

# We Confess



Aug–Oct  
2016

## The Council of Bishops Names the Commission on a Way Forward

Executive Director of The Confessing Movement, Patricia Miller, has been selected to serve on the Commission on a Way Forward. We are very pleased to have her represent our supporters and all orthodox, evangelical United Methodists.

Council of Bishops President, Bishop Bruce R. Ough, said in a statement that *“After three months of diligent and prayerful discernment, bishops have selected eight fellow bishops, 11 laity, 11 elders and two deacons to serve on the commission. This group is representative of our theological diversity.”*

There will be one or two telephone or video conference meetings to begin organizing the Commission’s work between now and the end of the year. 7 face-to-face meetings have been scheduled for 2017 and another two in January and February of 2018. Any recommendations by the Commission will need the approval of General Conference. The Council of Bishops met October 30 to November 2 during which time they decided to plan for a special General Conference in 2019. According to a statement by the COB, this “action stops short of making the actual call for a special session, which is expected to come at some point after the Commission on a Way Forward begins its work.” Many had hoped that a special session would be held in 2018. According to Bishop Bruce R. Ough:

*“A requirement that materials be in the hands of delegates at least 230 days before such a session makes it unlikely that the Commission could complete its work in time to meet that deadline for a 2018 meeting, so 2019 seemed to us to be the best option.” “The purpose of broadening the timeframe to either February or March is to afford more flexibility in finding a suitable and available location.”*

(Continued on Page 2)

*(Commission on a Way Forward, cont)*

## COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Commission members, listed in alphabetical order by last name, are:

*The Rev. Jorge Acevedo  
USA, Florida, elder, male*

*The Rev. Jessica LaGrone  
USA, Kentucky, elder, female*

*The Rev. Donna Pritchard  
USA, Oregon, elder, female*

*The Rev. Brian Adkins  
USA, California, elder, male*

*The Rev. Thomas Lambrecht  
USA, Texas, elder, male*

*The Rev. Tom Salsgiver  
USA, Pennsylvania, elder, male*

*Jacques Umembudi Akasa  
Africa, DRC, laity, male*

*Myungrae Kim Lee  
USA, New York, laity, female*

*Bishop Robert Schnase  
USA, Texas, bishop, male*

*The Rev. Tom Berlin  
USA, Virginia, elder, male*

*The Rev. Julie Hager Love  
USA, Kentucky, deacon, female*

*The Rev. Jasmine Rose Smothers  
USA, Georgia, elder, female*

*Matt Berryman  
USA, Illinois, laity, male*

*Mazvita Machinga  
Africa, Zimbabwe, laity, female*

*Leah Taylor  
USA, Texas, laity, female*

*The Rev. Helen Cunanan  
Philippines, elder, female*

*Patricia Miller  
USA, Indiana, laity, female*

*Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett  
USA, Alabama, bishop, female*

*David Field  
Europe, Switzerland, laity, male*

*The Rev. Mande Guy Muyombo  
Africa, DRC, elder, male*

*Bishop Rosemarie Wenner  
Europe, Germany, bishop, female*

*Bishop Ciriaco Francisco  
Philippines, bishop, male*

*Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa  
Africa, Zimbabwe, bishop, male*

*Alice Williams  
USA, Florida, laity, female*

*Bishop Grant Hagiya  
USA, California, bishop, male*

*Dave Nuckols  
USA, Minnesota, laity, male*

*Bishop John Wesley Yohanna  
Africa, Nigeria, bishop, male*

*Aka Dago-Akribi Hortense  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, laity, female*

*The Rev. Casey Langley Orr  
USA, Texas, deacon, female*

*The Rev. Alfiado S. Zunguza  
Africa, Mozambique, elder, male*

*Scott Johnson  
USA, New York, laity, male*

*Bishop Gregory Palmer  
USA, Ohio, bishop, male*



## WESLEYAN COVENANT ASSOCIATION ORGANIZES IN CHICAGO OCTOBER 7



Nearly eighteen hundred United Methodist evangelicals from every conference in the United States and from several overseas conferences gathered in Chicago October 7 to launch a new association, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA). The new association of individuals and churches has as one of its several purposes to move The United Methodist Church into a new future, one that will be global in nature, faithful to Scripture, faithful to Wesleyan doctrine and practice, and will emphasize integrity and accountability in matters of church polity.

