

The Christian Methodist Newsletter

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General Conference 2008 (GC2008)

The following letter was sent to the GC2008 Delegates:

March 31, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Congratulations on your being elected as a delegate to the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC). This is a great honor and an important responsibility.

We are sending you a copy of the book *We've a Story to Tell* It fully illustrates and documents significant events within the UMC. In this book we tell what happened when the full weight and financial power of the UMC leadership were brought to bear to destroy a small church – St. Paul Church. As quoted on the back cover of the book:

“What I’m saying is there is nothing in the Discipline that speaks to this particular reason for discontinuance.”

– Bishop Edward Paup

“There were no specific charges being levied against St. Paul.” “There was (sic) no specific charges being ma (sic) – levied against any member of leadership.”

– Supt. Rachel Lieder Simeon

Again, there were no specific charges brought against this church! Why then did the conference leadership attempt to destroy it? During this process of disaffiliation, Dr. Robert Carlson stated on page 92 of the book, “the procedures leading up to the discontinuance of our church by United Methodist clergy within the AMC [Alaska Missionary Conference] have flagrantly violated multiple provisions of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church – 2000...*” This was a very unjust situation.

Petition #81089-FA-¶2503 that is listed on page 787 of the *Daily Christian Advocate*, Volume 2, Section 1, would strengthen the power of a local church against an unjust seizure like this. May I ask that you support this petition? Also, may I ask that you oppose any petition that increases the power to close a local church? When people pay for, build, and care for their church – it is wrong to have it seized and taken from them.

Also, please oppose any action or suggestion that 10,000 of our smallest churches be closed or consolidated. There is no need for this. We should be about “making disciples for Jesus Christ.” How can we make disciples for Jesus Christ if we are closing churches? We need to evangelize and grow these churches into larger churches!

Regarding St. Paul Church, the words of Mr. David Swan of Clearwater, Florida are insightful: **Can this happen to us?** (p. 153) The answer is – “Yes, if we don’t correct it!” Please support our local churches and enable them to grow and prosper! That is where we can do the most effective work for the Lord.

Sincerely,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

Three petitions will be among more than two thousand:

The first is entitled “Equitable Title to Local Church Property” and deals with the question of “Who owns the property of a local church?” At present each church has a “trust clause” in the deed that ensures the conference has final ownership of it. This petition would amend ¶2503 of the Book of Discipline to “safeguard the interests of members of local congregations, who have purchased, built, and maintained their church building, parsonage, and other real property. There have been instances when viable, functional congregations have had their property seized by district or conference personnel.”

We know of several instances where viable congregations had their property seized and used by the conference or one of its subordinate districts. This is an issue of fairness and justice in that it provides for equitable (50%) ownership by the local people. This would help rectify this injustice.

A second petition related to the one above is entitled “Annual Conference Compliance” and amends ¶2548.2c of the Book of Discipline. This petition is to ensure “fairness for the local church so that it would not be arbitrarily discontinued. The *Book of Discipline’s* procedure for assisting a local church that may be encountering problems is sound. Implementation

of this change would ensure that the church would in fact receive justice” as the rationale states. In fact the procedure to be used before a church is discontinued is rendered useless by the statement that the failure to follow the procedure does not nullify the action itself. This provision was used in an attempt to close the church in Fairbanks, Alaska for no discernible reason. [See a more complete description of the action against St. Paul Church in the left hand column and on page 4.]

This revision would ensure justice for the local church and that it would not be closed arbitrarily.

A third is entitled “Tenure for Bishops” and deals with the “lifetime” appointment of our bishops. It would amend ¶4032c of the Book of Discipline to provide that bishops serve two four-year terms and then either return to the ranks of the ministry or retire. The rationale as stated in the petition itself is that it “is reflective of our heritage in that term limits for bishops were exercised in the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Furthermore, this is to ensure that a greater number of the many capable pastors in our denomination will be afforded the opportunity to serve in the office of bishop.” Both of these reasons are true, but it would also interject a degree of badly-needed accountability into the Council of Bishops. – AOM

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When Homosexuals Take Over A Church

by Bill Fishburne WTZY Radio co-host

Five years ago I took my family out of one local church and began a search for a new church home. The experience was difficult. This is the story of that time in my life. I want to tell you why we left, what we lost, and what we found.

