

“BIBLICAL [DIS]OBEDIENCE” UPDATE: Renegade Clergy, Bishops Break Trust and Encourage Self-Destructive Sin

Consistent with clear biblical and historic Christian teaching, the United Methodist Church forbids services to bless homosexual unions and bars the ordination of anyone sexually active outside of man-woman marriage. But through the “biblical [dis]obedience” movement, renegade United Methodist clergy are brazenly breaking their own vows to God and the



Active and retired bishops of the Western Jurisdiction have been especially forceful in pushing biblical disobedience. (Photo: Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church)

church to uphold these policies, hoping to liberalize the *de facto* reality of our denomination’s standards even if those standards remain on paper. Aside from undermining our unity, this inflicts great pastoral harm by encouraging people to continue in ultimately self-destructive sin.

Last year, local UMC officials in the Southwest Texas Conference pushed forward the ordination candidacy of Mary Ann Kaiser Barclay, knowing she was a partnered lesbian. But this May, the conference-wide board of ordained ministry blocked her candidacy from advancing, a result Kaiser Barclay admitted she expected.

As reported earlier, Frank Schaefer of Eastern Pennsylvania was defrocked by a church trial in late 2013 for conducting a same-sex wedding and refusing to agree to uphold his United Methodist ordination vows for the future. Schaefer’s actions cost the conference a lot of money and reportedly drove away at least half the people in the shell of his former congregation.

Schaefer chose to continue draining church resources by appealing to the Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals,

which reinstated Schaefer’s ordination (for now). This result was a foregone conclusion given the committee’s liberal composition, with a lesbian activist as its president. As of this writing, the Schaefer case is being appealed to the UMC’s Judicial Council.

Meanwhile, Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the California-Pacific Conference has appointed him to lead a student ministry. In publicly inviting Schaefer to California, Carcaño equated biblical teaching against homosexual practice with racism.

She is not the only bishop behaving badly. On May 17, retired Bishop Roy Sano presided over the communion service of a rally in support of the “biblical [dis]obedience” movement, held in conjunction with a lesbian wedding performed by a United Methodist pastor in a Northern California United Methodist church. While Bishop Sano did not technically officiate at the lesbian wedding, he was apparently seeking to push the envelope about as much as possible.

We reported earlier that some other bishops, particularly Grant Hagiya of the Greater Northwest Area, have used their offices to protect renegade clergy from meaningful accountability after they officiated at same-sex union ceremonies or were known to personally be homosexually active.

Tens of United Methodist clergy have now gone online bragging about performing unauthorized same-sex blessings. In most cases, their bishops appear to have taken no action to reprimand or discipline these renegade clergy. ✚

**FOR REFLECTION: 1 Timothy 5:20; James 3:1.**

**ACTION: Please contact your bishop and respectfully urge him or her to work to ensure that the November Council of Bishops meeting results in a clear, public, collective commitment of our active bishops to uphold God’s boundaries for sexual morality by holding accountable any clergy who violate our biblical standards, rebuking bishops who have undermined our accountability mechanisms, and promising that bishops will no longer appoint as “counsels for the church” individuals not committed to the standards they are entrusted with upholding.**

**It is VERY important that they hear from as many concerned United Methodists as possible! Please recruit as many people from your church as you can. Contact information for your bishop can be found at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org); click “Directory” at the very top of the screen, and then select “Bishops/Episcopal Area.”**



The United Seminary campus in Dayton, OH (Photo: United Seminary)

GOOD NEWS: United Seminary Continues Renewing the Church

United Theological Seminary continues serving as a major force for spiritual and theological renewal in our denomination. While United’s faculty and students are hardly a conservative monolith, the school stands out among the 13 American United Methodist seminaries with its very public, unapologetic institutional commitment to historic Christian orthodoxy, as encapsulated in the Nicene Creed. Enrollment has tripled since the Rev. Dr. Deichmann became president in 2008.

United recently began a formal partnership with Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, the UMC’s charismatic renewal group. Among other things, this involves a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) degree in Supernatural Ministry and an annual Holy Spirit Conference.

United’s “Light the Fire!” church-renewal conferences are annual gatherings for renewal-minded United Methodists. LTF does what few other United Methodist conferences can do: It offers a ministry-equipping forum that non-mainline evangelicals find attractive and helpful. This year’s LTF was held May 8-9 and focused on effective ministry with people with disabilities and mental illnesses. The 2015 LTF will be January 22-23 in Naples, Florida. ✚

**ACTION: For more information on the good work God is doing in and through United, visit [www.united.edu](http://www.united.edu)**



United Seminary President Wendy Deichmann has led a dramatic turnaround at the Dayton, OH school. (Photo: United Seminary)

UMAction Briefing

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UMAction Briefing

GOOD NEWS: Young United Methodists, Growing Annual Conferences Reject LGBTQ Agenda

The eventual sexual liberalization of our denomination is *not* inevitable.

