

\$6.00

Open Hands

Vol. 11 No. 3
Winter 1996

More Light Churches
Open and Affirming Program
Reconciled in Christ Program
Reconciling Congregation Program
Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Resources for Ministries Affirming
the Diversity of Human Sexuality

Valuing Differences
Part 2

Weaving Community
from Diversity

Open Hands is a resource for congregations and individuals seeking to be in ministry with lesbian, bisexual, and gay persons. Each issue focuses on a specific area of concern within the church.

Open Hands is published quarterly by the Reconciling Congregation Program, Inc. (United Methodist) in cooperation with the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (American), the More Light Churches Network (Presbyterian), the Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ), and the Reconciled in Christ (Lutheran) programs. Each of these programs is a national network of local churches that publicly affirm their ministry with the whole family of God and welcome lesbian and gay persons and their families into their community of faith. These five programs— along with Open and Affirming (Disciples of Christ), Supportive Congregations (Brethren/Mennonite), and Welcoming (Unitarian Universalist)— offer hope that the church can be a reconciled community.

Open Hands is published quarterly. Subscription is \$20 for four issues (\$25 outside the U.S.). Single copies and back issues are \$6. Quantities of 10 or more, \$4 each.


Subscriptions, letters to the editor, manuscripts, requests for advertising rates, and other correspondence should be sent to:

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3801 N. Keeler Avenue
Chicago, IL 60641
Phone: 312 / 736-5526
Fax: 312 / 736-5475

Member, The Associated Church Press

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ISSN 0888-8833

 Printed on recycled paper.

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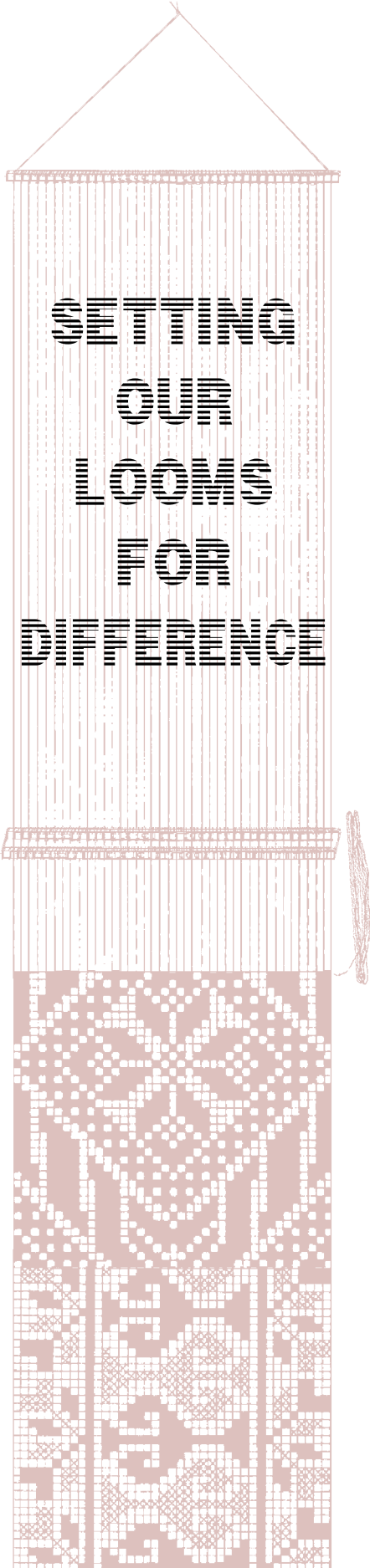


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FOCUS ON DIVERSITY



SETTING OUR LOOMS FOR DIFFERENCE

Our lives are enhanced and enlivened by the diversity of creation (not human creation alone). Let's explore and celebrate the rainbow of colors and plethora of shapes that make it all interesting! Let's seek to open up the ways in which we delude ourselves for the sake of "safety" and blandness.

Diversity is something that is seen, touched, heard. When we meet it, we can turn and run in fear or we can greet it and embrace it. Our welcoming congregations embody diversity; yet to be whole and alive, we still need to celebrate this diversity actively and intentionally.

—Thoughts of the *Open Hands* Advisory Committee as they helped shape this theme for the magazine.

Welcoming congregations weave a multiplicity of colors, textures, shapes, cultural identities, ages, genders, and orientations into a human tapestry full of difference. With our looms set for diversity rather than for sameness, we are creating Christian community. As we gather up diverse fibers of humanity and weave them into a whole, we weave the body of Christ—the holy people of God.

—Editor

DEALING WITH DIVERSITY: Confessions, Convictions, and Commitments

By Toinette M. Eugene

To deal with diversity is to accept an open invitation to be as inclusive as possible in developing welcoming and reconciling communities of faith. To deal with diversity is to enter into covenantal choices that can bind us together as congregations whose *confessions, convictions, and commitments* honor the differences which enhance us as uniquely Christian human beings. “Dealing with diversity” is a lifestyle that renews us in ways that lift us out of the status quo and into the sacred spaces where we know ourselves to be transformed and transforming in an era which desperately needs conversion and change.

Confessions

True confessions are good for the soul. They are vitally important for the religious community as we reclaim identity and integrity in an era when complicity and conspiracy are symbolic of the sickness and sinfulness of our American society. What we seem to have lost is something as simple as respect—for each other, for the earth, and for the kind of values that could hold us together. Most of the social, economic, and political issues we now face have a spiritual core. Rapidly changing demographics and our ingrained habits of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism will create increasing cultural polarization unless we begin to confess our common humanity and equality as children of God. The insatiable momentum of our consumerism will ultimately poison both our environment and our hearts unless we learn to confess and to reclaim our right relationship to the earth, its diverse cultures and peoples, and its abundance.

Because I deal and struggle with diversity in painful and poignant ways every day of my life—not because I want to but because I have to—I need to begin by confessing who I am as well as who I want to be. I confess that my sig-

nificant academic degrees were received, and my dissertation was written, in the *School of Hard Knocks*. As Zora Neale Hurston (premier African American anthropologist and “rumored to be lesbian” author in the literary era of the Harlem Renaissance) would say, “Ah done been in sorrow’s kitchen and ah licked de pots clean.”¹

How many of us can confess to this? Can we say with conviction that we know the taste of disappointment, despair, deprivation delivered only and intentionally because of religious denomination, race, class, gender, or sexual orientation? Can we taste it? Can we smell it? Can we feel it? Can we choose to be in solidarity with it? That means taking it up—the way one reverently picks up a fallen flag...or takes up an old rugged cross.

I confess that even saying this makes me feel a little uncomfortable. I feel more than a little bit like one of the old ladies of my home church, a black Roman Catholic Church in Oakland, California. Whenever I go home to preach, I greet the Mothers of the Church, those wizened and wise old women who have grown down and smaller with the passing of the years because they have borne the heat and the burden of the day. I look forward to an exchange with Mother Camille who always says to me, “Why, Chil’, Girl, how you all doin’?” and I say, “Well—just fine, Mother Camille. And how ‘bout you?” And she looks me in the eye, and she says with a straight face, “Why, Baby, I’m somewhere between ‘Lord, Have Mercy!’ and ‘Thank You, Jesus!’”

As I seek to say something about “Dealing with Diversity,” the oppressions and ideologies of dominance, the abuse of power, privilege, and the abuse of persons which universally occurs within the interstices of sexism and heterosexism, of racism and classism, of rampant consumerism and capitalism, I confess that I am somewhere closer to

“Lord, Have Mercy” than I am to “Thank You, Jesus.”

I need to confess that I am black *and* that I am also by birth and academic training and denominational tradition, a western Christian. Because of that, I have inherited—and sometimes even handed on like bread gone stale—the pernicious dualism that western Christianity has held sacred between sex and God, between sexuality and spirituality, body and spirit, pleasure and goodness. By literally splitting us in two, the dominant ideology of western Christian culture has rendered us flattened facsimiles of fully human beings. We have been stripped—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually—of our capacities to delight in ourselves, one another, the creation, and its holy well-springs. Lord, have mercy!

I confess that I am a self-avowed Catholic Christian, a black, lesbian woman, made in the image and likeness of a mighty good God. I confess that because of *who I am* and *whose I am*, like Zora, I am no longer concerned about whether some folk count me “out” or “in” the official ranks of the church or the academy, or of polite or politically correct seminary faculty, or within the fold of respected civic society. My primary interest, spiritually and intellectually, is in empowering people—beginning with myself—to live a life that is characterized by justice/love, in mutuality, in right relationship.² Thank you, Jesus!

In dealing with diversity, in reaching for the reconciliation of God’s people, I confess that I must be accountable with and to those others who are also committed to justice/love for all. I may not always live out this value evenly or very well. Most of us do not. But the commitment is honest and strong. The promise that draws me to people who seek justice/love is that they will remind me that, even when I believe I am being

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so inclusive in my work, inadvertently someone is usually being left out because of my limitations. To that extent, I am helping hold unjust power in place even in my honest outpourings for justice/love. I confess that I need to be more inclusive still. Lord, have mercy!

Finally, I confess that I am able to stand more closely in solidarity with those whose radical politics and spirituality I have come to trust: those who know that we meet the Sacred in relation to one another and who understand that any power that we or others use in ways that are not mutually empowering is abusive. I look to such radical women and men, of whatever color, religion, class, sexual preference or orientation, to confirm in me a joyful commitment to live responsibly in this world. Thank you, Jesus!

Dealing with diversity means more than just welcoming or recruiting people of color. It means dealing with and honoring human differences, confronting the racism, classism, elitism, and liturgical literalism that limits our pro-action and reaction. It means dealing with whatever limits our ability to listen longer than we claim our right to speak. It requires the confession that "It's me, it's me, it's me, Oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer!" Lord, have mercy!

Community Query

1. What do we need to confess?

Convictions

Because of my confessions, I stand convicted, not as a criminal, but by the love of God for me and for all who struggle to deal with diversity, to honor diversity, to utilize diversity as a way to enter joyfully and completely into the kingdom of God. To be convicted is to be convinced, to be sure, to know that the truth (though it may make us weary) can also set us free (Jn 8:32)! I have three convictions about the ways members of different races, ages, classes—people who are also gay, lesbian, and bisexual—can lead us in our struggles to deal with diversity as we seek mutuality, long for equality, and work for justice/love.

Conviction 1: Sexuality is relative. It is more than coincidence that the gay, lesbian, and bisexual liberation movement is occurring in a time and culture which is passing from a scientific myth of Newtonian absoluteness to that of Einsteinian relativity. There is a relativity about sexuality that is not well served by those who, like Newton, feel they can confidently know the unbending "laws" of nature. Plato (working out of a Newtonian world view) said that homosexuality was unnatural because animals "didn't do it." However, Plato did not know what animals naturally do and not do sexually. Two prophetic gifts from the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community will be to teach humility to those who presume to know exactly what is and is not "natural" and to teach that what is natural varies with different groups, cultures, racial/ethnic values, and traditions. Sameness does not necessarily bring about solidarity or satisfactory solutions.

*Members of different
races, ages, classes—
people who are also gay,
lesbian, and bisexual—
can lead us in
our struggles to deal
with diversity*

As Alfred North Whitehead (working out of an Einsteinian world view) put it, "the laws of nature develop together with societies which constitute an epoch."³ Part of the Einsteinian epoch we are moving into will be an acceptance of the relativity of sexual lifestyles. With this acceptance, a new awareness will occur: The essence of human sexuality is in establishing faithful relationships and in the quality of right relationships, not in absolutist laws and principles a la Newton. Meister Eckhart (the medieval mystic) taught that "relation is the essence of a thing."⁴ This relational spirituality corresponds beautifully with Einstein's teaching on the scientific theory of relativity.