Another purpose for the WCA will be to be a unified evangelical voice in the discussions that will be taking place in coming months as a denominational Commission on a Way Forward will formulate and offer a plan to be presented to a special General Conference in 2019 that will (hopefully) enable The United Methodist Church to stay together amidst growing pressures to divide over issues relating to Scriptural authority, United Methodist doctrine and practice, faithfulness to covenants, and issues relating to human sexuality.

Concerning the bishops' Commission the WCA adopted the following statement:

*We believe it is imperative for the commission to propose a plan that calls for accountability and integrity to our covenant, and restores the good order of our church's polity. If the commission determines no such plan is possible, then we believe it should prepare a plan of separation that honors the conscience of all the people of the church and allows them to go forward in peace and good will. A plan that requires traditionalists to compromise their principles and understanding of Scripture, including any form of the "local option" around ordination and marriage, will not be acceptable to the members of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, stands little chance of passing General Conference, would not definitely resolve our conflict and would, in fact, lead to the fracturing of the church.*

To become a member of the WCA you can visit the website at [wesleyancovenant.org](http://wesleyancovenant.org) and click on Membership. From there you can download the membership form and either email it to [info@wesleyancovenant.org](mailto:info@wesleyancovenant.org) with a credit card number included for payment of membership fees, email the form without a credit card number and use the online secure payment system, or mail in the completed form and a check to: Wesleyan Covenant Association, 5 Grogan's Park Drive Suite 207, The Woodlands, TX 77380. The fee is \$100/year for an individual and \$1.50 per member/year for a congregation.

You can also view recordings of the main sessions at the Chicago meeting by going to the WCA website and clicking on Chicago Resources.

## DR. JEFF GREENWAY SELECTED TO BE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF THE WESLEYAN COVENANT ASSOCIATION

Dr. Jeff Greenway, lead pastor of Reynoldsburg United Methodist Church in Ohio, has been elected as the chair of the governing board of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. The vice-chair will be Rev. Carolyn Moore, pastor of the Mosaic United Methodist Church near Augusta, Georgia. Rev. Madeline Carrasco Henders, pastor of First UM Church in Luling Texas will be secretary and Ferrell Coppedge, lay leader of Bethel UMC, Marietta, Georgia the treasurer. The other WCA Council members are:

Dr. Bill Arnold Wilmore, KY	Rev. Joe DPaola Lancaster, PA	Cara Nicklas Oklahoma City, OK
Rev. Ryan Barnett Kerrville, TX	Jeff Jernigan Powder Springs, GA	Rev. Rob Renfroe The Woodlands, TX
Rev. Shane Bishop Fairview Heights, IL	Rev. Randy Jessen Denver, CO	Rev. Chris Ritter Geneseo, IL
Rev. Keith Boyette Spotsylvania, VA	Rev. Jessica LaGrone Wilmore, KY	Maggie Ulmer Jackson Center, OH
Rev. Bryan Collier, Tupelo, MS	Rev. Thomas Lambrecht Spring, TX	Dr. David Watson Dayton, OH
Jennifer Cowart Warner Robbins, GA	Dr. Joy Moore, Pasadena, CA	

Board members were elected by acclamation at the Chicago meeting October 7. Those who are members of the WCA will nominate and elect board members and officers in the future.

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*“By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.”*

*John Wesley*

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## WHY A NEW ASSOCIATION WHEN WE ALREADY HAVE THE CONFESSING MOVEMENT AND OTHER RENEWAL GROUPS?



One of the questions that has been asked a number of times is whether the new Wesleyan Covenant Association is needed when we already have groups working for renewal such as The Confessing Movement, Good News, and UM Action. As a matter of fact The Confessing Movement and Good News have been primary forces in encouraging the formation of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. There are a number of explanations given as to why a new association is needed at the present time. Here are two:



**UM** Action

1. The purpose of the WCA is different. *Good News*, at least in its beginnings, addressed issues in the church such as Sunday school curriculum and missions. *The Confessing Movement* addressed issues around doctrine, especially the Lordship of Jesus Christ. *UM Action* grew out of the discovery of church funds being directed toward political and non-Christian causes. *Lifewatch* addressed matters related to abortion. *Concerned Methodists* was primarily a lay-directed group. The Wesleyan Covenant Association comes on the scene at a time when the church is so divided over matters of Scriptural authority, accountability, covenant breaking, and integrity in the church-- especially around matters of human sexuality-- that some have spoken of division and separation. It would appear that the church is in danger of being hi-jacked by forces that would impose an agenda on the church highly influenced by a secular culture. The General Conference was so concerned about these matters that it asked the bishops to gather a special commission to explore *A Way Forward* to see if the church still has a basis for unity. The special commission is expected to bring recommendations to a specially-called General Conference in 2019.
2. A whole new generation of leaders is committed to moving the church forward in the days to come and the WCA is tapping into the new generation. The presenters at the WCA gathering included a number of persons under 40 years of age. In addition numbers of pastors from growing churches have expressed interest in joining the cause for Wesleyan doctrine and practice that has been missing in the denomination. Some persons from seminaries are involved. Further yet, there is the recognition that if we are a global church we need to include strong voices from the central conferences and especially from Africa.



