

WE CONFESS

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Newsletter of The Confessing Movement
Within The United Methodist Church

The Origin of Our Name - The Confessing Movement



(By Leicester R. Longdon, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship Emeritus, Director of United Methodist Studies, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, and a charter member of The Confessing Movement.)

Two questions commonly arise about The Confessing Movement:

1. Does the name have some relationship with the Confessing Church that resisted Hitler in Germany?
2. What does “confessing” mean? A brief answer to these questions can help us to remain clear about the roots and the purposes of our involvement in a contemporary confessing movement.

The name “Confessing Movement” was not a title invented by the coalition of United Methodist evangelicals, centrists, charismatics, and catholic-leaning traditionalists who launched The Confessing Movement Within The UMC in 1994-95. There was a conscious precedent that came to mind—the “Confessing Church” that arose in the nineteen-thirties in Germany. In opposition to two pressing dangers—interferences with the German churches by the Nazi (National Socialist) government, and accommodations by various parties and theologians within the churches to the pressures of the culture—a group of pastors formed a Pastors Emergency League in 1933 which eventually became known

as the Confessing Church. Their first official gathering in 1934 produced the famous confessional statement known as the Barmen Declaration.

It is not surprising that an “emergency” gathering of pastors, laity, bishops and professors in 1994, who met to consult about a “crisis of faith” in The UMC, should have looked back to a previous church struggle for guidance, nor that they produced a “confessional statement” (in 1995) to address the challenges of their own time. One of the leading voices in the Confessing Church in Germany was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, author of *The Cost of Discipleship*, and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, who was eventually hanged by Hitler. He is a hero of the faith to countless UM clergy and laity. Thus, it was natural that his name and the German church struggle arose in the discussion.

Not everyone was convinced that we should borrow such a name, for there are no exact historical parallels between the German and American situations. William Abraham reminded us that while the German church struggle has an honored place in Protestantism, we should remember the history of the Church is filled

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In the Words Of John Wesley

“If you resolve and design to follow Christ you are fit to approach the Lord’s table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.”

“Every doctrine must stand or fall by the Bible.”

with key moments, before and after the Reformation, which required “confessing the faith” in response to attempts, inside and outside the Church, to re-invent or reject the faith. Yet, as the discussion proceeded, it became clear that we needed some kind of statement that confessed the faith being challenged and denied in our time. And that leads to the second question. What does “confessing” mean?

This question often arose at the beginning of The Confessing Movement. Some people thought it only referred to “confessing our sins.” Others thought it referred to “confessions” of particular churches, like the Westminster Confession (Reformed tradition) or Augsburg Confession (Lutheran). But the Barmen Declaration and our own Confessional Statement are not “confessions” in the sense of distinguishing between different churches. Instead, they seek to make clear the difference between Christian faith and denials or false copies of it.

Bonhoeffer can be instructive on this point. He argued that the German churches had arrived at a *Status Confessionis*. This is a Latin theological term meaning “a confessional situation”. In Bonhoeffer’s words, the Church had arrived at a time when “in order to be true to itself and its message, it must distinguish as *clearly as possible* between truth and error.” He acknowledged that Christians certainly may have different opinions and disagree on how doctrine relates to various public policies and ethical matters; “but there are some issues so fateful that no dissimulation or compromise is possible, and there is no longer a basis for negotiation.” Sometimes the Church has to say a clear Yes and a clear No.

Thus, the Barmen Declaration—in the face of laity and theologians who wanted to claim that Hitler’s work was actually a new revelation to the German people—stated that the foundation of the Church (the Yes) is founded on Jesus Christ as the one Word of God, and (the No) that no other lord (Fuhrer) or revelation in nature or history nor any change in politics or ideology can come before the Lordship of Christ.

In a similar way, our Confessional Statement declares a Yes. For example, in Article III, *“We confess, in accordance with Holy Scripture and with the Holy Spirit’s help, that Jesus Christ is the only Lord of creation and history. In the midst of many competing voices, the Church seeks to hear, trust, and obey Jesus the Lord and his commandments (I Cor. 8:5,6). True authority in the Church derives from and furthers obedience to*

this Lord. True authority in the Church holds the community accountable to this Lord, especially when teachings and practices arise that undermine or deny his Lordship.”

