

THE CHRISTIAN METHODIST NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Christ, Dedicated to Truth, Dedicated to Renewal

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What is Concerned Methodists?

We are a ministry of laypeople and clergy – made up completely of volunteers serving without pay – who are joined together reaffirming our Wesleyan heritage, the Bible as being God's word, and Jesus Christ as being fully Lord and Savior.

We are grieved that our United Methodist Church has been in consistent decline for the past forty years.

"We believe that there are some spiritual and moral truths – similar to physical law of gravity – that are unchanging and universal.

One bishop has said, "Allen Morris loves the United Methodist Church." That is true. And that is the reason that we want to see it prosper. We believe that when we return to our Wesleyan doctrine and heritage that have served us so well in the past, we will face our problems, correct them, and start to grow again. Our ultimate hope is the Holy Spirit would somehow be poured on the people of the United Methodist Church and every person would be changed into a John Wesley or a Susannah Wesley. Then our church would grow, and we would turn the world upside down for Jesus Christ! That is our ultimate prayer

The Rev. Jerry Kulah Addresses World-Wide Church Amendments

Jerry P. Kulah, superintendent of the United Methodist Church's Monrovia District in Liberia, is urging defeat of a series of constitutional amendments aimed at restructuring the denomination. If passed, the amendments likely would result in the structural segregation of United Methodists in Africa, Asia, and Europe from United Methodists in the U.S. The amendments, proposed by the Task Force on the Global Nature of the Church, were approved

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Spring 2009

Amending Away Our Global Church?

By Dr. Riley B. Case

A pastor, who would be known as a "Progressive" in today's language, was speaking of his trip to Africa. It was a good trip, and he was moved by a number of things. Then he made a statement: "In their understanding of human sexuality—as well as other things—the Africans are a couple of generations behind us."

I did not challenge his comment, but I wonder if he realized what he had just said. In his mind, progressives are advanced in science, education, moral vision, and cultural expression, and the rest of the world needs to catch up to his way of thinking. In other settings, this view is understood as cultural imperialism.

That kind of thinking is inherent in the newest argument for the acceptance of homosexual practice. Some advocates have long claimed that homosexual orientation is in the genes, or is at least God-given in some way, and therefore to be affirmed. But now there is a new twist.

An argument now being made is that attitudes toward matters of human sexuality are culturally conditioned, and since cultural differences should be recognized and affirmed, it is quite possible that African views of homosexuality (where it is strongly believed to be sinful) may be acceptable for Africa, but they should not be imposed on the more-progressive thinking United States.

In other words, let Africans decide what is right for Africans and Americans decide what is right for Americans. This is relevant because it is the presence of the Africans at the 2008 General Conference that assured that the church's traditional stand on homosexuality would be maintained. As one African delegate commented, "We saved the church." However, in the minds of progressives, the Africans did not "save" the church, but rather kept it from advancing. No wonder some African delegates sensed that they—or at least their views—were not welcome at General Conference. Some Africans were told it was best if they did not speak.

Now a way has been proposed that would remove Africans and other Central Conferences from voting on how the practice of homosexuality is handled in the U.S. This would be through major constitutional changes in our Book of Discipline that would separate the Africans and other Central Conference delegates from voting on matters that are considered specific to the U.S. The present Central Conferences would be renamed Regional Conferences and the U.S. would be made its own Regional Conference.

Under the new system, there would continue to be a General Conference, but it would deal with a limited agenda. Exactly what that agenda would be

is still unclear (and that is part of the problem). Then, after the shortened General Conference meets, the rest of the world could go home and the U.S. delegates, meeting as a Regional Conference, would decide those matters that are U.S. specific. This would include a majority of the resolutions, many financial matters, ordination standards, and a whole lot more.

This proposal to restructure and create Regional Conferences came to General Conference upon the recommendation of the bishops and the Connectional Table (the two most powerful groups in the church). With the recommendation came "assurances" that the issue of homosexuality was not the motivating factor for the proposal. Despite these "assurances," homosexuality will surely be one of the unintended (or for many the intended) consequence of the proposal. The amendments associated with the proposal passed General Conference with almost no debate (almost all of the time set aside for discussion and debate was taken up by the question of how many youth would serve on the Task Force. This was the governing body at its worst; we debate the make-up of the committee but never address the substance). The proposal now needs to be ratified by the annual conferences. Under our Discipline, amendments cannot become church law unless and until at least two-thirds of the aggregate votes of all the Annual Conferences approve them. Thus the importance of the 2009 Annual Conferences.