From July 16–20, the Global Young People’s Convocation and Legislative Assembly (GYPCA) gathered United Methodist youths and young adults from around the world. Among other things, participants debated and voted on three petitions that would have clearly, directly called for liberalizing our denomination’s moral disapproval of homosexual practice. All three failed to gain the assembly’s support, rejected by a coalition of young United Methodists from Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the United States. African and Russian-speaking delegates were especially vocal in defending biblical standards for sexual self-control.

In May, the Texas Annual Conference voted to reject, by margins of at least 2–1, several petitions that would have in various ways petitioned the next General Conference to remove disapproval of homosexual practice from the UMC’s governing *Book of Discipline*. In June, over three-fourths of North Georgia Annual Conference delegates reportedly rejected a resolution to endorse the “Transgender Day of Remembrance.” In both conferences, these resolutions were submitted by activists associated with the Reconciling Ministries Network.

These two are among the few U.S. conferences posting membership growth this year. Smaller conferences get more attention when they pass liberal resolutions. But with 285,944 lay members, the Texas Conference has more people than seven of the eight conferences of the radicalized Western Jurisdiction combined. With 363,383 laypeople, North Georgia is home to more United Methodists than the entire Western Jurisdiction, or than any other U.S. conference.

In contrast, the radicalized Pacific-Northwest Conference, whose Bishop, Grant Hagiya, has made clear his unwillingness to truly enforce our denomination’s biblical moral standards, reported its second year in a row of losing more than five percent of its members – huge losses for a single year. ✚

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**FOR REFLECTION: 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8; Hebrews 12:1–17.**

**ACTION: For resources on how your church can compassionately minister to same-sex-attracted people and anyone struggling with sexual brokenness, contact *Transforming Congregations*, a program of Good News: 2412 Second Street / Monroe, WI 53566 / [www.transcong.org](http://www.transcong.org)**

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The small but vocal Russian/Eurasian delegation – an emerging new force for faithfulness in the UMC? Bishop Eduard Khagay of Moscow is second from left. (Photo: John Lomperis / IRD)



Members of Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades in Rafah, December 2011 (Photo: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

## Anti-Israel Activists Claim Victory with UMC Pensions Agency

The United Methodist General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBPHB) recently decided to sell its stock in the British company G4S, which supplies security equipment to Israel, including equipment used in prisons.

This was quickly celebrated as a victory by anti-Israel church activists, such as United Methodist Kairos Response (UMKR), an unofficial caucus group, and David Wildman, leader of the UMC General Board of Global Ministries' human-rights efforts.

This action indeed resulted from lobbying of the GBPHB by activists for the Palestinian cause. But David Zellner, the agency's chief investment officer, told the *New York Times* that the decision was ultimately due to concerns over prison profiteering. A terse, carefully worded GBPHB statement stressed that this "decision was specific to G4S," due to "the inherent nature of the company's products and services—which are tailored to the prison industry."

Our last General Conference voted 2-1 to reject an effort by the UMC General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), UMKR, and others to pursue divestment against Israel. Since then, the GBPHB has taken the position that "divestment from the companies perceived as supporting the Israeli occupation is not the proper course of action at this time." Agency officials have insisted that any human-rights standards for divestment should be applied with global and moral consistency, without singling

out Israel. Zellner recently reported that a leading Palestinian activist in the anti-Israel divestment movement admitted to them that while this movement is especially targeting three companies (Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola) for their business with Israel, other companies were seen as having worse human-rights records but were not targeted for divestment.

But anti-Israel activists from UMKR and elsewhere continue pressuring the GBPHB. UMAction has repeatedly observed such activists singling out the world's lone Jewish state, reiterating demonizing caricatures, dismissing Israeli concerns, and oversimplistically claiming that "the occupation is the problem." But in decrying "the occupation," they routinely ignore the history of aggression against Israel, foreign terror funding, and Israeli efforts to seek peace and Palestinian self-determination, if only the Palestinian leadership will recognize the Jewish state's right to exist and stop the terrorist attacks. ✚

**ACTION: Let GBPHB's General Secretary know that, contrary to what she hears from UMKR, you and other mainstream United Methodists do NOT want her agency to pursue any anti-Israel divestment: Barbara Boïgegrain/General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits/1901 Chestnut Avenue/Glenview, IL 60025/bboïgegrain@gbophb.org. You can write to David Zellner at the above address or Dave\_Zellner@gbophb.org.**

## The Conservative Case AGAINST UMC Schism

Amidst escalating denominational conflict, there has been much talk of our denomination undergoing a massive split, as happened in 1844 over slavery. While we understand and share the frustrations that lead many to desire such a solution, there are five broad reasons why this is neither realistic nor desirable:

1. **Political.** Any major dissolution of the UMC into two new denominations would require a complex series of Constitutional amendments, which would have to be passed by a two-thirds super-majority of General Conference delegates and then two-thirds of all annual conference delegates around the world. Such a broad consensus for splitting is simply not there.

