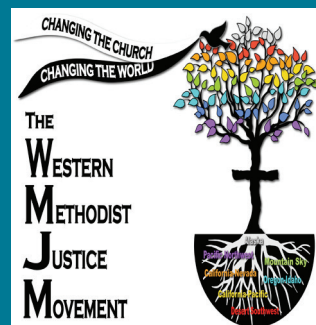


The Western Methodist Justice Movement

We are a multi-cultural and inclusive community of United Methodists from across the western United States. As a network of activists, we work together on social principles for advancing justice in our church and the world.

May 2019 Newsletter



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EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT ON JUDICIAL COUNCIL DECISION 1378

by Rev. Frank Wolf

The *Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church* has released its highly anticipated ruling on the constitutionality of the so-called *Traditionalist Plan* passed by the 2019 *Special General Conference*. While many of us had hoped that the entire plan would be ruled unconstitutional, the Judicial Council took the middle road of determining that some parts of the plan conformed with our denominational constitution while other parts did not.

Members of the 2016-2020 Judicial Council. (From left) Front row: Deanell Reece Tacha, N. Oswald Tweh Sr., the Rev. Luan-Vu Tran. Back row: Lydia Romão Gulele, Ruben T. Reyes, the Rev. Øyvind Helliesen, the Rev. Dennis Blackwell, and the Rev. J. Kabamba Kiboko.

(Not pictured, Beth Capen) Photo by Kathleen Barry, United Methodist Communications.



In brief, the Council:

- Ruled that several of the original and amended provisions of the plan were unconstitutional (Petitions 90033, 90034, 90035, 90037, 90038, 90039, 90040, and parts of 90045);
- Affirmed that the following petitions were constitutional and would therefore become church law:
 1. Petition 90032, which expands the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual;”
 2. Petition 90036, which prohibits bishops from commissioning or ordaining elders and deacons or consecrating bishops who have been judged to be self-avowed homosexuals;
 3. Petition 90042, which mandates harsh penalties for clergy convicted of performing ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions or solemnize same-sex weddings
 4. Petition 90043, which prohibits District Committees and Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry from approving persons for certification, licensing, commissioning, or ordination, when these persons are found, upon mandatory examination, to be self-avowed practicing homosexuals;

Continued on the next page

5. Petition 90044, which requires that information concerning the dismissal of complaints against clergy persons or bishops be shared with those who are making the complaints;
6. Petition 90045 (in part), which requires that just resolutions to complaints against bishops and other clergy persons shall state “all identified harms” and describe how those harms will be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaints;
7. Petition 90046, which requires that the complainants against bishops or other clergy persons be part of any just resolution process and that every effort be made to obtain a complainant’s agreement to the resolution of the complaint before that resolution goes into effect;
8. Petition 90047, which gives the Church the right to appeal to the Committee on Appeals and then to the Judicial Council if it determines that a trial court made egregious errors of church law or administration; and
- Affirmed the constitutionality of the Disaffiliation Petition 90066, which provides procedures for local churches to leave the denomination, as long as:
 1. The disaffiliation resolution receives a 2/3 majority vote of the professing members present and voting at a duly called church conference;
 2. The terms and conditions of the local church’s departure are established by the Conference Board of Trustees; and
 3. The disaffiliation agreement is ratified by a simple majority vote of the members present and voting at a session of the Annual Conference.

While disappointing, none of this is particularly surprising. The Judicial Council’s role is not to make law, but merely to interpret and evaluate the rules and policies passed by the General Conference. In this, the Council simply did its job. It’s clearly not an “activist court.”

The General Conference constitutes our biggest problem and our most pressing concern. Whatever decision the Judicial Council might have made, we would have still be forced to deal with the fact that the General Conference has for many decades been moving in an increasingly conserva-

tive and judgmental direction, particularly on matters related to sexual orientation and gender identity. In this regard, St. Louis was simply the next logical step in a well-coordinated and well-funded right-wing campaign to manipulate the General Conference into making the Church even more exclusive than it already was!

And yet, we must be clear that there was more to what happened at the General Conference than a mere setback in the struggle to make the Church more inclusive.

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By passing the “Traditionalist Plan,” the General Conference has removed any realistic hope that LGBTQIA+ persons will ever find a safe and authentic spiritual home in The United Methodist Church, at least not in its current configuration. The powers of exclusion have effectively seized control of the Church. In spite of cynical protestations to the contrary, these advocates have made it abundantly clear that LGBTQIA+ persons and their allies will neither be welcomed nor loved in the new denominational entity they are creating.

Against this backdrop of apparent defeat, it is more important than ever for United Methodist Christians of good faith to resist the efforts of those who would substitute rigid (and ultimately unbiblical) tests of orthodoxy and purity for the inclusive gospel of transformative grace that has long served as the theological and ecclesiastical lodestone of our Wesleyan Christian movement.