In addition to the fact that the passing of the amendments would open the door for the U.S. church to approve homosexual practice, there are other reasons why this proposal is—at least at this time—bad for the church.

1. This proposal did not come from the overseas churches. It was a U.S. initiated proposal based on the fear—if fear is too strong a word, at least the realization—that at the present rate of decline in U.S. membership, and the growth of the overseas churches, particularly the African church, the U.S. will eventually be overwhelmed by the masses. And, as has been pointed out by many, the African church is more biblical and more traditional in its understanding of the faith. Theological liberalism would lose badly unless it can get the Africans out of the way. In reality, this is a form of the old Central Jurisdiction which, when adopted in 1940, was a form of institutional racism.

2. Regional Conferences would be more expensive and add layers of bureaucracy. We do not know what the price tag would be for adding "regional" conferences to our structure, but it is most probable that there would have to be "regional" Disciplines, additional travel expenses, additional staff, and additional meetings. Currently, no reports have been

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issued of the actual financial calculations. This is like starting a building with no estimate of the cost. Does the church really want to be that reckless financially?

3. While there is presently a task force which is instructed to work out details of what sorts of legislation and matters would be assigned to the General Conference and what sorts of matters would be assigned to the Regional Conferences, there is no way of knowing how the General Conference and the Jurisdictional Conferences will divide up the Discipline. For example, the U.S. seminaries, which are heavily subsidized to the tune of \$15 million a year (while the overseas seminaries get almost nothing) will not want the overseas delegates to vote on how seminary money will be spent. There will be tremendous differences of opinion about what is global and what is national (beginning with issues around homosexuality).

4. There is no way that the proposal and amendments that authorize it will get a fair hearing and debate at the annual conferences. The conferences are being asked to consider 32 constitutional amendments in 2009. Twenty-three of those amendments relate to the Regional Conferences. Very few annual conference delegates at this point even know what the proposal is all about. There have not been articles in the church-wide press with serious discussion.

It is most likely that annual conferences will want to vote on all the amendments at one time. Even worse, and in some ways unconscionable, the African conferences—who will be greatly affected if the proposal passes—know very little about what the U.S. church has planned for them. At this writing, the amendments have not even been translated into French or Portuguese, the commonly spoken languages in Africa. Consider the fact that some of the overseas conferences will be meeting in early spring. The Sierra Leone conference, for example, meets in late February. It is almost as if there is a calculated effort not to involve the Africans in these votes.

What then should be done? Annual conference delegates must vote down the 23 amendments having to do with the Regional Conferences—assuming there will be an opportunity for an informed debate and vote. If forming Regional Conferences is a good idea (of course many of the bishops think it is) there is no reason why it cannot be considered at a later time, when the task force working on details will have completed its preliminary study.

There is no denying that United Methodism has serious challenges in its way to being a truly global church. Up until now, we have been an American church with missionary conferences that are dependent on our money and subservient to our way of thinking. If we are politically correct and monitor the speech of delegates to be sure it is properly inclusive, we expect the rest of the world to be politically correct and to be monitored. If we change our minds on whether the practice of homosexuality is to be affirmed, we expect the rest of the world to change their minds. If we believe it our church's responsibility to instruct the U.S. government on how it should be run, we expect the rest of the world to agree with our instruction.

It is true that the present Central Conferences, and particularly the African Central Conferences, find it difficult to adapt to American United Methodism's corporate culture. The way we speak, the issues we want to debate, even the whole process by which we conduct business—these are often a mystery to those of a different culture, especially when these people speak a different language and communicate by way of interpreters.

The Regional Conferences idea would address these challenges by segregating everyone into their little groups. We may gain some temporary efficiency, but we would sacrifice our claim of being a global church.

