

GOOD NEWS: Africans May Outnumber Americans in UMC within a Decade



The National Choir of the West African nation of the Ivory Coast singing during worship at the 2012 UMC General Conference (Photo: Mike DuBose / UMNS)

Recent membership statistics show that United Methodism is shifting away from American liberal Protestantism towards a new global identity.

Between 2009 and 2012, while United Methodism lost roughly 280,000 lay members in the United States, UMC congregations in Sub-Saharan Africa gained nearly twice as many members.

In 2012 African membership grew to 39 percent of UMC laity while Americans' share dropped to 59 percent. Another 1.7 percent of lay United Methodists are Southeast Asian, reflecting a reported increase, while European UMC membership has

Despite Protests, Liberal UMC Seminary Honors Prominent Evangelist

Intolerant LGBT activists at Candler School of Theology (part of Emory University) recently sought to make a United Methodist alumnus of this United Methodist seminary *persona non grata* for his crime of ... supporting United Methodist beliefs!

Rev. Eddie Fox, Executive Director of the World Methodist Evangelism Institute, is internationally renowned as pastor, preacher, evangelist, and author. He graduated first in his Candler class. For his impressive record of service to the church of Jesus Christ in 155 countries, he was selected as one of three recipients of Candler's 2013 Distinguished Alumni Awards.

This elder statesman of United Methodism also publicly supports the clear teaching of the Old and New Testaments as well as

declined, remaining at just below one half of one percent of the church.

At the 2016 General Conference, 58 percent of delegates will come from the U.S., down from 61 percent in 2012. Thirty percent will come from Africa, 4.6 percent from Europe, and 5.8 percent from the Philippines. (Europe and the Philippines are disproportionately represented thanks to each annual conference, however small, being guaranteed at least two delegates.)

The total 2012 UMC lay membership of 12,518,936 includes 7,390,691 Americans, 4,852,976 Africans, 216,326 Filipinos, and 58,943 Europeans.

If American United Methodism continues losing 90,000 members annually while African United Methodism gains 170,000, Africans will outnumber Americans by 2022.

The increasing Africanization of the UMC is widely credited with shifting our denomination in a more biblical, theologically orthodox direction, to the consternation of liberal church activists. After the 2012 General Conference, Bishop

Minerva Carcaño (now of the California-Pacific Annual Conference), an outspoken activist for the LGBT cause, infamously lashed out at African United Methodists, saying she was "wondering when our African delegates will grow up."

FOR REFLECTION: Revelation 7:9-10.

ACTION: Praise God for the growth of his kingdom through our church in Africa. Keep informed about issues affecting our United Methodist brothers and sisters who live there.

2,000 years of very consistent Christian teaching that homosexual practice is sinful. This has long been our denomination's official stance. Furthermore, convoluted arguments for church affirmation of homosexual practice cannot be squared with the Doctrinal Standards which our clergy promise at their ordinations to "preach and maintain," since this core doctrine affirms a high view of biblical authority and declares that "no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the [Old Testament] commandments which are called moral."

But because of Fox's very United Methodist position, pro-homosexuality activists at Emory demanded that his award

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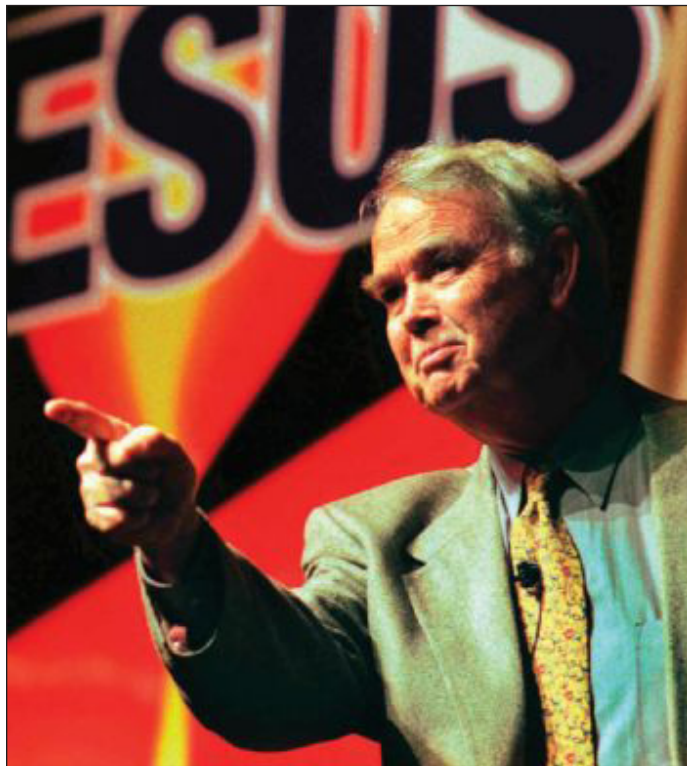
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be retracted. Candler students and faculty staged an obnoxious anti-Fox protest. Student and protest organizer Zebulun Treloar expressed hope that this would intimidate the Candler Alumni Board into establishing a pro-homosexuality litmus test for all future awardees. The Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) self-servingly invited Candler to right its alleged wrong by formally becoming an RMN-affiliated "Reconciling Seminary."