Photo: Nancy Carter

DIVERSITY FORUM: Toinette Eugene raises questions about confessions, convictions, and commitment at RCP Convocation, July 1995.

Conviction 2: Faith is built on right relationships, not self-righteous institutions. Because lesbians, gay men, and bisexual persons have not been widely welcomed into ecclesiastical institutions, those who have remained have had to look beyond institutions for answers to our questions of faith: What matters? Does anything matter? A well of creativity can be tapped from persons who have learned to live marginally in institutions. They could be a powerful force in revitalizing very stolid institutions.

Conviction 3: Difference is a basis for creativity. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons stand as witnesses to how people can indeed be creatively different and equal. As minority people, (the "Poor of Yahweh," known in the Old Testament as "*anawim*"⁵), they have the potential to be more creative because they have touched nothingness in their being emptied and because they have been made painfully aware of their being different. The recovery of the body as spirit and the reclaiming of a more sensual spirituality and a less product-oriented love are particular gifts of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community to the

church at large. By not splitting body and soul and by not equating sexuality exclusively with procreation (as Augustine did), they allow for the energies of the Spirit to flow once again. They overcome dualisms that neither Jesus nor the prophets ever imagined, allowing passion in its proper place so that compassion might be born. By removing sexual expression from the dominant culture's productive motif, as if sexual love needs to be justified by having babies, they—like the author of the Song of Songs—can teach our society and churches to pause long enough to savor life and its divine delights.

If it is true, as Gutierrez writes, that “the spirituality of liberation will have as its basis the spirituality of the *anawim*,”⁶ then the issue of First and Third World liberation, of feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and male liberation, of North American as well as Latin American liberation, of white as well as black, brown, red liberation cannot be joined without the sexual *anawim* being listened to. When a society can al-

low for differences, it will—as historian John Boswell demonstrates the medieval church did—celebrate creative rejuvenation because of the presence of the *anawim* people in its midst. Perhaps it is not too late to begin to listen to those who represent the *anawim* in our midst.

Community Query

2. Of what do we stand convicted?

Commitments

Having made my confessions and named my convictions, I next must offer my commitments. Commitments, promises, covenants, and communities develop best in the context of gratitude and thanksgiving for all that is and for all that might be in a future full of hope (Jer 29:11). In a spirit of gratitude to the members of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community, I offer five commitments as we seek to deal with diversity as welcoming congregations.⁷

Commitment 1: To be in solidarity with the homosexual and bisexual members of welcoming congregations because you have been teaching us in the church “a hermeneutic of suspicion.” For far too long the church and its academy has been uncritical of its own assumptions in doing theology. However, *anawim* people, the faithful diverse and different ones so loved by God, have been teaching us a more healthfully suspicious theology. Those of us who are “different” in race, in sexual orientation, and in downwardly mobile class diversity, have taught us, for example, to distrust sincerity as a validating criterion for theology. Some of us used to think that when some Christians found homosexuality contrary to God's will on biblical

grounds, their sincere use of the scriptures should be respected, even if we disagreed with their conclusions. Some of us have come to believe that this is like saying that when white folk sincerely ground in the Bible their convictions that persons of color are inferior, we ought to respect that sincerity. Even the Southern Baptist Convention is getting over that old colorphobic chestnut!⁸ Sincerity and elaborate uses of scripture are no guarantee of freedom from homophobia or of racism. We are, all of us, afflicted with those diseases. *Anawim* folk have taught us to be more creatively suspicious as well as subversive in doing theology.

Commitment 2: To be in solidarity with gay, lesbian, and bisexual brothers and sisters because you have made the church more aware of its Christian tradition. For example, in pressing the question of blessing unions, you have made some of us more aware of our frequent errors in understanding the Christian tradition of marriage. So many have thought that clergy actually perform marriages and that churches have a special power to create a valid marriage. This is not so. Some of you have reminded the church that only the covenant of two persons with each other and with God creates a union. The church has the opportunity to bless, celebrate, and support a union. However, it is the covenanting process that creates a marriage, not the church or the clergy or a wedding service or a license. That applies to gay and lesbian unions as much as it does to those of heterosexual people.

Commitment 3: To be in solidarity with the folk who emanate out of the homosexual and bisexual margins of our almost monocultural western Christianity because you have shown us a bigger church than the one we once knew. In quantitative size, this *anawim* group is a statistical minority. However, in qualitative size, we are no minority because we are large and making the church larger. We have had many reasons and many occasions to vote with our feet and leave the church. Yet we have stayed because we believe that the gospel is for everyone. We have stayed because we still bear the hope that the church might be yet larger

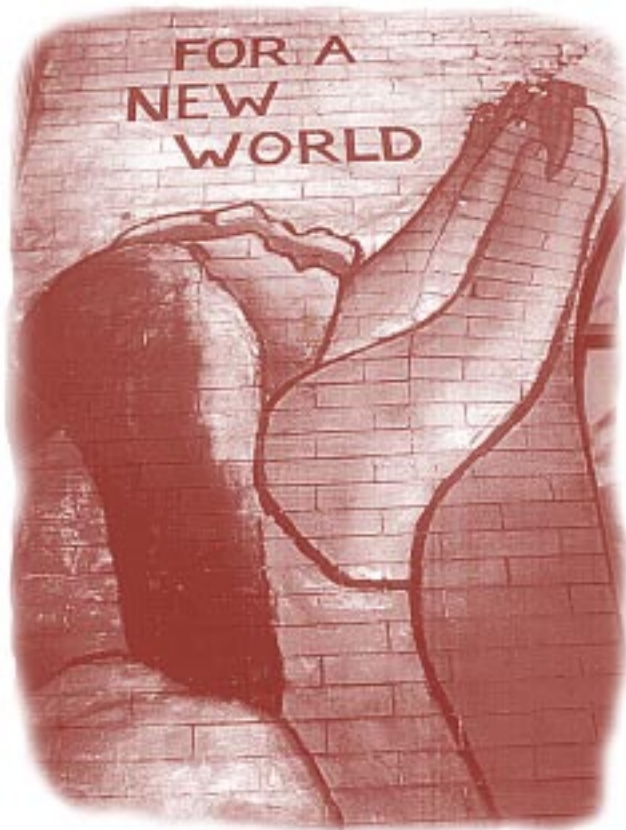


Photo: Dale Fast Description: p. 17
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in stature, larger in the size of its soul, bigger in its integrity, greater in its ability to entertain a rich variety of persons, fuller in its strength of spirit to enable all people to realize their destiny to freedom, uniqueness, and worth. I thank God for this revelation and vision of a bigger church.

Sacred clowns— God's *anawim* people— do things backwards!

Commitment 4: To commit to, and thank God for, members of the homosexual and bisexual communities who have chosen to become sacred clowns. There is an ancient tradition of the sacred clown—indeed, of Christ as a clown.⁹ And in the Native American tradition, the *heyoehkah* (sometimes negatively described as the *berdache*) were sacred clowns, honored in the tribe for their important and special functions of healing, and for their work as shamans.¹⁰ They were those in the tribe who did things differently, who challenged people's thinking and shook them up, who kept them from becoming rigid. They were called "contraries" because they did some things backward, did things contrary to what others considered normal. I thank God that we have been shown by *anawim* people, in their contrariness, a *heyoehkah* response to AIDS. When the so-called normal response was fear and panic, sacred clowns danced backward and responded with love and compassion. When the world was talking about dying with AIDS, you were helping people to live with AIDS. When the "normal" response was to isolate, you drew people into community. When most people said that AIDS is not about us, but about "them," you said, "This is about us all; our whole planet is sick and has acquired an immune dysfunction." I thank you for dancing the dance of the sacred clowns.

Commitment 5: To lift up the power and potential of liberating love to heal us all of our limitations, to forgive us of our sins, to reconcile us to ourselves, to God, and to the "other," whoever and however different from us they may be. H.L.

Mencken once described the Puritan as the one who deep down had a nagging sense that some people, somewhere, might be enjoying themselves. Well, I have a nagging sense that all of us are sinners. All of us are broken and need healing. Our sin, however, does not lie in living out our sexuality or in our particular sexual orientations, whatever they may be, but in our estrangement from love. My final commitment in dealing with diversity is to reiterate and to reinforce the need for all of us to find prophetic, radical, subversive ways to live and love in right relationships, with justice/love, wherever we are.

Community Queries

3. What are our commitments?
4. How shall we respond?

Liberating justice/love can teach us and comfort us in our efforts to deal with diversity, with confessions, with convictions, and with commitment. Carter Heyward insists that

- To say "I love you" is to say that you are not mine, but rather your own.
- To love you is to advocate your rights, your space, your self, and to struggle with you, rather than against you, in our learning to claim our power in the world....
- To love you is to be pushed by a power/God both terrifying and comforting, to touch and be touched by you. To love you is to sing with you, cry with you, pray with you, and act with you to re-create the world.
- To say "I love you" means—*let the revolution begin!*...¹¹ ▼

Source

This article is adapted from a longer speech given at the Fourth National Convocation of Reconciling Congregations, July 13-16, 1995, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Copyright 1995 by *Open Hands*. Original speech is available on videotape from RCP. 312/736-5526.

Notes

¹For rumor, see Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), p. 88. For quote, see Mary Helen Washington, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Woman Half in Shadow," *I Love Myself When I am Laughing*

...*And Then Again When I am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, Alice Walker, ed., (New York: Feminist, 1979), p. 19.

²The terms justice/love, mutuality, and right relationship are richly expanded upon by Carter Heyward in *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).

³Cited in Donald W. Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 93.

⁴See Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart Creation Spirituality in New Translation* (Garden City: Doubleday, Image, 1980); and Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart* (Santa Fe: Bear, 1982).

⁵See A. Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1953). Also Ps 9:18; 82:3-4; and Zeph 3:12.

⁶Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleston (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), p. 207f.

⁷This list is derived and adapted from James B. Nelson, "I Thank God for You: A Sermon for Lesbian and Gay Awareness Week at United Theological Seminary," in James B. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), pp. 183-189.

⁸See "The Era of Collective Repentance," *U. S. News and World Report*, July 3, 1995, pp. 10-11, and "SBC renounces racist past," *Christian Century*, July 5-12, 1995, pp. 671-672, for reports on apology offered by the largest Protestant body for "condoning individual and systematic racism in our lifetime," a scene strikingly reminiscent of the apology four years ago by the Dutch Reformed Church to black South Africans for having provided religious justification for apartheid. Archbishop Desmond Tutu accepted that apology.

⁹Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome: Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer, and Contemplation* (Garden City: Image, 1979).

¹⁰Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), pp. 197-200.

¹¹Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice* (New York: Pilgrim, 1984), p. 93.

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Bigot-Trees or Nature's Way?

