

# Methodists try to avoid split over gay rights

By RACHEL ZOLL  
AP Religion Writer

Struggling to avoid a split over gay rights, the top policy-making body of the United Methodist Church on Wednesday narrowly approved a full review of all church law on sexuality, amid an emotional meeting roiled by talk of schism.

Delegates at the Methodist General Conference, meeting in Portland, Oregon, voted 428-405 to delay all consideration of LGBT-related proposals. Instead, the delegates created a commission that will spend at least two years reviewing policy on the subject, contained in the Methodist Book of Discipline, with the goal of developing a plan to address their differences.

The denomination has 12.7 million members worldwide and is the third-largest faith group in the U.S.

"We are at a precipice," said Lonnie Chafin, a delegate from the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, or church district, speaking in favor of forming the commission. "There is urgency before us. The church might divide."

While other mainline Protestant groups, including the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), have approved same-sex marriage, the Methodists have upheld a policy they adopted in 1972, calling same-gender relationships "incompatible with Christian teaching."

As gay rights gained acceptance in broader society and in other churches, Methodist LGBT advocates stepped up pressure for the denomination to lift prohibitions on ordination for people with same-sex partners, along with a ban on gay weddings. However, the denomination is on a more conservative path, with its greatest growth in the U.S. South and overseas, regions where conservative views predominate. Of the 864 delegates at the Oregon meeting, 30 percent are from Africa.

A recent survey by the church found about 54 percent of U.S. pastors and lay people in leadership roles agreed with the church restrictions on gays and lesbians, although only 41 percent of congregants held the same view. The Rev. Adam Hamilton, who leads



Attendees and LGBT advocates gather to confer during a break in the United Methodist Church conference in Portland on Wednesday.

Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, estimates two-thirds of Methodists are centrists who could live with those differences. But Methodist conservatives and liberals have become even more polarized over the years, raising questions about how they can stay in the same church.

Matt Berryman, head of Reconciling Ministries Network, a Methodist LGBT advocacy group, said the commission plan "signals hope." The Rev. Rob Renfro, president of Good News, a caucus of evangelical Methodists, said the plan has "some potential to resolve our differences" but is "fraught with peril," depending partly on whether conservative views will be heard.

Clergy who support gay rights have been increasingly defiant, conducting same-sex marriages or coming out as gay and lesbian from the pulpit. Doing so risked penalties, including permanent loss of clergy credentials. Conservatives have stepped up demands for punishment of such actions. Separately Wednesday, the Judicial Council, or top church court, ruled that mandatory penalties, which conservatives had sought, were unconstitutional.

At the meeting, which began last week, buzz about a potential breakup grew as some bishops and leaders of different streams within Methodism, including conservatives and LGBT advocates, met privately on whether the

church could stay unified. The group discussed a proposed division of the church into conservative, centrist and liberal wings — a split that would have been the most dramatic realignment over homosexuality in American Protestantism. The church began in 1784 and has property and investments worth billions of dollars.

The rumors intensified to the point that the president of the Council of Bishops, Bishop Bruce Ough, was compelled to stand before the full conference Tuesday to address them. He said no plan would be advanced to break up the denomination, but he acknowledged bishops were divided and struggling to find a way to move forward.

"I have a broken heart in that collectively we have a broken heart," Ough told the delegates. "Our heart breaks over the pain, distrust, anger, anxiety and disunity" evident at the conference.

As committees rejected appeals to lift LGBT prohibitions, gay rights advocates staged multiple protests, standing on the perimeter of one session with rainbow-colored duct tape over their mouths and lying on the floor with their hands and feet bound.

"People are walking down the street in tears saying, 'This is not the United Methodist Church that I joined,'" said Dorothee Benz, an LGBT rights advocate from the New York.

## BRIEFLY

### Former NASA engineer speaks Friday

PENDLETON — Spike Psarris, a former engineer in the United States' military space program, will speak at Calvary Chapel of Pendleton.

A former atheist, Psarris speaks about science, creation and the Bible. He contends the universe is inconsistent with random evolutionary models and is consistent with Biblical creation. Psarris is the author/producer of the DVD series "What You Aren't Being Told About Astronomy."

The public is invited to the multimedia presentation Friday at 6:30 p.m. at Calvary Chapel, 1909 S.W. Athens Ave., Pendleton.

For more information, contact 541-966-8912, cependleton@ccpendleton.com or visit www.ccpendleton.com. For more about Psarris, visit www.creationastronomy.com.

### Nazarene church holds Ladies Spring Brunch

HERMISTON — Fellowship, laughter, special music and a special message by guest speaker Linda Brazel are featured during the Ladies Spring Brunch.

