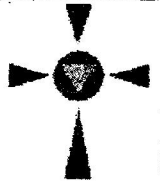


# Affirm!

## TABLE MANNERS



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

May 5, 2000

### **Come Out, Come Out, Whoever You Are**

We thought it might be so. Now we have learned from a confidential but informed source that our bishops had indeed agreed not to mention homosexuality in worship. The closest they can come, we've been told, are words like "marginalized" and "sexuality." Moreover, we understand there is much dismay in the Council of Bishops following Bishop Arthur Kulah's unilateral decision to speak out against the acceptance of homosexuality in his May 3rd morning sermon.

There is something ironic about the notion that it is now our bishops who are closeted, pledged not to speak their truths out of loyalty to the institution of the church. But we who have wrestled hard with the dynamics of closets have found that you cannot preserve unity of peace by refusing to speak your truth-- you can only isolate yourselves further from those you love.

We ask you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, is a church that turns out the light to avoid examining what it does not want to see-- is that church the bearer of vision, the inspirer of hope, a blessing to the world? Can the church of God thrive in a climate of fear?

Jesus said it, and many of us have found it to be so: the truth sets us free. Free to witness, to bear good news, to speak out to those who would oppress, to name-- and love-- those who would be enemies.

If language is food and drink to nurture our spirits, we tell you it's a desert out here. We await your words, your honesty. Please don't leave us unnamed and unanswered in this dry land.

### **Homosexuals Can Change!**

*While poking around a table full of press releases, we found one stating that homosexuals can change. In response to this, we decided to run a letter that Gary Shephard wrote in response to a Cal Thomas column last year. Cal Thomas writes this column for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate. The letter is starting to show it's age. Gary's now 45 and has been for a while. The message of the letter is, however, timeless.*

*Gary Shephard is working on Affirmation newsletter production.*

Dear Mr. Thomas:

RE: Your Column *The secular sin of bigotry-- also known as truth-telling*

First I must tell you about myself.

I am 44 years old. I live a quiet life revolving around work, family, church, and my hobbies of gardening, bicycling, and photography. I have been in a monogamous relationship for fourteen years.

Until age twenty two I struggled with my sexual orientation. At that time I finally realized that no amount of prayer was going to change it. No amount of wishing on a star. By the time I turned twenty two, "hoping that it was just a phase" no longer worked.

At the age of twenty two I finally admitted to myself that I was gay. Like it or not.

Second, I must say that your column really confused me.

Yes, homosexuals can change their behavior. But why would they want to? They would be denying something that they can't change, and pretending to be something that they aren't.

Been there. Done that. Didn't work.

When I was in college I had a girl friend for three years. As much as I wanted it to be there, there was no sexual attraction. There was no love. The relationship ended because of this.

My domestic partner dated and married a woman. Had a son. He finally decided that a marriage and a child and a lot of prayer and a lot of expensive counseling was not going to make the "homosexual feelings" go away. It was too much work to maintain the behavior. Heterosexual was a role he had to play every minute of every day. Energy that he should have been put into caring for his diabetes was instead directed into living a lie. He divorced his wife, came out to his parents, and started putting together a life that was based on his true self, not some role imposed by society. His health improved markedly.

And third, what evidence is there that ignoring or repressing one's sexual orientation is going to lead to anything besides loneliness and depression or completely unsatisfying relationships?

I know a young man who journeyed into the dark and dangerous land of deep depression battling against his sexual orientation. When he started thinking of suicide he checked himself into a mental hospital. When his family finally found out the cause for the depression they rallied around him. He's back from the edge. He's accepted himself. He's on his way to being a productive member of society.

I do disagree with name calling. It's unproductive. It never wins friends. You'll notice that I didn't do any of it.

In conclusion, Mr. Thomas, the reason why Dr. Laura draws such criticism from the lesbian and gay community is that we've lived the life. And we know she's wrong. That's why the lesbian and gay community will continue to call attention to her. Hopefully we'll be able to do so in a constructive manner.

### **Table Manners**

We believe it's just good manners to check out a rumor before you print it. It's just common courtesy, especially when you're talking about our UM family. And no, no protest was planned for Thursday.

### **Judicial Council Endorsement**

Affirmation endorses Rev. Dr. Larry D. Pickens for the Judicial Council. As a fifteen year veteran in ministry in the Northern Illinois Conference and serving as an alternate on the Judicial Council [church level] gave him the experience with this position. And that is just the tip of this seasoned and learned man.

Dr. Pickens has served on many committees, such as delegate at the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, delegate at the World Methodist Conferences in Kenya and Singapore, and director of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns and Executive Committee of the Consultation on Church Union.

Licensed to practice law in Illinois and South Carolina, strengthens our reasons to support Pickens. In recent times, Pickens labored as defense attorney for Rev. Dell. His local charge houses a congregational resource center of the Strengthening for Black Church for the 21st Century Program.

