

NOT PROPHETIC

Some years ago, I officiated at a wedding in the local United Methodist church, festooned as it was with rainbow flags. A five-year-old guest asked me if the church had a particular passion for the story of Noah. Would that it had. That might at least have distinguished it from every other Pride-flag-waving business in the town. Instead, it had chosen not to be a prophetic witness of the faith to the world but to be one more example of capitulation to the virtue signaling demanded by the wider culture. It boasted not in its difference from the world but in its similarity. In seeking relevance, it declared its irrelevance to all and sundry. Why should anyone go to church to hear what can be heard elsewhere? And why should anyone go to seminary simply to learn how to express contemporary political opinions in a religious idiom?

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OUR WITNESS FOR THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

Christ is risen! And the Holy Spirit has come to the Church and to us! Therefore, with faith (not fear), with hope (not despair), with love (not self-concern)....

- *Pray that God would guide us to pro-life tasks that we can and should take on.
- *Pray for congregations, laity, and clergy to encourage pregnant women to give birth to the children they carry.
- *While reading Lifewatch, carefully consider truths encountered there, and ask what then should be done.
- *Sign up to receive LifeNews.com each week day.
- *Discuss with a friend the Lordship of Jesus Christ over this world and how His Lordship relates to unborn children and other defenseless people.
- *Discuss with a friend the Lordship of Jesus Christ over His Church and how His Lordship orders the mission and ministry of His Church.
- *Discuss with a friend that the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our lives means that even our feelings, intense though they can be, are subject to His perfect rule, gracious guidance, and merciful judgment—and that God’s forgiveness is available upon our repentance.
- *With a son or daughter, a grandson or granddaughter, speak about the beauty of marriage and the gift of children.

- *Prepare and present a church-school lesson or a youth-group devotional on the Church, through the ages, protecting unborn children and their mothers.
- *Encourage pastors to preach sermons that defend vulnerable human beings, especially unborn children, from those who are more powerful.
- *Suggest that church-school classes critically discuss denominational Social Principles on life and abortion, and marriage and sexuality.
- *Volunteer at a local pregnancy resource center, and minister to pregnant women in need.
- *Ask District Superintendents to propose to their pastors, during a District Pastors Meeting, the Gospel of Life.
- *Write to bishops an email indicating commitment to the Church’s apostolic faith, to life over abortion, and to the marriage of a man and a woman as the natural and optimal relationship for receiving and raising children.
- *Speak honestly, with a Christian brother or sister, about where and how to witness more faithfully, courageously, and persuasively for Jesus Christ and His Church.
- *Practice repentance every day—or more often!
- *Trust in God every day for forgiveness of sins and for an increase in faithfulness.
- *Strive every day to follow God’s guidance and commands. (PTS)♥

NAZI PROPAGANDA AND NAZI “ETHICS”

The Nazis produced powerful propaganda. Among their propaganda products was the film “Dasein ohne Leben,” which means, in English, “Existence without Life.” The original film and its copies were lost (or perhaps destroyed?) at the end of World War II.

What follows is the transcript of a nearly ten-minute reconstruction of the original film. A Moderator’s critical comments, in English, are heard throughout the film. On the [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvS2jDMvNLY) website, the reconstructed film notes: “Prof. Dr. Kampfer, ‘Existence without life 1941,’ AI enhanced video;” its web address is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvS2jDMvNLY>. In what follows, I offer notes, in italics, that can help a non-viewer to understand more fully how this film plays and persuades. For maximum impact, you are strongly urged to read what follows and then watch the video. (PTS)

Described and Transcribed

The film begins with loud music. An attractive, college-age couple looks at a large poster, presumably in a college-campus building. It announces Professor Doctor Kampfer’s lecture entitled, in English, “Existence without Life.” The Moderator repeats the title in German and then in English. In the video, all the characters’ speaking parts are in German with English subtitles; only the invisible Moderator speaks in English.

Standing in front of the poster, the young man asks his friend: “Why don’t you come too?”

She replies honestly: “What would I do in a medical lecture?”

He assures: “This subject doesn’t just concern doctors.”

She responds: ““Existence without Life”? It sounds a bit ideological.”

He answers, “It is a human question that concerns us all.”

Then they walk toward the lecture hall.

Moderator: “The film, which again uses the professor figure to add spurious, scientific respectability, vanished in early 1945. But we have recreated it from the original director’s script, which had been filed away in the Federal German Archives.”

Entering the lecture hall, the young couple finds seating. The camera pans the audience. Most of those seated are young, well groomed, and intelligent looking. The lecturer is Prof. Dr. Kampfer [hereafter Professor].

Professor: “The nation state is not only a coming together of people who share the same race and history. It is also rooted in the eternal laws of nature. Mental illness is a hereditary evil...one of the greatest dangers to the health of the nation.”

Images of people, who are mentally ill, appear on the screen.

Moderator: “The script demands that demonically mad faces arise like a specter out of the sea. The faces seen here were those used in the original film. They come from the documentary footage we discovered in Potsdam [Germany]. This unedited film shows the techniques used—such as sharp, underneath lighting to make the patients appear grotesque. The parts of the film never to be shown to the audience reveal the trick. The Professor continues with his demeaning diatribe.”

The unsettling images continue.

