

# “OUTRAGEOUS QUOTES”

**May 2**--The Institute on Religion & Democracy has a long tradition of posting on our website “outrageous quotes.” While our team has been in Ft. Worth we have been collecting quotes from the various rallies, events, and committee hearings that have struck us as OUTRAGEOUS. We find humor and usually get a good giggle at our team meetings. We hope that on this last morning that you too can find the humour. -The IRD Team.

“If you haven’t been accused of anti-Semitism yet, you haven’t been doing the work of Justice.”  
--Liat Weingart at a MFSA Divestment Event.

“The Church is missing out on a great resource. Can you imagine the resource because a transgender person has been on both sides of the table”  
--Diane DeLap, Affirmation Press Conference, describing the value a transsexual could bring to counseling situations such as marriage preparation.

“Christianity teaches love and not incompatibility.”  
-broad argument used (unsuccessfully) in the GC plenary for removing the denomination’s prohibition on ordaining “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals.”

“Not everyone would agree that that’s human life.” -Iowa delegate Lana Ross arguing against the church expressing concern for vulnerable unborn human life.

“I loathe IRD. I don’t believe in what they are doing. I just wish they would leave.” -South

Carolina Delegate Liz Patterson, speaking in Church and Society #1 Legislative Committee.

“Institute on Religion and Democracy... and Good News are... groups that are fundamentally committed to the domination of the Church... They want but one thing, and that is the preservation and domination of white males in the Church.”  
--The Rev. James Lawson, speaking on a Soulforce panel.

There’s a cultural lag, and a spiritual lag, and I think in the 21st century that lag will catch up and the two [African Christians and orthodox American Christians] will become enemies.”  
--The Rev. James Lawson, at the same Soulforce event.

“We are talking about an un-liberated people... We can’t even imagine that our parents did it [had sexual relations] to produce us.”  
--The Rev. Dr. Gil Caldwell, at the same Soulforce event.

“The Board of Ministry cannot decide whether you are a minister of the Gospel, [and] pastors cannot tell you that you are a member of the church,” because “God has already accepted you... Stop reading the Discipline so much!”  
--Rev. Don Guest, RMN worship service.

“They [conservative delegates] are legislating out the love at General Conference.”  
--Sean Delmore, Boston Theological Seminary

# GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008 LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

## BY JERALD WALZ

The Institute on Religion & Democracy is criticized by some as being an “undemocratic” organization. But how democratic is the process by which over 1500 pieces of legislation, called petitions, are considered by General Conference? The 992 delegates are divided into thirteen committees. The committee I observed, Church and Society #1, had 73 assigned delegates. They were charged to review over 230 petitions on social and political issues. About 20 hours of committee time—not nearly enough—were allotted over 4 days.

Once the committee elected presiding officers, it further divided into six Sub-Committees on topics like Environmental Justice, War and Peace, Criminal and Restorative Justice, and Economic Justice. Each Sub-Committee was assigned dozens of petitions to discuss and make a recommendation for adoption, adoption as amended, rejection, or referral.

The “General” Sub-Committee I observed had 12 members or less, including one international delegate. Once a consensus is determined, sometimes by parliamentary procedure but often by informal discussion, the petition is sent to the full Legislative Committee for further consideration.

Because time becomes increasingly scarce while the process moves along, debate and amendment becomes increasingly unlikely. In C&S #1 the 80 or so petitions that were unchanged and recommended unanimously by Sub-Committee were automatically approved by the Full Committee in a single up-or-down vote. That’s 80 petitions, all taken together, in a single vote, and without debate.

The petitions then go to the floor of General Conference for consideration. Unless there are financial implications, 10 votes against the recommended action of the Committee, a Minority Report (where delegates offer an alternative), or 20 delegates who petition the General Conference for full debate the recommended petitions are again lumped together with items from other committees for a straight up-or-down vote by the entire General Conference.

So, it is possible, indeed likely, that one unanimous vote of 12 delegates (or sometimes less) at the Sub-Committee level determines the decision of the entire General Conference and the church law or policy position of the 11.5 million member United Methodist Church. Do these statements really represent the will of the church?



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