ethic of hospitality” in which we would compassionately “welcome the unborn as the stranger” and also support “their pregnant mothers, trafficked and enslaved young people, endangered coal miners, incarcerated young men on death row, tortured prisoners of war, the dignity of the aged” and the environment. He also urged attention to such how such factors as a libertine sexual culture, poverty, and violence often drive women to seek abortions. ✚

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 1:26–44.*

**ACTION:** *Thank the bishop for his faithful witness for life: Bishop Kenneth Carter, Jr. / 450 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue / Lakeland, FL 33815 / bishop@flumc.org*

## Spring 2014

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Bishop Ken Carter preaching at the Lifewatch Sanctuary of Life Service of Worship (Photo: UMNS)

“BIBLICAL [DIS]OBEDIENCE” UPDATE: Renegade Clergy Get Wrist-Slaps and Celebrity

As we have reported earlier, our denomination’s resources and structures are facing an overwhelming siege by the “biblical [dis]obedience” movement, through which numerous renegade clergy perform blessings of same-sex unions in open defiance of the biblical UMC policies they vowed to follow. Leaders from this vocal minority have openly touted their goal of creating a *de facto* reality of The United Methodist Church effectively abandoning biblical standards for sexual self-control. In the Pacific Northwest Conference, the Revs. Cheryl Fear and Gordon Hutchins were each let off with a nominal punishment of “24-hour suspension without pay” for performing a same-sex union. One key figure in the “biblical [dis]obedience”

movement, the Rev. Don Fado of Northern California, responded, “The joke was, ‘Do seven gay marriages and you’ll get a whole week off.’” An advisor for Fear and Hutchins suggested this was a healthy instance of the radicalized region enjoying “autonomy” from the rest of the denomination. These slaps on the wrist were negotiated by Fear and Hutchins with the Rev. David Orendorff, a liberal minister appointed by Pacific Northwest Bishop Grant Hagiya as “counsel for the church” (the equivalent of the prosecuting attorney). The two evangelical pastors who filed the complaints against the renegade pastors were cut out of this process, and did not get the result they had sought: Fear and Hutchins pledging to refrain from future such defiance of their own ordination vows.

Our Imbalanced Council of Bishops

The Council of Bishops is a key decision-making body of our denomination, but its membership is skewed to be extremely unrepresentative, as the chart shows. The radicalized Western Jurisdiction is uniquely privileged by having its over-supply of bishops subsidized by the other U.S. jurisdictions. Furthermore, the West has long lagged far behind the rest of the U.S. in paying even its assigned share of denominational apportionments. The last readily available public report noted that the 2011 base salary for U.S. bishops was \$133,215 with projected annual increases, in addition to free housing plus other benefits. Non-U.S. bishops receive much lower salaries, some of which are also subsidized from America.

Region	Lay + Clergy Combined Membership	Number of Bishops	Members per Bishop
USA – Western Jurisdiction	343,894	5	68,778.8
USA – North Central	1,279,976	9	142,219.6
USA – Northeastern	1,266,098	9	140,677.6
USA – South Central	1,715,834	10	171,583.4
USA – Southeastern	2,829,689	13	217,668.4
Africa Central Conference (Southeastern Africa)	750,609	5	150,121.8
Congo Central Conference	2,600,987	4	650,246.8
West Africa Central Conference	1,510,831	4	377,707.8
Europe	60,073	4	15,018.3
Philippines	218,236	3	72,745.3

**ACTION:** Contact Moses Kumar, General Secretary of the UMC’s General Council on Finance and Administration, and urge that as denominational finances are adjusted for our shrinking U.S. membership base, we stop favoring the Western Jurisdiction with more bishops than it pays for itself: Moses Kumar / GCFA / 1 Music Circle North / Nashville, TN 37203 / mkumar@gcfa.org

scheduled every Sunday in the first half of the year, along with continued media puffing. In a recent speech, he recalled a gathering in Southern California in which numerous pastors declared that if they could not officially liberalize the UMC, “we have to find a way to break away from The United Methodist Church,” and this break would involve “the entire Western Jurisdiction.” Schaefer predicted that “something’s gotta’ give,” that either the UMC’s official stance will liberalize, “or there’ll be a splintering of our denomination, or something I can’t predict and no one can.”



Bishop Grant Hagiya (Photo: Marta W. Aldrich / UMNS)

In response to earlier calls for meaningless “24-hour suspensions” for clergy performing same-sex rites, UMAction and our allies strongly supported a petition at the 2012 General Conference that would have established a mandatory minimum penalty of a one-year suspension for the first offense, and then defrocking all repeat offenders. But when LGBT activists illegally occupied the floor, our bishops in their collective wisdom



(Photo: UMNS)

decided that the best leadership they could offer was meekly submitting to their demands to, among other things, effectively prevent delegates from even considering this proposal.

**FOR REFLECTION:** Proverbs 12:22; Mark 7:20–22; Colossians 3:9–10.

**ACTION:** Contact your bishop and respectfully urge him or her to have the courage to join Bishops Jones and Hayes in publicly defending biblical teaching on marriage and to insist on meaningful penalties for renegade clergy. To find contact information for your bishop, ask your congregation’s staff or go online to [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org), clicking “Directory” at the top of the screen, and then selecting “Bishops/Episcopal Area.”

United Methodist Blind Spots on Israel, North Korea

Under the divisive leadership of Jim Winkler, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)—our denomination’s apportionment-funded D.C. lobby office—has been especially devoted to one-sided criticisms of Israel. It even became a member organization of the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, which, in its own words, “seeks to isolate Israel economically, socially, and culturally” through sweeping, collective-punishment “comprehensive divestment,” boycotts,

and sanctions. The 2012 General Conference rejected the GBCS’s efforts for our church to more narrowly divest against the world’s lone Jewish state.

Last November, the GBCS co-sponsored a Congressional briefing to accuse Israeli settlements and security measures of imposing hardships on the tiny West Bank village of Wadi Foquin (population 1,400). While that situation is more complex than the GBCS’s portrayal, Christian compassion is appropriate for the villagers. But should the GBCS single out Israel while ignoring far greater suffering elsewhere?

In North Korea, some 25 million people suffer under arguably the world’s most brutal dictatorship, a Stalinist dystopia with a notorious lack of political, speech, or religious freedom. Yet the GBCS has largely avoided highlighting this. At its September board meeting, GBCS directors discussed following United Methodist Women (UMW) in endorsing a Korea Peace Petition calling on President Obama to pursue peace “immediately” by “[l]ifting sanctions on North Korea and ending the joint U.S.–South Korea military exercises” and “[s]igning a Peace Treaty with North Korea.” For an extremely *non sequitur* proof text, the statement also cited a passage from Ephesians



The GBCS directors discuss issues at a recent meeting (Photo: IRD)

peace, and the Communist dictatorship’s persecution of Christians and other human rights abuses. Although conservative and liberal directors opposed the statement, the GBCS board is so overwhelmingly stacked that the petition was still endorsed in a narrow 17–13 vote, with the encouragement of staff.

The GBCS has a \$7.2 million 2014 budget, an endowment of \$16 million, and about two dozen staffers, most of whom were hired by Winkler.

**FOR REFLECTION:** 1 Corinthians 12:26.

**ACTION:** Write to Winkler’s newly installed replacement and respectfully urge her to lead the GBCS to be more balanced and to make advocacy for the persecuted church a central focus of the agency: Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe / General Board of Church & Society / 100 Maryland Avenue NE / Washington, DC 20002 / shenrycrowe@umc-gbcs.org

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

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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: \_\_\_\_\_