
RENEWAL



The Journal of the Evangelical Renewal Fellowship in New England

Walter Ciesluk, Editor

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Evangelical Renewal Fellowship is the New England Association of The Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church

WHO WILL TRAIN US?

Rev. Dr. Thomas Bentum

When I began to put this article together, I intended to write just about why we need to reinstate Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary as a United Methodist approved seminary. But this led me to think about the broader issue of who will train our pastors and other leaders to effectively lead our church in this generation and beyond for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel. We have a good case for reinstating GCTS for this purpose, but shouldn't we also demand more from the schools that are already approved to train us effectively?

An approved seminary is one in which United Methodists can graduate from and be able to be ordained in the United Methodist Church. GCTS has not been approved for that purpose since 1998. GCTS is a world-class school committed to raising up the kind of leaders we need today in our church. A recent look at their course catalog shows 21 classes offered in just evangelism alone. You won't find that kind of commitment in the approved schools in New England like Boston University, Harvard or Yale.

The natural question is: why is GCTS not approved? I contacted the University Senate and they informed me that this is a confidential matter between it and the school and I could not see a copy of their official letter. GCTS was more than willing to let me see a copy of the letter, but in the interest of not hurting their chances of approval in the future I feel that I can not publish or comment on any of the content. In essence, the University Senate is asking us to trust them while our conference is losing membership and an effective school for pastoral training is not able to be utilized to its fullest extent. At the very least, we need to let the University Senate know that we want this school to be made available to us.

Having GCTS available to us is a good step, but we need to begin working toward bigger dreams. Imagine that someday the United Methodist Church would take back the colleges and seminaries that bear its name. Imagine that our schools would again be primarily training centers for United Methodist women and men following the dream of John Wesley "to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

Academic freedom has been the high ideal of our schools with very little constraint. I am certainly in favor of seeking truth wherever it may be found and to fearlessly follow the evidence wherever it may lead. We should never lose that because, if Jesus is indeed the Truth, than the Christian faith ought to thrive in that kind of environment. But there seems to be some kind of disconnect going on in the training of our people as they go to our schools. My personal experience is that our graduates are not all that passionate about Jesus and desiring above all things that his name be proclaimed in all the earth. Would not that goal for our schools be consistent with our Wesleyan heritage?

I am hardly an expert in this matter and can only ask the question and speak from my own experience. I did attend a United Methodist college and an approved, but non-United Methodist, seminary. My experience in college would hardly have excited my passion for following Jesus. I don't recall meeting any professors openly passionate about their faith in Christ or getting any encouragement from the school as a whole to explore the person of Jesus in class or

outside of class. Perhaps others experienced that, but I did not. I did meet teachers and administrators passionate about the institutional church and its survival, but they did not seem to connect that with a relationship to Jesus.

I am fascinated by United Methodist Paul Nixon's call to raise up apostles in our day in his book *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*. Central to his thesis is that we need apostles in our church who refuse to lead a dying church. The key ingredient of apostles in our church is someone who "has had *a living experience of meeting Christ* (his emphasis, not mine!) somewhere, somehow, and who, then, out of that experience, moves with a sense that he or she is chosen, *is sent out in life to share something of eternal value* with the world, and who *partners with others* of similar faith and experience in that endeavor."¹ Wouldn't it be great if our schools made it a priority to raise up people like that for the sake of the church? Think of the impact.

Donald Haynes in a recent article in the May 2, 2008 issue of *The United Methodist Reporter* affirms that indeed as a church we have taken a detour from our original passion. Since the late 19th century the predominant theology in our schools has been a liberalism birthed in Germany. Haynes quotes George Marsden of Duke who said, "Within a span of one generation, between the 1890's and the 1930's, the extraordinary influence of evangelicalism in the public sphere of American culture collapsed. Many leaders of major Protestant denominations attempted to tone down the offences to modern sensibilities of a Bible filled with miracles and a gospel that proclaimed human salvation only through Christ's atoning work on the cross."² We have indeed taken a costly detour and we have turned over the training of our church leaders for over one hundred years to a damaging, non-Wesleyan movement.

I would love to have GCTS made available to us once again, but, more importantly, I would love to see our church take back our schools. Boston University School of Theology, for instance, was the first to fully embrace German liberalism and had a huge impact on the rest of the church. It could now lead the way once again in our church by declaring this theological detour the failure that it is and become the training center for effective apostolic leadership that is reflective of the true heart of Wesleyanism for the sake of New England and the world.

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¹ Paul Nixon, *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 2006), 14.

