



LIZA KITTLE

THE ALTAR OF EVERYTHING

“The altar of everything” reverberated through my thinking as I attended the Women’s Division board meeting in April 2010. The initial gathering was

held at the Tillman Chapel, located on the ground floor of the Church Center for the United Nations, a 12-story building owned and operated by the Division and positioned directly across the street from the United Nations.

The marble altar was a beautiful display of over 70 Bibles lined in rows with stones placed between each one. The Bibles, each one in a different language, were gifts by member states to the Church Center at its 1965 dedication. What a wonderful display on the altar of God—a true visual representation of the Great Commission where Jesus says, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 24:19).

Originally, the chapel had a plain wooden cross hung discreetly to one side, no doubt signifying that although open to all peoples, this was a space consecrated to the glory of God in the name of Jesus Christ. An article commemorating the forty year anniversary of the Center stated the building “has stood as a witness to Christian support for efforts in international diplomacy...”

Over the years, the Tillman chapel has taken on a different look and witness. Now, hanging over the altar, the wooden cross has been joined by large banners with the symbols of four world religions—Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Shintoism. The chapel is the site for ecumenical and multi-faith events, interfaith marriages, and has even been used for “dialogue” with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Sadly, this sacred altar has become “the altar of everything” under the auspices of the Women’s Division. From celebrating feminist liberation theology at the UN Commission on the Status of Women to worshiping social justice causes during UN meetings, the worship space at the Tillman Chapel is used as an altar for every religion, cause, and theology imaginable—all in the name of tolerance and diversity.

While respect for religious freedom and cultural diversity is essential, the promotion of multiple theologies is detrimental to the Christian witness. As the renowned Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias says, “Truth cannot be

sacrificed at the altar of a pretended tolerance. All religions, plain and simple, cannot be true, are not in concert, and do not all point to God. Every religion at its core claims exclusivity and all-inclusive philosophies can only come at the cost of truth.”

If the Christian church embraces other religious faiths and is meek in its proclamation of Christian truth, the mission mandate of Jesus to take the Gospel into the whole world is disregarded.

United Methodism continues to compromise its theology and mission in the name of pluralism and tolerance. Recently, a multi-faith program of study was approved at Claremont University, an official United Methodist seminary, where a program to train rabbis and imams will be added. Emory University, another United Methodist institution, hosted a multi-faith conference last month on the pursuit of happiness from different faith perspectives with the Dalai Lama as a keynote speaker. He also serves as a Presidential Distinguished Professor at Emory.

The Word of God and the Great Commission remains unchanged. While the display of Bibles in different languages on the altar at the Tillman Chapel was an impressive sight, the fact remains that out of 6,909 spoken languages in the world; only 451 have a complete Bible.

In October 2010, the Third Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization took place in Cape Town, South Africa. Over 4000 Christian leaders from 200 countries gathered for a week of prayer, repentance, study, and dialogue as they discerned the church’s next phase of evangelistic outreach.

Strategies and methods may have changed, but the passion for the Great Commission should not. Evangelizing “unreached people groups,” planting strong churches, and training indigenous missionaries have been extremely successful mission models. But billions of lost and broken souls continue to search for meaning, healing, and purpose in life that only a relationship with Jesus can provide. Christians continue to be persecuted and martyred all over the world. Billions have no access to the Gospel. The sacredness of the altar of God and the proclamation of biblical truth are more important today than ever before.

Liza Kittle is the President of the RENEW Network (www.renew-network.org), P.O. Box 16055, Augusta, GA 30919; telephone: 706-364-0166.