*Dr. Riley B. Case is a retired elder of the North Indiana Conference. He is also the author of *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History* (Abingdon).*

Dr. John Ed Mathison: Seven Concerns About the UMC

March 4, 2009

The man who led one of the United Methodist Church's strongest and largest congregations for more than three decades shared his "ideas and opinions" last week about the future of the denomination. Dr. John Ed Mathison, pastor of Frazer Memorial UMC in Montgomery, Ala., for 36 years, spoke at a gathering of the Wesleyan Covenant Renewal Movement, a group of theologically conservative pastors and leaders in the North Georgia Conference. He said the most "pressing challenge" facing the UMC is a series of constitutional amendments — to be voted at this year's Annual Conference sessions — that would separate the denomination into multiple "Regional Conferences," each with the ability to adapt the United Methodist Book of Discipline as it so chooses.

If passed, the amendments would allow United Methodists in the United States to structurally segregate themselves from United Methodists in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Noting that such a change would likely have a profound effect on the ministry environment in the United Methodist Church, Dr. Mathison urged his audience to get involved with educating delegates about the amendments. "Don't sit back and say, 'Somebody's going to take care of it,'" he warned. "Be sure you talk with the folks who are delegates from your church and in your area."

Another cause of concern is the United Methodist Church's failure to attract young people to the ministry. "It's appalling to see the [small number] of young people under 35 who are entering the United Methodist ministry," Dr. Mathison said. Recent studies show that only about 5 percent of UM clergy are under 35. A related problem is that "we seem to making it more and more difficult to enter the ministry," especially for those who didn't attend a UM-approved seminary. "I am for strong standards," he said, but "if we keep putting up bigger and bigger fences to get into the Methodist Church, we're losing a lot of good people."

Dr. Mathison, who now heads a leadership-training ministry, also noted that UM seminaries need to [do] a better job of teaching students leadership skills. "How many of us took a course in seminary on leadership?" he asked. "And [yet] that's what we do most of the time."

Another concern Dr. Mathison focused on is the growing impact of the economic recession on local church budgets. He said leaders at the Annual Conference and General Church level could help reduce the burden on local churches by cutting some of the denominational expenses local churches are required to pay. If such leaders would publicly announce specific cuts, local churches would have a sense that they are "being heard at the upper levels," he said.

John Ed Mathison also spoke about the need for Annual Conferences to be "more intentional in starting new churches," noting that the planting of new fellowships gave tremendous impetus to the early Methodist movement.

He rounded out his list of seven concerns... "I think it is extremely clear [from votes at the General Conference] how United Methodists stand worldwide on human sexuality," he said. "And I'm just hopeful and prayerful that when the Judicial Council meets they will remember that and...act accordingly." [Note: This speech was made before they had met.]

<http://methodistthinker.com/2009/03/04/john-ed-mathison-seven-concerns-about-the-umc/>

Culturally Conditioned Human Sexuality?

As Dr. Case had mentioned in his article examining this issue, the "progressives" believe that human sexuality is "culturally conditioned" and not the same worldwide. It is important to recognize that God has laws. His physical laws such as gravity determine what will happen and consequences if we violate them. He also has spiritual laws; His moral laws determine what will happen and the consequences if we violate them. The "progressives" ("liberals" or "secular humanists") have yet to understand these realities. In fact within the culture here in the United States some 30 out of the 50 states have voted to recognize that marriage is between a man and a woman. So it would appear that our cultural norms here in this country are not so different from those of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. Let us not be deceived – if something is true, it is true everywhere, which should not be surprising; if something is a moral truth, people can universally recognize it.

It seems that only a select minority of those in our United Methodist Church here in this country have failed to understand that.

The Impact of the “Separation” Amendments on Our Church

At the upcoming annual conferences across our connection there will be amendments considered that would separate our church here in the United States from our overseas church. If these amendments pass by two-thirds vote in the annual conferences and the American church is made into a regional conference, then it will be separated from the overseas church legislatively. This means that the overseas churches will not be able to vote on legislation that would affect our denomination here in the United States. There will then be a massive shift of the voting power of the “decision makers” in favor of those who want to normalize homosexual practice in the United Methodist Church; the votes are in place to do this as we have seen at the four general conferences held in 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008.