² George Marsden as quoted by Donald W. Haynes, "Finding Our Way—After a Costly Detour," *The United Methodist Reporter* 2 May 2008: 7B.

REFLECTIONS ON GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008

James V. Heidinger II

We have now had two weeks to reflect on our church's General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, and I want to share with you some of my initial impressions. As soon as we returned to our offices, the magazine staff worked feverishly to assemble our 52-page special edition of Good News magazine covering General Conference. I am very anxious for you to get it in your hands. It is an outstanding issue and deals in-depth with the major issues addressed at General Conference.

Fort Worth was the eighth General Conference that I have attended. Each one of these events ends up leaving a bittersweet taste in my mouth. There is pageantry expressing the global nature of United Methodism and some pretty good preaching and singing. And then there are the grandstanding speeches and political maneuverings that leave you wondering if this is what John Wesley had in mind to strengthen the spiritual growth and witness of early Methodism. We have always believed that General Conference can steer the direction of the United Methodist Church — either positively or negatively. That is why our work there plays an important part in our overall renewal ministry. Our legislative agenda suffered some losses and gained some victories. Throughout our time at General Conference, we endeavored to be a voice for the grassroots United Methodists in the pew who still believe in traditional Christian values.

Homosexuality Debate—Yet Again

We can all give thanks that our church reaffirmed our gracious and biblically-grounded positions on human sexuality and marriage. While we affirm and share in ministry with those who struggle with same-sex attraction, we maintain our trust in Scripture and nearly 2000 years of church teaching on this matter. In voting the way it did, the General Conference enabled our church to steer clear of the deep divisions now tearing at the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion.

Unfortunately, however, our Council of Bishops made a regretful decision that will keep this issue roiling our denomination for at least the next four years. Despite the decisive votes on the matter, approximately 150 activists were allowed (once again) to interrupt the conference with a "time of witnessing" on behalf of the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender cause. This was obviously a protest against the actions taken by the conference to strongly reaffirm our church's teachings on homosexuality. Protesters were allowed to march around the floor of the conference, sing songs, and then, most regretfully, place a black shroud over the conference's altar table. Many delegates and observers found the protest offensive, and the placing of the shroud over the altar an act of desecration. We know a small minority of individuals do not agree with our church's biblically-grounded positions, but our denomination stands with nearly every other branch of the Christian faith in claiming that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching," and that "marriage is between one man and one woman." We don't believe the protest on the floor of the General Conference should have been allowed. Outside the convention center, the protesters had the unfettered opportunity to lobby delegates with their handouts and make their demonstration known with drumbeats. Inside the convention center, they wore rainbow stoles and stood in silent protest whenever there was a vote on homosexuality. Allowing the protest to take over the General Conference floor broke covenant and trust with those delegates who were sent from their local congregations to move the denomination forward.

Judicial Council Elections

We were very disappointed with the results of the Judicial Council elections. Three faithful, evangelical members who had given extraordinary service were not re-elected. They were obviously targeted by the Council of Bishops and special interest groups because of their vote in overturning Bishop Charlene Kammerer's 2005 ruling that removed the Rev. Ed Johnson from his church in South Hills, Virginia. As you will recall, the Rev. Johnson refused to bow to Bishop Kammerer's demand that he accept a self-avowed, practicing homosexual as a church member. Though the man was active in the church, the Rev. Johnson had postponed membership pending further counseling. Although it would have been perfectly appropriate to do so, none of these fine members were re-nominated by the Council of Bishops to serve another term. Instead, five of the Council of Bishop's nominees were elected. Then, shortly after the

vote was taken it was revealed that many delegates had had placed on their chair or desk a campaign flyer (unsigned and unidentified) recommending five bishop-supported candidates. All five were elected, and in the order listed on the flyer! This egregious action violated the General Conference Rules of Order that prohibit the distribution of materials on the desks of delegates. And it happened the very morning votes were to be cast for Judicial Council elections.

“Cellphonegate”

As you may have already read, the Renewal and Reform Coalition provided cell phones, as a hospitality gift, for Central Conference delegates. When others learned of this, the accusations flew furiously (you can click [here](#) to read the story and [here](#) to read the Good News response). The story quoted no less than eight denominational officials (including three bishops) who questioned our motivation or accused our Coalition of a laundry list of violations: “vote-buying,” “bribery,” “paternalism,” “racism,” “manipulation,” etc. Sadly, none of the eight quoted had made any attempt to speak to any of our Coalition leaders before making their accusations. The article did quote three Central Conference delegates who received a cell phone. They were grateful and said they felt no conditions or strings attached whatsoever.