See 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

By Gaye Janesdaughter

*Hail to you, O Copper Beech,
flourishing in the wood.
What tales of prejudice would you tell,
if only now you could?*

*Do all the other green-leafed trees
speak to you of "norm"
and turn their branches up at you
with deep contemptuous scorn?*

*Would they deny you a chance to live
in their exclusive town,
saying: "It's not Nature's way
to make spring leaves red-brown."*

*And do you ever try to say:
"I just came this way, you see.
I never asked to be a Beech,
just a happy, living tree."*

*But, perhaps, your neighbors see in you
the contrast you present
and view your dark leaves happily,
unthreatened and content.*

*Perhaps, they see your reddish brown
highlighting their own green hue
and rejoice in the fact that this wide globe
can accommodate both them and you.*

*Oh, would that the woods could teach us
how to live like them in grace
and show us how to enjoy the "others"
of different styles and race.*

*If we could see the differences as
variations on a theme,
then we could love, as God must love,
Her little earthling dream.*

June 1990

Gaye Janesdaughter is a pseudonym used by a woman in deference to her partner's need for complete anonymity professionally. The great-granddaughter of a Presbyterian minister, she married an Episcopal priest, divorced, raised her two sons as a single parent for eighteen years, and claimed a lesbian identity in 1987. After a particularly painful discussion with a minister who said he didn't think homosexuality was "natural," Gaye went for a walk and saw the beautiful copper beech with brown leaves standing among green-leafed trees.

Crumbs from the Master's Table

Matthew 15:21-29

By Paul W. Egertson

I feel strangely at home here at Wesley United Methodist Church (see Source, p. 12). Thirty-eight years ago, while I was a student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, my wife was pregnant with our first child. Our doctor's office was in the Wesley office building which used to stand next door to this church and we came here regularly for pre-natal care. Our baby boy was duly born at Fairview Hospital, not far from here. Twenty-one years later, he told us he is gay. I also feel right at home here in a Eucharist sponsored by the Twin Cities chapter of Lutherans Concerned and presided over by the irregularly ordained pastors of St. Francis Lutheran Church in San Francisco where my son is a member and has served as president. Yes, I really feel at home here.

I hope you feel at home here, too. Many of us are in Minneapolis attending the Fourth Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These assemblies are times when Lutherans meet to deliberate on issues the Spirit of God places before the church. In every period of the church's life, new issues arise and old issues are viewed with new eyes. Each time that happens, God's people have gone back to square one and listened again to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

have to observe the laws of Moses?" Can you imagine the discussion which followed when the question before the house asked if it was necessary for Christians to obey everything written in their Bible: the Law and the Prophets? They had no New Testament. All they had was the gospel being orally preached and believed. The minutes tell us they settled the issue by a four-fold appeal: to the prophets of Israel; to the gospel; to reasoning from their own experience of the gospel; and to their own sense of being led by the Spirit of God. In the process, they used one part of the Bible to support their freedom from any obligation to obey other parts of the Bible.

The result was a decision that has been honored in the church ever since; Gentile Christians are not to be bound by every command in the Law of Moses. But, because that Law was being read every week in the synagogues, most Jewish Christians continued to attend; and because many of them had a lifetime of religious education and conditioning that would not quickly be overcome by the startling new standards set by the gospel and the Spirit, the Gentile Christians were asked to avoid a few practices which, however erroneously, were still widely believed to be against the will of God.

This momentous decision made by that first churchwide assembly required the reeducation of people away from some things their Bible and religious tradition had always taught them. Why? Because in Christ a new time had dawned and what was once not acceptable was now acceptable. How do we know? We know from our experience of the gospel and the leading of the Spirit of God among us as we dialogue openly with each other. What do we do? We change our policies from those of past times to those for the present time, asking people to be patient and sensitive to each other's feelings during the transition. Can we be 100 percent sure we

Who Should Be Made Disciples?

The first churchwide assembly was held in the first century, less than twenty-years after Pentecost. The minutes of that meeting are recorded in chapter 15 of Acts. The issue the Spirit put before the church then focused on which people were, and which were not, acceptable in the Christian fellowship. Jesus had sent his apostles to make disciples of all nations. But the first Christians were all Jews and apparently thought Jesus meant to make disciples of the Jews in all the nations. He certainly couldn't have meant to include Samaritans, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. And he certainly didn't mean to include the Gentiles, for Jews do not enter the houses of Gentiles or ever eat with them.

So what was the problem? Well, the problem was that the Spirit of God, without permission from the duly recognized apostolic leaders in Jerusalem, inspired a layman to preach the gospel and baptize some of the dreaded Samari-

tans. Only after the fact were the apostolic leaders brought in to evaluate those irregular baptisms. Worse yet, Peter, who was one of the apostolic leaders, and therefore should have known better, got into the spirit of things himself. Along with a couple of friends, he preached the gospel and baptized a Gentile. Only after the fact did he explain his unauthorized sacramental practice to the church. Amazingly, he did not justify his actions on either the grounds of scripture or tradition, but on a personal and subjective experience of insight from the Spirit of God. Finally, an outside upstart, ordained by God but not by the apostles, began making a habit of preaching to and baptizing Gentiles. The growth of Paul's congregations was so rapid the church could no longer endure these happenings without coming to some consensus on their meaning for its life and ministry. So the first churchwide assembly was called together in Jerusalem.

The question under discussion was essentially this: "Are Gentiles saved by the grace of God alone or do they also

have it right? No. The best we can hope for is the level of certainty that first churchwide assembly reported: *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.*

Who Receives the Blessings?

I've reviewed this ancient lesson because the issue it raises is not ancient at all. It comes up in the life of the church repeatedly. Every generation has to learn it anew, often in relation to issues that were not faced before. The story from Matthew 15:21-29 is a case in point. The date of that first assembly in Jerusalem we believe to have been 48-50 CE, well within the lifetime of the first generation of Christians. The Gospel of Matthew is one of the latest gospels written, probably some thirty-five years after the assembly at Jerusalem. Matthew's readers then, are second generation Christians who need to deal again with the question of the acceptability of Gentiles into the church.

The point of the story is that a Gentile woman asks Jesus to heal her demon possessed daughter. The disciples want Jesus to send her away. Jesus tells her what many of the Jewish Christians who are Matthew's readers personally believed: I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles. It isn't fair to give the blessings belonging to the children of the house (read, Israelites) to the house dogs (read, Gentiles).

The use of the word *dogs* here reminds us of how hostile the feelings between Jews and Gentiles were then. Each referred to the other as dogs. The Jews were dogs to the Gentiles because they

denied the polytheism of the Greek and Roman religions. The Gentiles were dogs to the Jews because they did not believe in the monotheism of the one true faith. In other words, their mutual rejection was grounded in their religious convictions.

What does this woman say to Jesus? "Even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." What does Jesus say to her? "Great is your faith. Your wish is granted. Your daughter is healed." And what did those early Christians learn from this story? The healing grace of God comes to people through faith, not through their racial or religious genealogy! It comes to women as well as to men. (This is not a story about a man and his son.) It comes to Gentiles as well as Jews. In other words, the gospel breaks through all the boundaries human culture and religion have created. Christians are no longer confined to live within borders Christ himself has crossed. *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them.*

Who Does ALL Include Today?

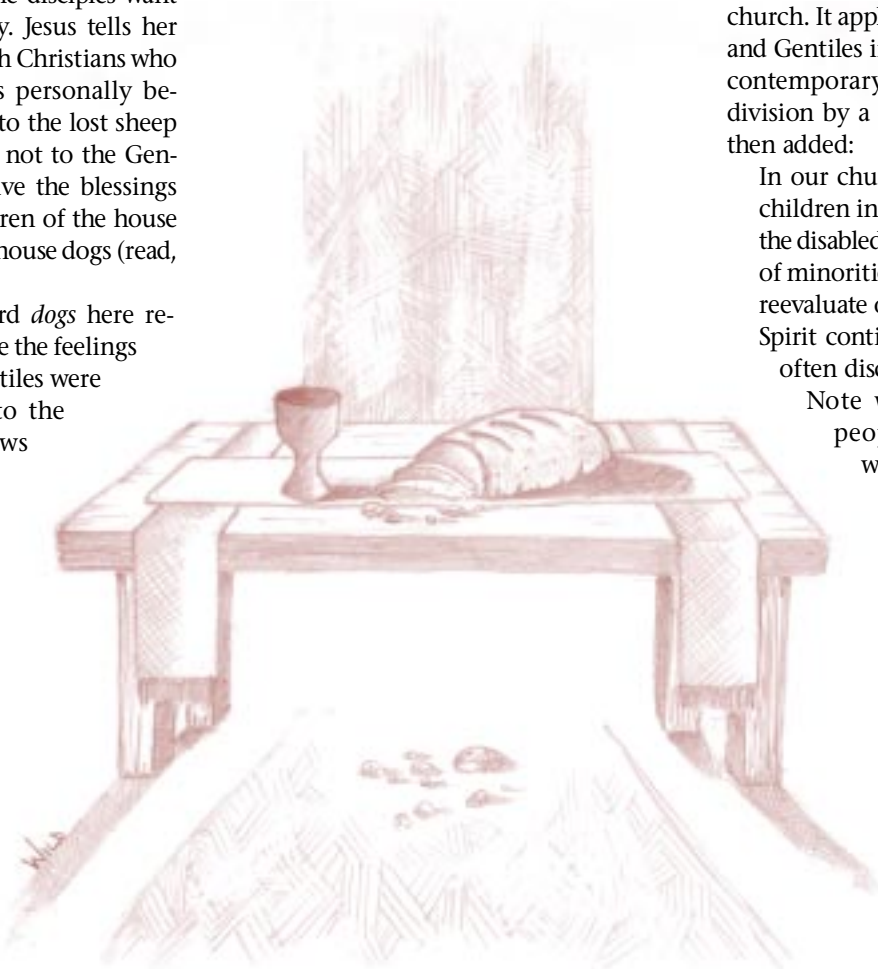
Just as first and second generation Christians had to learn this lesson in their times, so every generation of Christians down through the centuries has had to relearn it in their time. Our grandparents had to learn it in relation to the race issue in America. Are black people fully human? Does the Spirit intend for us to admit them into our congregations? My generation had to learn it in relation to the gender issue in America. This year we celebrate twenty-five years of ordaining women in our Lutheran church. But I was ordained thirty-five years ago and voted at least three times against seating women as delegates to our district conventions. Yet, the Spirit drove us during the 1960s to a new understanding of the Word that led to ordaining women in the 1970s.

When this text in Matthew last came up for reading in Sunday worship, the message on the back of our denomination's Sunday bulletin folders tried to connect the story with our time and church. It applied the lesson about Jews and Gentiles in the first century to our contemporary expressions of human division by a reference to women and then added:

In our churches, the presence of children in worship, the needs of the disabled, the elderly, the voices of minorities may challenge us to reevaluate our mission. The Holy Spirit continues to call those we often discount.

Note who are listed here as people we often discount: women, children, disabled, elderly, minorities.

more 



Are there any people the church of ten discounts missing from that list of discounted people? Are there some people so discounted they don't even make our list of the discounted? Only 5 to 10 percent of the world's population! The people being placed by the Spirit before the church for full acceptance in our time are the gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons whom we are not yet comfortable even naming. If the Spirit is not facing us with this class of humanity for reconsideration, why has every major mainline denomination been re-examining its policies in relationship to them? And why has there risen up outside the official structures but within the fellowship of every major denomination a cadre of persons to bear witness to the need for change? And why has there developed in every church body a growing list of congregations willing to break the old traditions in the light of new leading from the Spirit by giving a public affirmation of welcome to gay and lesbian people? Each denomination has its own name for them. In Lutheran circles they are called Reconciled in Christ congregations, while United Methodists know them as Reconciling Congregations and Presbyterians call them More Light Churches....