Women and girls are invited to attend Saturday at 10:30 a.m. at Hermiston Church of the Nazarene, 1520 W. Orchard Ave. Child care will not be provided during the event.

The meal is potluck, so those attending are asked to bring something to share. To see what others are planning to bring, visit www.mealtrain.com/rvy9o2.

For more information or to RSVP, contact 541-567-3677, hermistonnaz@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/events/1189822504385364.

### Christian author to speak in Baker City

BAKER CITY — A faith-based women's spring event will feature Christian author Francine Rivers.

The public is invited to hear the bestselling author, who will speak Tuesday from 7-8:30 p.m. at the Baker City Christian Church, 675 Highway 7, Baker City. A pre-event, which features an author meet-and-greet and book signing, is from 6-7 p.m. Afterwards there will be refreshments, books for sale and additional time to have Rivers sign her books. The event is free.

Rivers received a degree in English and journalism from the University of Nevada-Reno. She initially embarked on a writing career from 1976-1985. She received numerous awards and acclaim. In 1986, after becoming a born-again Christian, Rivers wrote "Redeeming Love" as her statement of faith. Since that time, she has penned more than 20 novels with Christian themes.

For more about the event, contact 541-523-5425 or secretary@bakercitychristian.com. For more about Rivers, visit www.francinerivers.com.

## BOARDMAN'S LIMEY PASTOR

# Beginnings and bondings

Oh my! There is a lot of stuff going on. In a few days time I am invited to give a baccalaureate address to the wise children of Boardman June 1, as they prepare for one of the most significant transitions in their lives. The majority of them are Catholic, and in preparation for the wide world, a Lutheran pastor (that's me)



COLIN BROWN  
Comment

is going to speak with them about the next steps in the larger picture.

I know one of the children already, a young lady who serves me breakfast at the Sunrise Café on Saturdays, who plans to start training as a nurse at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham. What an honor to be asked to help prepare her by words, a young saint in training. You can hear the call in her, reverberating to the purity of that sound. Many of the youngsters, of course, will still be listening for their own call. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian, said that God's will is not just one thing, it can be many and our job is then to examine them all, trying to discern which ours is for right now. This, I think, is wisdom.

Since I went to a Baptist church in my pre-teen years, was baptized a Catholic and migrated to being a Lutheran due to accidentally moving next to a Lutheran church while listening to and reading the works of Garrison Keillor about the mythical Minnesotan town of Lake Wobegon, it seemed likely that I might find myself as a presenter to this lively group. In those days, Keillor was Plymouth Brethren and managed to convert himself into a Lutheran while in the process of telling his understated story gems about life in the minus-20 degree temperatures of that northern state.

In this spirit of beginnings, examination and discernment, I am also preparing for wedding my son Matthew to his true love, Kylene, and doing it carefully without disturbing the balance of things, without scaring them, but focusing a laser-like solemnity of purpose to the occasion while blessing them with God's joy. To my delight

Kylene said to me: "I want God in it!" By golly, that's what she will get — she came to the right man in her future father-in-law (I hope). Both of them will realize the holy nature of the wedding bond, its purpose that lasts in a world outside our own and that will take the couple to a deeper understanding of the community, the family of

God where they are to be placed as man and wife.

Matthew's old school friend, Rachel, is also getting married to the equally biblically named Adam. I am performing their service too. Adam is like a large pixie, grinning perpetually as if plotting a mischief, while Rachel's soulful Madonna eyes gaze at her man with adoration and longing. It seems like marrying them will be like tying together starlight to a hay bale — such astonishing and perfectly matched opposites.

These wonderful conjunctions all come following Pentecost, the celebration of the birthday of the church when the Holy Spirit entered and spoke, opening up the treasure chamber of spiritual gifts. In those early days the Spirit melded languages while sharing understanding. On Sunday I sat with my flock, in their red feathers, in a shaded sanctuary to share our stories of the Holy Spirit — still active in our lives after all these years. Stories came out faster and faster as people revealed their stories about how the supernatural touch of the Spirit embraced them and protected them, or bent their lives in new directions. Had we stayed there until the next day the stories would have still flowed out, because as we reflected we realized that God has never left us alone and never will. Miracles of the Holy Spirit are gifted us every day. Amen.

Pastor Colin Brown from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Locust Road in Boardman invites you to join us at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning with coffee and tea afterwards.