In his own words, Rev. Dr. Pickens believes that:

Our Church is at a pivotal point in history. The 21st century presents numerous challenges to our policy and covenant community. As a member of the Judicial Council, I will provide leadership that is balanced and committed. I bring reason, ecumenical experience and global vision. If you entrust me with leadership in the Judicial Council, I will do my best to contribute to the Order and Discipline of our Church.

Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens will work for an inclusive Church. This conscientious and loving man is committed to justice and the proclamation of God's liberation throughout all of humanity.

## One Story of Pain

The Minnesota Reconciling Congregations marched as a unit for about the 8<sup>th</sup> time in 1998. As our group passed a large downtown church we were met with a handful of people holding large signs giving readings from Leviticus, etc. and the fact that "homosexuals were going to hell!" The church group in front of us opted to engage in a shouting dialogue. As we came along after them, the street group continued their shouting. The MN Reconciling United Methodists responded by breaking out in singing "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know."

We continued along the parade route and on the other side of the street the driver of the truck pulling our trailer saw two men standing together in the large crowd. One was heard saying: "Look! There's the Methodist Church!!" And with that the young man put his arms around his companion's neck, put his head into his chest and sobbed loudly enough to be heard over the crowd noise by the truck driver.

What is our church doing to her people? What has our church done to her people? Will we continue this pattern of abuse?

## Communion Service

You are invited to a daily RCP Communion Service on the Mall outside the front of the Convention Center. The services are held daily at 12:30 PM.

## Freedom From Rigid Creed

*In reference to rigid creeds, Wesley made the following statement in a sermon in Glasgow:*

There is no other religious society under Heaven which requires nothing of men in order to assure their admission into it but a desire to save their souls. Look all around you; you cannot be admitted into the Church, or Society of the Presbyterian, Anabaptists, Quakers, or any other unless you hold the same opinion with them, and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship; but you may continue to worship to your former manner; be it what it may. Now, I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed, or has been allowed, since the age of the Apostles. Here is our glorying; and a glorying peculiar to us. What Society shares it with us?

*P 41, Meet The Methodists by Charles L. Allen, Abington Press*

## Regarding Bishop George Bayshore's Address

Affirmation is delighted that the good bishop acknowledged and lifted up the wonderful musical team of Avery and Marsh. This great couple has been in an out and committed relationship for many years now. We rejoice that same-sex couples are lifted up and acknowledged by United Methodist clergy. We hope that this will happen more often.

## Overheard In The Checkout Line Down At The Piggly Wiggly

"Well of COURSE they can change. They CHANGE all the time. New HAIRDO, new CLOTHES, they rearrange the furniture. They just LIVE for change!

## **Pastoral Care Available on a Drop In Basis; Debriefing and Support Sessions Also Scheduled**

Frustrated, anxious, depressed or just need to talk to someone?

Non-U.M. Clergy and a few other trained professionals are available to you on weekdays for Pastoral Care. These clergy are GLBT friendly and are available between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. in the AMAR Resource Center at the Holiday Inn Express [Euclid at 6th]

Three group de-briefing sessions are scheduled for anyone who needs time to share experiences, both highs and low during General Conference. The sessions are scheduled on:

Saturday May 6th 3:00 p.m.  
Sheraton Inn on Lakeside at 6th Street.  
Fuldheim Room  
[following the RCP Rally]

Sunday, May 7th 11:00 a.m.  
Holiday Inn Express  
Washington Room  
[prior to the worship service]

Sunday, May 7th 3:30 p.m.  
Holiday Inn Express  
Washington Room

## **Friends of the Reconciling Congregation Program To Surround General Conference Delegates With An Unbroken Circle of Love**

A rally will be held on at 12 noon, Saturday, May 6 to continue to draw attention to the exclusionary language in the United Methodist Discipline towards persons who are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgendered. Nearly 2,000 Reconciling United Methodists will gather and join hands, encircling delegates in love and the hope that the outcome of

their votes will allow ALL of God's children, regardless of sexual orientation, to be included in the life of The UMC. "We have been holding the General Conference and the delegates in our prayers and we will be praying for them at the rally," said The Rev. James Preston of Rockford, Illinois and Rally co-chair.

"This will be a rousing and meaningful experience with great music, stirring speeches and communion. A special presentation will be made to California-Nevada Conference Bishop Mel Talbert. The rally will conclude with a circle of love around the convention center as we extend the table to persons of ALL sexual orientations." added The Rev. Karen Oliveto, a pastor in San Francisco and co-chair of the Rally.

Speakers will include San Francisco activist Randy Miller, Soulforce Director The Rev. Mel White, RCP Board president The Rev. Gayle Felton, RCP executive director Marilyn Alexander, and The Rev. Bill Johnson, who was the first openly Gay man to be ordained into the United Church of Christ.

"Reconciling United Methodists are United Methodists through and through," commented James Preston, rally co-chair. "We are a part of the whole church and we want the whole church to be open and welcoming to ALL of God's Children. That's why we'll be at the rally!"

## **Affirmation General Membership Meeting**

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.