Professor: “Those who suffer are burdened with the heaviest fate.”

The handsome, scholarly Professor returns to the center of the screen. He names “the heaviest fate:” “An existence without life.”

The video again features the Professor and his audience.

Moderator: “The script describes the Professor as a man close to life’s experiences. His students as a powerful image of today’s strong, racially pure, and healthy youth. His lecture, scripted by psychiatrists working for T4 [a Nazi euthanasia program, which destroyed thousands of people], first claims that care for the sick has become indiscriminate and too costly.”

Images of the ill, the countryside, and the lecture hall appear.

Professor: “Private and state asylums were established in the midst of Germany’s beautiful countryside. New, ever larger, asylums were built...which met all the requirements of modern medicine. And so arose the immense number of state and private asylums in Germany, which today house almost 400,000 mental patients...idiots and feeble-minded...who are tended by over 2,000 doctors and over 40,000 nurses, attendants, and ancillary staff.”

Moderator: “The film then turns to the central question of the fate of those, it was claimed, who could not be cured.”

Professor: “But these purely economic questions don’t belong here.”

The young woman says to her friend, “This Goy [Gentile] really exaggerate[s] things! That’s nothing compared with reality.”

The screen reveals a framed picture of chaos in a medical institution. Then comes a moving picture of chaos in another medical facility.

Professor: “Despite all the efforts of our psychiatry, a large percentage of our mental patients remain incurable. One can tell at once the extent of their decline from a conversation with these wretched people, insofar as they are capable of talking.”

Video of people, who are mentally ill, continues.

Moderator: “Using the new and then unusual technique of recorded interviews, patients are shown talking nonsense—to suggest an inner madness. [For example, an ill woman is shown speaking:] ‘He showed me a murdered head, so that I could see it. Then he showed me my murdered head, and then the taste of a murdered head.’”

Video continues to illustrate the Professor’s points.

Professor: “What a contrast! On the one hand, a hellish display while in the ward for apathetic cases, and [then] unnatural silence like the grave. Women who are dull, empty, indifferent. Burned out! Often these helpless cases need force-feeding. [On the screen, a boy has a feeding tube shoved into one of his nostrils.] And attention to their bodily needs.

“What greatness of spirit it requires, to put aside one’s natural claims to life and happiness, in order to bury oneself alive in such a house of pain. But it is unnatural and intolerable, in terms of a higher morality, that whole generations of healthy young people [shown in the lecture hall] should grow old caring for the incurably idiotic and

mad. All their sacrifices merely help to maintain and prolong an existence without life.”

Video shows residents of an asylum leaving their building.

Moderator: “Evermore contemptuous of disabled people, this film completely writes off their lives, denying them even their humanity.”

A man, visibly disabled, walks down a sidewalk.

Professor: “It is a mistake to think that such patients feel happy or that they cling on to life. They have no consciousness of existence. They cling on because they are devoid of critical faculties and are accustomed to their situation. All possibilities of medical treatment, or even improvement, are excluded. What shall become of these innocent victims?”

Video presents additional people with disabilities.

Moderator: “The Professor then appropriates the religious language of mercy and salvation to call for the killing of disabled people. The asylums’ administrators have been instructed to choose what they called ‘hopeless cases,’ many of whom were given a temporary reprieve from the gas chambers, to be filmed.”

With video illustrating his points, the Professor becomes sentimental and vicious at once: “We call upon a merciful destiny to liberate these regrettable creatures from their existence without life. How cruel it is to keep the spiritually dead as living corpses until they reach old age. Day in, day out, in the night of madness. Always the same mad ideas, always the same idiotic behavior. Years, decades, a lifetime long. Permanently on a level which we only find deep down in the animal kingdom.”

Moderator: “Arriving at the crux of the argument, the film switches to a deeply emotional and personal tone to confuse the issue [or the reality!] of the state coldly carrying out mass murder.”

The Professor speaks emotionally: “Allow me to close with a few purely human and personal remarks and so to extend the framework of this lecture. If I knew that I, and this could happen to anyone, would be struck down by the disaster of some incurable mental illness, and that such an existence without life would lie before me, I would do anything for this not to happen. I would rather die. I’m convinced all healthy people think like this. [The healthy young people in the audience appear on the screen.]

“But I am also convinced that every incurable mental patient or idiot—if he could recognize his position—would prefer an end to such an existence. [People, who are apparently ill and/or disabled, appear on the screen.] No sensible human being could deny him the right to die. [The original couple appears, with the young man nodding in agreement with the Professor.] Is it not the duty of those who care for the incapable—and that means total idiots and the incurable mental patients—to help them exercise their rights? Is that not a sacred demand of charity? Deliver those you can not heal! [In the background, music begins to play softly, and its volume gradually builds.] The director of a large mental institution put this question to the

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parents of all his incurable charges. Seventy-three percent answered ‘yes.’ One mother wrote: ‘Don’t ask, do it!’”

The Professor’s last sentence is delivered with great, personal conviction. Knocking loudly on their desktops, all members of the audience demonstrate enthusiastic approval of the

speech they have just heard. The music reaches its crescendo, and the film ends.

Conclusion

To this lecture, Christ’s Church responds decisively with one word: No! (PTS)

A version of the above article first appeared as a Pastoral Reflection on The Human Life Review website (<https://humanlifereview.com/dasein-ohne-leben-or-existence-without-life-a-nazi-film-argues-for-killing-the-weakest/>). It was posted on February 9, 2026.