Those leaders quoted in the news article might have done well to have followed the charitable example of Bishop Roy I. Sano, executive secretary of the Council of Bishops. His concerns about this very issue led him to initiate a face-to-face conversation with Coalition leaders to inquire about the distribution of the phones. We were grateful to Bishop Sano for his gracious spirit in seeking further information about the issue. It’s amazing how much mutual understanding and respect can be gained when a church leader takes the time to talk and listen.

A Messy Process

Finally, a few key aspects of the General Conference left much to be desired. Delegates from the Central Conferences (Africa, the Philippines, and Europe) suffered the most from this failing. Many of them arrived in Fort Worth without having had the opportunity to review the pre-conference reports and petitions that the U.S. delegates had in their hands for several months. Furthermore, translation problems still continue to plague the proceedings, making it very difficult for non-English speaking delegates to follow the parliamentary procedures leading up to very important votes regarding the future of our church.

Numerous and lengthy reports and celebrations early in the conference left precious little time later to seriously debate the very important issues. A particularly egregious example of this came on the final day of the conference when a petition to amend Article IV of our church’s Constitution came up for debate immediately following the morning break. Not that there was much of a debate to hear. Because time had been used so unwisely, the conference was working under a rule that allowed only a one minute speech in favor of a petition and a one minute speech against it. Imagine our U.S. Congress voting to amend one of the articles of our nation’s Constitution after just two minutes of debate! It was a very frustrating experience for the delegates, and a very disheartening thing for observers to watch. And this was done on the final day, when a number of central conference delegates were not present, and even some U.S. delegates had decided to head home out of utter frustration and exhaustion.

Good News Going Forward

At one point during the long days and nights of observing General Conference, it became very clear to me as the proceedings unfolded, that some church institutionalists and bureaucrats were trying very hard to roll back changes Good News has advocated in recent years. Boards and agencies were desperately trying to protect their "turf." The dwindling annual conferences in the Western Jurisdiction failed to stop attempts to curtail their outsized and unfair influence on the church. And several bishops and other church leaders went out of their way to make not-so-subtle attacks on Good News and the other reform and renewal groups. These are not pleasant things to hear, but no one said the work of renewal and reform would be easy.

So going forward I urge you to prepare yourself for some serious battles ahead. Despite a terrible track record with decades of precipitous decline, there are still UM leaders that hold to the outdated and misguided belief that continued liberal revisionism will somehow revitalize the church. Furthermore, a now left-of-center Judicial Council could

plunge the church into crisis when radical advocates for the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender agenda decide to challenge our church's biblically-grounded teachings on human sexuality and marriage.

On a positive note, however, it is important to note that this backlash actually demonstrates how influential evangelicals have become. Indeed, many liberals recognized that this General Conference was perhaps their last chance to gain traction in the church. In 2012, roughly 40 percent of all the General Conference delegates will come from the more biblically-grounded Central Conferences in Africa, Europe and Asia. Their strength, coupled with the stability and growth of evangelicals in the U.S. church, will challenge and thwart the divisive liberal agenda. Nevertheless, we still have much work to do. Despite our growing strength, we have a formidable task ahead of us—ensuring that those institutionally-minded church officials do not suffocate the glowing embers of a church longing to blaze forth with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In closing, we thank you for your many prayers, your faithful partnership and your generous investment in Good News. Our presence in Fort Worth with a team of more than 50 persons was a costly endeavor. But we believe it was worth the effort and expense. I am asking you to prayerfully consider a generous gift to Good News this month. We need your financial support to help us take care of some of these expenses. Thanks for your dedication. We are grateful for you.

Reprinted from Good News Perspective, 19 May 2008 with permission of Good News, www.goodnewsmag.org. Dr. Heidinger is the Publisher of Good News magazine and the Good News Perspectives electronic newsletter.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Robbin R. Grill

In thinking about what I would write for the ERF journal, I decided that I wanted to share with you my husband, Alan's, recent experience. Through the power of prayer, Alan is still with us today. At 4:00 a.m. on April 18th Alan woke me up to tell me he was having an allergic reaction. This was his third and the doctors had not been able to find the cause despite numerous tests. He took Benadryl and injected himself with his epi-pen which he always carries with him. I called 911 and it took a long time for Rescue to get there, but they finally did and transported him to Concord Hospital. Alan's blood pressure and heart rate kept going down and nothing seemed to stop the downward plunge. The doctor called for the code cart and they were telling me that I needed to have someone with me.

