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OUR INHERENT FAMILY

By Dr. Rick Huskey, M.D., D.Min, M.Div., a co-founder of Affirmation, United Methodists for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns.

The pain is palpable when the General Church argues GLBTQ inclusion destroys the family unit. An assumption exists that "family" and "GLBTQ" are non-harmonious, antithetical and contradictory to each other. A monolithic notion of what constitutes "family" is both narrow, and straight in our Church.

Methodist history speaks to problems with the use of "family protection" to impede Church progress. Such arguments failed when used by the Southern Church's attempts to continue slave ownership. Historically, the Methodist Episcopal Church passionately argued over the matter of slave ownership in 1844. Meeting in New York City, seventeen years before the civil war, the north and south debated abolition. The southern voice used a "protection of family" approach.

The slavery issue split the Church, and involved two Methodist slave owners. Both men were ordained white ministers with families: one a northern pastor in the Maryland Annual Conference; and the other, one of the Church's five presiding General Superintendents: a southern Bishop. The General Conference was small enough that all suspensions from ministry could be brought before the GC as a once, every four years, appeals process.

The case of an Elder in the Baltimore Conference with slaves came up for review by GC1844. Brother Francis A. Harding, a recently ordained Baltimore Conference preacher, had possession of five slaves, through his wife's inheritance upon the death of her parents. The five slaves had been together as a family unit in Mrs. Harding's parents' home for many years. The five are identified as Harry, 52; Maria, 50; John, 22; a girl "___", 13; and a child, 2 years.

Harding's defender, W.A. Smith, was a Virginia Conference ministerial member, teaching in the Randolph-Macon College. A respected ethicist at the time, Dr Smith wrote one of America's first ethics textbooks. Unfortunately, he extolled the blessings of slavery for humankind.

His defense strategy was to argue that slavery's abolition would destroy basic family units. Without continuing slave ownership, family units would fail. The essential *the protection of basic family* piece in this strategy was to *was heard repeatedly* exhibit each minister's family protecting another family, maintaining one big family.

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SLAVERY IN HAITI, TODAY

By Dr. Rick Huskey, M.D., D.Min, M.Div., Geriatric Internist Washington, D.C. He is reachable at drrickhuskey@msn.com

Every year there are new challenges and opportunities to demonstrate God's love to everyone beyond the church parking lot. During this past year in what limited free time I have, I have spent hours in the company of The Episcopal St. Vincent's Sisters of Charity, here in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Better than being on the streets at my age.

I love these "Blue Nuns" as I call them. They wear navy-blue habits for most of the ecclesiastical-calendar year. However, in hot weather they break out in lovely, powder-blue outfits. I am very careful around them because in spite of their habits, these women pack a real theological punch. I have seen them bring changing and transforming experiences to whomever they meet. Powerful is God's love as expressed through the lives of blue-uniformed women!

In mid-November 2003, I attended Trinity Episcopal Church for the first time in weeks. Caught off guard at coffee-hour by Sister Miriam, she asked three questions: 1. How was my French? 2. What was I doing in 72 hours this Wednesday morning? And, 3. Did I have a valid US passport? The Sister explains Father Phil has to attend to a church member's death and I "must substitute." She added, "Rick, go home, pray, take a Sunday afternoon nap, and when you wake up you'll find any obstacles are disappearing." She was right.

Oddly, the timing came at a not-too-busy period in the practice year. My colleagues were able to cover me without question. It seems I struck the "wish I could do that" chord in our collective medical psyche!

So off to Haiti I went with the Blue Nuns. Went so fast that I borrowed a dose of anti-malarial meds from a fellow missionary. "Nature affects missionaries, too," I was told. Then I realized, I was on a mission! According to Sister Miriam I was a medical missionary. This was not a Club-Med weekend. Quelle smooth! So basic a concept by which to be identified! So Christian! With Jesus in my heart I was on a mission to Haiti.

Landed, and Dear Jesus, it all began! Bribes at the airport between Haitian colleagues and customs officials over getting necessary medical supplies and equipment to the awaiting SUV's. Once outside immigration the "sea gull effect" was in full gear as Baptist missionaries gave a few coins to a few children and dozens

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Dr. Smith argued that Brother Harding could not free or "manumit" the five slaves because they belonged by probate dispersal to his wife and not to him. Slaves existed in the legal land as "property," so all discussions in law refer to either the active property concerns about slaves, or, the fates of "manumitted," former slaves.