As the Apostle Paul reminds us, “our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) The goal of these powers and principalities is nothing short of the evisceration of the Gospel. If possible they would commandeer even the Church in their efforts to preserve their power, wealth, and privilege.

That is why we must double down in our efforts to create a different kind of faith community... a community of inclusion rather than exclusion, of grace rather than judgment, of justice for all rather than priv-

ilege for a few, of abundance rather than scarcity, of sharing rather than hoarding and coveting, of peacemaking rather than violence, of vibrant prophecy rather than stagnant orthodoxy, of equality rather than dominance and submission, of hope rather than despair. We do this, trusting that we follow a God of resurrection, whose loving ascendancy over the powers and principalities of hatred and fear is assured.

Many around our UM Connection are gathering to discern next steps in the face of our current reality, and we encourage all of you to take part when and where you are able to do so. However, wherever you find yourself participating, we encourage you to remain strong in the faith that the God of resurrection goes with you in your struggles for justice and wholeness for all. The struggle for justice is intersectional, as Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (Letter from Birmingham Jail).

So, even as we engage in the crucial struggle for the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons at all levels of the Church’s life and ministry, may we also commit to struggle for a Church that repents of its sinful participation in ideologies and structures that perpetuate injustice and oppression of any sort.



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May we turn from our flirtation with the powers and principalities so that together we might build a world free from the scourges of white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, ableism, greed, poverty, classism, violence, militarism, colonialism, xenophobia, and all other forms of oppression and injustice.



It is the intention of WMJM to sponsor an event in the fall where we might pull together the many ideas and plans for dreaming a new church. Watch for more information in our newsletter and website.



*Rev. Frank Wulf is Lead Pastor, Echo Park United Methodist Church
California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church
Chair, Western Methodist Justice Movement Leadership Team
Co-Convener, Love Your Neighbor Coalition*



United Methodism: Where Are We Now?

By Ben Roe

The Judicial Council has ruled on the constitutionality of the actions of the General Conference held in St. Louis February 23-26, 2019. In the wake of these events, a number of pastors, churches, seminaries, organizations, conferences, and even confirmation classes have expressed their disagreement, dissent, and/or non-compliance with these decisions. One UM leader has said that The United Methodist Church in the United States is "imploding," and, changing metaphors, "the plug has been pulled on life support."

Many progressive United Methodists in the U.S. and Europe have been feeling dismay and sadness at the outcome of the General Conference of 2019 and the subsequent confirmation by the Judicial Council of most of the decisions made there. The statements of disagreement, dissent, and non-compliance come with explanations of a vision of "church" which is in stark contrast to the official actions. The words "revolt" and "revolution" come to mind, given the number and strength of the expressions of disagreement.

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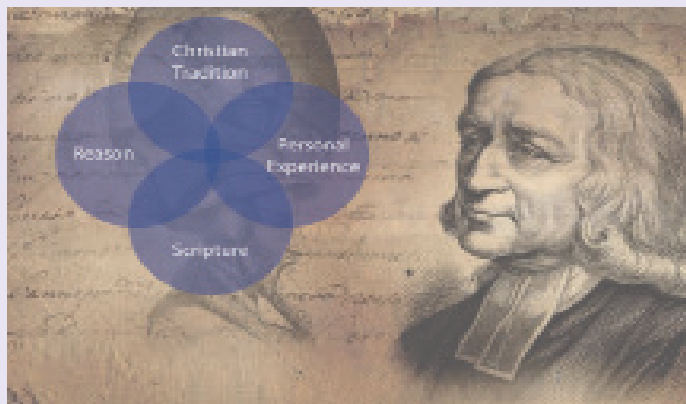
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A good overview of the aftermath can be found in Heather Hahn's article for United Methodist News Service, "Court rulings escalate talk of church split" found here: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/court-rulings-escalate-talk-of-church-split> on the Web.

A significant percentage of American and European United Methodists want their church to be inclusive of all who have felt the nudgings, the outright call, and/or push of God on their lives (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and non-binary persons). Another way to put it is just simply, "All are welcome, and 'All' Means All!"

You can find on our web site, WMJM.org, a large collection of links to statements, resolutions, news stories, and actions by those who are registering their disagreement and even refusal to comply with any of the exclusionary and punitive church laws which go into effect in the U.S. on January 1, 2020. These are inspiring witnesses to what progressive Methodists believe "church" is all about. It presents a stark contrast to the legalistic, punitive, and exclusive vision of traditionalists which is based on biblical literalism and religious tradition.

There will be opportunities in the months ahead for activists to support the birthing of a new Methodist Movement, one that will be likely based on John Wesley's experience of "grace, grace, and more grace," and all four sources of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral for theological and ethical reflection



tion — and full inclusion of all those who respond to God's call and claim on their lives.