At his point I need to digress a bit and tell you that about ten years ago Alan led a young man in our church to the Lord. They are now going to another church, as are we, but Mike works in the Emergency Room and we would see him on Alan's trips there. When Mike heard what was going on and that Alan was not expected to live, he came in the room and, pushing everyone out of the way, started praying over Alan, asking Jesus to send Alan back, that he still had work to do here. It was at that moment that Alan's blood pressure started to go up as did his heart rate. Soon after they did an ultrasound and we could see Alan's heart pumping regularly.

Prayers are answered as was certainly the case this time! You know, Jesus tells us to spread the good news and to be his witness. If Alan had not witnessed to this young man ten years ago, I would not be writing this article with such a joyous ending. We need to share our faith and we need to pray. We need to let others know of the blessings that God wants to bestow upon us.

On another note, we are once again answering phones at Conference for the Upper Room Living Prayer Center. We have stepped out in faith this year and signed up for a four hour block on Friday and again on Saturday. The times are 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. each day. Won't you consider taking an hour to help others with problems? You will be so blessed that you did. If you can do this, please contact Robbin Grill at robbin@rrgcpa.com or at (603) 228-0695. May God's blessings be with you!

Robbin Grill is the coordinator of the Evangelical Renewal Fellowship (ERF) prayer ministry.

REPORT ON LEGISLATION, GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008

Dr. Riley Case

The following is a summary of some of the legislation from General Conference that is of special interest to evangelicals, along with some comments.

- The series of petitions that will enable constitutional amendments that would make the church in the United States a regional conference passed by the necessary 2/3 majority. The amendments would allow for a General Conference made up somewhat similarly as our General Conference now is, that would deal with issues of a world-wide nature, but then in addition provide for Regional Conferences (similar to Central Conferences now) that would deal with issues of a regional nature. Since much of what General Conference now does relates to the U.S. church primarily, those U.S. specific matters would be dealt with by the U.S. Regional Conference. The problem is determining what is of a worldwide nature and what is of a "regional" nature. A study committee will work out the details. Evangelicals generally oppose this amendment (at least at this time-one argument was, let the study committee show us the details first and then let us do the constitutional amendment if it looks right). The matter of the Social Principles (what is really at stake is the definition of the family and the matter of homosexuality which are in the Social Principles) immediately came up in conference debate. Do the Social Principles apply to the church globally or does each region set its own Social Principles? It is very obvious to all observers that the church's definition of marriage as between a man and a woman, as well as the matter of whether the practice of homosexuality is to be approved, might well change if the Central Conference votes were removed. In other words, some are arguing that while the church in Africa may see homosexuality as a sin, the church in America sees it differently. The matter is not yet settled. Each annual conference will need to vote on this since a constitutional amendment needs to be ratified by 2/3 of the annual conference members.
- Another constitutional amendment, which would have tremendous implications would change Article IV (p. 22 of the 2004 Discipline), entitled Inclusiveness of the Church. The article was placed at the time of the EUB merger in order to emphasize that the church is open to persons of different races, national origin, or economic condition. A sentence in the paragraph now reads: All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its services and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members. The amendment, basically, would remove the words without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition.. to make the paragraph read: All persons shall be eligible to attend its worship services.. and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members. The seriousness of the change cannot be overemphasized. This is being called the "No Standards, No Conversion" amendment. The purpose of the paragraph is changed from not discriminating against people on the basis of who they are, to not discriminating on the basis of anything, which could be, what they believe, whether or not they are converted, whether or not they obviously have ulterior motives. While an incident regarding denial of membership to a practicing homosexual triggered the change, the change would reach far beyond just the matter of practicing homosexuals. This will require annual conference ratification, so members of annual conferences will have a chance to vote on this.
- Some observers believe another sentence in the amendment could be used to declare the ban on ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexuals and performing same-gender unions or marriages as unconstitutional. The sentence reads, "In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church." Are we not "structured so as to exclude" gay and lesbian members from ordained ministry and same-gender unions? Given the new makeup of the Judicial Council, it would not be far-fetched to see them overturn our existing prohibitions based on this amendment. And again it would go beyond homosexuality, as it appears we could not exclude any group for any reason (such as theological differences or racist practices). This amendment will require annual conference ratification, so members of annual conferences will have a chance to vote on this.