First of all, I want you to know we were involved at this church, not just attendees. I had been on the Vestry and had been Junior Warden. I had been the church Treasurer, and at the time of our departure I was chairman of the finance committee. My wife had been a preschool and Sunday School teacher, and both of our children, ages seven and nine, were members of the children's choir.

My wife and I had been married in an Episcopal diocese in Chicago. The priest there taught us to be Episcopalians. We attended the enquirer's class. We learned the tradition and history of the church. It was there that we first learned of the Episcopal faith's three-legged stool of the Bible, Tradition and Reason. We read the Book of Common Prayer's marriage vows, and we shared the hope of children. We read The Nicene Creed, which stated exactly what our new denomination believed. We agreed with its fundamental belief that Jesus Christ was the only Son of God; and that he suffered and was crucified on the cross for our sins; and that he rose again on the third day. And that by believing in him we might have eternal life.

In short, our experience at the church of the Redeemer on Fullerton St. in Chicago was so good that we sought the same type of church in Asheville.

We joined an Episcopal church where the priest was proud of his reputation as an avant guard liberal priest. He had come to the church in 1957 and had assumed a ministry based on personal devotion to his members, and an overt social liberalism that eschewed such common symbols as the American flag and N.C. State flags in the church

By the mid-eighties we were a family of four. The little church was our home and we were comfortable as the only living conservatives in a sea of liberals. And it was OK. We had our differences, but we worked together in God's sight to serve and glorify His name.

About that same time, one of the ladies of the church began a self-designated ministry to the prisoners in the Buncombe County Jail, and Craggy prison. She delivered personal care kits with toothpaste and soap, and, I suppose, counseled the prisoners. In the mid-eighties, she asked for the priest's permission to become a deacon. In the Episcopal church, this is one step below the priesthood. She could perform every priestly function except administering the sacraments of bread and wine. To gain this position her ministry had to be approved by the church vestry. She was given the approval, provided she would agree to expand the ministry to the victims of crime, not just the perpetrators.

A year later I was asked to run for the Vestry and was elected to the post, just as she came back to the vestry and the priest, asking that her ministry be changed and expanded again, this time to include the victims of HIV and AIDS infections. Again, it was agreed.

What followed next was a series of half-inch steps until the church was thoroughly dominated and intimidated by the homosexual community. A constant flight of traditional long-time members ensued. One never knew where they went, but they were some of Asheville's most prominent families. Some of the half-inch steps that drove them away included:

– First, a support group for persons with HIV and AIDS was established. The group met in the church library, or one of the other meeting rooms. No problem. Alcoholics Anonymous and other groups already used church facilities for their

meetings. One more group seemed to make little if any difference.

– Second, special services were requested for the HIV/AIDS community. The vestry denied these services, in that there was no desire to establish a homosexual-oriented church within the church. Thus, we welcomed increasing numbers of homosexuals to regular church services. This transpired over a period of months and years, and many of the new people who joined the church were welcome. They were bright, they were polite and considerate of others, but, by and large, they kept to themselves, sat together and avoided Sunday School classes and such Bible study as the church had. Many, it should be noted, gravitated towards the church choir. By the end of 1990 the influx of these individuals had made an impact. Many of the straight men left the choir and a noticeable group of homosexuals attended services each Sunday morning.

The deacon's prison ministry had fallen by the wayside, and various homosexual groups met at the church several times each month. The deacon spent her full time working with these groups, and had little time or interest in working with others.

The mainstream congregation seemed unaware of the change. The growing numbers of smiling and polite young men without wives or girlfriends seemed not to be noticed. Yet a gradual change had taken over the church. Homilies, or sermons, delivered from the pulpit now dwelt exclusively with social issues. One layman took to the pulpit one Sunday morning to lecture on the benefits of Liberation Theology to the huddled masses of Latin America. I nearly gagged. I had spent two years in Central America in the U.S. Army's Special Forces, training indigenous personnel in village defenses, human rights and patrolling. We went with them on patrols to fight the communist insurgencies spawned by Satan's own liberation theology. Many good men, women and children died in that undeclared war and I suffer the mental and physical scars today. Fools can rant and rave all they wish from the sanctuary of their liberal pulpits, but when the night fell in Guatemala in the 1969, I was on the ground with a rifle and a poncho praying for dawn. So on that morning when the church rafters rang with that heresy, I felt sick. I wondered how long I would be able to stay.

