

## Shayla: What's 'wrong' with Methodism?

### Meforshim:

As the old saying goes, “the devil’s in the details” or as Quothelth taught, it is the “little foxes that spoil the vines.”<sup>1</sup> As a whole, the UMC’s doctrinal statements are remarkably similar to our own.

In regards to Christ they say,<sup>2</sup>

*“We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.”*

In regards to reconciliation through Christ they say,<sup>3</sup>

*“We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.”*

So, their doctrine regarding the Messiah and salvation are right on the money. However, the denomination is all over the place in regards to practice. For example:

The UMC supported the inclusion of the gay Metropolitan Community Church in the National Council of Churches BUT does not recognize gay-related organizations within the UMC.

The UM Judicial Council approved actions taken by annual conferences and general church agencies to declare themselves ‘Reconciling Conferences’ and ‘Reconciling Commissions’ BUT later reversed itself, saying agencies and conferences cannot call themselves ‘reconciling.’

They adopted a resolution in 1996 stating that the U.S. military should not exclude persons from service on the basis of sexual orientation, BUT the UMC excludes persons from denominational service on the basis of sexual orientation and forbids union ceremonies on the basis of sexual orientation.

The denomination has a ban on ordination and appointment of gay clergy, BUT bisexual, lesbian, and gay UMs are ordained and appointed to UM churches, implying a UM “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

The Judicial Council ruled in 1982 that nothing in church law explicitly prohibits ordination of homosexual persons,<sup>4</sup> BUT in 1984 adopted new language that expressly forbids ordination of gay individuals.<sup>5</sup>

On December 2, 2004 lesbian pastor Beth Stroud was convicted of violating the UMC Book of Discipline when she “came out” in a sermon that she was involved in a “committed relationship” with another woman. She was convicted and removed as a pastor by a vote of twelve to one. Here’s where the really weird part begins. She did not lose her membership in the UMC. In fact, she was considered a “member in good standing”, free to be involved in the life and ministry of the church. She remained paid staff, free to even speak and teach from the pulpit...but as a lay person.

If there is anything the UMC is consistent at, it’s inconsistency!

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<sup>1</sup> Song of Solomon 2:15

<sup>2</sup> From the book of discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004; Confession of Faith of the United Methodist Church Article II.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, article VIII

<sup>4</sup> Decision 513

<sup>5</sup> *Discipline*, Para 304.3

In the fundamental, core doctrines the UMC is on the money. However, they ignore the practical application of the Scriptures to their own peril and my guess is that very soon those core doctrines will end up on the cutting floor of their editing rooms.