

Justice for Reconciler • Call for Openness and Accountability

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- *At the upcoming North Alabama Annual Conference, we will ask to appeal the change in status of Church of the Reconciler and the refusal to let us hold a charge conference or elect our own leadership. Please support our request when it comes to the floor.*
- In October, 2011, 29 members and active friends of Church of the Reconciler filed a complaint with Bishop Alfred Gwinn of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. We requested an investigation into the removal of our pastors, the appointment of four additional pastors without consultation, and the disenfranchisement of the longstanding, successful, and respected lay leadership of the church. Bishop Willimon submitted a response to our complaint, but we were never interviewed nor was there any investigation. The complaint was dismissed with no hearing of our concerns.
- The cabinet made it clear that none of the people who signed the complaint would be considered for the appointed board. Although the Discipline allows for a process of complaint and we followed that process, we are being retaliated against.
- Bishop Willimon and Ron Schultz make the claim that because Church of the Reconciler was given mission status in 2005, we can, at any time, have our structure changed to an appointed board, despite the fact that we chartered as a congregation in 1996. We were given mission status for the purpose of receiving equitable salary support. At no point at that time or in the subsequent six years was it ever suggested that accepting mission status would mean we were giving up our rights as a chartered congregation. If, in fact, the bishop or cabinet can take over a mission church at any time they deem it suitable, it makes all mission churches, in essence, second-class citizens in the life of the United Methodist Church. This is unacceptable. Churches that minister to the poor should have all the same rights as any other chartered church.