Thanks to Dr. Carl R. Trueman for providing the link to “Dasein ohne Leben” (or “Existence without Life”) in his First Things article “Save the Fox, Kill the Fetus” (February 5, 2026, <https://firstthings.com/save-the-fox-kill-the-fetus/>).♥

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OFTEN CRIES “WOLF!”

Today, the bishops of The United Methodist Church worry aloud, often through implication, that the Trump Administration is in the process of dismantling democracy in America. (See the next article “Today Bishops Cry ‘Wolf!’ by Crying ‘Tyranny!’”) In the 1980s, United Methodist bishops were disturbed that, in their estimation, the Reagan Administration was leading the world toward nuclear war and annihilation.

Do you detect a pattern here? According to United Methodist bishops, Republicans in the White House seem to place bishops in what they perceive to be existential crises. (Perhaps today’s bishops should be congratulated for toning down their crisis-mongering rhetoric: All things considered, a non-democratic America seems less a crisis than the entire world blown to smithereens by nuclear bombs.... [Then again, the bishops might be saving the issue of man-made global warming—which, if its most dire warnings are correct, could devastate this world as much as a nuclear-weapons exchange—until the time is right for them to put it on the public table, front and center.]

Bishops against Reagan

From 1981 until 1989, Republican Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. Willing to exert (and threaten to exert) American military power against aggressive foreign adversaries, President Reagan was derided by his critics as “Ray Gun.” Many on the political

Please remember to pray and fast for the ministry of Lifewatch on the first Tuesday of every month.

left feared that he would lead the US into wars—even nuclear war.

Presumably in response to the buildup of American power, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now named the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) wrote and released “A Pastoral Letter” entitled “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response.” It was dated May 3, 1983.

Later, also responding to President Reagan’s peace-through-strength policies, and the threats they seemed to pose according to the political calculus of some, The United Methodist Church’s Council of Bishops composed and published “In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace” (Foundation Document, Graded Press, 1986).

In the mid-1980s, your scribe was living in New Jersey and working in New York City at The Center on Religion and Society. I was invited, by my District Superintendent Maxwell (aka “Max”) Tow [1934-2012], to critique “In Defense of Creation” during a District Ministers Meeting. So on October 9, 1986, my presentation on the bishops’ pastoral letter took place at New Providence United Methodist Church in New Providence, NJ.

The Real Crisis

My response to “The Challenge of Peace” ended in this way: “[W]e might listen to Paul Ramsey [1913-1988], a distinguished professor, Christian ethicist, and United Methodist of Princeton University [not Princeton Theological Seminary]: ‘...Since Jesus Christ will ask not whether there is any peace but whether there is any faith in the earth [Luke 18:8], it is just barely possible—but possible nonetheless—that there are other, equally, or more important dangers confronting the church (such as) ethical apostasies within and death rattling in the throat of the civilization through which we are on pilgrimage, that are not so notable as awesome nuclear power.... The most serious crisis, judgment, and promise confronting the present age is not nuclear power. Two women will be holding hands in protest at a Trident submarine launching; one shall be taken and the other left. Alan Geyer [a United Methodist clergyman, who drafted “In Defense of Creation,” who taught political ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary, and who died in 2011] will be at a summit conference of Washington think-tankers; let him not come down to his house to take anything out. Let him who is mowing his lawn not turn back. Let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains. Pray that your flight be not in nuclear winter. “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, neither shall be. And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved” (Mark 13:19-20). Begone then, with the politics of fear; better (a Fundamentalist) preaching Hell torments into the saving of souls than scarifying people into paralysis for the sake of an elusive peace never promised us [unpublished testimony before the Council of Bishops, pp. 10-12].’”

I concluded the speech with my own words: “Let me put it less poetically than Ramsey. For us United Methodists, the real crisis is not the nuclear crisis. For us,

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the real crisis is that the bishops of our church could write a statement on the nuclear threat without serious reference to God’s providence, without serious reference to God’s coming Kingdom, without serious reference to Jesus’ Death and Resurrection, and without serious reference to [The United Methodist Church] as [part of the Church catholic]. That is our crisis.”

Some things never change. Or they change very, very, very slowly. (PTS)♥

TODAY BISHOPS CRY “WOLF!” BY CRYING “TYRANNY!”

United Methodist bishops, as noted above, seem always to have a world-threatening crisis from which God is calling them to save the world. Tyranny—or authoritarianism—is their current crisis. To engage the current crisis and to lead The United Methodist Church to try to respond faithfully to this crisis, the bishops have written the book Building Beloved Community: The Courage to Love in the Face of Tyranny (Abingdon, 2025).

According to the book’s Acknowledgments, Bishop Kennetha J. Bigham-Tai (Illinois Area-Iowa Area) was the “convener” of the writing team. Bp. Kenneth H. Carter, Jr. (Charlotte Area) served as the “lead writer.” In addition, Bp. David A. Bard (Illinois Area-Michigan Area), Bp. Minerva G. Carcano (retired), Bp. LaTrelle M. Easterling (Baltimore-Washington/Peninsula-Delaware Area), Bp. Karen P. Oliveto (retired), Bp. Lanette L. Plambeck (Dakotas-Minnesota Area), Bp. Patrick Streiff (Central and Southern Europe Regional Conference), and Bp. David K. Yemba (retired) assisted in the project.