2. **Pragmatic.** Such a large-scale division would be anything but "amicable." Local churches and annual conferences would be forced to choose sides. We could not expect all losing

minorities to gracefully surrender their congregations or conferences. Battles over property would spill into secular courts, becoming extremely costly, drawn-out, and embittering. At least our current clashes are more focused on matters of theological and moral substance.

We could not count on a major split leaving all conservative United Methodists together for a unified witness. We would likely see longtime friendships erode as multiple new groupings formed while some people went independent or aligned with one or another of the many smaller denominations that long ago broke away from what is now the UMC.

3. **Historical.** No Christian church has ever been free from the twofold mission of advancing the Kingdom beyond its

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## Adam Hamilton Unveils Plan to 'Episcopalianize' the UMC

Celebrity megachurch pastor Adam Hamilton has rallied people around a new proposal to shift our denomination away from biblical standards for sexual self-control.

The Hamilton Plan, formally entitled "A Way Forward for a United Methodist Church," quotes no Scripture. In a nutshell, it would empower every United Methodist congregation to decide to bless same-sex unions, and allow every regional annual conference to decide to ordain homosexually active clergy. Although the UMC is a global church, the original signers are all American.

This "Way Forward" is being misleadingly sold as a compromise. But it only asks for major, one-sided surrender from our denomination's faithful majority. To become a denomination that officially allows for blessing sexual sin while allowing for some local variations in practice would give United Methodism the same policies that have notoriously caused such tumultuous defection, decline, and schism within the Episcopal Church.

After removing an authoritative, denomination-wide commitment to follow relevant teaching of Scripture, consistent Christian tradition, and our own United Methodist doctrinal standards, this plan would impose on annual conferences and congregations the same divisive debates of General Conferences, likely with similar placard-waving disruptions and protests. This would spread our painful conflicts out as widely as possible, directly hurting grassroots United Methodists with draining, emotional, relationship-shattering congregational conflicts. As recent annual conference sessions show (see "Young United

Methodists, Growing Annual Conferences Reject LGBTQ Agenda" on page 1), not even overwhelmingly conservative conferences or congregations can count on avoiding divisive fights with a vocally liberal minority.

Hamilton later basically admitted that his proposal could not guarantee that liberal United Methodists would be satisfied enough to stop pushing further, his hopes for peace notwithstanding.

The Hamilton Plan was quickly endorsed by leaders of United Methodism's two main liberal caucuses, the Methodist Federation for Social Action and the Reconciling Ministries Network, who cannot be expected to settle for a partial victory. Other liberal caucus

leaders have declared that they will ultimately be unwilling to accept a single United Methodist congregation refusing to bless homosexual unions.

The Hamilton Plan mentions renegade United Methodist clergy breaking covenant by defying our denomination's ban on same-sex unions, implying that this is unsustainable. But rewarded behavior will be repeated.

Hamilton was formerly known as evangelical, but has shifted his views significantly. He now claims that Scripture includes "passages that never reflected God's heart and will." ✚

**ACTION: Commit to praying daily for United Methodism to be renewed in biblical faithfulness and holiness, and for UMAction as we resist such attempts to weaken our denomination's official adherence to biblical, historic Christian morality.**



Adam Hamilton is senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection near Kansas City. (Photo: John Lomperis/IRD)

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walls, *and also* fighting against serious doctrinal and moral impurities within them. New churches formed in hopes of escaping the spiritual corruption of older ones eventually find similar old problems in their new structures.

No United Methodist alive today has seen our denominational leadership reliably committed to theological orthodoxy. We have had a century of theologically liberal dominance, with denominational elites rejecting the need for personal salvation in Christ, the authority of Scripture, or the importance for clergy adherence to our doctrinal standards — problems far more fundamental than today's presenting issues of sexuality — while our official teachings remained largely orthodox. After so many decades in the wilderness, why quit now, when the UMC's globalization is bringing a steadily emerging majority of Bible-believing evangelicals?

4. **Wesleyan.** Though painfully aware of its spiritual problems, John Wesley never left the Church of England. In his "On Schism" sermon, he argued that as long as my church "does not require me to do anything which the Scripture forbids, or to omit



John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, faithfully remained in a spiritually and theologically compromised Church of England through his dying day. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

**FOR REFLECTION: Jude; Revelation 1:9–3:22.**

**ACTION: Read John Wesley's Sermon #75, "On Schism," available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/>; click on "John Wesley," and then "The Sermons of John Wesley."**

**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: \_\_\_\_\_