

Pulse



Pulse is a new monthly publication from The Confessing Movement designed to keep you informed of the current state of our beloved church. Please continue to pray for renewal - particularly a renewed obedience to Scripture.

Holy Conferencing in Preparation for GC 2016

The Confessing Movement and Good News were invited to participate in a meeting with the Commission on General Conference along with LGBTQ leaders who advocate for liberalizing the church's stance on issues of homosexuality. Dr. Maxie Dunnam and Dr. Kim Riesman, both CM board members, attended the meeting in Portland on behalf of The Confessing Movement. The stated purpose of the meeting was as follows: "This time of sharing will be designed to provide the Commission with an opportunity to hear [various] groups so that we might best prepare for a conference which allows the Church to be its best self as we live and work together. We also hope that during our time together we can [with group input] help create a conversation among all of us as we strive to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We may also look at possible commitments, agreements and practices that the Commission could consider for our 2016 General Conference."

Read Dr. Dunnam's commentary on the meeting below.

The Nature of Discernment at GC 2016



Dr. Maxie Dunnam

Unfortunately, my recent meeting, along with other invited guests, with the Commission on the General Conference was far from productive from my perspective. I appreciate the stated purpose of inclusion in conversation about ordering the GC. But that did not happen.

The Commission leadership made it clear that they wanted to "try something different" at this GC, especially in our making decisions on the sexuality issues. But what they wanted to "try" was not made clear.

Since the meeting, press reports from the Commission have indicated some clarity. They want to use a discernment process that has been used in the United Church of Australia in their dealing with sexuality issues. That raises big questions for me. The UC of Australia is not a model I would choose to follow. Since the Methodists united with other denominations to form this United Church, I'm told by "former Methodists," that the new body is smaller than the Methodists were when they joined the union.

But my larger concern has to do with the nature of discernment. There can be no discernment with integrity unless there is a founding truth/position that all parties share, on which they test the movement of discernment. For the UM Church, that truth position must be grounded in Scripture (tested by tradition, reason and experience). Therein is our problem. We are divided not only in what we believe Scripture says, but whether we accept Scripture as the final authority.

My experience, in past General Conferences, is that when we have sought to have "holy conferencing" on the sexuality issue, the time in small groups was spent on hearing testimonies of homosexual persons...all experience, no Scripture, no tradition, and little reason. This is not anything that hints at legitimate efforts to discern God's will for our church.

May 2015



Adam Hamilton's "A Way Forward" - Just a Remake of the "Agree to Disagree" Proposal of 2012?

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas has offered a proposal to allow for a "local option" in which churches could vote to depart from the Book of Discipline on issues regarding homosexuality such as performing same sex marriage ceremonies and the use of church property for such ceremonies. The proposal also calls for allowing annual conferences to choose to go against the Discipline by ordaining self-avowed, practicing homosexuals. The current language of the Discipline regarding homosexuality would become the "historic position" of The United Methodist Church and would be considered the default policy, able to be changed through a church or Annual Conference vote. Essentially the UMC would have no position on the matter that is binding or enforceable, replacing the connectional model of polity with a congregation model. This is NOT a formula for unity but rather moves the decades old contention over the church's position on homosexuality to the local level instead of leaving it to the General Conference.

The Heart of the Matter

While the issue of homosexuality has received a lot of attention, the conflict is only a symptom of a much bigger issue - the authority of Scripture and its interpretation. We believe that the faith as embodied by Scripture was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Others believe in "new revelation" that supersedes the authority of Scripture. This is the real issue at the center of the debate.

Maxie Dunnam, Kimberly Reisman, Greg McGarvey, and Pat Miller from The Confessing Movement and Rob Renfroe from Good News will be meeting with 7 bishops and several progressives to discuss how we can resolve the differences dividing The United Methodist Church. The 18 member committee has met several times previously. Please pray for this meeting which will be held July 8 & 9.

The United Methodist Church is at the crossroads. Will 2016 General Conference act to keep the church united or will the already schismatic church be broken apart with some having no alternative but to leave? Please tell your UM colleagues to be aware and watching. Pray for the election of General Conference delegates and General Conference.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

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