Building Beloved Community contains an unstated assumption. It assumes that The United Methodist Church continues to be a major culture-forming institution, in American society and beyond, with considerable political clout. That might have been the case in decades gone by. However, with other declining oldline Protestant denominations, The United Methodist Church is no longer a leading voice for Christians, for justice and peace, for the good and the true and the beautiful, in public life. Today, when the Council of Bishops speaks, fewer and fewer listen. If you are skeptical of this claim, then read Ryan Burge, who regularly studies and reports on American Protestantism.

Even so, the Council of Bishops should be applauded for attempting to connect Christian discipleship and the local church to public life. Since Jesus Christ is truly the Lord of all—and since all Christians and all congregations are themselves flawed, and situated in imperfect societies and in chaotic history—Christians and congregations must learn to be faithful to Christ in the challenging circumstances of where they live, move, and have their being. Building Beloved Community coaxes United Methodists and their congregations to overcome fear, to break silence, and to learn to take on public responsibilities as faithful Christians and faithful congregations. Good.

This World and the State

The first paragraph of the book's Introduction realistically describes this world: "We live in an increasingly fragmented world. Political parties and factions deploy nationalistic visions to divide citizens from another. The inequality of wealth, climate change, violence, and war force human migration in unprecedented numbers. Corruption in political systems and among leaders increases fear and enforces conformity. The manipulation of media, social media, and artificial intelligence communications undermines the possibility of understanding truth from falsehood." (p. 1) Yes, indeed, this world is a messy and a tough place.

However, this world is much rougher than the bishops would lead us to believe. What about terrorism? Narco-terrorism? Islamo-fascist terrorism? What about abortion by the millions? What about the trafficking of illegal drugs, women, and children? What about pornography? Random crimes committed and their victims? It is a very rough world out there. After all, the world is in violent, vicious, desperate rebellion against God and against the good.

That is why the Church *and the State* are necessary for people to flourish. Nations—which are most just when their governments are democratic and kept accountable by the rule of law, and their citizens are generally religious and somewhat active in civil society—are absolutely necessary. Even United Methodist doctrinal standards (e.g., The Articles of Religion [Article XXIII--Of the Rulers of the United States of America, Article XXV--Of a Christian Man's Oath, and Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority] and The Confession of Faith [Article XVI--Civil Government]) recognize the importance of government in and for society. While the Church should offer faithful and merciful Word-and-Sacrament ministry, the State should serve the goals of justice and peace. While the purposes of the Church and the State are different, their institutions relate to, and are challenged by, each other.

Viewpoint Diversity Needed

As hinted in the prior section, Building Beloved Community would have been greatly improved by a writing team with more viewpoint diversity. For example, the writing team would have been strengthened by a bishop who does not assume that President Trump is the embodiment of a latter-day Hitler, authoritarianism, and tyranny. And by a theologian who upholds the church's doctrinal standards throughout the process (and thereby practiced what G.K. Chesterton [1874-1936] called the "democracy of the dead"—that is, letting the dead speak through tradition to the living). And by a political scientist who tests the partisan politics and ideological consensus of the writing team that is on bold display throughout the book. And by an even-handed journalist or historian who knows of the tyrannical overreach of Democrats. Again, viewpoint diversity would have enhanced this project—by making it less predictable and more interesting.

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Several years ago, a bishop admitted that he would no longer be reading publications that tended to be politically conservative or theologically orthodox. That is exactly how Building Beloved Community reads—as if it is the product of theological or political or ideological groupthink.

Yes, the world is very messy. So being a Christian and being the Church is a great and difficult challenge. And

by the way, we should never forget: In every place and during every age, being a disciple of Jesus Christ and being His Church have been tryingly difficult. No exceptions. Sometimes dangerous. Even fatal. The world is in hot rebellion against God. That will be the case until Christ returns in glory and power, sets all chaos to order and all wrongs to right, and establishes His Kingdom in fullness.

In its January 27, 2026 statement on immigration and ICE in Minnesota (which followed the release of Building Beloved Community), the Council of Bishops pleads: "...we ask that we work together with our communities so that we can create a world where the sword is turned into plowshares, and the lion lays down with the lamb." *That, my friends, is a pretty tall order!* Through the ages, the Church has believed that *only* Jesus Christ, in all *His* power and glory, can fully establish the Kingdom of God in this world. Again, this world will be repaired and perfected by Christ—and *by Christ alone*. (He may well work through His servants, but He is not restricted to their assistance.)

To repeat, this world, as we know it, is messy and chaotic. We observe that messiness and that chaos on television every night, and in our lives every day. It is good that we do! In a free and democratic society, as long as the messiness and the chaos play out in public, the citizens of that society are in *relatively* good shape.

