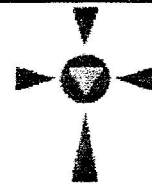


Affirm!

TABLE MANNERS



Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Concerns
GC 2000 Daily Newsletter

May 3, 2000

Special Prohibitions

For years we've been hearing language about gay/lesbian folk and "special rights." Our Discipline bears out another reality within United Methodism. Lesbians and gay men labor under the weight of special prohibitions.

Do we want to celebrate our family commitments with a faith community? There's a special prohibition for us.

Does God call us to ordained ministry? Another special prohibition.

Does the church even want to consult with us? Yet another one.

Some states used to have a whole set of special prohibitions for some of their citizens. We called them Jim Crow laws. We knew they discriminated.

When will we drop our gay Jim Crow laws? When will we affirm, in reality as well as in words, that the United Methodist Church opposes discrimination?

May 2, 2000 Episcopal Address

Regarding the Episcopal Address, most of us Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered [LGBT] clergy quickly identified a seminary paper when we heard

The Affirmation general membership meeting will be 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm Sunday May 7 at the AMAR Hospitality/Resource/Meditation (Dorothy Fuldheim) Room at the Sheraton Cleveland City Center Hotel.

The first meeting of the newly elected council will follow.

one. It was out of touch, and beyond reach of inspiration. The bishop's address meant to inspire the Church was soulfully lacking in speaking to us and moving us. Surely our entry into the twenty-first century would find specificity of language from a normally erudite clergy group. Most of us left the Episcopal Address asking the question what in heaven's name are the bishops talking to us about?

We all know there are huge global issues which we United Methodists must address. However, the Bishop's address gave the Church no specifically stated elements in our common ministry. Our common awareness of global concerns comes to all United Methodists from the perspective of a people who live within a society. We have directly experienced the church's mistreatment and abuse of us LGBT parishioners. The Church needs our open presence for we can help the church articulate its feelings with a specificity sorely lacking.

Stop the obfuscation and fluff. There was no mention of the frontline issues facing our Church. We need to name them at General Conference so "God may use us to inform the world" [from Episcopal Address].

The Shower Of Stoles Project

The Shower of Stoles is a collection of hundreds of liturgical stoles from gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people of faith from all over North America. Over 200 stoles from United Methodists have been brought to Cleveland for the General Conference.

This beautiful collection of stoles can be seen in the Dorothy Fuldheim Ballroom of the Sheraton City Centre Hotel directly across the street from the Convention Center.

Open 9:00 am until 7:00 pm daily.

Please join us for an Open House on Friday May 5 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

The Bishops need to teach. They need to ask the Church, "Guess who's coming to dinner?" Once again the bishops lose an opportunity to teach when they attempt as a group to address issues of sexuality. Their message comes across as an administrative blob and misses the mark of ministry.

The bishops outpouring of unrequited love for their LGBT parishioners is just not happening. We dare to suggest that a major eschaton or theophany would be necessary before these bishops magically and deliciously act in love and acceptance and not from an agenda of fear. No heterosexual United Methodist, lay, clergy, or bishop has a monopoly on Christian morality. A crucial opportunity to clearly state love and deliver positive appreciation for all members in our common ministry has once again eluded the bishops in our church. What a shame that a once every four year opportunity to articulate our church's love was lost on both delegates and audience.

We Have A Dream

"Justice as right relationship is what orders a community well and it is what love seeks to achieve. Love does this when it establishes right relations, respects rights, motivates good deeds and right action, legislates just laws, produces and distributes goods and services fairly, including the special care of the widow, the orphan, the alien, the outcast or marginalized, and promotes the values, processes, and structures that make for wholeness and community. When love succeeds in caring for the victim of injustice and rectifies the wrong and restores order in any measure, to that degree, justice is served."

"Your Bishops suggest that we must now include the genuinely different as an essential factor in a more-inclusive community."

- Bishop Emerito Nacpil for the Council of Bishops

We have a dream
that one day soon
United Methodist will join together to listen to our
stories,
to learn our faces,
to embrace us as beloved colleagues in the faith.

Methodist History 101

Being a pupil in the United Methodist "License to preach course" on the history of John Wesley, I disintombed John Wesley's relationship with Thomas Blair. Many United Methodists may recall that in 1732, Wesley spectacularly ministered in Oxford's Bocardo Jail to the famous homosexual Blair.

The **Wesley Works Editorial Board** and the Deans/Presidents of Boston University, Drew University, Duke University, Emory University, and Southern Methodist University who comprise the editorial board inflict injury upon our Church by not hastening the translation and release of *John Wesley's Oxford Diaries*, specifically, the *Oxford II Diaries*. Academic freedom is thwarted and the church remains both clueless and ignorant regarding the fantastic nature of Wesley's method. His *Oxford Diaries II* provides vivid, essential documentation which breathes life into the nature and method of pastoral ministry in our Church we love together.

