

Wesleyan Covenant Association Organizer: Schism Is Pure Speculation

The Wesleyan Covenant Association was not founded to promote schism from the United Methodist Church, WCA organizer Rev. Keith Boyette says.

Despite information the WCA was founded to consider a split after the consecration of a married lesbian bishop, Boyette says this is patently false.

“WCA is seeking to provide a form for traditionalists to come forward and discern the best way to continue to work in UMC and global pan Methodist family to advance a historic Christianity,” Boyette says.

Along with the five founders, 40 ministerial leaders and lay ministers have endorsed the WCA formation.

Boyette says he believes some confusion stems from the wording of Council of Bishops President Bishop Bruce R. Ough’s statement:

We began by acknowledging the profound dissonance between what the Council had proposed to the General Conference in May and the reality within the church in July. The landscape has changed dramatically. The reported declarations of non-compliance from several annual conferences, the intention to convene a Wesleyan Covenant Association and the election of the Rev. Karen Oliveto as a bishop of the church have opened deep wounds and fissures within The United Methodist Church and fanned fears of schism. The church finds itself in an extremely fragile, highly contested season. We lament that, for some, these actions disrupt and detract from the effective ministries of congregations across our global

connection. We confess that we have all played a part in delaying God's kingdom reign.

"Any number of people may speculate the purpose of WCA is schismatic, slash, an intent to form new denomination," Boyette says. "Readers can draw their own conclusions and watch what unfolds in coming days."

According to their website, the WCA was founded to:

- Connect evangelical, orthodox United Methodists with one another in a common ministry of the gospel.
- Provide mutual support and encouragement of traditional United Methodists, including those who feel isolated and marginalized in their own annual conferences, and provide an effective voice for a classical Wesleyan understanding of the faith.
- Cooperate in visioning toward what a revived and authentic Wesleyan ministry could look like.
- Facilitate ministry partnerships with Bible-based United Methodist brothers and sisters outside the United States for mutual learning, resourcing and equipping for ministry.
- Collaborate with like-minded ministries, as well as foster partnerships within the WCA, to resource and extend the ministry of local churches in such areas as missions development, leadership training, resources for ministry, and planting and resourcing new churches.
- Empower and stimulate congregations and clergy to engage in risk-taking, bold ministry strategies to reach their communities and the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Strategize together for the future growth of a faithful Methodism, including a joint response to the recommendations of the Bishops' Commission on the Future of the Church.
- Foster mutual accountability among congregations and

clergy through Association membership standards and informal means of accountability and support.

- To uphold and promote biblical teaching on marriage and human sexuality.

Schism over Oliveto was never a contributing factor.

“Evangelicals within the 12 million member UM Church are attempting to be faithful as best they can,” Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, vice president of Good News, said. “We are not seeking schism. Separation may occur one day in the future, but the WCA was formed to be a united voice to play by the denominational rules and live with faithful integrity in a very volatile situation.”

The WCA will hold their first meeting in October. When asked if the meeting indicates the formation of a new denomination, the WCA responded:

That is not the association's intent. The WCA hopes the UM Church can remain united. We pray we can all find ways to live as Jesus' joyful and obedient disciples in covenant with one another. We long for a church that leads with grace and is committed to the truth of God's will revealed through Scripture and embodied in Jesus Christ. We plan to work for a vibrant expression of Wesleyan Christianity within The United Methodist Church.

However, we are mindful of the deep disagreements that exist over the inspiration and primacy of Scripture, its interpretation and God's power to transform lives through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, particularly as these core confessions pertain to our church's sexual ethics. We believe it is imperative that United Methodists definitively answer the question: Are we a truly united church or are we two churches pretending to live as one? If we are united, then we must live according to our covenant with one another. If we are unwilling to live in covenant with one another,

then we must frankly confront that reality and act accordingly.