So long as *all* is an exclusive word in our time meaning *heterosexuals only*, we will have to follow the New Testament's example, saying: *and also for homosexuals.*

If Christians in our time are to fulfill the Spirit's call to become a fully inclusive church...then we can no longer omit these people from the list of those to be specifically identified for inclusion. In the early church it was not enough to say the gospel was for *all*, because *all* meant all Jews, but not Gentiles. So when the Word of the Spirit in that time was heard, those Christians made sure

to specify that the gospel was not only for Jews but also for the Greeks. Paul's letters are full of those specific designations. So long as *all* is an exclusive word in our time meaning *heterosexuals only*, we will have to follow the New Testament's example, saying: *and also for the homosexuals.*

If the church wants to keep gay and lesbian people from sitting or serving at the Lord's table, it should not drop them any crumbs... or allow them to overhear the gospel.

In the meantime, my son and you other gay and lesbian people may have to be content with the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. But before you feel too depressed about that, let me tell you something about those crumbs. They are made up of the same bread being eaten by those who have a seat at the table. The same nutrients they receive, you receive. The grace given and received is the same grace whether from loaves off the table or crumbs off the floor. That grace accepts, reconciles, redeems, and saves all in like manner. You may have to wait for seating at the church's table, but you are already eating at the Lord's table.

Finally, Only Two Options

If the church is hesitant to take a stand regarding gay and lesbian people, it might be helpful to recognize that only two options are finally available. On the one hand, we can do what the first Christians did. We can continue to discuss this matter in Christian love with one another and if *it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us*, we can remove both our rejecting attitudes and policies and announce to the world that for us *all* means homosexual people, too. Since there are many who have been taught from the Bible by the church that such acceptance is unthinkable, we will all

need to be sensitive to those whose religious conditioning will not allow them to embrace the change.

On the other hand, if the church cannot believe the Spirit is saying this for our time, then it should quit being so sloppy in its table manners and stop allowing crumbs to fall where those not qualified to receive God's meal might happen upon it. If white Christians really wanted to keep black people enslaved, they should never have allowed them to sit in the balcony of their churches and hear the gospel. If Christian men want to keep women subordinate, they should not only insist women keep silent in church, as the Bible clearly commands, but also insist they not go to church at all, lest they hear the gospel and be set free. And if the church wants to keep gay and lesbian people from sitting or serving at the Lord's table, it should not drop them any crumbs from the table or otherwise allow them to overhear the gospel.

Why? Because *the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*. Any underclass persons who eat its crumbs, even from the floor, will be transformed and empowered in such a way that they will finally find their place at the table of God. It is to that table that Christ now invites us all, regardless of sexual orientation. Amen. ▼

Source

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Paul W. Egertson, Ph.D., a long-time pastor and educator, assumed office in February 1995 as bishop of the Southern California West Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He and his wife Shirley Mae have raised six sons and now have two grandsons.



THE CARING SHEPHERD: A Parable for Children Based on Luke 15:1-7

By Margaret Lirones

(Before telling this story, find 100 small, identical items. Pennies would work; ends of cotton swabs are better; bits of wool are ideal. Hide one in your pocket. Sit on the floor with the children in a semicircle in front of you. Silently spread a large piece of green felt on the floor and add felt cutouts of hills, a small piece of black for a cave, twigs for bushes, and a cutout figure of a shepherd.¹ Start by showing pictures of sheep and shepherds in the dry, hilly countryside where Jesus lived. If possible, bring in a fleece from a sheep or samples of real wool for children to see and touch. Discuss the importance of sheep to the people and the ways that a shepherd cares for the sheep, taking them far over the hills to find grass and water.)

Today we are going to hear a story that Jesus told. When Jesus was traveling around his country, he spent time with all kinds of people: rich people and poor people, healthy people and ill people, religious people and people who had never heard about God. Jesus talked to people in the fields, and by the sea, and in the city. He visited all kinds of people in their homes and he often ate meals with them.

Now, some people thought they knew who was good to know. They didn't like to see Jesus spending so much time with people they did not like. They grumbled and complained because they thought Jesus should be with *them* instead. Jesus spent just too much time with those other people! They complained so much that finally Jesus told them a story. It went like this:

Jesus said, "Pretend that you have one hundred sheep. You take good care of your sheep. You find the best grass for them and water for them to drink. Sometimes you count the sheep to be sure that they are all there." Let's count the sheep!

(Bring out the ninety-nine pieces representing sheep. Invite the children to count with you. Count slowly while you lay the items down in rows of ten so there can be no mistake. Remind the children once or twice that you are getting close to 100.)

One, two, three...fifty-five, fifty-six...ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine.

(Sit back and let the children absorb this. They have been counting for a long time and expecting to reach 100.)

Oh, dear, one is missing! Now this shepherd (*touch the figure of the shepherd*) could say, "Oh, well, I have ninety-nine sheep. That's still a lot of sheep." But this shepherd does not do that. This shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep where they are in the wilderness and goes searching (*move the figure of the shepherd*) over the hills...and in the caves...and behind the rocks...and in the bushes...and *just everywhere* until this shepherd finds the one that is lost. (*Place the one remaining sheep with the shepherd.*) And when this shepherd finds the lost one, he carries it on his shoulders and calls all of his friends and neighbors to celebrate with him!

God is like this shepherd. If even one person is missing from God's whole people, God searches and searches and finds that person and calls all of us to celebrate. In our church, we are happy whenever anyone knows God's love. We celebrate, just like the shepherd's neighbors. That's what God calls us to do.

(Slowly and silently put your storytelling materials away as the children watch. Then continue the discussion or dismiss them to their next activity.) ▼

Note

¹This way of sharing stories with children is derived from the work of Jerome Berryman. See his book *Godly Play: A Way of Religious Education* (Harper: San Francisco, 1991).

Margaret Lirones, director of Christian education at Centennial United Methodist Church in Sacramento, is a member of Davis United Methodist Church and lives in Davis, California with her partner and their two children. Her son Eric (below) was four when she first told this story in Vacation Bible School.



Misinterpretations of the Parable

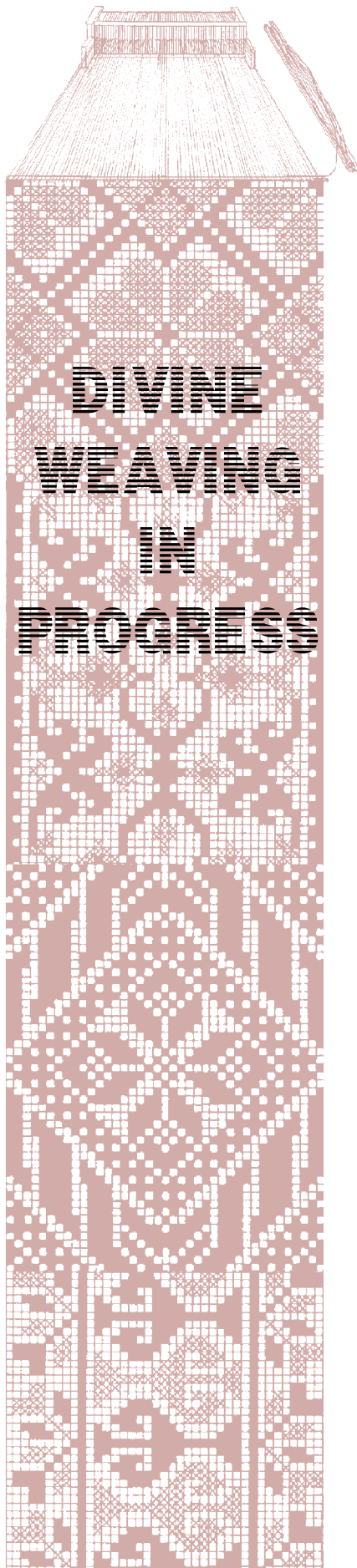
Children's versions of this parable often describe the dangers a lost lamb might face and the relief it might feel when the kind shepherd rescues it. Sometimes the story emphasis is on a wandering sheep being welcomed back to the fold by ninety-nine who had better sense than to stray. The descriptions of sheep's feelings are not part of the biblical text. The unspoken message, "don't stray," becomes a warning against being "different," wandering, getting lost, or deviating from the norm. This was not Jesus' intent!

This parable was originally addressed to the majority religious establishment, *not* to individual "sinners." Jesus calls the church to be the neighbors who celebrate with the shepherd. The story describes a flock that is incomplete if even one is missing. It illustrates God's unfailing care for each of us—and for all of us. That is a powerful message.

—Margaret Lirones

Homosexuality in the Evangelical Experience

By Howard H. Bess



I am an evangelical Christian. I use that word, not in the context of present national political divisions, but in the context of a particular movement in the Protestant Reformation. We evangelicals believe our tradition is firmly rooted in the Bible.

My grandfather is a good example of the evangelical tradition and experience. John Henry Bess was a young hillbilly living in the rural environs of Bollinger County in southeastern Missouri. He drank too much. In today's world he would be identified as an alcoholic. According to my grandmother, grandpa was drunk the day they were married. Her friends asked her why she was marrying that "no good John Bess." Nevertheless, she did, and life was not pleasant.

Then, in about 1885, a traveling evangelist came to Marble Hill, the county seat of Bollinger County. As was the custom, he brought a tent and sawdust for the aisles. My grandfather went to the revival meeting. He was convicted of sin, walked the sawdust trail, took Christ as his Savior, and was saved. Grandpa never took another drink. He joined the Baptist church, and he and Grandma raised their five children in the church. Their middle child was my father, who with my mother, raised their seven children in the church. The impact of Grandpa's conversion has now reached into the fifth generation. John Bess's great, great grandchildren are accepting Christ and finding salvation in the evangelical tradition.

Understanding the Plan

At the heart of the evangelical experience is the conviction that "If any person is in Christ, that person is a new creation; old things pass away, and behold, all things become new." This experience of being born again has little or nothing to do with baptism, receiving of communion, or church membership. It is all about meeting Jesus and

receiving him as Savior and Lord. The preacher who is true to this tradition ends every sermon with an invitation to receive Christ and experience transformation.

We evangelicals have seen enough transformed lives that our confidence is unshakable. It is this mindset that is brought to the homosexual phenomenon.

Without question the dominant evangelical Christian opinion of homosexuality is that it is a perversion of the intent of the Creator. The homosexual is a sinner by definition and any same sex action is sin. It is entirely understandable to this evangelical person why a transforming experience with Jesus Christ ought to be considered the solution to such a perversion of creation as homosexual attractions and expressions.

It is a shock to such an evangelical Christian when dramatic conversion does not work with a homosexual person.

When the Plan Fails

In a certain sense, a young homosexual person is the perfect target for such an approach to Christian experience. Young gay and lesbian persons are looking for a way out of their dilemma. They learn quickly in their junior high and senior high school years that their sexual orientation brings a huge negative response from friends, family, church, and community. They are driven, out of fear, into silence, inner psychological manipulations, and passionate pleas to God. But these approaches prove ineffective. Desperation sets in.

The homosexual person who is familiar with evangelical Christian faith decides it is time to get right with God and receive Jesus Christ as Savior. He or she walks the aisle. A pastor, a deacon, or a trained counselor reviews the plan of salvation. The young homosexual person repeats the sinner's prayer of confession and verbalizes a commitment to

Christ. Many times the new convert is encouraged to “pray through.” Honest, heartfelt pleas and commitments are made to God. Often a flood of tears accompany the experience and confirms the reality of the conversion.