By 1990 my term on the vestry had expired. The church was torn apart by the undercurrent of conflict between the straight congregation, the ones raising children and their grandparents, on the one side, and the extreme social liberals and homosexuals on the other. Many of the latter group had AIDS, and one of the fears was that it would be transmitted by the common Communion cup. This fear was addressed in two ways. First, a second, small intinction cup was provided for those who wished to dip their wafers rather than drink from the cup. Second, there was a lecture on how HIV and AIDS were transmitted, with assurance that the Communion cup was safe. The tone of the meeting was that everything was fine, there was no chance of any accidental contact spreading the HIV virus, and we were ignorant if we thought otherwise.

At the same time, two of the most liberal women in the church were dispatched to a conference on "Human Sexuality." This, as it turned out, was a code phrase for a seminar on the acceptance of homosexuality as just a normal part of human life. Live with it, in other words, it's normal and it isn't a sin. People are just born that way, and if you think otherwise you are just being "judgmental."

Within a few months, things went from resigned acceptance of a forced equality between homosexuals and heterosexuals to an overt preference for the homosexual community. Here is what happened.

The Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance, otherwise known as SALGA, wanted to put on a gay fashion show. This was a cross-dressing event. A drag queen show. The church deacon quietly made arrangements and it was held in the church parish hall. That was the first time in nearly 100 years that the church had been used for a fashion show of any type. That it was a homosexual cross-dressed fashion show made it even more outrageous to the church's straight population. Worse yet, one of the church's youth groups (EYC) was on the premises at the time, attempting to use the kitchen facilities, which were also in use by the cross dressed homosexuals. These young people were thus exposed to one of the more outrageous examples of homosexual behavior, without guidance or preparation for what they saw.

The priest received a barrage of objections from the straight membership. People continued to leave. This church experience was not what they expected, and this church's family was like no family they had ever encountered. It seemed clear that the liberal priest and the ultra-liberal deacon had gone too far. But nothing was done. The private conversations between concerned straights vanished whenever the priest or deacon came by. The Human Sexuality committee, otherwise known as the get-along, go-along gang, was everywhere. On the Outreach committee. Teaching Sunday School. In the Altar Guild, and certainly in the choir. These people, acting either on their own or as duplicitous tools of the priest, stifled protests of the homosexual influx with lectures on the need to show loving and tender acceptance of "alternative lifestyles."

A few months later, they went even further. In February, SALGA and the deacon conspired to put on a homosexual St. Valentine's Day dance. Again, the 100-year old Parish Hall was the site of the event. The entire affair was done in secret. The fact that the parish hall was reserved for a SALGA St. Valentine's Day Dance never appeared on the church calendar, and was never announced during the scheduled announcement time on Sunday morning. It was a closed event. The

planning, however, was intensive. In January, the deacon presented the office manager with a beer and wine sales permit application.

"Sign it," she said, "so we can sell beer and wine at the dance."

The office manager, a Baptist, refused. The priest, for a change, supported the no alcoholic beverage sale position. After all, it would be the first time the church had obtained a permit to sell alcoholic beverages during a church event. To an Episcopalian, a little wine and cheese at a reception was one thing. Selling the stuff was entirely something else.

Undeterred, the deacon and her friends from SALGA determined they would have beer and wine at their dance anyway. Rather than sell it directly, they prepared signs that advertised the beer and wine would be available in exchange for "love" offerings equal to the predetermined sale price.

And thus it was that, without the congregation's knowledge or approval, SALGA held a dance to celebrate St. Valentine's Day in the Parish Hall of an Episcopal church. Beer and wine were readily available if you made a "love" offering. From all reports and signs, the event was a huge success. A gay old time, as they say, was had by one and all.

The next morning, Sunday, I arrived early to find the church sexton and Junior Warden hard at work cleaning up. I helped them finish the job - of removing beer cans and other evidence of the previous night's homosexual extravaganza from the premises. It was clear to me that the celebrants had not been celibate throughout the evening. The place was a mess.