If a society becomes quiet and peaceful, some might call it "beloved community." But others will know that someone, somewhere, is standing behind a curtain (like the Wizard of Oz), making all the significant decisions, implementing those decisions in the most secretive ways, and thereby exercising authority never granted by constitution or by legislation. Call that soft tyranny—which is usually achieved under the cover of "peace." In their book against tyranny, the bishops should have warned the church about it. But that would have been possible if, and only if, their writing team would have evidenced greater diversity among its writers and in their resources. (PTS)♥

PASTOR HONESTLY DEALS WITH SEMINARY, CHURCH, CHAPLAINCY

The Reverend Dr. John Ruiz, once a United Methodist and now a Global Methodist, is a long-time friend of Lifewatch. Do You Still Believe in Miracles?: An Apologetic Expose by a Liberal, Bible Believing, Evangelical Pastor (Wipf & Stock, 2025) is his new book. If that title does not grab your attention, nothing will.

The book's chapters are brief, and they include study questions. So the book would be ideal for discussion in a church-school class or a Sunday-evening study.

Dr. Ruiz believes the Church's faith—as stated by a plain reading of the Bible, by the creeds, and by church doctrine—is true. That means he has had to defend exactly that faith over against challenges that came from a seminary professor (namely, Dr. Arthur Jeffrey Hopper [1930-2015] at Methodist Theological School in Ohio) and from a bishop (namely, Bp. Joseph Sprague). In his book, without getting into the weeds, Ruiz recalls those challenges to the faith and his defenses of the faith. He makes it clear that he *still* believes. (Therefore, he *still* believes in miracles.) He gives reasons for his enduring belief, and he encourages his readers to maintain similar belief. This is very interesting stuff—quite uncommon from a former United Methodist pastor.

In his book, Dr. Ruiz reports on the membership trends of several American Protestant denominations that belonged to the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Ruiz found that all suffered membership decline. On the other hand, among denominations that stayed closer to apostolic teaching on life and abortion, Ruiz usually found increasing membership. In this, the author sees God's providential hand at work.

As a former minister serving a congregation, Dr. Ruiz is honest when he writes: While “a local pastor, it would have been so much easier to not talk about abortion. In my United Methodist denomination, our official position is to respect a woman's right to choose and also uplift the sanctity of life. This is a very difficult balance and sometimes can feel like it is trying to have it all and actually being left with very little. The position attempts to [lift up] that there are a variety of perspectives [on abortion] within the denomination and hold these in creative tension. However, many times this means do not rock the boat, so do not talk about it. Yet there are many times we must talk about those things that make us uncomfortable and shed light on things that make us sick to our stomachs. For in addressing the truth of our day, we open ourselves up to change, healing, and transformation.” (p. 44, emphasis added) That is a good word from a seasoned pastor.

After nearly twenty years of pastoral ministry, Dr. Ruiz became a hospital chaplain. His faith—which was toughened through his seminary experience and through his pastoral service—provided him with a believing, reliable, truthful foundation for chaplaincy: “...over the years I have been called to attend to tens of thousands of crisis situations. Around three thousand times, these situations would mean providing ministry to loved ones at the time of death. This includes well over five hundred sudden deaths in the emergency department. Being around death and the mystery of death is simply a part of the job of a crisis

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chaplain. It also means I have been asked—in many, many situations—to be with a person on the worst day of their life.” (p. 117)

The Reverend Dr. John Ruiz tells a personal story that contains some good theology (his) and some bad theology. His book Do You Still Believe in Miracles? tells his story of standing up to ideas and ideologies that tempted him to let go of miracles and to settle for a transcendence-free faith. But Ruiz did not give up or give in. If you read his book, you, too, will most probably

become more steadfast in maintaining a faith that is open to the Triune God and to His oftentimes surprising interventions into this world—including our lives. (PTS)♥

A UMC-EPSTEIN CONNECTION: HOW COULD IT BE?

In the middle of Lent, on March 12, an article entitled “Probe underway of pastor who worked for Epstein” was posted at UMNews.org. Disturbing is the reasonable reaction.

Before getting down to brass tacks, several involved with this situation must be commended. Heather Hahn, a journalist for and news editor of United Methodist News, for writing the initial article. UM News for publishing the article. (Most church leaders, who are tired of fighting and weary of negative news, must have wanted the story suppressed or canceled.) Rev. Elizabeth Glass Turner, a writer and editor, for reviewing the Epstein files, uncovering the United Methodist connection, and forwarding a tip to UM News. Bishop Robert Farr, of the Missouri Episcopal Area, for apparently being faithful and decisive in striving (if belatedly) to uphold church discipline in this scandalous matter.

According to the aforementioned article, Rev. Stephanie L. Remington, an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church and a member of the Missouri Conference, is at the center of this storm. From August to December 2018, Rev. Remington worked as an administrative assistant for Jeffrey Epstein. From January until May 2019, she was a temporary property manager of Epstein's island.

(For context, Rev. Remington worked for Epstein *after* he had served time for conviction on sex offenses. Then, two months after she had left being a property manager for him—that is, in July 2019—Epstein was arrested on charges of sex trafficking minors. The next month—that is, in August 2019—he was found dead in his New York City prison cell.)

After discovering that one of its clergy members had worked for Epstein and that had not been officially communicated to conference officials, Bp. Farr suspended Rev. Remington “from all clergy responsibilities” (The Book of Discipline [2020/2024], Par. 363.7, p. 321). Bp.

Farr's office then began reviewing the matter.

Mostly in Her Own Words

Rev. Remington has not been silent about her situation.

According to UM News, "she acknowledges that she knew Epstein was a registered sex offender when she accepted a job in his employ."