Many times the same sex yearnings actually fade. In reality, the yearnings have not left, but rather have been repressed. After a while the yearnings reappear. Guilt and rejection of self intensify. The promise of deliverance has become a horror of enormous proportions.

As a pastor who decided long ago that I could not refuse pastoral care to anyone, I have heard this story dozens of times. Many of my gay and lesbian friends have gone through this process not once, but twice, three times, four times...

Establishing Communication

To further understand the tensions between evangelicals and the homosexual population, a person must grasp the importance of the Bible to an evangelical. The typical evangelical has rejected most if not all forms of hierarchical church authority. Authority rests in the local congregation—and the Bible is the tangible source of that authority. Evangelicals pride themselves in being people of the Bible. They are not easily influenced by psychological, sociological, or biological discussions or studies.

If evangelicals in any significant numbers are to rethink their determination to address homosexual orientation by dramatic conversion, two things must happen. First, we each must engage in honest discussion of all pertinent Bible material. Christians who do not hold a high view of scriptural inspiration and authority will never be an active part of the discussions. If there is an appearance that the authority of the Bible is being undermined, evangelicals will leave the discussion table. However, within evangelicalism there has always been healthy debate about the interpretation of the Scriptures. Evangelicals are not theologically monolithic. I believe many evangelicals are ready to talk about the Bible, theology, and sexuality. Now we need people who are kind in nature, gentle in spirit, and gracious



in discussion to provide leadership so that the conversations can begin.

Second, honest discussion must begin to happen about a very sensitive area: homosexual lifestyles. Is there such a thing as a healthy Christian same-sex lifestyle? No progress will be made until communication is established between evangelicals and gay and lesbian Christian couples who are living in long term, committed, healthy relationships. Such couples are tightly closeted. They leave their closets of safety at great peril. Who will create the opportunities for sharing that will not hurt such couples and at the same time respect the concerns of evangelicals?

I offer two examples of approaches that are not working. Recently, a week-long conversation about homosexuality was sponsored by an American Baptist agency. Four regional discussions are scheduled for the next year by another agency of the same denomination. In none of the gatherings, past or planned, have gay or lesbian individuals or couples been invited to share their perspectives and understandings. How tragic. The people being discussed are not even being invited.

Second, the Wheaton College Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association, a sizable organization and growing, has asked to have conversations with a newly formed Wheaton College task force on homosexuality. The response

of the college administration has been a very clear “thanks, but no thanks.”¹

If Only...

American evangelicals are not bigots, as some of my gay and lesbian friends perceive. Gay and lesbian persons are not evil people, as most evangelicals perceive. Each group needs desperately to be talking with the other.

I believe that tens of thousands of gay and lesbian couples are living in virtuous, healthy partnerships that can be honestly affirmed by evangelical, Bible-believing Christians. Further, the evangelical tradition is a rich expression of vital Christianity. It is my tradition. The possibilities are marvelous, if only communication can be established. ▼

Note

¹The college’s “no thanks” is reflected in correspondence between president Dr. Duane Litfin and Wheaton College GALA. I, as a heterosexual alum, wrote to the president encouraging dialogue and received a letter from him reasserting the “no talk” administration policy.

Howard H. Bess, pastor of a Welcoming and Affirming American Baptist church in Palmer, Alaska, is the author of a recently published book, Pastor, I Am Gay. He is also a new member of the Advisory Committee for Open Hands.



ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

By cornelius kanhai

A pastor shares his thoughts about inclusivity and arrogance in a sermon to his Reconciling Congregation. Perhaps your welcoming church is struggling with the same issue.—Editor

Most of us live with a continuing contradiction in our lives. On the one hand, we need people to share our lives, to enter into close personal relationships, to share insights and information, and to interact in ways that shape our lives and theirs. We are, indeed, social animals, gregarious by nature. On the other hand, we have no desire to be with some other people. We avoid even minimal contacts, much less extended interactions or continuing relationships, with them. We sometimes exclude them from our circle without knowing anything about them, and without the slightest curiosity or interest to get to know them before excluding them.

Sometimes, the distinctions we make are personal. We just don't like, or just don't want, to have anything to do with some people. Sometimes, the distinctions we make are social. We are born into an affinity group that excludes people in another affinity group. Jews had no dealings with Gentiles. Greeks considered themselves superior to barbarians. Serbians and Croats hate and kill each other. Palestinians and Jews live in the same land but in a relationship marked with fierce violence. African Americans live in the same society with European Americans but experience a completely different reality than European Americans.

Think of all the people who are excluded from our circle about whom we have not even the slightest curiosity. We don't know them and we have no desire to know them. Without knowing anything about how they live, we assume that they are inferior to us. We assume their culture is inferior. We assume their political and economic sys-

tems are inferior. We assume their theologies are inferior. What is more, we have no interest or desire to have any communication or commerce with them.

In 1 Corinthians 9:16-23, Paul says: "I have become all things to all people...to the Jew, I became as a Jew...to those under the law...as one under the law...to those outside the law, I became as one outside the law...to the weak, I became weak..."

Reconciling Within

Many of us in welcoming churches feel very good about where we are. We in University Church feel very good about where we are. We feel good about being a part of this community. We value the openness and inclusiveness. We value the intellectual and spiritual freedom. We value the relationships and the contacts we have. We value the emphases of our ministry. However, just when we reach the place of loving where we are, we begin to approach the point of being exclusive. We value so highly our relationship to this community that we begin to close in on ourselves and risk becoming exclusive.

As a Reconciling Congregation, we here at University Church value the atmosphere of our congregation where there are no longer distinctions between straight and gay. It has taken some of us a while to get past the difficulty of identifying persons by sexual orientation and focusing upon that quality as if it were paramount. "He is gay" or "she is lesbian" is no longer the most significant quality about any individual.

Some of us still need to explore and unlearn our biases, including homophobia; some of us are in process. In former congregations I have served, just mentioning the word "gay" in a sermon could be the beginning of serious reaction and fallout from the congregation. The openness of University Church enables us to talk about sexual identity without scandalizing anyone. I am grate-

ful to University Church for helping me to deal with the heterosexism with which I had been imprinted prior to my becoming a part of University Church.

Reconciling Beyond

Yet, as soon as I begin to celebrate our inclusiveness, I begin to feel somewhat exclusive and arrogant of those who are not part of a Reconciling Congregation. I betray the community by becoming exclusive—unless I remember that being a part of a reconciling community means that we are all still learning, that we are all still becoming, and that the difference between ourselves and another is a matter of degree rather than of kind.

Being a part of a welcoming community like University Church places upon us a responsibility to share the experiences we have come to value. Our response to congregations and communities who are in an earlier stage of struggle with homophobia and heterosexism should not be one of smugness. Rather, it should be one of helping to bring others to the experience we have come to know. D.T. Niles, the Indian theologian, says that evangelism is "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." By the grace of God, we have found bread here. That places upon us an obligation to share the good news with others. "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some."

The special character of our community as an open, inclusive, and reconciling community puts us in a crucial place to witness to a wider community and society that is being destroyed by bigotry and hate. To be a welcoming, reconciling congregation must mean for us that we reach out beyond our walls, reach out beyond ourselves, and reach out beyond our self interests to effect reconciliation and healing for all.

University Church has been discovering the power of being a reconciling community. In the fall of 1993, as we



FOR A NEW WORLD

This mural, on the west wall of Parish of the Holy Covenant United Methodist Church in Chicago, was created by John Pitman Weber, Oscar Martinez, and other young artists from the Chicago Mural Group (now Chicago Public Art Group). It was dedicated on August 5, 1973. Meant to be a “window toward the world,” the panels represent the three elements of the church’s worship service: *Confession* (symbolizing the evils of our time), *The Word* (showing the promise of a new world where there is neither oppressor nor oppressed), and *Offering* (representing the dedication of our lives to bringing the new world of justice into our daily work. The mural needs renovation and a fund has been established. Thanks to current pastor, Bonnie Beckonchrist, for details of the mural’s history.

Photo: Dale Fast

Artists: Oscar Martinez and John Pitman Weber
©1973

sought to deal with hate mail by drawing together others in our city who might benefit from mutual support, we found an eagerness and excitement about this ministry. The Coming Out/Coming Together service we helped lead (see *Open Hands*, Spring 1994, p. 21) and the continuing work of the coalition as they meet regularly for fellowship, support, and for planning other ministries have been exciting and gratifying experiences. Yet we need to continue to work to find other ways of exercising our ministry as a reconciling community.

Reconciling Theologically

I believe that the ministry of a reconciling community must go beyond being inclusive of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in our ministry. Being the open and inclusive community we are puts us in a special position of being able to create the climate for dialogue and reconciliation in an increasingly diverse religious/theological mix in our community. The diverse nature of our community in Madison places on us a responsibility to work for inclusiveness by drawing together Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, Christians of many traditions, and earth-based religions into conversations and community.

“Becoming all things to all people” might mean for us beginning to find

new ways in which all people who are in spiritual pilgrimage can begin to respect each other, learn from each other, and find ways to work together to advance our common goals. We need to clarify our own theological thinking and become open to the theologies of other traditions. We need to begin to move toward a post-Christian theology which will get beyond the narrow exclusiveness of a Euro-centric Christian theological tradition to a conversation in which we develop a respect and a new openness to older theological traditions that can inform and enrich our own experiences.

Reconciling Racially

Finally, as a reconciling community we need to begin to move ourselves and others beyond racism. We need to confess that we are racist and to find ways in which we can deal with the white western European traditions which have enslaved and excluded other traditions.

Someone pointed out to me recently that if we wanted to be attractive to non-whites, we could begin by looking at the art on the walls of our building. Would art that celebrates other cultures and traditions, that depicts the Native American experience, that celebrates Hispanic culture, that depicts African American and African struggles, that celebrates the great wealth of the East, that comes from

whole spectrum of the human enterprise, not be more expressive of a reconciling community? It would be a good place to begin to eliminate racism in our own experience.

Some of us long for our church community to reflect the ethnic diversity of the larger secular community we serve. However, as long as we remain essentially middle-class-white in the character of our community, there is little that would attract and hold people who are of other races and cultures. We need to find ways to be a reconciling community which heals the brokenness and pain that racism inflicts on us all.

All things to all people.... It is a challenge, indeed! But, for us at University Church, it is a wonderful opportunity. May God strengthen and encourage us in our ministry. ▼

Source

This article is adapted from a sermon delivered on February 6, 1994, to University United Methodist Church, Madison, Wisconsin. Used with permission.

cornelius kanhai, pastor of University United Methodist Church from 1992 to 1995, now serves Waterloo United Methodist Church in a suburb of Madison. He has also served as a board member of the Reconciling Congregation Program.

VALUING DIFFERENCES: A Process of Experience

By *DeeAnna P. Merz with Al Duvall*

In the spring of 1994, my husband Tom and I decided to become therapeutic foster care providers. We had just finished graduate school in rehabilitation counseling. One Sunday, skimming the paper for employment opportunities, I saw an ad that read something like this:

Foster parents needed to provide in-home care to a young man with multiple disabilities. This person will be facing a series of surgeries and will need assistance with independent living skills...

Tom and I replied with a resume to the listed social service agency, thinking that this agency might have other positions available for skilled rehabilitation counselors. Thoughts of providing case management or in-house training related to disabilities came to mind for both of us.