The Quadrilateral is the name for the four sources that Wesley said should be used for theological reflection: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience. A good collection of articles on the sometimes controversial Quadrilateral can be found here: <https://um-insight.net/topics/wesleyan-quadrilateral/>

You are encouraged to read, watch, and/or listen especially to the statements from the Western Jurisdiction Leadership, the College of Bishops, Conferences, Boards of Ordained Ministry, and pastors in the West at this address: <https://wmjm.org/web/events/gc-2019/236-gc19-fallout-conferences-pastors-churches-speak-out>

Ben Roe is on the Executive Team for WMJM. He Serves as Web Servant for the WMJM & Mountain Sky United Methodist Foundation.





ISRAEL/PALESTINE NEWS AND CALLS FOR ACTION

By M. Theresa Basile

TAKE ACTION: The Global Kairos Petition Christian Palestinians have a global campaign for a petition that will be delivered to Israeli embassies and legations in the US and worldwide on May 15th. That is Nakba Day, the annual commemoration of the Palestinian catastrophe (al nakba in Arabic): the massive ethnic cleansing of Palestine that started before and after Israel unilaterally declared itself a state in 1948 and that has continued ever since. [See it and add your name.](#)

TAKE ACTION: Our Right to Boycott for Justice!

US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (US-CPR) – in which MFSA, GBGM, GBCS AND UMKR are member organizations – is calling for action on several disturbing pieces of legislation in Congress right now. All of them seek to penalize Americans for supporting boycott campaigns for Palestinian rights. These are an onslaught by our own elected officials on our constitutional rights. Political analysts say this trend in the US and Europe is one of greatest threats to free speech in the West.

[SEND A MESSAGE to your legislators now!](#)
[LEARN MORE about this legislation](#)

See the interfaith statement opposing Senate bill S.1 of January 2019

See the news: Third court strikes down pro-Israel oath as unconstitutional

UMKR Responds to GC2019 and Judicial Council

Excerpt: "In the wake of the painfully divisive experience of GC2019 and the findings of the Judicial Council in April 2019, UMKR renews its commitment to the vision of the Love Your Neighbor Coalition, to mutually support justice efforts on behalf of oppressed peoples and marginalized communities within our own denomination and around the world." Read the full statement.

MFSA says "No" to Pinkwashing

In January 2019, Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) joined more than 60 organizations around the world in calling on global LGBTQIA communities to boycott the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest in Israel. See the press release.

Three Israel/Palestine Resolutions for ACs in 2019

This year United Methodist advocates for Palestinian rights have three pieces of church legislation for upcoming Annual Conference sessions. Offered by UMKR, all focus on the church's investing policies, with a special focus on the government bonds of any country maintaining a long-term military occupation (nope, not just Israel!) See the resolutions and a Q&A resource.

Continued on the next page

UMKR's Winter-Spring edition of our unique e-magazine, The UMKR Response, is about to be published!

A one-stop roundup of the global Palestine-related news stories justice advocates should know, in your e-mailbox. SUBSCRIBE TO UMKR NEWS & ACTION, only one or two emails in a month! See news on our website: www.kairosresponse.org



M. Theresa Basile is a co-founder and Communications Director for United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), a grassroots movement working for freedom, justice and equality for all Palestinians and Israelis. She also serves as a Steering Committee member of US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR) and a Leadership Team member of the Western Methodist Justice Movement (WMJM). During several decades of activism, she has served in leadership for many years in Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSa) and has worked with diverse United Methodist, ecumenical, interfaith, and secular organizations, addressing such issues as LGBTQ equality, labor justice, immigration justice, racism, gender equality, and environmental policy.

LINKS FOR ALL ABOVE

GLOBAL KAIROS PETITION

https://www.kairosresponse.org/umkr_statement_gc2019_jcapril2019.html

OUR RIGHT TO BOYCOTT

https://org.salsalabs.com/o/641/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=23606

<https://uscpr.org/right2boycott>

https://www.kairosresponse.org/faith_groups_condemn_antibds_legislation_jan2019.html

<https://theintercept.com/2019/04/26/in-case-brought-by-school-speech-pathologist-texas-federal-court-becomes-the-third-to-strikingdown-pro-israel-oath-as-unconstitutional>

UMKR RESPONDS TO GC2019

<http://lyncoalition.org/vision-for-umc/>

https://www.kairosresponse.org/umkr_statement_gc2019_jcapril2019.html

MFSa SAYS NO TO PINKWASHING

<https://mfsa-www.brtstite.com/article/mfsa-stands-in-solidarity-with-lgbtqia-palestinians-12749659?e-Type=EmailBlastContent&eld=073b759c-b4ff-4ce2-8dff-812f18766991>

THREE ISRAEL/PALESTINE RESOLUTIONS

https://www.kairosresponse.org/2019_resolutions_associated_resources.html

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<https://www.kairosresponse.org/>