To UM News, she stated: "I never saw anything. I knew him [Epstein] for the last nine months of his life, well after he served time for the things that he was accused [PTS: *convicted* is the proper word] of doing."

In a July 2019 personal blog post, she sought to justify working for Epstein: "...I felt that if I withheld relationship from this man because of his past, then I would be turning my back on every message of hope I have ever preached, every invitation to God's unconditional love I have ever extended, and my calling to be a healing presence in the world for all people."

More recently, in a 2026 email to UM News, she claimed: "Jesus got into a lot of trouble for the company he kept, but he didn't let that trouble pressure him into rejecting the people who, by their standards, did not deserve to be human. Social death is just another kind of murder. He [Jesus] opened his heart and his mind to them, and they opened their tables and alabaster jars to him. Is Jeffrey [PTS: notice the use of only his first name] not among their kind?"

"Of course he didn't deserve a second chance. None of us do. But that's not how grace works."

Again drawing from recent email, Ms. Hahn quoted Rev. Remington: "The world is full of so much hate. There are many powerful men who have done despicable things with their privilege. They come and go in the news...."

"...Jeffrey was very proud to have direct lines to all his presidents [of the United States]. If association with sinners makes one guilty, then the church is in an awful state. I have heard the confession of the people in my pews. I know their stories. We're just people. The human kind."

Lacking Doctrine and Discipline

The intention of the present article is not to pillory, indict, or convict Rev. Stephanie Remington. As an employee of Jeffrey Epstein, she was an agent, not a victim. As such, she will face social, and perhaps ecclesiastical and/or civil, consequences for her actions and inactions related to her work for Epstein. We trust that she will be treated fairly and justly by society, church, and state—and that she will not be run over by those in moral panic.

The intention of the present article is to comment on The United Methodist Church—its everyday theology and its everyday procedures. When a denomination's bishops preach and practice exclusively "grace," "love," and "peace"—with few references to sin, repentance, and judgment, and with fewer references to law (moral, Biblical, ecclesiastical, and civil) and prudence, lawbreaking and consequences—clergy and laity are left without the God-given theological, spiritual, and moral resources (and motivation) to live in joyful obedience to Jesus Christ and His Church. Unfortunately, lacking the

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resources to survive in this world (let alone thrive), clergy and laity are then jerked around by the currents and crests, ideologies and idols, principalities and powers, of this world and our time.

The denomination's superficial theology and dysfunctional life together created conditions that allowed one of its own

ordained clergy to decide to work for—and receive a salary from—the world's most notorious sex offender.

The silence and/or inattention of more than a few United Methodists may well have allowed Rev. Remington to drift into working for the Epstein organization. Were there clergy friends who asked her, "What are you doing...working for Jeffrey Epstein?" Did the conference Board of Ordained Ministry search for her (beyond an initial contact, which evidently generated no response from her) to find out about the state of her faith, faithfulness, and employment? Did members of local churches, that she had once served, contact her, question her, challenge her? Did Wesley Theological Seminary's Lewis Center for Church Leadership (for which Rev. Remington once worked) ask about and respond to her employment situation; and did the Lewis Center report what was known about Rev. Remington to her bishop? Was Christ's universal call to holiness and obedience to Christ ever discussed with Rev. Remington? "Probably not" is the answer to all of the above questions.

Again, in this matter, Lifewatch's focus is on The United Methodist Church, and its therapeutic theology and conflict-averse practice. That allowed one of its own ordained ministers to wander into a darkness disguised by the trappings of celebrity, wealth, and power—apparently without a word of warning from her brothers and sisters in the church.

United Methodists, it is time for renewal in church doctrine and church discipline. It is not too late. (PTS)♥

LETTER TO LIFEWATCH

March 12, 2020 [email]

Good evening Paul,

I want to respond to your note about "For All the Saints" and the phrase "I'm tired of fighting" in the March 2026 Lifewatch [pp. 9-10]. I feel compelled to write because you likely heard that phrase from me, on my way out of the UMC [United Methodist Church].

I think you mistake our past weariness with apathy. You even state that to sing "For All the Saints" and then say "I'm tired of fighting" is hypocrisy. I think the issue here is that you miss the silent part of that: "I'm tired about fighting ABOUT THESE THINGS, WITH MY CHURCH." The things we were wrapped up in debating were distracting us from living out the mission of the Church.

I would point to the Lifewatch article on page 1, "Confessions of a Centrist," as Exhibit A. Lonnie Brooks notes that, with the departure or silence of much of the Traditionalist wing of the UMC, Centrists now find

themselves by default the voices on the Right and no longer nominated to positions of leadership. This is exactly what was predicted by those of us who said, “We are tired of fighting.” The UMC’s power structure, when we left, was decidedly progressive theologically and was often advancing teaching contrary to Scriptural Holiness. Giving lip service to “we have a big tent,” the UMC’s leadership made sure the space for traditional, orthodox, Wesleyan Methodists was gone. Rather than continually being distracted by this constant fight, we left and formed a new expression of old-school Wesleyan Methodism.