That nearly was the last straw, for me. The Parish Hall was not used for dances for our teenagers or our adults, because the priest had said he was afraid of "damage to the floor" in the historic building. As far as anyone can remember, that had been a hard and fast rule during his 30-year tenure. No dances in the Parish Hall. Not even a mixer for our kids.

But the rule was broken in favor of the homosexuals. And a fashion show was held for the homosexuals. And beer and wine were, in effect, sold for the homosexuals. Everything clearly indicated that this church now preferred homosexual members to straights. The evidence was in the actions the church took. The general membership was kept in the dark, and the church bulletin - or newsletter - often seemed to mention the good things being done by the deacon and her gay friends.

A few months later, with the problems just below the boiling point, the priest and the get-along, go-along committee announced there would be a Wednesday night to discuss the problem. I now refer to it as the "Wednesday Night Massacre." When I walked into the Parish Hall that evening, I found out just how far the priest and deacon were willing to go to push their agenda. First, there were more homosexuals present than straights. And most of the homosexuals in attendance were neither members nor regular attendees at our church. Second, to speak at the event you had to have signed up in advance. Only one straight was on the program, with a total of about seven folks speaking for the homosexual community. The program started with a young lady from SALGA stating she had personally cleaned up all the mess after the dance. I said she had not, that there was a great deal of litter on the grounds. She told me that was a lie, that everything had been cleaned up. I look at the Junior Warden, who had called me to help clean up on that Sunday morning. He grimly lowered and shook his head. He and the priest had been very close for years. In times of birth, marriage, and death. Thirty years in one church, together. The Junior Warden would not press the issue.

After opening remarks from the head of the get-along committee, we split into small groups. Each group had at least one homosexual in the room to guide and lead the discussion. In my group we were hosted by a defrocked Catholic priest, who had declared himself a practicing homosexual some years earlier. His seminary training and familiarity with all Biblical references to homosexuality totally dominated and intimidated our discussion. After 40 minutes of this oppressive environment, in which little constructive was accomplished other than the attempt to brainwash the straights, we returned to the Parish Hall. It had been much the same in the other breakout groups. The deck was stacked and no one had been dealt a straight hand.

One person, a member of the church who also was an ordained Presbyterian minister and psychologist with an active family counseling ministry, was on the schedule to speak for the straight community. His remarks were on one sheet of paper, and would take about four minutes to read. After 30 seconds, the priest cut him off. "David, that's enough of that," he said. "We've heard all we need to hear. Sit down."

And thus ended the great debate. Free speech had been stifled. The forces of darkness had taken control of the church. Half an inch at a time.

I stayed a few weeks longer, writing a lengthy and impassioned letter to the Bishop and calling each member of the vestry to see what could be done. The answer was nothing. The bishop wrote me a very nice letter that said, "Even if I was of a mind to remove the priest, which I'm not, I couldn't. Only the church vestry can remove an Episcopal priest."

The vestry was dominated by the priest's faithful servants. The head of the get-along, go-along committee was on the vestry. The faithful Junior Warden, of course, as well as the Senior Warden. Twelve people, at least eight of whom were the priest's dedicated servants.

We lost. And we left. We moved to a more rural parish where we felt we could believe in the Bible without fear of criticism from our ministers. The liberal wing of the Episcopal Church, and the church we left in particular, is too liberal for us. I was very concerned that the sight of men holding hands in church, and sitting throughout Sunday morning services with their arms around one another, was a bad example. I was afraid that my young and impressionable children were witness to events that would destroy the very values and morality Christianity attempted to teach. The year after our departure the deacon proposed the church open a gay and lesbian support group for middle school children. Notice of this plan was printed in the church's annual report.

The time period I have described covers about six years. Six years in the life of a church, and many tragedies in the lives of young homosexual men who died of AIDS when they came [to] the church in search of God and, found, instead, encouragement for the lifestyle that would lead to their death[s].

Later, in 1995, at the Diocesan Convention at Camp Kanuga, the deacon defied instruction from the bishop and the priest, and declared on the floor of the assembly that she was a lesbian.

