

Remarks by Scott Campbell, Counsel for the Respondent

I would like to begin by expressing my admiration and appreciation for Dr. Thomas Ogletree and his committed and compassionate embodiment of the love that lies at the core of the Christian gospel. I am also indebted to my colleagues ^{at this table} who have journeyed through this long process with me. At all times the question "what is best for the people of God called United Methodist?" has been first and foremost in the minds of each of them.

I must add a special word of appreciation for the step that Bishop Martin McLee has taken today. He has had the vision and the courage to move us in the only direction that may save our church from schism. He has declared that there is a better way for the church to behave than to employ methods of coercion in matters of conscience. He has announced that he will lead through inspiration rather than intimidation.

There are some who will not be satisfied with what has happened today. They will not see this resolution as just. "Where is the punishment for breaking the rules?" they will ask. They will tell us that without the element of fear, other clergy will feel free to follow their consciences as well and that the covenant that binds us together will be undone. What they will fail to understand is that the true covenant that holds us together is not about absolute fidelity to the fallible and discriminatory rules of an institution, but is about a commitment we make to one another to bring the love of Christ to all of God's people without regard to any of the distinctions we human beings are so fond of making.

Fear works to hold conscience in check for a time. But sooner or later someone is more afraid of being unfaithful to God than they are of any punishment the church might mete out. People like Jimmy Creech and Greg Dell, and Amy DeLong have demonstrated that conscience can never be suppressed universally or indefinitely. And others have followed. And still others—in this conference a story a week since October. And finally, it is no longer the individual who is afraid, but the Church itself. It might attempt to make even tighter laws and offer stricter sanctions, but it is too late. The wind of the Spirit cannot be sent back to the place from whence it has come. The church that believes it will be saved by coercing compliance with rules that large numbers of the faithful believe to be unjust will destroy itself in the end. Bishop McLee has helped us to see a better way, the only way, and I am grateful. Thank you.



3/10/14
PRESS CONFERENCE
ANNOUNCING RESOLUTION