The **Editorial Board** needs a shower of letters requesting release of these translations. These entries detail the who, what, where, when, and therefore the why of Wesley and his group of religiously inspired collegians at Oxford University who met for the purpose of emulating and embodying the religious life activities of the early church -- also known as the Holy Club. Granted, the *Oxford Diaries* are tedious works to translate, and even for us to read. But it is a marvelous read if you are a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered [LGBT] United Methodist living in this new millennium; or lay and clergy persons trying hard to understand how to minister to us in the new millennium.

An obviously obsessive-compulsive man, John Wesley and the other members of the Holy Club, by faith activity, jotted and titled their days in diary documentation designed to account for every hour of their lives and their ministries. These *Oxford Diaries* place Brother Wesley in ministerial predicaments equal in terror to the predicaments of Brothers Creech, Dell, and many General Conference ministers in our time. John's own robust documentation would bear ridicule, even condemnation upon the regressive and punitive nature of the Judicial Council and the

Council of Bishops for failing to embrace ministries to LGBT persons in our Church and world.

Every minister engaged in equal ministry with LGBT United Methodist parishioners in our time will find Wesley to be a friend. His method is genius, rich in description of eighteenth century ministry. John's inclusion of a homosexual in his ministry becomes a perfect template for ministry today. John Wesley's own witness establishes the historical precedence of ministering to the gay community among pastor's constituent venues.

MEMORIALS OF OXFORD.



NORTH VIEW OF BOCARDO, 1770.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH.

The *Oxford Diaries II* will substantiate that 1732 was a benchmark year for Mr. Wesley. We know in this tumultuous year Mr. Wesley included ministerial service to a known homosexual at the time of his Oxford ministry and talk. John Wesley held numerous meetings with this forever-grateful young man. Senior Church historian, The Rev. Dr. Richard Heitzenrader, has identified over 40 entries regarding Thomas Blair in Wesley's *Oxford Diaries*.

Three times John Wesley faced his bishop in 1732, and three times he left the bishop's office with his orders intact. Wesley had to explain the great triad experiences of the **death of Holy Club member Morgan** in springtime, the pro-active and busy summer and fall ministry to the **young homosexual Thomas Blair**, and finally to respond to the

anonymous risqué opinion published in the Fleet Street *Fogg's Weekly Journal*, **accusing Wesley and the Holy Club members of fostering an odd theology and group practices with possible sexual overtones.** These are known facts. One must realize the Reverend . Wesley's sermon on Sunday, January 1, 1733 was his gut-wrenching "**Circumcision of the Heart,**" a sermon forged in the refining fire of vibrant, vital and fabulous ministries to real people in the Holy Club's immediate world.

John Wesley was **called on the carpet by his bishop three times in 1732 and walked out with his orders intact.** What a difference a few hundred years of distrust between a bishop and pastor can mean. UMC ministers must hold empathetic fear with Wesley's multiple visits to his bishops office to explain one's ministry. All you have to do is recall the horror of blocking Brothers Creech and Dell's pastoral ministries with ministerial expulsion. The difference is that Wesley experienced neither persecution nor prosecution from his bishop for extraordinary acts of pastoral conscience. We need this witness from the *Oxford Diaries* now, not tomorrow!

For those United Methodists who believe that *a truly inclusive Church* is probably as close as we Christians will come in our lifetime to the *imago dei* [Face of God], we report that 1732 is the year in which John Wesley becomes the role model for inclusive ministry. From the crucible of these ministries John found his ministry free of restrictions. Wesley's own ministerial witness precedent provides both beacon a pastoral safe-harbor for those journeying in ministry with LGBT United Methodists in this twenty-first century.

John Wesley's bishop was pastoral and accepting of his ministries. Wesley's bishop practiced basic principled pastoring, trusting that the Church's work is never fixed in stone, but is ever yet to be revealed. We dare to speculate that Wesley's bishop ascribed to the belief that works of faith guided by the Holy Spirit renders no door nor prison bars a barrier to the simple knock of a humble priest. Wesley's eighteenth century bishop had faith in ministry and he did not place restrictions upon ministry. **Bishops must have been primarily pastors who loved pastors who pastored.** Without such episcopal pastors Wesley

would have been treated like our pastors who minister honestly to LGBT parishioners in our time and would have received a boot in the butt and we would have no UMC today!

Just like the Episcopal Address ask, "Will you join your Bishops in living this life-style?"

Overheard By The Collard Greens At The Piggly Wiggly

"Well now, Bertha, doesn't it just seem to you that God has more important things to worry about? If God had to deal with 'straightening' out our gay and lesbian children or dealing with You-Know-Who when she wears that gaudy print muumuu to the PTA meeting, well now, I think God's paying more attention to that muumuu."

Things Quoted Out Of Context

(We can do it too!)

"Will you join us in this affirmation?"

From Discipleship At The Turn Of The Ages – The Episcopal Address given by Bishop Emerito P Nacpil