Candler's dean, Jan Love, who is hardly conservative, decided "[a]fter careful consideration" to still honor Fox at the September awards ceremony, noting that "Fox represents the overwhelming majority of [United Methodist] church members" and insisting that "Candler's task is to continue to facilitate an open, vibrant community of conversation created with people who hold stark and different perspectives."

ACTION: Write to Dr. Jan Love to thank her for not succumbing to pressure to rescind the Rev. Fox's reward, and to urge her to make Candler more inclusive of conservative, evangelical faculty and students: Dr. Jan Love / Candler School of Theology / Emory University / 1531 Dickey Dr. / Atlanta, GA 30322 / jan.love@emory.edu



Some theologically liberal United Methodists dismiss Fox's work to share the Gospel because of his refusal to affirm their views on human sexuality (Photo: UMNS)

UMAction Briefing

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UMAction Briefing



UNPRECEDENTED: Council of Bishops Rebukes, UMW Honors Talbert

On October 26, Melvin Talbert, the long-retired former bishop of San Francisco, traveled to the Birmingham, Alabama, region to stage a publicity stunt of becoming the first United Methodist bishop to officiate at a same-sex "wedding" ceremony. He did so in open defiance of both the biblical standards of the UMC *Book of Discipline* he vowed to uphold and the public protests of the resident bishop, Debra Wallace-Padgett, and the executive committee of the Council of Bishops.

During a tense November 11-15 meeting, the global United Methodist Council of Bishops called for formal charges to be filed in our denominational accountability system against Talbert. Such a public rebuke by the Council of Bishops of one of its own is likely unprecedented in modern United Methodist history.

While this move was supported by a clear majority of active UMC bishops, Bishops Sudarshana Devadhar (New England), Sally Dyck (Northern Illinois), Grant Hagiya (Greater Northwest), and Robert Hoshibata (Desert-Southwest) publicly dissented.

Talbert has long been notoriously disdainful of non-liberal United Methodists and has become increasingly aggressive in encouraging renegade UMC clergy to defy our church's biblical policies on sexual morality.

Three weeks later, the Scarritt-Bennett Center, a retreat venue run by United Methodist Women (UMW), held a ceremony to award Talbert alongside anti-death-penalty activist Sister Helen Prejean. United Methodist News Service reported that Jocelyn D. Briddell, the center's director, explained that Talbert was selected for his promotion of "inclusiveness regardless of race, gender and sexual orientation." He used his acceptance speech to promote his "disobedience" campaign and urge support for President Obama.

UMW's New York headquarters has long been dominated by activists strongly opposed to traditional Christian beliefs who have operated with very minimal accountability.

Any formal complaint filed against Talbert will have to be sent to the current president of the regional college of bishops for the U.S. Western Jurisdiction, Elaine Stanovsky, and proceed through a complex process from there.

FOR REFLECTION: 1 Timothy 5:20.