Recently passed Maryland law stated that property inherited by a wife is the wife's property and cannot be taken from her by her husband for any reason, including payments of his debts. At the time, such a law was progressive for women and protected their inheritances. It was protection against the economic volatility of a Husband's dealings. By protecting the home's ongoing economy for wife and kids in the face of a drunkard husband with betting losses, etc., the law was pro-family.

Harding believed the slave family did not belong to him, and he could not free, or "manumit" slaves who were not his "property." This law came into existence only a few weeks before his wife's inheritance of the five slaves.

Dr. Smith argued before GC1844 that the twists and turns of Maryland State law required slaves to leave the state once they were manumitted. It was an odd situation because freed slaves were not at liberty in the state where prior they were enslaved. Brother Harding saw only two possible outcomes available to the five slaves: they had to leave Maryland for a free state, or due to the colonization movement, be sent to Liberia to seek fame and fortune. Either choice Brother Harding felt was not correct, because it would effectively break-up or abandon the care of this family of five to a very questionable fate in the world in which they would be homeless and in certain poverty.

The vote against Brother Harding was formidable with 117 ("Noes") to 56 ("Ayes") (1 excused and 5 absent) against reversing the Baltimore Conference's suspension of Brother Harding. This vote was better than 2:1 against a church member with slaves.

The GC1844 was dangerously close to extinguishing the Southern church's complex religious, social and economic structure, which had become intertwined in various degrees with slavery. For example, the Southern churches in the local communities were economically supported by profits from the slave industry. Many of the Southern Elders actively ministered to slaves as an active form of missionary work. They included church programs teaching reading to slaves, thereby attempting to halt slave illiteracy. However, the anti-slavery push of GC1844 was not complete with this denouncement of a slave-owning Baltimore minister.

the Southern church's structure... which had become intertwined in various degrees with slavery

On May 22, the Conference received Report #3 from the Committee on the Episcopacy. The report consisted of a letter written by Bishop James O. Andrews to the Conference committee. In the letter, Bishop Andrews explained his slave ownership due to the probate inheritances of 1) a mulatto girl bequeathed to him by a female church member;

2) the mother of a former wife ~~dead~~ and left him a slave;

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more appear. Quickly, the ever-present heat reduces all activity and movement to minimums. Its time for the powder-blue habits!

Visually, Haiti's colors include God's spectacular sunshine, blue sky, green foliage, and beautiful beaches. All the cities are basic concrete and rebar. Roads are dirt-based, rock-laden and puddle-filled, and house mosquitoes. This is America's poorest neighbor.

The Haitians are beautiful people, as is their country. But Haiti is in deep trouble due to its poverty. It is poverty with an infrastructure of exploitation and abuse stemming from the top of the government on down. The President, Mr. Aristede, was the pick of the U.S. government. Hello! Once again we picked badly! Aristede is a murderer, liar, thief, and his people's poverty persists with his blessing. He leads a society where bigger, mightier, lighter-toned, and rich Haitians exploit, abuse, use, and ride-over the weaker, poorer and darker-toned Haitians. He uses roving thugs to intimidate citizens. Returning home I learned through a *Los Angeles Times* report of over 300,000 Haitian children living in slavery. When a mother cannot afford to feed her child, the child is offered for sale. These children are not doing just laundry.

I thank God for the accommodations we had with a missionary who ministers to missionaries. 'Bin's Place' provided housing with safety at night, good cuisine and well-planned transportation with interpreters. We lived and worked ecumenically with Baptists.

Our mission was to help the Nuns' name sake Hospital in downtown Port-A-Prince, *St. Vincent's Hospital for Handicapped Children*. Imagine the fates of handicapped children in this abusive, exploitative society. Outside the hospital, these children have zero life options.

We spent time with the children, evaluated institutional needs, extracted the "wish-lists" of both administrators, and the medical staff. The Nuns presented the hospital with more than US\$7,000.00 dollars collected in two months. I realize that collecting money, is basic; but I see a more pressing need for all Christians to get to Haiti.