The director responded immediately, asking if we would be interested in fostering the person mentioned in the ad. Our reply was simple enough. "Well, we are not really in a position to care for someone in our home. Our schedules are hectic. We just need secure employment..." The director said she wished we would at least consider the opportunity because she felt our educational background would benefit this young man. Besides, she said, he was difficult to place given the severity of his disabilities. She gave us a run down of his life and what led up to his need for care at this time. "His name is Al. He has been institutionalized for nineteen of his twenty years. He is part of a class action suit against the institution. Now he has the chance to live in the community..." What followed was a harrowing list of disabilities and an explanation of the reconstructive surgeries ahead for Al. Al would be meeting several potential "foster parents." Would we at least be willing to meet him? We agreed.

A Decision That Changed Us All

That conversation changed our lives and the life of our worshiping community. After we met Al, there was no question. The decision was made jointly between Al and the two of us. He came to live with us in June of 1994 and together we have crossed many bridges.

In our first meeting, we asked Al how he felt about church and explained our active participation in the Clifton Presbyterian community. He was excited. Being in an institution, he had limited interaction with church congregations, but expressed a strong faith. We explained that Clifton was an inclusive church and part of the More Light Network. We talked about the homeless mission that Clifton created fifteen years ago. We explained how Tom is a volunteer bus driver, picking up homeless men at the stop in downtown Atlanta once a week, and that I am the food coordinator for the shelter. We also explained that Clifton is a small community, with a worshiping congregation of about forty people. From the beginning, Al expressed a deep understanding for disenfranchised people. He said, "Most people don't care about homelessness. I am glad Clifton gives them a home."

In the months preceding Al's placement with us, Tom and I took every opportunity to share about Al at church. We shared a picture of him to ease any shock for people who may not have encountered a person with facial differences. We explained what Al's disabilities were, hoping not to color any first impressions. At the same time, we felt that if the congregation knew about his differences even before he joined in, they would be able to move past the differences. They would, we hoped, be able to meet Al and discover the gifts he would bring. With the best of intentions, the congregation embraced Al, sometimes even doting on him. Al says

"I didn't know what to expect. I expected them to be skeptical. I know my disabilities surprised them." Some people were indeed skeptical, not only of Al becoming part of the church community, but of Tom and I signing up for such a huge "undertaking."

DeeAnna's Journey

I first became involved at Clifton Presbyterian as a volunteer in the homeless mission. Every night the men sleep in the sanctuary and every Sunday the mats are rolled away to make room for worship. The members of this church bring guests into their church home every night. Some guests remain for a very short time; others become residents. I watched volunteers, church members, and homeless guests enter into relationship with one another. People who seemingly had nothing in common, all very different and diverse, were teaching and learning from one another. People of different cultures, races, sexual orientations, genders, classes, and abilities were giving and receiving from one another. I eventually joined Clifton as a worshiping member, in part because I believed in the efforts of the homeless mission, but also because of Clifton's commitment to inclusiveness and their decision to become part of the More Light Network.

For years, before my decision to bring Al into my life, Clifton modeled the valuing of differences for me. Night after night, Clifton brought marginalized people into their home and offered hospitality. There was never any ownership of the residence; it was truly God's house for all who dwelled within. I believe this witnessing allowed me to open my heart and home to Al. The irony is that those people in the Clifton community who were hesitant and skeptical about Al were the very people who were part of the witness. They were instrumental in bringing me to a place of truly valuing differences.



Learning to Value Differences

I believe we learn to value differences through experience. In my case, Clifton Presbyterian Church taught me, at the deepest level, how to value the differences of homeless people and people with different sexual orientations. Interwoven among the homeless guests were people with a variety of differences, including disability. However, as intimate as this portrait is, bringing Al into the worshiping community was a deeper cut even still. The fabric of Clifton was no longer woven with differences on the frayed edges; a person with ability differences was now worshiping in their midst and expected nurturing. Al expected more than a hot meal, a warm blanket, and occasional conversation. He wanted to be able to form lasting relationships and be valued as an integral part of the community. This did not happen overnight. Al and church members reached a level of vulnerability with each other over time. Al began to share his pain and his joy. He joined in the church activities and began seeing the pastor for weekly visits. He began asking for what he needed—from help to the rest room to a prayer request. People began to see Al, not for what he had overcome, but for his ideas and opinions.

I asked Al what he liked about Clifton. He said very matter-of-factly, “Well, Clifton is like another family for me.” I asked Al how he thought people

or churches could begin to value ability difference. He said:

Go to places that have people with disabilities, like hospitals and institutions. Volunteer at places like that so you can begin to see what their lives are like. That’s how you get educated. Find a couple of people that you really like and have conversations with them. That way, the disability won’t be as frightening. Take someone with a disability out just to be with them. When you have someone with a disability in your church, educate them. I didn’t know much

about being Presbyterian, or getting baptized, but members of the church talked to me and the pastor gave me some literature. My baptism was the greatest! It changed me. In fact, my relationship with God got stronger. It’s like when people get married and say their vows. I really am a child of God. Churches also need to be sensitive to language. Words like crippled and lame are hard to hear. We all just need to learn from each other.

How Have We Changed?

In the time that Al has been with Tom and me, the youth at Clifton have produced and staged a play about valuing different sexual orientations. Clifton has begun to move beyond shelter in their homeless mission. I have witnessed the building of deeper relationships as volunteers, members, staff, and other churches have engaged in a deeper level of commitment to the guests that reside at Clifton. We are now talking about how to make our church more accessible to people with disabilities. I have been a part of building deep, intentional, and inclusive relationships within my nuclear family and my church family.

All of us at Clifton have taught and we have learned. We have given and we have received. We have grown and we have experienced! That’s how we learn to value differences. ▼



DeeAnna P. Merz and Al Duvall are members of Clifton Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia. DeeAnna works part-time at the church as food coordinator for the homeless mission. Al recently completed course work at the Center for the Visually Impaired and is now volunteering his time at the Disability Action Center.

TRANSFORMATION IN FRONT OF OUR OWN EYES!

By Dody S. Matthias

The strategic plan of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church, is “calling local congregations to transformation.” In this context a new conference position, coordinator of human relations, was created. A major emphasis of this position, which Dody Matthias has held for less than a year, is to acknowledge the brokenness of racism and to discern God’s healing purpose. Since, however, the roots of prejudice and privilege are intertwined, the model that Dody proposes here may well be instructive for those working on brokenness due to privileges of age, gender, orientation, class, weight, ability, or health.

—Editor

The acknowledgment of racism is very painful for white (European-American) people since we have been socialized into it. We have had little support in developing ways to look at racism and, for that matter, to even *know* what it is and how it is rooted in all the systems of this society. To begin to comprehend this sin, we need a life of prayer and of reading and seeking the Word of God, for it is this truth that sets us free.

Beginning Attempt

The Eastern Pennsylvania conference staff and cabinet members first participated in an all-day event. We got in touch with white privilege,¹ explored the definition of racism as power to enforce prejudice, and discussed a powerful video, *The Color of Fear*, produced by Lee Mun Wah following the L.A. uprisings.² Since that day-long event, we have held a four-part follow-up.

Biblical Reflection: Part 1

We read and reflected on Ephesians 2:13-16. Emphasis was on:

- a. Our responsibility is not to rebuild the dividing wall that God has already broken down. We were reintroduced

to the fact that white privilege is one way we rebuild the dividing wall of racism.

- b. It is in the flesh of Jesus that groups become one. Being part of the body of Jesus means no walls of division. When we separate from one another, it is we who have chosen to be outside the body of Jesus.

Assumptions and Consequences: Part 2

We saw and discussed the video *Free Indeed*, a drama of four white, middle-class young adults who play a card game as a prerequisite for doing a service project for a black Baptist church.³ Their ensuing discussion addresses issues of accountability, unseen assumption, success, and what racism does to white people.

Identification and Commitment: Part 3

White (European-American) conference staff and cabinet members were invited to identify three white privileges directly related to their job-position within the cabinet or staff and then to respond to the following questions:

- a. How do these privileges affect you?
- b. What action will you take to address white privilege within yourself and your position?

Accountability: Part 4

White persons on the conference staff and cabinet shared their responses to the questions above, naming how the privilege they identified affected them and the action they would take. White staff and cabinet members then chose a white partner to whom to be accountable. Finally, the two white partners turned over hand-written cards describing their actions to a person of color on the staff/cabinet. The point was

made that white people are to hold one another accountable and be accountable to people of color.

A process was set up whereby the white person “checks in” with her/his partner as a support measure for the new chosen behavior. The partners regularly check in with the person of color who holds their cards, reporting their progress on their chosen action taken to address white privilege.

Account’ability: Answerable to...

White people are answerable to people of color viz a viz their work on undoing/dismantling/de-constructing racism. We know from experience that well-intentioned white people easily can make matters worse if we do not check out our intended anti-racist actions with the people who will be affected by our actions. That’s why, in dealing with racism, white people are accountable to people of color. In the same way, in undoing sexism, men are accountable to women; in undoing heterosexism, heterosexual women and men are accountable to gay/lesbian/bisexual people.

Actions chosen by white conference staff and cabinet members included behaviors in setting aside privilege. For example, one cabinet member who had a role of power and authority within a particular conference committee put his white privilege to that role aside so that an African-American man could participate. The white cabinet member felt this to be “freeing.”

Another action to address privilege was a decision to change the rules so that people of color would *always* be at the table in discussions and decision-making that affected their destiny. This change has already resulted in “access to the table” being gained by someone who otherwise wouldn’t have been part of decisions crucial to the person/group.

Participant Reactions

It is difficult for white people to think in terms of being accountable to people of color. To be part of the body of Jesus (Ephesians passage above) is to be interdependent and accountable. White persons are beginning to see this as liberating, being “free indeed of white privilege and how we play the game.”

African-American staff and cabinet members felt this to be “a positive, much-needed experience, my first of this kind in the conference. I trust this is just a beginning.”

Closed with Prayer

God, you made us in your image and redeemed us through Jesus. Look with compassion on your people—your body in this world. Take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in one body of love; and through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your will.

Next Time

As a beginning attempt, next time I would start with a shorter session, using parts 1-4, rather than the film. I would let people “sit” awhile with those parts before going on to an all-day event. *The Color of Fear* film is a very powerful piece and can be overwhelming to some people, especially as a beginning effort. ▼

Notes

¹See *Open Hands*, Fall 1995, especially “Making Tangled Roots Visible” and “Identifying Race Privilege: From One White to Another.”

²Lee Mun Wah, *The Color of Fear*. Stir Fry, 1222 Preservation Parkway, Oakland, CA 94612. (510)419-3930. Rental: \$200.

³*Free Indeed* is available from the Mennonite Central Committee, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 19501-0500. Cost: \$20.

Dody S. Matthias, a member of St. John Lutheran Church in Potstown, Pennsylvania, is part of the justice teaching collective, HUPERETAI. She wrote *Working for Life: Dismantling Racism* (see p. 25). She also writes poetry.



VALUING DIFFERENCES: Study Ideas

By Mary Jo Osterman with Dody S. Matthias

1. Struggle with Definitions: Develop class definitions of racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, classism, ableism... The common elements are prejudice (an attitude), discrimination (an action), privilege (a position), and power (an action). How do they fit into the definitions? *Tip:* to make the definitions more than statements about individual prejudice or discrimination of one person or group against another, we need to recognize the place of one group's power (because of their privilege) to enforce prejudice.¹ For example, people of color may be prejudiced against white people and individually discriminate against them but white people hold the power to enforce prejudice against people of color. Les/bi/gay and transgendered people may be prejudiced against heterosexual people and individually discriminate against them, but heterosexual people hold the power to enforce prejudice against les/bi/gay and transgendered people.