ACTION: Write to Council of Bishops President Rosemary Wenner of Germany and Bishop Stanovsky to urge that biblical standards be upheld with integrity so that Talbert loses his standing as a United Methodist minister. Be sure to address both leaders with appropriate respect. Bishop Rosemary Wenner: bischoefin@emk.de; Bishop Elaine Stanovsky: Rocky Mountain Annual Conference / 6110 Greenwood Plaza Boulevard / Greenwood Village, CO 80111 / bishop@mountainskyumc.org

Winter 2014

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Bishop Mel Talbert with Sister Prejean at the awards ceremony (Photo: Beth Kindig / UMNS)

‘Biblical Disobedience’ Update: Three Pastors Exit UMC Ministry as DS ‘Marries’ Two Lesbian Pastors

As we have previously reported, a vocal minority of United Methodists are besieging our church with a nationwide “biblical [dis]obedience” campaign to disrupt, overwhelm, and exhaust our church structures in order to create a *de facto* reality of a United Methodist Church that blesses same-sex unions and has clergy who are openly sexually active outside of man–woman marriage. These desperate tactics come as the UMC moves in an increasingly faithful direction, with growing General Conference majorities supporting biblical, historic Christian teaching on sexual morality.

For UMC ordination, one must covenant to uphold our denomination’s *Book of Discipline*, which explicitly forbids clergy sexual activity outside of man–woman marriage and declares, “Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.”

After a very high-profile church trial, Frank Schaefer of Eastern Pennsylvania was defrocked in December for performing a same-sex union and refusing to commit to following the *Discipline* thereafter. Schaefer rejected offers for more amicable resolution, instead insisting on a path that devastated long-term friendships and drove out at least half the members in the congregation he pastored while costing the wider denomination as much as possible. In a subsequent interview, when asked if he was “sure that the Koran is not God’s Word and that Jesus is the Savior,” Schaefer revealingly replied that he was “very sure” but “not 100% sure,” rhetorically asking what if he “had been born in India or somewhere in the Arab world.”

Phil Thomason, an associate pastor in Atlanta, has been cohabitating with a gay partner for 19 years and officiated at a same-sex union a few years ago. After a complaint was filed against him, he chose to “retire” from his church and surrender his ordination credentials last fall rather than endure a church trial. In a November speech, Thomason was flippantly unrepentant about “living in sin” before his commitment ceremony and strongly hinted at disagreements with core UMC doctrine on Scriptural authority and the fundamental sinfulness of all humanity.

In June, Gerry Hill of the Oregon-Idaho Conference retired early and later announced his intention to surrender his ordination credentials as a matter of personal integrity and public solidarity with “LGBTQ and allies.” In a statement, he explained that he could simply “no longer hold membership in a denomination” that maintained biblical standards on sexual morality. Hill was distressed by “the liberal and progressive UM clergy who are incensed by the Church doing what it always said it would do,” and noted that “[t]he people out of integrity are not those prosecuting the offenders.” He challenged fellow liberal UMC clergy to follow his example—“even if no one brings charges against you”—if they could not fulfill their ordination vows.

But the “biblical disobedience” campaign continues. Bishop Minerva Carcaño showily invited Schaefer to move to her California-Pacific Conference to become a licensed local pastor. Dozens of UMC clergy nationwide who have recently performed same-sex union services are in various stages of our denomination’s accountability processes. Activists affiliated with the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) have even launched a “We Did!” project for renegade UMC clergy to publicly brag about blessing same-sex unions.

One of the most unprecedented offenses of this movement happened on December 7 when Seattle District Superintendent Patricia Simpson, as if entering a contest for breaking the most *Discipline* provisions at once, performed a lesbian wedding, held in a UMC congregation, between two UMC pastors, Joanne Carlson Brown and Christie Newbill. As a deputy for Bishop Grant Hagiya, Simpson’s job is to help him uphold the *Discipline*. Earlier in 2013, Hagiya personally attended the lesbian wedding of the former Pacific-Northwest Conference lay leader, at a UMC congregation, with one of his clergy presiding. ✚

ACTION: Contact Bishop Grant Hagiya and respectfully urge him to keep his word by upholding the Discipline, or at least have the integrity to resign as bishop: Bishop Grant Hagiya / Pacific Northwest Conference UMC / P.O. Box 13650 / Des Moines, WA 98198 / bishop@pnwumc.org



The lesbian clergy couple, in a photo they submitted to United Methodist News Service. (Photo: Joanne Carlson Brown via UMNS)

UNHINGED: Liberal Activists within UMC withhold Prayer, Promote ‘Open Bathrooms’

Liberal United Methodist activists have a new cause: “open bathrooms”! At its recent “ChurchQuake” convocation, the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), an unofficial United Methodist LGBTQ activist group, touted bathrooms “for everyone,” since “[p]ublic restrooms labeled for women or men *only* can have adverse effects.” In June, the UMC’s rapidly shrinking, radicalized Desert-Southwest Conference (encompassing Arizona and Southern Nevada), similarly adopted a resolution calling for its congregations and other church-related buildings to have “open bathrooms” so that “transgendered people may use the bathroom of their choosing.”