This means that after the next General Conference in 2012, the structure and polity would be put into place that would incorporate these new policies into our church. This in turn would result in the next time that the “regional” legislative body met here in the United States, it would pass those petitions that would result in the ordination of homosexual clergy, performance of “marriages” for same-sex couples, and all other actions that would catapult those

people supporting homosexual practice into positions of leadership, prominence, and control of the American church. The votes would be in place to do this since our overseas delegates would not have any votes in the legislative process for the United Methodist Church in the United States.

In turn, you would see a massive exodus from our denomination of both clergy and laity who support the orthodox Christian faith and morality as translated down through the years by our Wesleyan forebears. The push for homosexual acceptance would permeate every corner of every United Methodist church – regardless of size or where it was located. Local congregations that refused to go along with this compulsive advocacy would face seizure of their property or closure – similar to that of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska, whose doors were “closed” and who lost their property. What happened to them and as told in the book *We’ve a Story to Tell...* is of so much importance to every single United Methodist church.

Make no mistake about it – this is what will happen if these amendments pass.

– Allen O. Morris, who has reported on four general conferences: 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008.

Is that what we want to do?

It appears that church officials to include many of our bishops are urging us down the road to full homosexual acceptance in our church. Why is that? To do this would take us in the same direction of the Episcopal Church which is in a state of disarray and on a path of accelerated decline and disintegration.

Predictions Being Fulfilled

In the book *The Church in Bondage*, written in 1999 and published in 2000, several predictions were made:

- * It appears that our church leadership is moving the UMC down a road away from the orthodox Christian faith.
- * The increased numbers of news releases about benevolent activities and the “bishops’ initiatives” serve to camouflage the deeper problems that are potentially undermining the UMC.
- * It is believed that the bishops want to “dialogue” about the homosexual issue to wear down opposition to its practice so that it will ultimately be normalized.

These predictions were made almost ten years ago – Can anyone deny that this has been happening in our church?

The Day the Amendments Passed at GC2008

When the amendments passed at the 2008 General Conference in Ft. Worth (GC2008), the process was interesting in many respects. First of all, many of the African delegates did not receive their material – a voluminous amount of legislation consisting of two thick books with over a thousand petitions – to review until they arrived at GC2008; they would not have had adequate time to evaluate it in Ft. Worth because they would have been caught up in the intense activity that was happening at GC2008 and surrounds every General Conference. Secondly, on the day that the amendments were brought to the floor, there was a whole row of African delegates missing – with one sole exception being a single male who was still present; I learned later that when the airline flights of some of the African delegates had been booked to and from GC2008 by the UM agency responsible for their travel, their return trip had been scheduled for them to leave on Thursday – the day before the votes on this crucial legislation would come to the floor. Third, note the date that each of the amendments was passed – they are all on the same day – a great deal of important legislation was passed in one day. Fourth, many of the amendments passed with little or no discussion – some appeared to be rushed through in just minutes. Fifth, during the debate on at least one of the amendments, the African delegates complained that the translations they were receiving made no sense and they did not understand what was happening – yet the amendments continued to be pushed through. Finally, it appeared that the “skids were greased” to push the amendments through as quickly as possible and with minimal challenges.

Analysis: Due to the tremendous importance of these amendments, questionable procedures surrounding their passage, the apparent disenfranchisement of the African delegates, and how they will seriously affect our United Methodist Church, it would be best that we wait until we have had time to consider fully the impact the amendments will have on our denomination – and until after the study committee has had time to complete its work and report back to the 2012 General Conference. We have nothing to gain by passing this legislation at this time – but much that we could possibly lose.

– Allen O. Morris, with results of observations he had made at the 2008 General Conference in Ft. Worth

The Book *On the Brink*

The book *On the Brink* examines the practice of homosexuality with abundant information from a sociological, medical, physiological, and Biblical context – and offers information on various ministries and other resources to help people who are involved in this practice. In addition, it examines in much greater depth the effect of these constitutional amendments will have on our denomination. Finally, the Chronology in Appendix A shows the activism in our United Methodist Church for over 36 years and provides a good indicator of where we as a denomination are headed. Copies of the book are available for \$12.00 + \$2.00 shipping and handling from: Concerned Methodists, P.O. Box 2864, Fayetteville, NC 28302-2864.