- The subject of pastoral authority in regard to determining readiness for church membership was debated at length. In the end, nothing was changed. A petition, which included the words: In continuity with our historic Methodist heritage, pastors have the responsibility of discerning one's readiness to take the vows of membership was defeated 384 - 515. Then an alternative petition which stated: The pastors(s) and the congregation are to faithfully receive all persons who are willing to affirm our vows of membership also failed 436 - 448. This means the present ruling of the Judicial Council decision 1032 still stands saying that the pastor has sole authority to determine membership.
- The church's position on the practice of homosexuality remains, basically, unchanged. The major discussion was on the statement in para. 161G of the Discipline, which states The United Methodist Church, does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. A statement strongly supported by progressives wanted to remove the statement and substitute it with the words: Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness. While this statement was supported by the legislative group a minority report finally prevailed: The statement that passed retained the language of the present statement: "not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" and also added the phrase sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. This statement also included a rewrite of much of paragraph 161G to make it shorter and more understandable. The crucial vote on this was 517 - 416 (55% - 45%). Following the announcement of this vote approximately 125 persons in the gallery disrupted the conference by standing a singing "Jesus Loves Me" 40 times. The next morning a planned demonstration was held when the agreed-upon plan of the bishops to circumvent the rules of the conference against non delegates speaking or having the floor of the conference was carried out by declaring a "recess" (so permission would not have to be given by the delegates). During the "recess", a 15-minute demonstration was held; persons in sympathy with the demonstration (including the presiding bishop) stood in solidarity, and then heard Bishop Melvin Talbert (given a live microphone) berate the conference and call the action maintaining the church's current position a sin.
- Once the major debate was completed on para. 161G other homosexual-related paragraphs passed without extensive debate. These included the prohibition of the ordination and appointment of self-avowed practicing homosexuals, the prohibition of the use of apportionment money to promote the acceptance of homosexuality, and the probation of ministers to perform same-sex unions or marriages.
- Paragraph 161C on marriage as "shared fidelity between a man and a woman" was retained 603 - 222. A minority report would have defined "marriage covenant shared by adults." That minority report failed.
- A petition to continue support for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) prevailed 418 - 384. Persons committed to a pro-life perspective had wanted a petition that would have had the Women's Division and Church and Society withdraw from RCRC, since RCRC is radically pro-choice and much more extreme than the nuanced view of abortion that is presently in the Social Principles.
- General Conference did add a statement to the Social Principles urging ministries to reduce "unintended pregnancies" and to assist support centers that help women "find feasible alternatives to abortion." It also acknowledged the equal claim to life and well-being of "the unborn child" and supported parental notification and consent for abortions performed on minors.
- All petitions that would have changed the formula for the Ministerial Education Fund failed. The fund presently subsidizes the United States seminaries to the tune of over 15 million dollars a year. This money keeps the seminaries afloat (in some cases barely) but does not directly help students, many of whom graduate with great debts. An even bigger concern is the overseas seminaries, which receive no money from the fund. For many this is a justice issue. In places like Africa where the church is growing rapidly and where students are turned away by the hundreds because of lack of funds there is no subsidy. In the United States, where seminaries are having problems attracting students, there is a subsidy of 15 million dollars a year. There was a special action setting aside 2 million dollars for African seminaries but this is a pittance compared with the 60 million (in four years) for the U.S. seminaries. The General Conference did tighten the accountability of U.S. seminaries by requiring that UM funds be spent only on United Methodist student scholarships or "faculty and staff salaries and benefits for

those who prepare United Methodist students for ordained ministry or service as local pastors through the Course of Study program." These requirements may also influence the distribution of funds to favor those U.S. seminaries that have more UM students preparing for pastoral ministry. An annual report by the seminaries will help us monitor progress in this area.