Now reflect on a different hymn, “The Church’s One Foundation.” The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord! We came out of verse 3: “Though with a scornful wonder, we see her sore oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.” But, unified in mission and discipleship, we have put down that fight in the UMC so that we can focus on fighting for the Faith in an increasingly indifferent world. There is revival happening in the Global Methodist Church because we have lifted up Jesus Christ with a renewed conviction, helped by not being fettered or distracted by the fight we had in our former life. We simply don’t live there anymore.

...We are truly just getting started, and our singular focus is on making disciples in both doctrine and mission. God is calling and empowering us as we are taking the fight to where it should have always been—not with each other, but contending against the evil one, and lifting up Christ in the midst of the spiritual battle for the soul of our culture and our world. We ARE fighting—and very HARD right now—just not with the UMC. That’s not hypocrisy, it’s obedience. And the revival that we are living into is powerful to be a part of.

Blessings my friend,
Rev. Paul Dunham, Pastor
Sharon Methodist Church
Supply, NC

Dear Rev. Dunham:

Thank you for your heartfelt reply to the You Should Know That item in Lifewatch (March 1, 2026, pp. 9-10). I am thankful for your honest and thoughtful response.

First of all, know that I love you as a brother in Christ, and that I respect your decision to depart from The United Methodist Church and enter into the Global Methodist Church. All United Methodists, laity and clergy, could exercise discernment and conscience, and make their own decisions. Your decision was different than mine. You left, and I did not. I am okay with that. Even so, Christ is our Judge.

Did you ever think that you would wind up in the theological debate over the lyrics of the Church’s hymns? Well, that is where we are.

“For All the Saints” and “The Church’s One Foundation” paint a realistic, yet hopeful, picture of the Church. According to these great hymns, the Church is often involved in fighting for the faith—due to heresies within the household and to atheism/paganism outside the household. An essential part of the Church’s mission is to conduct those fights in defense of the faith. The Church does not get to decide which issues over which she wants to fight; the faith itself determines what must be defended.

Again, these two hymns assume that fighting is a constant feature of Church history and Church life. Those

conducting the fights are not to fight like scoundrels and vandals. They must fight like Christians—mainly speaking and living the truth in love. But they are to fight, not surrender. God gives what His people, fighting for the faith, require. And God promises the fight will end as hoped, when Christ returns in power and victory. Then and only then, all fights cease.

So, Paul, continue fighting the good fight for the Church’s faith—in the Global Methodist Church. “What fights?” you ask. They will arise.

In Christ,

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Lifewatch♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

●**Thank you for your continuing generosity to Lifewatch.** Your gifts—prayers, notes, and checks—encourage, sustain, and advance our witness! Again, thank you.

●**After noting (in the March 1, 2026 issue of Lifewatch) that books by Rev. Adam Hamilton and Bp. Will Willimon were “UMC-endorsed,”** the editor asked: “In The United Methodist Church, exactly who—or what committee, or board, or agency—is acting as the endorsing authority or agent [for books and videos sold by Cokesbury]?” Well, thanks to Laura Dallas—Marketing & Resource Coordinator, and Media Center Director, for the North Carolina Conference in Garner, NC—for answering.

The endorsing authority is the Curriculum Resources Committee of The United Methodist Church. Committee members and their responsibilities are outlined by The Book of Discipline ([2020/2024], Paragraphs 1117-1122, pp. 629-32).

Now that Rev. Hamilton has decided to run for the U.S. Senate as an “‘Independent-minded’ candidate on the Democratic ticket” from Kansas, will the Curriculum Resources Committee endorse him again? (Come on, relax...that’s intended to be humorous.)

●**“Some lives matter more than others. Most of us have believed this lie for too long. I think we should look again.”** Tim Tebow’s and A.J. Gregory’s thoughts, from their book Look Again (2025), resonate with the Church’s apostolic faith and challenge all of us.

●**Dr. R. R. Reno, the editor of First Things, writes about the roots of courage:** “More than a decade ago, I met Bobby Lopez. He was then a professor at Cal State, Northridge. In obedience to his Christian faith (and, I should add, informed by his experience being raised by a lesbian couple), Lopez took a courageous public stand against same-sex marriage. He was attacked by student activists and harassed by university administrators. Yet, as he told me, his classes were always overflowing with students. This perplexed Lopez. He knew that these students did not share his faith or agree with him about sexual morality. ‘Why,’ he asked me, ‘do they want me as their teacher?’

“I remember telling him that the answer was obvious. The young people in his classes were in bondage to the principalities and powers that rule our morally deregulated society. They saw in Lopez a man who enjoyed *parrhesia*, a man with the freedom to speak his convictions. Perhaps those young students disagreed with his convictions. But in Lopez they had a glimpse of freedom, which they desired.”

Reno then considers the deeper meaning of the New Testament word *parrhesia* [‘freely speaking one’s mind’]: “Christians are blessed with loves—for our Lord and Savior above all, but also for our spouses, children, communities, and nations. These loves ‘own’ us, and in being ‘owned,’ we know who we are; we know where we stand. Love stiffens our spines, giving us the strength and determination to honor, protect, and promote that which we love. This strength and determination make us free. Christians in twenty-first-century America are the advance guard of those who refuse to kowtow, compromise, or be pushed around. The larger the ranks of the soldiers of Christ, the more likely that America will see a new birth of freedom....” (“The Case for Christian Nationalism,” *First Things*, March 2026, pp. 40-41).

