

Married Lesbian Ordained as Methodist Bishop, 'Led by the Holy Spirit'

The Western Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church consecrated a married lesbian bishop in a move that could split the denomination.

Greater Northwest Episcopal Area Bishop Grant Hagiya claims the Holy Spirit led the move that the church bylaws expressly forbid.

"We understand there may be some political implications, but in our mind this was the best person. It was not a question of (sexual) orientation, it was a question of who was the best spiritual leader. The body spoke and said 'Yes, this is the one.' " Hagiya said.

Yet the denomination's Book of Discipline cites "self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church."

"The Wesleyan Covenant Association (a group of evangelical and conservative pastors) is meeting in Chicago in the fall to decide the future and if they'll form a brand-new denomination," someone close to the matter who asked not to be identified told *Charisma News*. "The judicial Council of the Methodist Church has to invalidate her election or risk losing the evangelicals."

The Western Jurisdiction consecrated lesbian Karen Phyllis Oliveto as their newest bishop. Oliveto, who is married to Robin Ridenour, pastors Glide Church in San Francisco.

"I think at this moment I have a glimpse of the realm of God,"

Oliveto said. "Today we took a step closer to embody beloved community and while we may be moving there, we are not there yet. We are moving on to perfection."

The move puzzles many bishops who wish to uphold biblical truth.

"We are in prayers here in Africa as we trust God to continue to lead us on the ancient path (the holy, undiluted Word of God) of Jeremiah 6:16. We shall not be moved. We will continue to remain obedient to the teaching of Scripture and loyal to Jesus Christ," Rev. Jerry Kulah, dean of Gbarnga School of Theology said.

"Those violating the Bible and Book of Discipline of the UMC are saying to the global UMC community that they are taking their exit and transferring their loyalty somewhere else," Kulah said.

The source close to the situation tells *Charisma News*, "Mainliners are not principled and just want to keep the peace. Evangelicals are standing on Scripture. Progressives just want their way no matter what."

In addition to Oliveto, two other openly gay bishops were nominated at the jurisdictions' meetings last week.

But still, the UMC Book of Discipline maintains practicing homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.