

UMC Lobby: Invest in North Korea, Divest from Israel, Legalize Drugs and Prostitution

At their spring meeting, the board of directors of our denomination's political lobbying office, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), voted to petition our denomination to adopt a number of questionable political stances, including:

- Piling on in the GBCS's years-long campaign to single out Israel for criticism by broadly opposing construction of Israel's security barrier (without citing the suicide bombings it is credited with stopping) and demanding United

and public drunkenness while broadly opposing any "[d]iscrimination against people with criminal records" (without any exception for day-care centers that screen individuals for histories of abusing children)

- Endorsing President Obama's controversial executive order to stop enforcing parts of U.S. immigration law
- Broadly decrying religious persecution without any urging of United Methodists to be especially concerned about the persecution of Christians

Our denomination's global General Conference next year will consider these proposals, along with one to trust the GBCS to lead in re-writing the official United Methodist *Social Principles*.

This meeting also raised serious questions about the GBCS's spiritual foundation. The use of Scripture in several GBCS petitions amounted to embarrassingly sloppy, out-of-context proof-texting, such as citing a Levitical regulation for family inheritance of tribal lands to oppose certain Appalachian coal-mining practices. One of the worship sessions featured a bizarre ritual involving "extend[ing] a greeting to our Mother Earth" and solemnly identifying "the four winds" as "our grandfathers."

The meeting was run in such a way that directors rushed through more than 100 General Conference petitions; it was not clear if directors had had time read everything they were adopting. This follows a pattern of the GBCS directors' meetings concluding much earlier than scheduled, allowing directors to either go home early or to use the remaining time for a UMC-funded personal sight-seeing trip to D.C. 🗺️

Methodist divestment from stock in the construction company, Caterpillar, over its business with Israel

- A lengthy resolution on the Korean Peninsula that avoids clearly acknowledging North Korea's brutal human-rights abuses while calling for lifting economic sanctions against the rogue regime to "facilitate foreign investment," the rationale being that this "is a high priority" of the dictatorship's Communist leadership
- A rambling new resolution on "Criminal Justice" reform that calls for legalizing prostitution, drugs,



From L-to-R: Henry-Crowe, Hoshibata, and GBCS board secretary Chelsea Calderon (Photo: GBCS / Rick Reinhard)

ACTION: Respectfully express your concerns about the GBCS's stewardship of our church's name and resources to the president of its board of directors: Bishop Robert Hoshibata / Phoenix Area UMC / 1550 E. Meadowbrook Avenue / Phoenix, AZ 85014 / bishop@dscumc.org

UMC Missionary Calls for Boycotting Holocaust Museums

continued from page 1

of neighboring nations, Arafat's First Intifada, or more recent Hamas rocket attacks?

It is worth noting that before the "final solution," German Jews faced boycotts, systematic marginalization, and dehumanizing rhetoric. Last August, the GBCS and GBGM both supported a conference that urged singling out the world's lone Jewish state for "Boycotts, Sanctions, and Divestment." Both UMC agencies are active members of the U.S. Campaign to End the

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Israeli Occupation, whose website describes its campaign to divest from Caterpillar (see "UMC Lobby," p. 5) as part of a larger effort "to isolate Israel economically, socially,

and culturally." Lewis's rhetoric suggesting that the Jews remaining in Israel are not people "of conscience" serves to legitimize the ongoing murderous violence directed against them.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines questioned Lewis's implication that Jews were somehow uniquely obligated in or were sinisterly blocking the memorializing of other tragedies, decried her inflammatory charge that Israel was perpetrating another "holocaust," and noted that boycotting Holocaust museums "is targeting Jews and not Israel."

In response to the Jewish Federation's protest, Bishop Julius Trimble of Iowa, who is normally very liberal, agreed that "[a]ccusing Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinian people is anti-Semitism." He had been scheduled to receive an award at a Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) event that also featured Ms. Lewis as keynote speaker.

But as of this writing, no public corrective action has been taken by GBGM or GBCS other than the GBCS later removing Lewis's article, which remains available on another website. 🗺️

FOR REFLECTION: Romans 11:13-24.