We also declare a clear No: *“We repudiate teachings and practices that misuse principles of inclusiveness and tolerance to distort the doctrine and discipline of the Church. We deny the claim that the individual is free to decide what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. We reject the wide-spread and often unchallenged practices in and by the Church that rebel against the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”*

In the urgent months leading up to General Conference 2016, with many claims and anxieties sounding in our church, with alarm cries about schism and separation, we need to think again about the difference between “confessing the faith” and restructuring the organization. Reading and studying again our Confessional Statement would be one good way to prepare.

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The German Church struggle provides us not only with the positive example of the Barmen Declaration. Its eventual results display a salutary warning. Bonhoeffer was called a schismatic and a fanatic. Some churches and theologians tried to avoid the necessary No of confessing the faith by arguing the fine points of the division between Church and State, seeking ways to compromise with Hitler. The Nazis, largely in control of church institutional structures, closed all the seminaries trying to form confessing church pastors, even Bonhoeffer’s “underground” seminary. The Confessing Church, as an independent reality, was scattered and ruined, existing only in isolated congregations. Many confessing church pastors accepted induction into the German army—or even sought it of their own free will—as either chaplains or soldiers. Very few sought to become conscientious objec-

tors, which after 1939 was illegal and invited arrest and death by the Gestapo. After the war, somewhat vague “confessions” of omission and wrong-doing were made by the churches; but many contemporary scholars note that far too little was said about the churches’ abandonment of the Jews and helpless victims of the State.

Thus does the judgment of God appear in our history. Pray that in the challenging years ahead God’s abundant grace and providence will enable The United Methodist Church to confess the faith with boldness.

UM PASTOR LEADS TOP MISSIONS



Wes & Joy Griffin

In 1998, the Reverend Dr. Wes Griffin of the North Georgia Conference felt a call in a totally new direction. With the encouragement of Bishop Lindsey Davis, Griffin created *INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE* (ILI) to raise up leaders who would equip and mobilize workers for the Lord's harvest. ILI's vision is to change history by accelerating the spread of the Gospel through leaders empowered by the Holy Spirit.

ROI Ministry identified ILI as one of the "Top 10" ministries in the world that are reaching the world's poorest people with the good news of the gospel—either through evangelism, discipleship, or mercy ministry. ROI is an acronym for "return on investment" when assessed in light of funds contributed by donors. This rating was based on a professional, third-party evaluation conducted by Calvin Edwards & Company, a philanthropic advisory firm in Atlanta, GA.

Today, after just 15 years, ILI has trained more than 120,000 leaders in more than 100 different countries. Its passion is to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. ILI holds training conferences all over the world, focusing on these EIGHT CORE VALUES: intimacy with God, passion for the harvest, visionary leadership, culturally relevant evangelism, multiplication of leaders, family priority, faithful stewardship, and integrity.

In 2013 alone, ILI trained 22,937 leaders at a cost of \$245,248. The cost per leader trained was \$10.69!

ILI is a 501© (3) ministry. It is governed by a 9-member board. It has 17 paid staff members. Its revenue for 2012-2013 was \$2,174,345. Expenses were \$2,143,414.

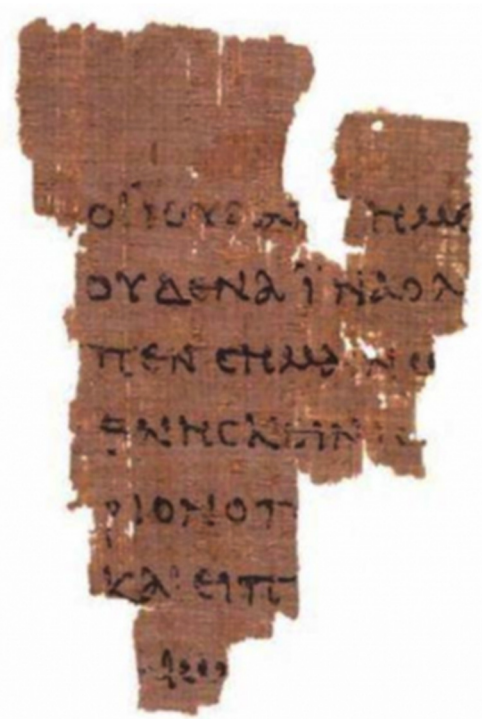
ILI holds national and regional conferences for established and emerging leaders that provide biblical, relevant, reproducible, and transformational leadership training. Participants learn how to effectively accelerate the spread of the gospel and train others. While many organizations train leaders, ILI also mobilizes alumni to train other leaders. 85% of all ILI training is done by alumni.