We set up a Saturday medical clinic in a Port-A-Prince church. Two Baptist doctors and I examined several hundred patients in six hours. A near riot began when we left. So much need. We ran out of medical supplies we brought, and worked until whisked home.

Clinically, we saw patients with dehydration, malnutrition, cardiovascular disease, bacterial and parasitical infections, HIV. Horribly, we found mothers with 6, 7, 8, and 9 years old daughters, both with painful frothy vaginal discharges. There is only one reason for that! Abuse and exploitation of the most vulnerable in society. It is culture-based and perpetuated by the poverty. Haiti lacks role-models showing right behavior between people.

Dear GLBTQ Christians and supporters create time to go on a mission, We are needed. I know I must go yearly as a missionary, and I invite you to do the same.

To be a missionary you need basic Christian essentials: always a prayer on your lips and the Good Book.

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and, 3) Bishop Andrews' present wife possessed slaves probated to her from a late husband. Bishop Andrews stated he asked the slaves to accept manumission and take their freedom. The slaves refused to take their leave from the household, and were content remaining with the Bishop's family.

The Conference would have NO moratorium on the issue of a slave owning Bishop. The Conference voted their will: "Resolved, that it is the sense of the general conference that Bishop James O. Andrews desist in the exercise of his office so long as this impediment remains." The vote was 110 "Ayes", and 68 "Noes". With a 2:1 majority in favor of the resolution. Bishop Andrews was effectively barred from Conference activity. His last time as chair of General Conference had been May 20, 1844.

On June 5th, the Southern delegates presented a declaration to GC1844,

The delegates of the General Conference in the slave holding states take leave to declare to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church that the continued agitation on the subject of slavery and abolition in a portion of the Church, the frequent action on that subject in the General Conference and especially the extra-judicial proceedings against Bishop Andrews which resulted on Saturday last in the virtual suspension of him from his office as superintendent.

The moment arrived *Arguments exploited the fear for the Church to cleave into of basic family failure* two separate churches, bearing the same Episcopal, Wesleyan brand of Protestant Christianity. Serious feelings of anger, hurt, pain, persisted on both sides with a keen understanding of an inability to work with each other contributed to this moment in history.

Dr. Smith's arguments on behalf of The Reverends Harding and Bishop Andrews, exploited the fear of basic family failure. Engendering fear at the GC1844, he created a wedge issue making protection of the family equal to the continuation of slavery.

GC1844 said no to slave ownership and established an absolute principle of freedom for all persons. The risk implied that some families might fail. Freedom from slavery was an issue separate from the concerns of family.

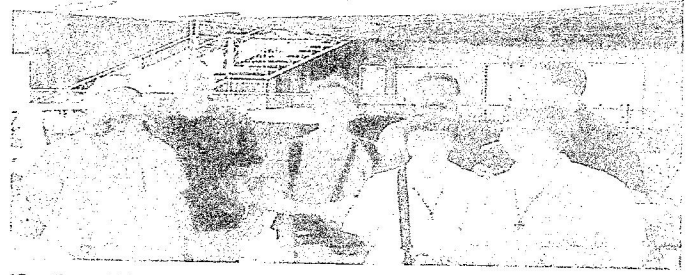
Absolute freedom applies to our freedom as well. GLBTQ Christians will always claim our inherent right to participation in family.

We are family.

With Love engages congregations and persons in ministries that seek to be inclusive in a just society.

With Love is a ministry for and with lesbian, gay, bisexual, Transgendered and heterosexual persons.

With Love provides religious leadership for ministries of education, justice and empowerment.



(Continued **Haitian Slavery** from page 2:Column 2)

For a week's mission pack a large jar of creamy peanut-butter to pass around during snacks (the Haitians harvest the smoothest coffee in the world and bake phenomenal croissants), a couple of cans of Deet insect repellent, sunscreen, antibiotics (such as anti-malarial pills, cipro, flagyl), and vitamins. Please drink a mandatory two liters of bottled water during the daylight, NO ice. Wear shorts, tee-shirts, sox, sneakers and your cross. Cognitively, you need to engage all your God-given wits and natural charisma to meet, greet, and pray with everyone. In turn you need to be met by others, listen and be receptive in Jesus' name. Most of all remember everyone in every place you visit, and lift them up to God in prayer.