Such “open bathrooms” are of course ripe for abuse by a few perfectly heterosexual, perverted individuals now basically invited to barge into multi-person bathrooms used by the opposite sex. Neither the Desert-Southwest nor the RMN policies suggested any safeguards.

Christians must be compassionate towards people suffering from gender identity disorder (desiring to identify as

the opposite of one’s physical sex), long recognized as a mental disorder. But it is ultimately harmful to encourage people to identify as anything other than the men and women God has created them to be.

Meanwhile, declaring that “[t]he time for polite persuasion has passed,” an LGBTQ activist group, Love Prevails (apparently consisting of professional protester Amy DeLong and a handful of friends) has announced a three-part campaign to undermine the UMC:

- Disclose(t): Liberal UMC clergy will publicly boast about “conducting same-gender unions and weddings.”
- Divest: “We will divest our prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness from all structures within the church that support the status quo.”
- Disrupt: “We will protest and disrupt local, national, and global [UMC] events.”

RMN and other major liberal UMC caucuses have bizarrely lionized the militantly lesbian DeLong as a poster child for

Wesley Studies Scholar and UMAction Advisory Board Member Promotes Humble Christian Approach to Politics

American Evangelical Christianity needs to learn from the mistakes of its past to approach politics in ways that are more humble, faithful, non-partisan, distinctly Christian, and unifying for the body of Christ.

Thus argued the Rev. Dr. Ken Collins in a panel discussion of his 2012 book, *Power, Politics and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism: From the Scopes Trial to the Obama Administration*, hosted at November’s annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR).

Collins, Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, serves as an IRD board member and is on the advisory committee for UMAction.

Collins explained that after suffering a huge loss of cultural power, American evangelicals in the twentieth century turned towards seeking political power. Collins constructively critiqued some conservative evangelicals’ failure to understand that “political power does not necessarily translate into cultural power.” He urged fellow evangelicals to focus their cultural renewal efforts on winsome persuasion.



Ken Collins addressing fellow evangelical scholars (Photo: IRD)

Collins faulted both the Evangelical Left and Evangelical Right for instead seeking to rely too heavily on the state to advance their social ideals. He lamented how “a partisan political ideology at times edged out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

It is “not wrong to have political opinions” or favored political ideologies, because, after all, “we all have them.” But Collins stressed the importance of carefulness in “how we hold them.” He urged American evangelicals to embrace humility and a “recognition of our own imperfections” as we come to differing political conclusions. This is in contrast to the attitude displayed by Religious Left leader Jim Wallis, whose 2005 book outlining his personal political opinions is not-so-humbly entitled *God’s Politics*.

While Christians are rightfully concerned for societal justice, Collins stressed that we must approach it differently, because “we have a different narrative than the world” has, and our commonality in Christ is more fundamental than our important political differences. ✚

ACTION: Power, Politics and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

the sort of pastors the UMC is losing with our ban on homosexually active clergy. She threatened to use physical force to prevent delegates at the 2012 UMC General Conference from even discussing a moderately pro-life petition.

RMN sounded a similar note in December when its new director declared, “After 40 years of playing nice and attempting a legislative solution, we will not wait any longer” for effective secularization of the UMC’s sexual-morality policies.

When some liberals withdraw from the UMC to the point of even refusing to pray for parts of it, the intra-denominational divide has become very deep. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: Matthew 7:12; John 13:34–35; James 5:13–18.

ACTION: Commit to pray regularly for the renewal and reform of our denomination.



Amy DeLong (center) confronting Bishop Bruce Ough of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area (right) during a disruptive protest in which Delong and a few followers forcibly took over a November 19 meeting of the UMC Connection Table, over which Bishop Ough presides. (Photo: Kathleen S. Barry / UMNS)

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

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Your Opinion, Please!

Is United Methodism unified by political stances in the Social Principles or by common faith in Jesus Christ?

- Social Principles
- Faith in Christ
- Unsure