ACTION: Write to the GBCS and GBGM General Secretaries and urge them to take three steps: (1) Join Bishop Trimble in publicly REPUDIATING the anti-Semitism of Janet Lahr Lewis's rhetoric; (2) FIRE Ms. Lewis so that she can no longer use our denomination's name and money for extremist activism; (3) LEAD their staff and boards to visit a Holocaust museum: Thomas Kemper / GBGM / 475 Riverside Drive / New York, NY 10115 / tkemper@umcmmission.org and Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe / GBCS / 100 Maryland Avenue NE / Washington, DC 20002 / shenrycrowe@UMC-GBCS.ORG

UMAction Briefing

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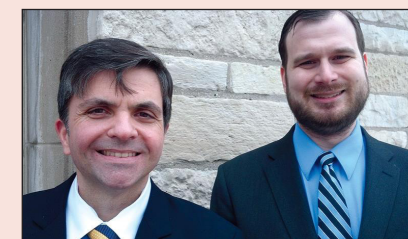
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UMAction Briefing

UMC Missionary Calls for Boycotting Holocaust Museums

Our United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) decided to mark the occasion of Israel's Independence Day by emailing a statement calling for a boycott of Holocaust museums!

The column was written by Janet Lahr Lewis, who serves as both a missionary of the UMC's General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and a Peace with Justice Program Associate of the GBCS. Her "missionary" work focuses on "advocacy and activism," funded by our offering-plate apportionments.

Just as "the Jews" have urged remembrance of the Holocaust, Lewis insisted that we must also "Remember al Nakba," the Arabic term for "the catastrophe" used by Palestinian activists to decry the establishment of Israel and resulting displacement of Arabs in the region.

Lewis insisted that we must also "Remember al Nakba," the Arabic term for "the catastrophe" used by Palestinian activists to decry the establishment of Israel...

Lewis railed against "Israel and the Zionist movement around the world," bizarrely accused the Israeli government of "an effort to wipe out [archaeological] evidence of non-Jewish cultures, except Roman, throughout history in the region," characterized the Israeli government alone as the "extremist" force in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and mocked the biblical exodus by claiming that the "extremist government" of Israel was provoking "a new Exodus" of "[t]he 'Israelis of conscience.'"

In closing, Lewis exhorted: "Don't participate in Holocaust Remembrance Day without participating in Al Nakba Remembrance Day. Don't visit a Holocaust museum until there is one built to remember the other holocausts in the world: the on-going Palestinian holocaust, the Rwandan, the Native American, the Cambodian, the Armenian... You could be waiting a long time!"

No sustained massacre in history was conducted across years with such deliberation and cold, mechanized efficiency, by a regime elected by the informed voters of an ostensibly civilized nation, as was the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews. Which Israeli government policy could possibly be categorized as another "holocaust" of mercilessly systematically murdering an entire people group? The security fence against suicide bombers? Security checkpoints? Israel defending its people from the 1967 hostility

continued on page 6

Summer 2015

Inside:

- UMC Lobbyists Trivialize Unborn Human Life 2
- Gay UMC Caucus Won't Just Say 'No' to Multiple Partners 3
- GOOD NEWS: Evangelicals Dominate Fastest-Growing UM Congregations 3
- Pennsylvania UMC Bishops Oppose Religious Liberty, Avoid Ecumenical Consensus, Hide UMC Teaching 4
- Your Opinion, Please! 4
- UMC Lobby: Invest in North Korea, Divest from Israel, Legalize Drugs and Prostitution 5



Janet Lahr Lewis (Photo: YouTube screen capture)

UMC Lobbyists Trivialize Unborn Human Life

The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., upholds the dignity of all human life on the January 22 anniversary of the Supreme Court decisions removing legal protections for unborn children throughout pregnancy.

Pointedly standing apart from this tremendous display of Christian unity among Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Evangelical, confessional, and African-American Protestant church leaders is our UMC's lobby office, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS). Prominently headquartered between the Supreme Court and U.S. Senate offices, they have in past years put snarky messages on their building's sign distancing themselves from the pro-lifers.