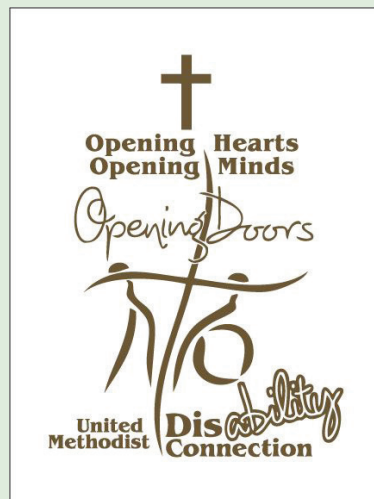
DisAbility Ministries Committee In Transition

By Sharon McCart

DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church is the only provider of resources, training, and information about disability issues that has a Wesleyan foundation. We have been in existence since 1992, two years after the passage of the ADA. As passionate volunteers, we have worked long and hard to include a marginalized group that comprises 25% of the worldwide population.

The DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church was removed from the Book of Discipline in 2016. Long housed under the General Board of Global Missions, we were excised without any conversation or warning. They cut off our funding in June 2018 other than what is being donated to our Advance.

Through our Advance, several accessibility of our important work Our consultant and our to only 11 and 10 hours cutbacks, we were able which made it possible our website (now at umcdmc.org). It also funded a collaborative project with the Find-A-Church website.



we were still able to fund grants last year, but much was necessarily curtailed. webmaster were reduced per month. In spite of the to find other funding, to completely renovate

Recently, representatives from our committee and the UM Association of Ministers with Disabilities met with representatives from seven general boards and agencies to discuss disability issues and work. We were pleased to hear that important work is being done by these groups and we found several avenues for collaboration and improvement in ministry with people with disabilities.

At the meeting, Gio Arroyo of GCORR offered the DisAbility Ministries Committee a new home. We thankfully accepted the offer. The new space will help us become better advocates and workers for justice, one that will include people with all types of disabilities as full participants in our faith communities and leadership work. We celebrate this new home with grateful hearts.

Sharon McCart, Deaconess

Chair, DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church
Deaconess Sharon McCart has served as a Western Jurisdictional representative on the DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church since 2012 and has been the chair since 2013. She has written magazine and blog articles, led workshops and webinars, and has preached at many Disability Awareness Sundays.



Methodism without Reason and Experience

By Robin Riley

Can one be a Methodist without the element of reason? Can one be a Methodist without recognizing the importance of personal experience? The “traditionalist remodelers” of Methodism have decided that, yes, one can be a Methodist without these two central components of Wesleyan Christian faith.

In arguing the issue of human sexuality, they suggest that Christian faith is reliant solely on the “authority of Scripture” and a particular orientation to tradition. As a result, the traditionalist forces shaping the denominational identity have moved the UMC in a new direction - backward into neo-primitive tribal



ism whereby loyalty, authority and doctrinal correctness, rule.

The principle qualities of this new Methodism are patriarchal dominance and authoritarianism identified most closely with a particular American cultural orientation toward gender and manhood.

In spite of forceful objections, the traditionalists have refused to consider inconsistencies in their reasoning with regard to hu-



man sexuality when it comes to scripture. In order to achieve the goal of homogeneity of meaning, they also discard personal spiritual experience as a basis for inclusion in the faith community.

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Instead, they rigidly assert that one's experience must fit within a mold established by literalistic interpretations of the Bible.

Suddenly, in just a short time, the elements of reason and experience have been expunged from the Methodist identity. The qualities that, for generations, have made Methodism a "big tent" denomination have been erased. As a result, the slogans associated with our church organization no longer make any sense. "Open doors, Open hearts, Open minds," seem oddly out of place in this new system of exclusion.



The Methodism I have experienced up to now had an open-ended inclusiveness that produced joy and hope. The traditionalists have removed these elements by replacing grace with law. The new role of a Methodist minister is to manage access to an exclusive religious club of believers who dare not think for themselves.

It is sad and heartbreaking to see what is happening as the wheels come off this magnificent organizational machine, grinding it slowly to a halt. Without reason and experience, Methodism is no longer

Methodism. It's like a bird whose wings have been clipped and can no longer fly. It's simply - religion.

Having freed itself from the fetters of reason and experience, this newly defined Methodism will rely only on tradition and authority to lead and direct its followers forward.

Oppression soon follows. In their consolidation of power the traditionalists are already at work purging the denomination of outliers who want to think and experience God for themselves.

Where will the big tent believers go as they exit the walls of this newly developing authoritarianism? We must fly on, soaring on the wings of grace, together finding a new collective identity of inclusive belonging. We must be free to reason with God and to experience faith for ourselves. Whatever our way forward, it will include reason and experience.

Robin Riley is an active pastor in the UMC and edits the WMJM newsletter.