## NEW ROOM CONFERENCE

### NEW ROOM CONFERENCE OFFERS HOPE FOR THE CHURCH

The Wesleyan Covenant Association is not the only group that has given encouragement to those who long for a genuine Wesleyan witness in The United Methodist Church. On September 21-23 the New

Room Conference was held in Franklin, Tennessee, with 1,500 in attendance.

Since the gathering was scheduled so close to the meeting of the Wesleyan Covenant Association there was concern the attendance of the conference would be negatively affected. This proved not to be the case. This conference was sponsored by Seedbed, the publishing arm of Asbury Seminary, and gathered not only United Methodists but others in the Wesleyan tradition for inspiration and training. As such it is believed to be the largest pan-Wesleyan gathering in America. Approximately 80% of those attending were UM.

Seedbed is becoming established as a publishing and resource company with a growing clientele among churches in the Wesleyan tradition.

### LARGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WITHHOLDS APORITIONMENTS

Like other Annual Conferences, the West Ohio Conference has struggled over the past few years with churches, pastors, and bishops openly defying the church's position on issues of homosexuality. The emphasis on church unity over unity in the Scriptures and Methodist doctrine has been a great concern for the leaders and members of Evangelical UMC in Greenville, Ohio. Following the election of a "married" lesbian pastor to the episcopacy and some Annual Conferences voting not to conform to church law with regards to issues of sexuality, the leadership team of EUMC, with the support of the congregation, made the decision to withhold apportionments at this time. Their desire is for the bishops to hold accountable those failing to abide by the polity and teaching of the church at which time they would begin to pay apportionments again.

*"The emphasis on church unity over unity in the Scriptures and Methodist doctrine has been a great concern..."*

## Bishops Rule Against Non-conformity Resolutions

The New England Conference adopted its “Action of Non-Conformity with the General Conference of The United Methodist Church” at its June 17 session by a vote of 445 to 179 with a few abstentions.

Presiding Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar ruled the resolution illegal because it is in violation of the Book of Discipline. In his ruling Devadhar called the decision “a painful one to make.” “As a United Methodist Bishop, I cannot challenge what I believe to be an unjust law by approving an illegal law” he said.

Similarly, Bishop Mark J. Webb of the Upper New York Conference ruled against a resolution adopted at the Jurisdiction’s meeting in July “ask[ing] the conference finance committees to say no funds were available for church investigations and trials related to homosexuality.”

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## Charges Against Lesbian, Partnered Clergy in Iowa Dismissed

Rev. Anna Blaedel, campus minister at the University of Iowa Wesley Center, announced during a June plenary session of her Annual Conference that she is a lesbian in a committed relationship with another woman. 3 of Blaedel’s clergy colleagues filed a complaint against her. After initiating the required supervisory response process and failing to come to a just resolution between parties, Bishop Julius C. Trimble, dismissed the charges with the explanation being that “a letter of reprimand will be placed in the file of Rev. Blaedel.”

As of September 1, 2016 Bishop Trimble is the residing bishop of the Indiana Episcopal Area.

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## JUDICIAL COUNCIL UPHOLDS DISCIPLINE

The Judicial Council ruled on several cases during their October meeting upholding the official position of The United Methodist Church on issues regarding sexuality. In cases where bishops failed to act or acted contrary to the *Discipline*, the Judicial Council reversed the resident bishops’ decisions and sent the cases back to be addressed properly. They also upheld the decisions by Bishops Devadhar and Webb ruling resolutions illegal that call for non-conformity to the *Discipline* in matters of sexuality with which the submitting conferences did not agree.

**The Confessing Movement**  
**within The United Methodist Church**

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Purpose Statement

**Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord.  
The Confessing Movement exists to enable The United  
Methodist Church to retrieve its classical doctrinal identity,  
and to live it out as disciples of Jesus Christ.**

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