Why did the Bishop and the parish priest instruct the Deacon not to publicly reveal her homosexuality? Because she would then have to be suspended. The Bishop followed through with a six week suspension. She then resumed her position and continues to lead and preach the gospel of homosexuality in the church today. In other words, the Bishop objected to her coming out of the closet. I believe he knew that she would be more effective if she remained cloaked. But he restored her to her office just as soon as the public furor died down.

About six months later, the Deacon's husband, head of Christian Education at this church, announced that he, too was homosexual. As was their adopted son. I guess that disproves heredity as a cause.

And more recently the new priest, Todd Donatelli, another avant guard liberal, announced [that] the church, now the Cathedral of All Souls, would offer the Church's blessing and an appropriate ceremony for homosexual unions.

Postscript:

The new All Souls rector, Todd Donatelli, last year issued the first Excommunication in the history of the Episcopal Church in the United States. This "honor" was afforded to one Lewis W. Green for the offense of disagreeing with the church's homosexual agenda. Mr. Green, to his eternal credit, absolutely refused to get along and go along with the acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle as equal to heterosexuality, and actually preferable in some cases. An appeal to our Bishop, Robert Johnson of the Diocese of Western North Carolina, fell upon deaf ears. The Bishop also supports Donatelli in his decision to bless homosexual unions.

Speaking of children, at Calvary our adults have a Sunday School class led by a wonderful retired priest. His table is overflowing with good things to share with us, teaching us ever more about our Savior and God's plan for the world. And we have another retired old-school priest who sings in the choir and is a font of good and humorous knowledge about all things spiritual. I am on the vestry and my wife taught Sunday School until this year when she decided the task required someone younger. The only mistake we see there thus far at Calvary is that they have allowed me to join the choir. Maybe the angels will sneak in and give me the ability to carry a tune. That certainly wasn't in God's plan, but until the Angels intercede I shall persevere in making my Joyful Noise.

By the Grace of God, the odyssey on which I took my family in 1991 ended at Calvary Episcopal Church in Fletcher. It was a very long and difficult journey, but I would do it again. And if Satan ever takes over the pulpit at Calvary, as he did at All Souls, we'll be on our way out the door.

And even though, at this time, we are not ready to lead our parish to the Anglican Mission in America, it is a blessing that we now have an alternative.

Permission to print this granted by Bill Fishburne, Ashville, North Carolina. Source: URL:

<http://ucmpage.org/articles/bfishburne.html>

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Commentary: "When Homosexuals Take Over A Church"

The history of this family's journey and how they saw their church come to be dominated by those living in an alternate lifestyle is instructive for us – in terms of the way it happened “one inch at a time” behind the scenes, to the results that those believing in traditional morality were gradually excluded. This was translated into what we see happening in the Episcopal denomination and the resultant internal disintegration of that once-great church. This is our future – if we make wrong decisions at General Conference 2008 and at any time in the future. It is crucial to “guard the faith entrusted to the saints.”

– Allen O. Morris

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Correction: In the last issue of *The Christian Methodist Newsletter*, we had published a story entitled “The Tablecloth” that told of a remarkable series of “coincidences” that led to a man and a wife being reunited after having been separated by World War II. One of our readers brought new information to our attention, and we did further research into the origins of this story. In fact, it appeared in 1948 in Readers’ Digest and did not happen recent past. We do apologize if we left any other impression with you.

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The book *We’ve a Story to Tell ...* gives the history of how a small conservative Alaskan church – St. Paul Church was:

- Conceived by laypeople focused on God and Jesus Christ
- Paid and cared for by laypeople,
- Built by laypeople, at times working in weather with temperatures plunging to 20 degrees below zero,
- Used by laypeople in outreach to the community,
- Targeted for closure with no viable recourse,
- Not given any plausible reason for its disaffiliation,
- Had the contents of their church taken with no warning, and after they had been given assurance of cooperation, and ultimately...
- Preserved by God’s grace – and the tenacity of laypeople.

Find out what happened! Get your copy from Concerned Methodists for \$12.00 + \$2.00 shipping and handling.

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There are copies of the book of *Stewardship Perspectives - 2007*
“A study of Finances within the United Methodist Church” available: 295 pages of information on church expenditures and priorities. Cost is \$16.00 + \$2.00 shipping and handling. For both books, order from Concerned Methodists, P. O. Box 2864, Fayetteville, NC 28302-2864