●**In the immediate aftermath of the October 7th Hamas attack on Israel, words from former US Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia were recalled.** For good reason. On a Holocaust Memorial Day (May 9, 1997), Justice Scalia said: “It is the purpose of these annual Holocaust remembrances—as it is the purpose of the nearby Holocaust museum—not only to honor the memory of the six million Jews and three or four million other poor souls caught up in this 20th-century terror, but also, by keeping the memory of their tragedy painfully alive, to prevent its happening again. The latter can be achieved only by acknowledging the existence of absolute, uncompromisable standards of human conduct. Mankind has traditionally derived such standards from religion; and the West has derived them from and through the Jews.” (Meir Y. Soloveichik, “Scalia’s Prophecy,” *Commentary* [December 2023], p. 16)

Remember that what the Jews taught was received, developed, and handed down by our Lord and His Church. So Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929, German-Jewish theologian and philosopher) proposed that “Christianity is Judaism for the Gentiles.”

●**At the end of 2025, The Reverend Dr. Phil Phaneuf** declared to the congregation he serves (North Chili United Methodist Church near Rochester, NY in the Upper New York Annual Conference) that he is transgender and beginning to transition. The clergyman noted, “I’m not becoming a woman but giving up pretending to be a man.” In response, the bishop in charge, Bishop Hector A. Burgos-Nunez, said: “...let us reaffirm our commitment to the Wesleyan call to do no harm, do good, and grow in our love for God....” (Shelby Winchell, “Bishop’s response to Rev. Dr. Phil Phaneuf coming out as transgender,” December 3, 2025)

In situations like this, the harms inflicted upon congregations, annual conferences, and the entire

denomination are routinely ignored. Clergy and laity leaving United Methodism usually do not offer departure speeches, and the denomination’s quiet decline continues. So deeply unfortunate.

●**The Reverend Jesse Jackson, 84, died on February 17, 2026.** For decades, he had been a civil-rights leader in America—perhaps *the* civil-rights leader. Also, let it be remembered, Rev. Jackson had three stars for service in pro-life ministry. First, early on, he was unashamed to note that he was conceived during statutory rape, and that his mother loved enough to keep and protect his life. Second, in the 1970s, before his run for president, he was “passionately pro-life” (Ryan Bomberger). And third, in March of 2005, he stood with Terri Schiavo, as she lay dying from legally approved dehydration. So, before campaigning for president, Rev. Jesse Jackson knew the truth about life. During and after his presidential run, not so much.

May his soul enjoy the Communion of the Saints, while his body (or ash) awaits resurrection at our Lord’s return in glory, power, and total victory.

●**On March 1, Kermit Gosnell, 85, died in prison.** A former Philadelphia abortionist, Gosnell was serving time for murdering three born-alive infants at his abortion clinic. Pray for this enemy of life and for his family.

●**On March 13, Paul Ehrlich, 93, died.** In 1968, Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb*, which sold 4,000,000 copies. Promoted by government officials, environmental activists, and college professors, the book predicted that “overpopulation” would threaten the life of planet earth. Unsurprisingly, Ehrlich vigorously advocated for abortion. Unsurprisingly, in its Social Principles and resolutions, The United Methodist Church followed the herd and expressed faddish concern about “overpopulation.”

Writing about Ehrlich, Steven Mosher, who often covers issues related to population and China, noted: “[T]he *New York Times*...was forced to admit in 2000 that ‘overpopulation’ was one of the myths of the 20th century.” (“Paul Ehrlich convinced Americans that babies are bad—and he was dead wrong,” *LifeSiteNews.com*, March 16, 2026)

Churches must be critically careful, always hesitant, about hitching their public witness to the latest trends among the so-called “best and brightest.”

●**Back in 1990, ethicist and philosopher Daniel Callahan (1930-2019) wrote in *Commonweal*:** “If legal abortion has given women more choice, it has also given men more choice as well. They now have a potent new weapon in the old business of manipulating and abandoning women.” (Clarke D. Forsythe, “The Wrong Tool for Protecting Women from Abortion,” *National Review Online*, September 22, 2025) True in 1990. True in 2026.

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● **As abortion clinics close across the United States, the nation's abortion totals increase.** Do-it-yourself abortions, facilitated by pills and at home, are becoming more popular with each passing day.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, in 2025 approximately 1,126,000 abortions were performed in the United States. Two-thirds were chemical abortions (by pill), and one-third surgical abortions.

Historically speaking, Methodists are committed to growing in grace, increasing in sanctification, becoming more holy. Today, should that not include Methodists swearing off the abortion pill and the abortion clinic, and encouraging others to do the same? Should that not include welcoming the little stranger, and encouraging others to do the same?

● **An elder in full connection mentioned in an email why he remains in The United Methodist Church.** His last sentence admits: "I have contended many times that what keeps me United Methodist is simply my commitment to the Benedictine vow of stability."

(February 18, 2026) FYI: The stability vow commits a Benedictine monk to a particular community for life. A Benedictine so committed to a particular community *must*—through hell or high water, and with the strong help of God—work out all problems that arise. Imitating the Catholic example of the Benedictines, this United Methodist clergyman understands himself committed to a particular Annual Conference for life. Admirable.

● *Vulnerari praesidio.* "Protect the most vulnerable."

● *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* "Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail."♥

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