ILI headquarters is in Carrollton, GA. For more information, phone 770-832-1244 or go to their website- www.ILITeam.org

OLDEST FRAGMENT OF MARK'S GOSPEL FOUND

Scientists have uncovered a fragment of the Gospel of Mark, written on papyrus and later used to make an Egyptian mummy mask. Researchers believe the text, scheduled to be published later this year, dates to the 80s A.D. If they are correct, it is the first New Testament manuscript discovered from the first century.

Most Bible scholars agree the Gospel of Mark was written in the late 60s in Rome, but it is not surprising a copy of the text could have made its way to Egypt less than 20 years later, Craig Evans, professor New Testament studies at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, said, "In the Roman Empire mail moved almost as quickly as it does today. Something written in Rome could be in Egypt being read within a few weeks."



(From an article by Julie Borg in the Feb 21, 2015 issue of *WORLD* magazine, used by permission.)

THE PRICE OF CONSCIENCE

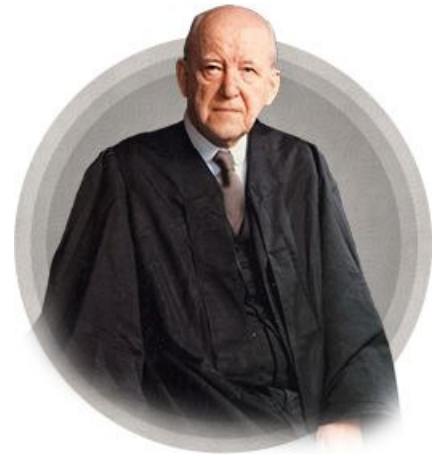
In a summary judgment bypassing trial, a Washington state judge ruled that florist **BARRONELLE STUTZMAN** violated state law by not fully supporting same-sex marriages. Attorney General Bob Ferguson offered to settle for \$2,000 in fines and \$1 in legal fees if she promised to "no longer discriminate" and stop litigation, but Stutzman wrote to Ferguson that her conscience is not for sale. Stutzman faces the fine plus large legal fees, which the judge ruled plaintiffs may collect from her personal assets. That may put Stutzman in a position like that of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, the Oregon bakery facing fines up to \$150,000 at a March 10 hearing.

(From *WORLD* magazine, used by permission)

Perspectives

DO NOT SUBTRACT FROM THE WORD OF GOD

(The following paragraph is an excerpt from *VICTORIOUS CHRISTIANITY* by the late Reverend Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Welsh Protestant minister and medical doctor, pastor of Westminster Chapel, London, for almost 30 years.)



Rev. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"Do not subtract from the Word of God. This is the particular danger at the present time. The modern man, come of age, does not believe in the supernatural and cannot take the miraculous. In the name of God, I say, be careful; do not reduce the Gospel. Hold to 'the whole counsel of God,' everything that has been revealed. The moment the preacher begins to look at his congregation and to think about what they will like and dislike and to ask himself, 'what can I get them to believe and accept?' he has already betrayed the Gospel."

CIVIL RIGHTS AND HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS

(Following are excerpts from an editorial by Janie B. Cheaney in *WORLD* magazine, April 5, 2014 issue, used by permission.)

"In the 1960s, centuries of legalized racial injustice were overturned in a decade by the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., its spiritual and moral leader, borrowed his tactics from Gandhi but based his authority squarely on the Bible and its insistence on the worth and equality of all human beings. He stood at the top rung of the civil rights ladder, last in a line of preachers who found their justification in the Word of God: flawed men with a sound message whose time had come.

"Promoters of homosexual rights piggybacked on the same ideas of equality and justice. But though their campaign looked similar, it was based not on affirming the Bible but on dismantling it. Homosexual rights advocates, often in all sincerity, appeal to God and Jesus just as MLK did, and it appears their time has come. But unlike civil rights advocates of the 60s, they can only make their cause sound godly by denying the Word of God."

