

The Council of Bishops called for a special General Conference to be held in February, 2019. The meeting “will be limited to acting on a report by Council of Bishops, based on the proposals from the Commission on the Way Forward.”⁴ In other words, by the end of February of next year the United Methodist church will have been forced to formally address the LGBTQ revolution one way or another.

Why include this issue in our Olive Press? I would argue for two important reasons. First, I think it is a powerful reminder of the cultural upheaval taking place all around us. It is very easy to turn a blind eye to this issue. We can hear of a school adopting curriculum with “LGBTQ-themed history, English and health”⁵ and find solace that it isn’t where our children attend. We can learn that the Boy Scouts of America, in 2015, “lifted its national ban on gay adult leaders”⁶, but instead of being alarmed, we console ourselves with the knowledge that troops lead by churches will retain the freedom to choose leaders consistent with their own values. In the division gripping the United Methodist church, however, we are reminded of the conflict raging in our country in a way that is hard to ignore. This is not the public school system. This is not the Boy Scouts of America. This is a church that was founded upon a “methodical” pursuit of holiness which finds itself unable to answer the question of whether or not homosexuality is a sin.

My second reason in wanting to write about this division in the United Methodist church is the unique way it reveals the changing landscape of Christianity around the world. Rev. Jerry Kulah is the dean of the Gbarnga School of Theology, a United Methodist seminary in Liberia. Speaking of the United Methodist churches in the United States he stated, “the church has taken on strangely a new direction. People from the country that brought the Gospel to us are now preaching a different Gospel.” He continues, “It’s mind-boggling, and it baffles the Christian leader from Africa — I speak for all of Africa — it baffles the mind of the Christian leader from Africa, who ascribes to the whole Bible as his or her primary authority for faith and practice, to see and to hear that cultural Christianity can take the place of the Bible. United Methodists in America and other parts of the world are far going away from Scripture and giving in to cultural Christianity.”⁷

This was, to me, a remarkable statement. We have the Dean of a United Methodist seminary in Liberia pointing to the very issue at stake. The United Methodist church is struggling to submit to the Bible as the “primary authority for faith and practice” and, in Rev. Kulah’s words, is now preaching “a different Gospel.” A comment like this questions the amount of influence the churches in America will have over the direction of Christianity in the future.



Natalie Blevins

Attending Crown College to major in nursing and participate in track & field
OPEN HOUSE - Saturday, June 16
12:00-4:00 pm - 2523 Hutchinson Rd



Maggie Wendt

Continuing at Lake Superior College in the fall, working towards her EMT.
OPEN HOUSE - Saturday, June 23
12:00-3:00 pm - Mount of Olives



Hannah Bettendorf

Continuing at the College of St. Scholastica to major in nursing and participate in cross country & skiing.



(True) Confessions of a WOO

By: Julie Seelke

I took Lora Kesselhon's strength finder Sunday School class last fall. It's an excellent class and interesting to see all the strengths in the church body. One of my strengths turned out to be WOO-winning others over. It may be the characteristic of extroverts. WOO's are suppose to "enjoy initiating with strangers because (they) derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection."

Now a lot of that may be true but another truth is that WOO's don't necessarily enjoy sitting alone or being new in situations. I do not like going to an event alone or sitting alone. I like my comfort zones also.

But God in His wisdom has put me in a lot of situations where I haven't known anyone. From California to China to Kenya to Ethiopia, I have had to push myself to meet new people and develop new relationships. Some of these relationships continue to this day and are blessings.

So how does this all fit in: I went to a Christian event a few weeks ago. There was a woman sitting all alone. The Christians were talking with their friends and the woman appeared to be invisible. That does bother me and I am guilty of that also.

In this season of change in our church, maybe we all need to become more "woo-ish". I've thought about how we can take the letters of WOO and apply them.

W-Watch Out. Be looking for those people at coffee time who seem to be standing alone. Look for different people to invite to events with you. Initiate conversations. It's OK if they've been attending MOB for a year but if you haven't talked to them before, it's someone new to meet.