This year, staffer Bill Mefford submitted a picture of himself taunting the pro-lifers with a mocking sign proclaiming "I MARCH FOR SANDWICHES" to a March for Life social media feed designed for pro-lifers to explain why they were

marching. He explained in a tweet, "I was inspired by the march for life to march for what I believe in!"

Ironically, Mefford is the lead GBCS staffer for "Civil and Human Rights." His stunt prompted a widespread outcry, including from an active bishop,

over this apportionment-salaried UMC official using his staff time to trivialize the tragic loss of more than 1 million unborn human lives in this country every year.

Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, the GBCS CEO, quickly responded with a classy statement on "Cultivating a Culture of Respect." She agreed that

"[a]ffirming human dignity is central to the witness of Jesus Christ" and admitted that Mefford's actions "did not reflect our culture of respect, openness and hospitality." Her statement reported that "[a]ppropriate conversations and action have been taken," which were not specified, although Mefford subsequently withdrew from any public social-media use for a brief time.

The open contempt Mefford displayed toward moderate and conservative believers and their values has long been typical of the GBCS's monolithically liberal staff. After the outcry and Henry-Crowe's statement, it remained unclear if there would be any substantial changes at GBCS.

But we did not have to wait long. The very next day after Henry-Crowe's "Culture of Respect" statement, her staff hosted an event at which an invited speaker likened United Methodists involved in IRD/UMAction to Nazis.

A few weeks later, GBCS staffer Susan Burton sent an email to GBCS supporters urging them to lobby U.S. Senators to vote against a provision that would prevent funds intended for assisting victims of trafficking from being diverted to pay for elective abortions (in cases not involving rape, incest, or danger to the mother's life).

Thus, despite Henry-Crowe's statement affirming "human dignity" and "a culture of respect," it did not take long for the GBCS, under her leadership, to revert to its old habits of demonizing non-liberal United Methodists and siding with NARAL and Planned Parenthood in political lobbying that treats unborn children as less valuable than sandwiches. ✚

ACTION: Write to Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe to respectfully urge her to "walk the talk" of her statement by substantially changing the GBCS's devaluing of human life, its spiteful treatment of non-liberal United Methodists, and who it hires: GBCS / 100 Maryland Avenue NE / Washington, DC 20002 / shenrycrowe@UMC-GBCS.ORG



GBCS staffer Bill Mefford holds a sign making light of participants at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. (photo: Twitter)

Gay UMC Caucus Won't Just Say 'No' to Multiple Partners

With heavy funding from secular foundations and about a dozen staffers, the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is the main unofficial caucus

pushing to end the UMC's official prohibition of homosexual practice and pre- and extra-marital sex. Traditionalists have wondered if other moral boundaries would be breached if we follow RMN's advice of abandoning Scriptural authority.

In a recent article, RMN dismissed such "slippery slope" concerns, first ridiculing an African-American pastor's testimony against redefining marriage and then explaining with mock seriousness, "Why we don't marry mops." The caucus digressed into approvingly citing Karl Marx and bizarrely speculating about "inter-species marriage relationships" with extra-terrestrials.

But in the midst of attempting to dismiss the slippery slope, RMN declared that it was "not, by the way, ruling out multiple-partner marriages." The RMN essay explained that its moral framework "does not rule out the possibility of other marriage arrangements" than "monogamous exclusivity" and that "it may be possible for more than two people to enter into" what RMN would consider a good Christian marriage.



After UMAction publicly critiqued this RMN article, its author, Pastor Dave Barnhart in North Alabama, issued multiple responses in which he attacked the character of UMAction Director John Lomperis while continuing to avoid calling non-monogamous sexuality immoral.

This is not the first time RMN has supported "polyamory" (concurrent multiple sexual partners). In 1998, it co-published a magazine that celebrated bisexual threesomes and promiscuous sex clubs as approved by God. In 2003, RMN co-sponsored the Witness Our Welcome conference in which one speaker defended "healthy, polyamorous relationships." At both the 2008 and 2012 General Conference, RMN rallied behind proposals that would have removed clear disapproval of extra-marital sex from the UMC *Social Principles*. The 2013 RMN "ChurchQuake" conference featured a workshop encouraging acceptance of polyamory. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: Hebrews 13:4.