2. Check your Attitude Before and After: Create a worksheet using psychologist Dorothy Riddle's Attitude Continuum:

*Repulsion—Pity—Tolerance—Acceptance—Support—Appreciation*²

Include below the continuum a short description of each point. Ask participants to mark this continuum privately at the beginning of your study. If you are studying multiple forms of oppression, mark the form for each.

At the end of the study, ask class members to mark the continuum again. Ask them to discuss with one other person in class why they moved (or didn't move) on the continuum. Possible discussion question: How does my privilege affect my attitude?

For a more communal and visual experience, print each word of the continuum on a separate sheet of paper. Place those word-cards on the floor in

the continuum order, leaving good space between each word. Ask the class to stand where they were at the beginning of the course; then ask them to move to where they are at the end of the study. Discuss feelings and insights.

3. Check your Actions Before and After: Create a similar form using the action continuum in *The Welcoming Congregation*:

*Oppressing—Denying/Ignoring—Recognizing/Not Acting—Recognizing/Acting—Educating Self—Educating Others—Supporting/Encouraging—Initiating/Preventing*³

Include short descriptions of each of the points. Use this form at the beginning of a study series as described above. Give class members time to explore silently or with others their self-evaluations on how they act. Possible discussion question: How does my own privilege affect how I act or don't act?

In a later session, engage the class in commitment/accountability discussions and action decisions.⁴ In the last session of your study, ask class members to check the action continuum again, noting any movement they have made. Possible discussion: How has my commitment to a particular action affected my place on the continuum? ▼

Notes

¹See Matthias, this issue, p. 20.

²Scott W. Alexander, *The Welcoming Congregation* (The Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108-2800), p. 58, for short descriptions of this attitude continuum.

³*Ibid.*, p. 59. A set of slightly different descriptions is found in Warren J. Blumenfeld and Diane Raymond, *Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life* Upd. and exp. ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1993), pp. 258-62.

⁴See Eugene, this issue, p. 7; Matthias, this issue, p. 20; and Matthias, *Working for Life*, pp. 81-82 (full description in Selected Resources p. 25).

Sustaining the Spirit

Weaving Diversity and Unity: A Liturgy of Celebration

By Cathy Ann Beaty

Greeting

- One: We are called to be a New Community, rejoicing in our diversity, witnessing to God's promise of new life.
- All: We are weaving God's New Community in God's image.
- One: We have gathered to celebrate the tapestry that the diversity of our lives creates.
- All: We are weaving God's New Community in God's image.
- One: May our presence and our worship proclaim God's truth: Our unity is God's resurrection hope.
- All: We are weaving God's New Community in God's image.

Hymn of Praise "Weave" verse 1

Acknowledging our Humanness

- One: Giver of New Life, You have called us together from many places and You offer to set us free if we trust in You.
- All: Yet, more often than we care to admit, we cling to that which oppresses us because it feels familiar and secure—and liberation calls us to unknown responsibilities. May our fears and our doubts be transformed through the liberating life of Jesus Christ. May we be challenged and empowered to accept responsibility for co-creating our own lives in relationship with You. And may we find the courage and boldness to overcome the conventional categories we place on ourselves and others, that—freed from stereotypical thinking—we might discover the beauty and diversity that is Your gift to us. Amen.

Affirming our Humanness

- All: Our individual uniqueness is a gift of love,
our diversity a gift of grace,
and our unity a vision of hope.
- One: May we celebrate the beauty and wonder
that God is weaving through us, God's New Community.
Let us share the Peace of Christ with one another.

Hymn of Thanksgiving "Weave" verses 2 & 3

Going Forth into the World with Peace

- One: May our hands reach to one another in hope.
- All: May our hearts overflow with compassion.
- One: May our lives embrace one another in peace.
- All: May our spirits soar with God's promise of new life in community.

Note

The print part of the liturgy may be reprinted for local worship events only. Other uses, please contact *Open Hands*. Please contact Rosemary Crow for all reprinting of the song.

Cathy Ann Beaty is pastor of Spirit of the Lakes United Church of Christ in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Spirit of the Lakes, which was started as an inclusive community, is an Open and Affirming congregation.

WEAVE

by Rosemary Crow

D F#m Em D Em D

Weave, weave, weave us to - geth - er. Weave us to - geth - er in

Em A D F#m Em D

u - ni - ty and love — Weave, weave, weave us to - geth - er.

Em D A D

Weave us to - geth - er, to - geth - er in love. 1.
2.
3. A

G F#m

We are man - y tex - tures, we are man - y col - ors —,
We are dif - ferent in - stru - ments play - ing our own mel - o - dies,
mo - ment a — go — we did — not — know — our

Em D D7

Each one dif - erent from the oth — er. — But
Each one tun - ing to a dif - ferent key. — But
un - i - ty on - ly di - ver - si - ty. — Now the

G F#m Em A DC

we are en - twined with one an - oth - er in one great tap - es - try,
we are all play - ing in — har - mo - ny, in one great sym - pho - ny,
Christ — in me greets — the Christ in thee in one great fam - i - ly.

Rosemary Crow, composer and singer, has published seven albums. "Weave" was the theme song for the Tri-Lutheran Women's Convocation, American Baptist Women in Ministry Conference, and national and international conventions of the Girl Scouts of America.

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On Weaving Community from Diversity

In the kingdom of God an all-inclusive, divine weaving of community will perhaps occur. It's certainly a marvelous vision! In the meantime, given our earthly, limited reality, many inclusivity discussions make me downright uneasy.

In the first place, I am uneasy because all-inclusive diversity is not *really* what we're seeking. Muttered under our breath is usually at least one disclaimer to this ideal. We may include all Christians, but exclude other faiths as valid in God's holy community-in-progress. We may include moderates, conservatives, and evangelicals, but not fundamentalists. We embrace certain analytical approaches and discard others. We insist on certain creeds or no creeds. We insist on various positions on ordination, abortion, or how to interpret particular biblical passages.

When we speak *within* our various "communities," we seem to know (or are soon told!) what the real boundaries of inclusivity are. "Of course, we don't mean the serious fundamentalist point of view; look at what fundamentalism has wrought in other countries." Or, "of course, we don't include serious feminist analysis..." Or, "of course, Christianity is superior..." Etc. Etc. Etc.

In the second place, I am uneasy because in the midst of revolutions of mammoth proportions those who place more value on some positions are often dismissed out-of-hand with such epithets as radical, marginal, extreme, out-of-touch, or "ideology rather than analysis." Usually, the dismissals come from

privileged mainstream persons, groups, or institutions enforcing their own prejudices.

In the third place, I am uneasy when some who cry "diversity is all" would have us believe that currently competing alternatives are equal so we should just blend them. This is the essence of tokenism: We let you into our system, but don't rock the boat by questioning us. Diversity, in such hands, becomes a tool to maintain centuries-old beliefs and discriminatory customs. It becomes a stealth weapon for the powerful and privileged to hang on to both.

How do we work with the divine weaving-in-progress? Certainly, we need to respect people who are different from us. Certainly, we need to be open to encountering different ideas. Closing ourselves off from difference ensures that we're limiting the divine weaving-in-progress. Being in dialogue with different kinds of people and diverse ways of thinking and believing is critical to the weaving of God's community.

Still, having faced into difference rather than turning away from it, we remain confronted with several tasks. Toinette Eugene (p. 5) outlines three: confession, conviction, commitment. Paul Egerton (p. 10) underscores biblical interpretation and witnessing to our beliefs. Dody Matthias (p. 20) outlines a process of accountability. As they imply, we still need some set of values or criteria by which to judge our diversity-building process. Which stances are faithful, loving, forgiving, just, charitable? Which stances *add* to the divine weaving-in-progress? Which *limit or negate* that weaving?

My set of values, based on a reading of scripture informed by biblical criticism methods, liberation theology, and feminist analysis, judges claims of inclusivity based on whether or not they (a) are justice-based and liberation-oriented, (b) acknowledge the divine spark in every person and in the natural world, (c) involve a painful, but necessary, giving up of privilege to equalize power, and (d) promote accountability—to God and to persons and groups who have been victimized by those who hold the power to enforce prejudices. What are your values?



Mary Jo Osterman

Second Call for Articles for Fall 1996



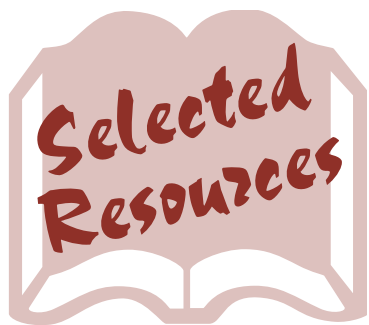
**Gender and Transgender:
Exploring the Issues,
Sharing the Stories**

We welcome additional articles, stories, and other resources for our gender and transgender theme. We encourage transgendered people to write of their personal journeys, especially as those relate to religious issues and acceptance (or non-acceptance) in a church community. We invite pastors and lay people to write about their personal experiences of ministering to and with transgendered people in a local congregation. What concerns have risen? What joys and gifts have been received? Let us hear from you!

Write or call with idea: April 1

Manuscript deadline: August 1

If you would like to write an article, contact *Editor, RCP, 3801 N. Keeler, Chicago, IL 60641*



Biblical/Theological Insights

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul. *Coming Together: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1995. This resource addresses racial and cultural diversity from a biblical perspective by illustrating different ways people of color interpret the Bible and how these intersect with traditional white European perspectives.

Lee, Jung Young. *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. A new model to develop non-dominating contextual theologies.

Solle, Dorothee. *Creative Disobedience*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1995. Critiquing obedience to earthly leaders and institutions as an unChristian virtue, Solle appeals to the life of Jesus who submitted to the will of God through creative disobedience rather than submitting to oppressive institutions of his day.

Treat, James. "The Canaanite Problem." *Daughters of Sarah* (Spring 1994): 20-24. Treat, an enrolled member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, explores Matt 15:21-28 by drawing parallels between Jesus' "Canaanite problem" and white America's "Indian problem."

William, Gregory, H. *Faith before Faithfulness: Centering the Inclusive Church*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1992. While retaining hard-won emphases on tolerance, political involvement, diversity, and justice, this author suggests a shift in image from "mainline" church to "inclusive-evangelical" church as a way for churches to regain their center in God.

Welcoming Work

Adleman, Jeanne and Gloria Enguidanos, eds. *Racism in the Lives of Women: Testimony, Theory, and Guides to Anti-racist Practice*. Binghamton, New York: Haworth, 1995. Essays on anti-racism work in various aspects of life.

Amado, Angela Novak, ed. *Friendships and Community Connections between People with and without Developmental Disabilities*. Paul H. Brooks Publishing, PO Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624. Suggested by DeeAnna Merz for individuals and churches exploring new ministries.

Barndt, Joseph. *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991. A pastor in the Bronx calls churches and individuals to the tasks of dismantling racism and building "a racially just, multiracial, multicultural society." (back cover)

Matthias, Dody S. *Working for Life: Dismantling Racism*. Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 1990. Sixteen learning experiences on dismantling racism through consciousness raising, education, advocacy, and activism. Order: Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, UMC, PO Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0820.

Rothenberg, Paula S. *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*. New York: St. Martin's, 1995. Explores infrastructures and workings of racism, sexism, classism.