- The mission statement of the United Methodist Church was expanded by adding the phrase "for the transformation of the world" to the words "make disciples of Jesus Christ." The new statement reads: the purpose of the United Methodist church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- The New Social Creed proposed by the Board of Church and Society was approved, not as a new social creed but as a "Companion Litany for the Social Creed." The Social Creed as it appears in the 2008 Discipline will remain the official Social Creed.
- The membership vows of the church will add the word "witness" to the member's pledge to support the church (with "prayers, presence, witness, gifts, and service."
- The four-year \$200,000 Study on the Ministry, which ended up with no recommendations except to continue the study, received rough treatment. The Study had asked that no ministry petitions be considered in 2008 but that all petitions relating to ministry be referred to the ongoing committee. The conference rejected that recommendation and dealt with a number of petitions. One of these would allow deacons to serve communion under certain circumstances. A more important piece of legislation would grant full rights to certain Local Pastors to vote on General Conference delegates. This, however, would be a constitutional amendment, and will need to be ratified by the annual conferences. Full voting rights for Local Pastors has been an evangelical cause for the past 40 years so this piece of legislation must be considered a step forward. Additional changes shortened the period of candidacy for ordination and the period of probation from three to two years each.
- A number of petitions (5 from annual conferences), in the form of resolutions, call for divestment from Israel (from companies that do business with Israel that "cause harm to Palestinians"), were rolled into one resolution that was voted down overwhelmingly (the item actually appeared on the consent calendar). The resolution calling specifically for divestment from the Caterpillar Corporation was withdrawn before the conference began.
- While it not exactly accurate to say that the conference did away with guaranteed appointments for pastors, it is accurate to say that paragraph 334 was amended to give bishops procedures for terminating an ineffective pastor's appointment. Pastors will be expected to be available for an appointment, participate in a review process annually, show evidence of continuing effectiveness in ministry, and show professional growth.
- A resolution "Opposition to Homophobia and Heterosexism" passed by a vote of 544 to 365. The objection to the resolution was in large part because of the inflammatory words "homophobia" and "heterosexism," since both are judgmental and easily misunderstood.
- No action was taken in regard to transgender persons. A petition from Transforming Congregations addressing transgenderism and sexual brokenness failed.

Reprinted with permission from the "Happenings Around The Church" electronic newsletter published by Dr. Riley Case. Dr. Case is an Associate Director of the Confessing Movement Within the United Methodist Church, www.confessingumc.org.

RECENT BOOKS ON CHRISTIANITY AND RENEWAL

Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White: Thoughts on Religion, Morality, and Politics, Adam Hamilton, Abingdon Press, Copyright 2008

Everyone agrees that America is polarized, with ever-hardening positions held by people less and less willing to listen to one another. No one agrees on what to do about it.

One solution that hasn't yet been tried, according to Adam Hamilton, is for thinking persons of faith to model for the rest of the country a richer, more thoughtful conversation on the political, moral, and religious issues that divide us. Hamilton rejects the easy assumptions and cursory analysis of black and white thinking, seeking instead the truth that resides on all sides of the issues, and offering a faithful and compassionate way forward.

In his new book, Adam Hamilton writes, "I don't expect you to agree with everything I've written. I expect that in the future even I won't agree with everything I've written here. The point is not to get you to agree with me, but to encourage you to think about what you believe. In the end I will be inviting those of you who find this book resonates with what you feel is true, to join the movement to pursue a middle way between the left and the right---to make your voices heard---and to model for our nation and for the church, how we can listen, learn, see truth as multi-sided, and love those with whom we disagree."

The Great Awakening, Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religious Right America, Jim Wallis, HarperOne, Copyright 2008

In this new book, Jim Wallis examines poverty, global warming, environmental degradation, and terrorism, some of the most pressing global issues of our time. While Washington seems to deal only with the politics of blame and fear, Jim Wallis strives to offer hope by helping to change the national conversation on faith and politics. By offering some ideas for positive political solutions, Wallis attempts to show that a revival is happening, as people of faith and moral conviction seek common ground for change.

By explaining that religious faith was a driving force behind our nation's greatest social reforms (the abolitionist and civil rights movement), Wallis shows how these "great awakenings" took place during crucial moments in our nation's history, ultimately propelling us toward the common good. He suggests that the time is ripe for another movement that will transform this country. "The Great Awakening", will help you to rediscover the moral center of our faith while providing the needed inspiration to help you find solutions to our nation's greatest political challenges.

Basic Christianity, Intervarsity Press Classic, John Stott, IVP Books, Copyright 2006

This book is a remarkable resource from one of our most beloved evangelical leaders! In "Basic Christianity", John Stott clearly explains the fundamental claims of the Christian faith, presents Christian apologetics, and explores how these beliefs impact the lives of believers.

He writes, "If Jesus was not God in human flesh, Christianity is exploded." "We are left with just another religion with some beautiful ideas and noble ethics; its unique distinction has gone." "Who is Jesus Christ? If he is not who he said he was, and if he did not do what he said he had come to do, the whole superstructure of Christianity crumbles in ruins to the ground. Is it plausible that Jesus was truly divine? And what might this mean for us?"

John Stott's clear, classic statement examines the historical facts on which Christianity stands. This book is a sound, sensible guide for all who seek an intellectually satisfying explanation of the Christian faith. Voted one of the top 50 books that have shaped evangelicals by Christianity Today in 2006.

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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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