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS IN SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS?

(The following excerpts are from an article by Daniel James Devine in *WORLD* magazine; used by permission.)

Heather Barwick always found it easy to love her mom. But loving two moms? That was a bit more complicated.

Barwick was around 3 years old when her parents divorced, and her dad rarely visited afterward. Her mom began a relationship with another woman that lasted a decade. It wasn't until Barwick entered kindergarten in Maryland that she realized other kids didn't live with same-sex parents. The boys in school thought it was awesome her mom was a lesbian.

Yet, while Barwick knew her biological mom loved her, she felt troubled by the absence of a dad she barely remembered. "I felt like I had this huge hole. And it just ate at me. I didn't understand why he wasn't there, why he didn't love me. Her relationship with her "other mom" felt awkward. By age 10 Barwick had asked to see a counselor, and by 15 she was seeking male attention from boy-friends. "I really used sex at a young age as a way to feel loved."

In the United States, about 110,000 same-sex couples had a child under 18 living with them in 2013, according to the Census Bureau.

In June the U.S. Supreme Court will declare whether state-approved homosexual marriage is a constitutional right. The debate over legal privileges for homosexuals has emphasized rights for adults, but some children (reared in same-sex households), now adults themselves, say another right has been ignored: the right of children to have a mother and father.

Today Barwick, 31, lives in Columbia, S.C., with her husband and four children. She has never before publicly shared her story using her real name. For those like her, speaking out about same-sex parenting can be heart-wrenching: She still has a close relationship with her mom, loves her deeply, and is thankful for her constant involvement as a grandmother.

But Barwick believes it was impossible for her mom's partner to fill the void she felt growing up: "I couldn't let go of my dad. I couldn't choose to love another woman as my parent."

A new study, published in February in the British Journal of Education, *Society & Behavioural Science*, examined a survey database from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, involving random interviews with tens of thousands of U.S. households.

In analyzing data from 512 same-sex couples with a child under 18 living in the home, study author D. Paul Sullins—a sociology professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC—found that children raised by same-sex parents were twice as likely to suffer emotional and behavioral problems as children with heterosexual parents. When compared only with children raised jointly by their own biological parents, the difference was even more stark: Children from same-sex households were four times as likely to suffer problems such as depression, anxiety, defiance, or inattention.

"Divorce is still, so far as I can tell, the primary means by which a child comes to be in a same-sex household," said Mark Regnerus, a University of Texas at Austin sociologist whose own survey of same-sex households in 2012 found children of gay parents were more likely to be unemployed, depressed, unhealthy, promiscuous, and to have a negative view of their childhood.

Heather Barwick said she only found healing for her "father wound" after she began attending church with her future husband. "It really wasn't until I came to Christ that I felt that burden lifted off of me. And I'm not bitter. I'm not angry," she said. "I forgive my dad."

Still, there have been long-term consequences: "I'm not gay, but the relationship that was modeled before me was a woman loving a woman. So I've struggled as an adult figuring out how to be in a relationship with my husband."

For Barwick, it's possible to oppose gay marriage and still love her mom: "It's sort of a delicate balance between me speaking up and honoring her."



Quotable Quotes

“If there had been any other way to save a lost and dying world other than through the sacrifice of his son, God would have been a monster to have sent him.”

(The late Rev. Dr. William H. Hinson)

“God doesn’t want a place in your life. He demands and deserves preeminence. God’s throne is not a duplex.”

(The late Rev. Dr. Adrian Rogers)

“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to a government of any other.”

(By President John Adams)



OUR ANONYMOUS SAINTS

When the history of United Methodist renewal is written one day, the unsung heroes will be the thousands of church members who prayed and contributed money to renew their beloved church. God knows who you are! Your help is critical, in terms of prayer and contributions. Some are skipping the Friday noon meal each week and using the time to pray for the UMC. Then they contribute their lunch money to The Confessing Movement. For directions on contributing, just call our office at 317-356-9729. Or, go to our website at www.confessingumc.org and click on “donate.” Thanks so much!!

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

7995 East 21st Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219
(317) 356-9729

Fax: (317) 356-9742

Web site: www.confessingumc.org

E-mail: cm@confessingumc.org

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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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