O-Out of Our Comfort Boxes. We all like comfort. Me too! But I'm not sure God has called us to comfort so much as obedience. He is our security. I'm pretty sure God is not into cliques. Freshen up small groups by reaching out to new people.

O-Outreach. This is what it's all about. We want to welcome new people to our church. We are not inviting people to a social club with inside jokes. We want anyone to come and hear the Good News that Jesus offers. We want to attract people to Him.

How should this struggle within the United Methodist church impact us? I would propose three ways;

* First, we should be reminded of the spiritual struggle raging all around us. Ephesians 6:12 states, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." We must, therefore, strive to understand the forces at work around us. We must not put our heads in the sand and hide from the revolution taking place and we must also remember that it is, ultimately, a spiritual conflict.

* Second, I would hope this story would strengthen our conviction of the importance of church membership. In Galatians 1:6 Paul writes, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel..." Paul is not chastising the Elders of the church. He is calling out the body as a whole! What is being taught is extremely important. You, as a member of a local congregation, are responsible for the doctrine taught in your church. Are the Elders held responsible as well? Most assuredly! However, it is the man and woman in the pew that Paul calls out. The position that the United Methodist church eventually takes on this issue may be decided by a General Conference. Yet it is the individual members who will be held accountable for the doctrine taught in their churches.

* Finally, upon hearing news that yet another church could be torn in two over the issue of homosexuality, I hope our hearts are broken and that we would go to our knees in prayer on their behalf.

REFERENCES

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6. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/07/27/boy-scouts-gay-leaders/30752987/>
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June 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	June Birthdays
					1	2	Isaac Bogatzki 2-Jun Michelle Brown 2-Jun Miles Erickson 2-Jun Karen Szymczak 2-Jun Natalie Lepien 3-Jun Jack Burklund 5-Jun
3 9:00 am Worship Service Sunday School to follow	4	5 6:30 pm Men's Bible Study & Prayer 9:00 am Women's prayer 5-8 pm Hope Center Ministry 7:00 pm Young Adult	6 9:00 am Women's Bible Study 6:00 pm Youth Summer Kickoff	7 10am-1pm Hope Center Ministry	8 5:30 pm Men's Game Night	9 10:00 am Women's Craft Day	Chloe Elizabeth Gustafson 5-Jun Elim Tunell 7-Jun James Durfee 8-Jun Bonnie Peterson 9-Jun Kayla Vang 9-Jun Kyle Gustavson 12-Jun Heidi Johnson 14-Jun
10 9:00 am Worship Service Sunday School to follow 6:00 pm Hymn Sing	11	12 6:30 pm Men's Bible Study & Prayer 9:00 am Women's prayer 5-8 pm Hope Center Ministry 7:00 pm Young Adults	13 9:00 am Women's Bible Study 9:00 am Arrow Sharpening	14 10am-1pm Hope Center Ministry	15	16	Cheyenne Brook Durfee 15-Jun Lilly Erickson 17-Jun Julie Seelke 17-Jun Jase Tunell 17-Jun Tom Florestano 18-Jun Daniel Preiner 19-Jun
17 9:00 am Worship Service Sunday School to follow 	18	19 6:30 pm Men's Bible Study & Prayer 9:00 am Women's prayer 5-8 pm Hope Center Ministry 7:00 pm Young Adults	20 9:00 am Women's Bible Study 6:00 pm Fellowship Night	21 10am-1pm Hope Center Ministry 11:30 am - Energizers Picnic - Billing's Park	22	23	Louise Watzcak 25-Jun Katie Hipsher 26-Jun Rian Kalkbrenner 26-Jun DeLaney Rautio 27-Jun Jori Watzcak 27-Jun Eliza Shelton 28-Jun Joy Sorensen 30-Jun
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL							
24 9:00 am Worship Service Business Meeting to follow Women's Planning Meeting	25	26 6:30 pm Men's Bible Study & Prayer 9:00 am Women's prayer 5:00 pm Young Adults @ Hope Center 5-8 pm Hope Center Ministry	27 9:00 am Women's Bible Study 9:00 am Arrow Sharpening	28 10am-1pm Hope Center Ministry	29	30 8:00 am Men's Breakfast	