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by last year’s General Conference. To be enacted, an amendment to the UM Constitution must be ratified by two-thirds of the aggregate “voting members” from all the Annual Conferences. Members may debate amendments, but cannot alter them.

In a video posted to YouTube on May 7, Mr. Kulah said the amendments were written without an appropriate level of consultation with African leaders or with “grassroots” Methodists from across the denomination. “We should have been consulted on this matter,” he said. Mr. Kulah noted that “most United Methodists in Africa are not [even] aware” of the proposed amendments, much less have an understanding of the changes that could result if the amendments are passed. For that matter, he is “not sure that [most] United Methodists in America are [aware] either.”

All 135 UM Conferences (67 Annual Conferences in the U.S. and 73 Conferences in Africa, Asia, and Europe) have begun voting on 23 amendments relating to the structure of the denomination. Those votes will take place over the next several months.

In the video, the Monrovia District Superintendent said he was open to a well-considered proposal for restructuring the UMC at some time in the future, but noted that “many of us who are leaders of the church in Africa do not favor passing these amendments right now.”

The Video by Jerry Kulah is at (the URL will be available on the Concerned Methodists’ website): <http://methodistthinker.com:80/2009/05/12/african-um-leader-on-amendments-we-should-have-been-consulted/>



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Dear Annual Conference Members,

This year at the various Annual Conferences we will be voting on a number of proposed amendments to The United Methodist Church’s Constitution. We in Concerned Methodists respectfully offer the following guide for your consideration. Your role in this process is very important, and we look forward to your full participation in the debate. Please examine the issues carefully and consider how they will impact our Methodist Church. Thank you.

Amendment:

- I. This proposed amendment sounds benign, but is in fact an attempt by homosexual advocacy groups to circumvent the church’s teachings on the practice of homosexuality. Its passage would lead to more church trials and continued rancor over the practice of homosexuality. (Vote No)
- II. This proposed amendment calls all organizations in the UMC to adopt ethics and conflict-of-interest policies. (Vote Yes)
- III. This is the first of 23 proposed amendments regarding the Worldwide Nature of the UMC. All of these amendments would lead to another costly layer of church bureaucracy, separate the U.S. church from the vital and growing Central Conferences, and lead to the weakening of our Connectional system. We encourage you to vote “no” on all of these amendments and we have noted that recommendation below with the acronym “WWN-UMC (Vote No)” throughout the remainder of this guide.
- IV. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- V. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- VI. This proposed amendment would allow General Conference to provide for a “transitional” period for newly created annual, missionary, or provisional annual conferences, not to exceed two quadrennia, during which such conferences would be represented at General and regional conferences on other than a proportional basis. This could codify the unfortunate way that the Cote d’Ivoire was brought into the Church, delaying their proper representation levels for a maximum of two quadrennia. (Vote No)
- VII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)

Amendment:

- VIII. This proposed amendment would ensure that church membership is open to all without regard to race, gender or status. (adds gender) (Vote Yes)
- IX. This amendment would ensure a minimum basis of support for the election of bishops at jurisdictional conferences. (Vote yes)
- X. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XI. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XIII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XIV. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XV. This proposed amendment to Paragraph 32 to the U.M. Book of Discipline (BOD) would reduce the minimum period that a person must be an active member of the UMC before he/she can be elected as a delegate to Annual Conference. (Vote No)
- XVI. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XVII. This proposed amendment to Paragraph 33 BOD would add the laity on the Committee on Investigation to those who can vote on ordination and character of clergy at Annual Conferences. (Vote Yes)
- XVIII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XIX. This proposed amendment to Paragraph 35 BOD would allow clergy members, including provisional members and local pastors who meet educational requirements to vote for delegates to General, Jurisdictional, or Central Conferences. (Vote Yes)

Amendment:

- XX. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXI. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXII. This proposed amendment to Paragraph 37 BOD would add the Church in Bermuda to the Baltimore-Washington Conference. (Vote Yes)
- XXIII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXIV. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXV. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXVI. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXVII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXVIII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXIX. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXX. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXXI. WWN-UMC (Vote No)
- XXXII. WWN-UMC (Vote No)