Our world is so small, and we are a part of the shrinkage. We too receive God's love. GLBTQ Christians and supporters need to respond to God's call with love. Please, consider a week each year away from life's lattes and gyms, and be a missionary. Missionaries are rewarded by God's love. I clinically observed that a week in Haiti dispels most depression. Returning home one realizes how much we individually and collectively possess. Perhaps in our journeys outside the Church parking lots we can learn that possessions may indeed be obstacles in the path toward God.

CENTURION ENVY

By Dr. Rick Huskey, M.D., D.Min, M.Div., United Methodist Christian

As a physician I seek the roots of pathology. In my opinion Christian homophobia has its roots in straight envy of the Centurion. He was the New Testament's obvious gay man seeking healing for his lover. Jesus referred to him in the synoptic gospels as having the strongest faith. And the Centurion was with those marvelous women at Jesus' death; holding last vigil with them.

When Jesus hung lifeless from that cross, straight men were not to be found. They vanished after the torture. They were AWOL, busy, tired and all tuckered-out after a day at the office, uninterested, or whatever! Wherever all those straight men were, they WERE NOT WITH JESUS at the end. (At the end of *The Tenebrae*, they leave first).

Ultimately, straight men were not first to discover the new life after the resurrection.

Ever since the crucifixion and resurrection, straight Christian men have dominated the Church with guilt and shame-based responses for absence at Jesus' death. They envy both women and the gay Centurion. Herein lies the root of homophobia and sexism in the Christian Church.

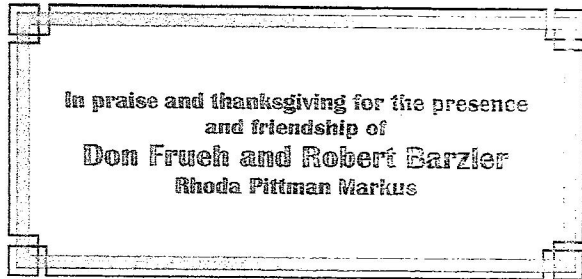
WITH LOVE RESTRUCTURES

With Love has begun a process of restructuring to better serve you. We are adding new writers and editors and strengthening our support base. Alice will continue as Editor/Publisher and write an editorial column. New volunteer positions need to be filled. The Executive Editor will format for publication. Editors-at-large will write feature columns and columns. The Executive Director will oversee policy and administration, board coordination, financial planning and raise funds. Board Members work with both the Executive Editor and the Editor/Publisher. Anna Jo Watson will continue as Publications Coordinator and Julie Lees will become Business Manager. We need a Webmaster and website Developer. To apply for a position. Send a letter of application to Anna Jo Watson c/o *With Love* or e-mail her at StPaulUMCDenver@earthlink.net before March 1.

News Briefs: RMN celebrates Troy Plummer as the new Executive Director! *With Love* expresses appreciation to Cathy Knight whose work and leadership as Interim executive director showed her abilities and dedication. Also, "Watermarked" will be RMN's title for the presence of Reconciling United Methodists at GC2004 Pittsburg. RMN will boldly proclaim we are "Watermarked" through baptism. Contact RMN Volunteers at 773-5526 or info@RMNetwork.org.

Pray for Rev. Karen Dammann's vindication in Washington. Also, prayers of thanksgiving for New Jersey's recent courageous actions; prayers of joy for the actions of Michigan Governor, Jennifer Granholm in December 2003. Finally, pray for GC 2004 and the Holy Spirit's presence. *With Love* thanks Dr. Rick Huskey for writing and preparing this newsletter.

THANK YOU for your support! *With Love* depends on reader support. Thank you for your contributions! Bonnie Benda and Bill Kirton, Flora Bowers, Joanne Carlson Brown, Ralph and Marilyn Bullock, Babs Eggleston, Gail Grossman, Marjorie Houser, Rhoda Pittman Markus, Keith and Jeannie Merriman, Maggie and Ben Roe, Catherine Roy, Robert and Jean Williams, Douglas and Karen Williamson, Ra and Jen Winquest.



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