## SUBMIT FAITH NEWS

Friday's faith page features local, national and international faith-related news. Send information about local faith-related news and events, including concerts, special speakers and activities to community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

# Worship Community

## First United Methodist Church Of Hermiston

Rev. Dr. James T. Pierce, Pastor  
*Open Hearts, Open minds, Open doors*

191 E. Gladys Ave.  
Sunday Worship at 11am  
(541) 567-3002

## Peace Lutheran Church

210 NW 9th, Pendleton, ELCA  
Join us Sundays  
9:30 am Sunday Worship  
10:30 am Fellowship  
11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class  
~Come and be at Peace~  
on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday

## Faith Center Church

Worshiping God  
Loving People  
108 S. Main • 276-9569  
Sunday Worship  
10:30 am  
Sr. Pastor,  
Ray O'Grady  
pendletonfaithcenter.org

## NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH

1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston  
Sunday Worship Services  
English- Pastor Dave Andrus  
9:00 & 10:45 am  
Spanish- Pastor Genaro Loreda  
9:00 & 10:15 am  
Classes for kids during all services  
For more information call  
541-567-8441

## Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Saturday Services  
Pendleton  
1401 SW Goodwin Place  
276-0882  
Sabbath School 9:20 am  
Worship Service 10:45 am

## Community Presbyterian Church

14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR  
922-3250  
Worship: 10 AM  
Sunday School at 11:30

## GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR  
www.graceandmercyelca.org  
Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m.  
Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided)  
Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School  
Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information  
541-289-4535  
Tom Inch, Pastor  
Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA  
164 E. Main St. / P.O. Box 1108  
Hermiston, Oregon 97838

## PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH

585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868  
(541) 443-2500  
prbcconline.blogspot.com  
Sunday School: 9:30 am  
Worship Service: 10:45 am  
Kids' Club: 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Services:  
Youth Group: 7:00 pm

## Grace Baptist Church

555 SW 11th, Hermiston  
567-9497  
Nursery provided for all services  
Sunday School - 9:30 AM  
Worship - 10:45 AM  
6:00 pm  
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM  
"Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"

## St. Johns Episcopal Church

All People  
Are Welcome  
Scripture, Tradition and Reason  
Family service 9am Sunday  
Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston  
Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest, PH: 567-6672

## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
215 N Main • Pendleton  
Sunday Worship: 10:40a  
Bible Class: 9:30a  
Office 276-5358  
M-F 8:30-12:30  
WWW.FCCPENDLETON.ORG

## Living Word Christian Center

Sunday Worship 10:00am  
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00pm  
Youth Classes - Nursery-6th grade Sun & Wed  
YOUTH GROUPS: Jr-Hi, Wed 7pm  
Sr Hi, Sun after the service  
Sharon Miller, Pastor  
401 Northgate, Pendleton  
541-278-8082  
www.livingwordcc.com

## Redeemer Episcopal Church

241 SE Second St. Pendleton  
(541)276-3809  
www.pendletonepiscopal.org  
Sunday Holy Communion 9:00 a.m.  
Wednesday Holy Communion Noon  
Weekly Adults Spiritual Life Group  
All Are Welcome

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

-Presbyterian Church (USA)-  
201 SW Dorion Ave.  
Pendleton  
Service of Worship - 10:00 am  
Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am  
Fellowship - 11:00 am  
www.pendletonpresbyterian.com  
Open Hearted...  
Open Minded

## Come meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH

3202 SW Nye Ave Pendleton, OR  
541-276-7590  
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 AM  
Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM  
Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM  
Mon. Community Women's Study  
9:30 AM & 6 PM  
Awana Kids Club (K-6th grade)  
Wed Men's Study 6 PM  
MOPS meeting the 1st Thur of the Month 6 PM

## The Salvation Army Center for Worship & Service

Sunday Worship Service  
9:30 - Sunday School  
10:30 - Worship Service  
Wednesday Bible Study  
5:30 Family Fellowship Meal 6:00 Bible Study  
COME AS YOU ARE  
150 SE EMIGRANT  
(541)276-3369

## PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD

FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM  
SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM  
712 SW 27th ST.  
541-276-1894  
www.fcogpendleton.com

## a place to belong Pendleton First

INVITING ENRICHING  
INVOLVING EMPOWERING  
SUNDAY SERVICES  
AM Celebration-10:00am  
AM Kids Place -10:00am  
The Connection--6:00pm  
Groups for all ages:  
Adults, Children, Youth, & College  
Thursdays  
Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm  
Celebration Place-6:00pm  
Other Groups Available Weekly  
For more info visit  
WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM  
1911 SE Court Ave  
541-276-6417  
Assembly of God Church

## FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

in Mission for Christ LCMC  
Bible Study.....9:00 AM  
Sunday Worship...10:30 AM  
Red Lion Hotel  
( Oregon Trail Room )  
www.faithpendleton.org

## BAHA'I FAITH

"The Unity of All Mankind"  
Pendleton Baha'i Center at  
1015 SE Court Place  
Devotions Sundays @  
11:00am; Everyone  
invited!  
(541) 276-9360 visit us at  
www.pendletonbahais.org

To share your worship times call  
Terri Briggs  
541-278-2678