ACTION: Talk to others about building a culture of healthy Christian marriages in your congregation, without devaluing those with the gift of singleness. One good devotional to recommend for Christian couples is Devotions for a Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas.

UMC congregations have strongly evangelical senior pastors.

No more than four (16 percent) are led by senior pastors known to have publicly promoted a liberal stance on homosexuality. Even the liberals on this list are not from the most radical fringe. Not one of these congregations is among those affiliated with the pro-homosexuality Reconciling Ministries Network.

Geographically, there is a direct relationship between the relative theological conservatism of a UMC jurisdiction and how many of these fastest-growing congregations it includes. Twelve are in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, ten in South Central, two in North Central, one in the Northeast, and ZERO in the geographically huge Western Jurisdiction, despite the explosive growth of that region's overall population. It appears that the more orthodox-leaning a jurisdiction is, the more effective the regional structure is in helping, or at least not hurting, such congregations in reaching new people for Jesus Christ. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: Galatians 6:7-10.

ACTION: To see the full list, along with exclusive UMAction interviews with some of these effective pastors about what the rest of us can learn from them, see www.juicyecumenism.com/topic/effective-united-methodist-churches/

Pennsylvania UMC Bishops Dismiss Religious Liberty Concerns, Avoid Ecumenical Consensus, Hide UMC Teaching

A wide range of Christian leaders recently released a declaration on "The Defense of Marriage and the Right of Freedom." This open letter explained, "It is in the best interests of the state to encourage and uphold the family founded on marriage and to afford the union of husband and wife unique legal protection and reinforcement." It noted marriage redefinition's grave consequences for children and freedom of conscience, while making clear that signers were motivated by "our duty to love God and neighbor," including love for "all those who disagree with us..."

The same week, United Methodism's three Pennsylvania bishops released their own statement endorsing broad legal protection for "sexual orientation and gender identity or expression," implying support for redefining marriage, and callously dismissing concerns about legal infringements on those with traditional views on marriage. They selectively quoted from the UMC's *Social Principles* while completely ignoring how these official teachings deem all sex outside of man-woman marriage immoral and "support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

They characterized religious liberty as only applying to "the right to our own personal beliefs" and "our religious creeds and rituals" within the church.

Beyond church walls, there have been several recent cases of American Christian small business owners facing six-figure

finances, forced loss of livelihood, and even threatened jail time for serving gay customers but refusing to supportively service same-sex "weddings."

In apparent response to these cases, these three bishops vaguely oppose "changing our laws to allow people to turn others away based on moral disapproval," and call on businesses to treat customers "with the same love, respect, and hospitality that Jesus offered to all he encountered," implying that Jesus would affirm sexual sin if requested to do so.

Do these bishops really believe in an absolute right to the "gender expression" of barging into the opposite sex's public bathroom? Can they really see non-liberal Christians as their brothers and sisters in Christ when they will not oppose fines and jail times for those who lovingly live out their biblical faith beyond church walls? In any case, with their guaranteed \$145,665 salaries, it is not the bishops' livelihoods that are being threatened. ✚

ACTION: Write to these three bishops to respectfully express your concerns: Bishop Thomas Bickerton / Pittsburgh Area UMC / PO Box 5002 / Cranberry Township, PA 16066 / umbishop@wpaumc.org; Bishop Peggy Johnson / Philadelphia Area UMC / PO Box 820 / Valley Forge, PA 19482 / bshpajohnson@aol.com; Bishop Jeremiah Park / Harrisburg Area UMC / 303 Mulberry Drive, Suite 100 / Mechanicsburg, PA 17050 / bishoppark@susumc.org

Please recruit other believers to sign our www.methodistsaffirmingmarriage.com online petition!

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Your Opinion, Please!

How should UMC agencies change their advocacy around the Arab-Israeli conflict?

- **Make no changes**
- **Continue biases for the Palestinian side, but draw the line against anti-Semitism and divestment**
- **Support Israel defending itself, within moral boundaries**