Shearer, Jody Miller. *Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege toward Racial Reconciliation*. Scottsdale: Herald, 1994. "A great primer, lovingly and encouragingly written without flinching from the truth. Helpful to those beginning to examine racism as well as those who have been on the journey for a time." —Dody Matthias.

Stroupe, Nibs and Inez Fleming. *While We Run this Race: Confronting the Power of Racism in a Southern Church*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995. The title says it.

That All May Enter: Responding to People with Disability Concerns. Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, Education and Congregational Nurture Ministry Unit, Resource Division, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202.

Video/Film

Free Indeed. Mennonite Central Committee. A finalist in the New York Film Festival, this 23-minute video challenges white viewers to examine their privilege and what it is doing to themselves and to others. Study guide. Order: PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500. Cost: \$20.

Mask. Screenplay by Anna Hamilton Phelon. Directed by Peter Bogdanovich. 1985. Possible resource for group discussion on difference and disability.

For Youth

Duval, Lynn. *Respecting our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit, 1994. Explores nature of prejudice from point of teens' concerns: fears/discomfort, language issues/jokes, attitudes/beliefs, conflicts. Exercises, discussion questions, bibliography.

New Movement Resources

OK! We're ONA. Now What? ONA Program, United Church Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, 1995. 40pp. \$8. Check: UCCL/GC. Order: ONA-UCCL/GC, PO Box 403, Holden, MA 01520-0403. Ideas on how your church can express its ONA commitment.

Inclusive Faith. Lutherans Concerned/North America, 1995. 18-min. video. Order: Bob Gibeling, 2466 Sharondale Dr., Atlanta, GA 30305. E-mail: gibeling@aol.com. Promotes the Reconciled in Christ program through interviews, music, discussion.



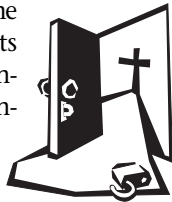
No New Church Profiles this Time

We know some of you were eagerly looking for your church profile to be here, but we needed more space to run the full welcoming church list (see p. 29). You'll find your church listed there. Watch for many new profiles in the spring issue, as our movement continues to grow!

—Editor

RCP's Open the Doors Campaign Builds Momentum

The *Open the Doors* campaign is drawing the support of thousands of United Methodists across the country in a witness to the 1996 General Conference, the denomination's quadrennial decision-making assembly. Noting that churches' doors have too often been closed to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons and their families, the campaign is calling on The United Methodist Church to "open the doors."



The campaign was launched at the Reconciling Congregation Convocation in July, 1995. Six regional Knock-Ins in October brought together 160 activists from thirty-three annual conferences to develop strategies in their communities and conferences. Knock-In participants created plans to enroll 9,600 Reconciling United Methodists, to communicate personally with their General Conference delegates, and to proclaim the *Open the Doors* message.

As *Open Hands* went to press in mid-December, 2,000 persons had enrolled as Reconciling United Methodists, proclaiming "I join the witness to 'open the doors' of The United Methodist Church to the participation of all people, regardless of sexual orientation." By February, 6,000 signatures are expected. Volunteer campaign coordinators have been secured in about one-half of the sixty-eight annual conferences in the U.S.

"This is the largest, grass roots witness on behalf of the full participation of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals ever seen in The United Methodist Church," noted James Preston, RCP outreach coordinator. "At the same time, we are also greatly expanding the base of the Reconciling Congregation movement."

Persons interested in enrolling as Reconciling United Methodists or getting involved in *Open the Doors* should contact the RCP office at 312/736-5526.

Brethren/Mennonite Churches Publicly Announce Their Welcome

The Supportive Congregations Network (SCN) recently announced the first twelve Mennonite and Church of the Brethren congregations to join the network as "publicly affirming" congregations (see p. 29). They have adopted a written and public statement of welcome of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. SCN coordinator Jim Sauder notes that twenty-seven additional congregations are designated "accepting congregations" (but have not made a public statement) and still others are "exploring congregations." For more information about SCN, write to PO Box 6300, Minneapolis, MN 55406 or call 612/305-0315.

Welcoming & Affirming Baptist Churches Face Dismissal

Churches in Ohio and California that are members of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (ABC/USA) are finding their denominational loyalty questioned. Although not binding on local churches or denominational policy, the General Board of the ABC/USA affirmed in 1992 that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." Some local American Baptist associations and regions are now using this statement as a "litmus test" of adherence to what some perceive to be a denominational policy. Action was taken in September by the American Baptist Churches of Ohio to remove First Baptist of Granville, Ohio, from membership solely because the Granville church is a W&A congregation. Similar action is expected in January to remove four California Bay Area churches from the ABC of the West. Although these churches will likely remain within the denomination, the constant barrage of misinformation, the repeated questioning of their Christian commitment, and the painful rejection by the regional denominational family is difficult for W&A pastors and congregations. Yet, while under attack, these churches remain loyal to the ABC/USA and to the affirming ministries to which they have been called by Christ. For more information, contact Brenda J. Moulton, Association Coordinator, PO Box 2596, Attleboro Falls, MA 02763-0894.

Lesbian/Gay Affirming Organizations Witness at NCCC

National leaders of ten lesbian/gay affirming organizations, meeting in Oakland, California on November 13-17 in conjunction with the general board meeting of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), successfully influenced inclusion of sexual orientation language and issues in the NCCC's Human Rights document.

RCP Reaches Milestone of 100!

Pacific Beach United Methodist Church in San Diego, California, declared itself a Reconciling Congregation on October 17, becoming the 100th Reconciling Congregation.



*A Unique Resource on
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual
Concerns in the Church for*

Published by the Reconciling Congregation Program in conjunction with More Light, Open and Affirming, Reconciled in Christ, and Welcoming & Affirming Baptist Programs.

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ADS

First National ONA EXULTATION Aptly Named!



GATHERED IN SPIRIT
GAINING IN STRENGTH

The first national ONA Exultation, meeting from October 13-15, 1995 in Cleveland, Ohio, was indeed “an exultation” due, in great measure, to the spirit and energy brought by 120 participants from all across the country. Many were from Open and Affirming churches in the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples) but a good number of those in attendance were from churches exploring or curious about the Open and Affirming process.

“Inspirational and rejuvenating!”

“Truly a peak experience!”

“Water upon dry land!”

—Evaluation comments made by participants.

In worship and workshops, through stories and songs, participants “exulted” in their common commitment to shaping faith communities that welcome all people—lesbian, bisexual, gay, and straight. —Ann B. Day



WELCOME: The Reverend Paul Sherry, president of the United Church of Christ, addresses Exultation participants.



YET ANOTHER ANNOUNCEMENT: Open and Affirming program coordinator, Ann B. Day, addresses the audience.

JUST PEACE PLAYERS:

Massachusetts Conference group offers an original play, “Everything Possible.” From left: Deborah L. Clark, Kate Stevens, Rebecca Pugh Brown, Louise Green.



HETEROSEXISM:

Melanie Morrison leads a workshop on heterosexism issues.



YOUTH FOCUS

WORKSHOP: Greg Anderson leads “Affirming Gay and Lesbian Youth: Strategies for Faith Communities.”



PLUGGING

RESOURCES: John W. Lardin, Exultation program chair, highlights one of many resources available.



ONE OF 8 WORKSHOPS:

Gordon Svoboda II, a national staff person, leads a workshop on the UCC human sexuality curriculum.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Keynoter Michael Kinnamon**, dean of Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky, speaks on “To Be Free and United in Christ.”
- **Closing Communion Service** features preacher, Christine Smith, associate professor of preaching and worship, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Minnesota.
- **Cleveland Area North Coast Men’s Chorus** perform in concert.

MUSICAL LEADERSHIP: A joyful noise was made throughout the weekend thanks to Elaine Kirkland and Steven Cagle (not shown).



Photos: April Allison

DISCUSSING INCLUSIVENESS: Panel members (from left) Dorothy Gannon, Alvin Haven, Margarita Suarez, Ann B. Day, Bennie Whiten, Jr., and Keith Townsend explore inclusivity issues in the UCC.

Note

Michael Kinnamon’s speech and Chris Smith’s sermon are available for \$2.00 each. Send check (payable to UCCL/GC) with your name and address to: ONA-UCCL/GC, P.O. Box 403, Holden, MA 01520-0403.

OUR WELCOMING MOVEMENT GROWS

Since 1978, a total of 644 churches, campus ministries, judicatories, and national ministries have publicly declared themselves welcoming of all people, including gay men and lesbians. *This represents an increase of 39 percent over last year!* The 644 welcoming communities are found in eight different denominations in forty-six states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. We have included eighty-five Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregations in the list for the first time this year.

Following is a complete list of congregations, alphabetically by state and city, followed by a list of campus minis-

tries, judicatories, and national ministries. The affiliation of each is designated by the following codes:

ML More Light (Presbyterian)
 ONA Open and Affirming (UCC)
 O&A Open and Affirming (Disciples)
 RIC Reconciled in Christ (Lutheran)
 RC Reconciling Congregation (United Methodist)
 SCN Supportive (Brethren/Mennonite)
 W&A Welcoming & Affirming (Baptist)
 WEL Welcoming (Unitarian Universalist)

CONGREGATIONS

UNITED STATES

ALABAMA

Huntsville

UU Church (WEL)

ALASKA

Anchorage

UU Fellowship (WEL)

Palmer

Church of the Covenant (W&A)

Sitka

UMC of Sitka (RC)

ARIZONA

Glendale

Rapha Menn. Fellowship (SCN)

Phoenix

Augustana Lutheran (RC)

Tucson

First Christian (O&A)
 St. Francis in the Foothills UMC (RC)

ARKANSAS

Little Rock

Pulaski Heights Christian (O&A)

CALIFORNIA

Alameda

First Christian (O&A)
 First Congregational (ONA)

Albany

Albany UMC (RC)

Altadena

Altadena Congregational (ONA)
 Christ the Shepherd Lutheran (RC)

Baldwin Park

First Presbyterian (ML)

Belmont

Congregational Church UCC (ONA)

Benicia

Community Congregational (ONA)

Berkeley

Berkeley/Richmond Intercity Min. (O&A)
 Epworth UMC (RC)
 First Baptist (W&A)
 First Congregational (ONA)
 St. John's Presbyterian (ML)
 Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran (RC)
 Trinity UMC (RC)
 University Lutheran Chapel (RC)
 University Church (O&A)

Carlsbad

Pilgrim Congregational (ONA)

Carmel

UU of Monterey Peninsula (WEL)

Claremont

Claremont UMC (RC)
 Claremont UCC, Congregational (ONA)

Concord

First Christian (O&A)

Danville

Peace Lutheran (RC)

El Cerrito

Mira Vista UCC (ONA)

Eureka

First Congregational (ONA)

Fair Oaks

Fair Oaks UMC (RC)

Fairfax

Fairfax Community (ONA)

Fremont

Fremont Congregational (ONA)
 Niles Congregational UCC (ONA)

Fresno

Wesley UMC (RC)

Hayward

Eden UCC (ONA)

Hollywood

First UMC (RC)

Irvine

Irvine UCC (ONA)

Lafayette

Lafayette Christian (O&A)

Larkspur

Redwoods Presbyterian (ML)

LaVerne

Ch. of the Brethren (SCN)

Long Beach

First Congregational UCC (ONA)
 Trinity Lutheran (RC)

Los Angeles

Hollywood UMC (RC)
 Mt. Hollywood Congregational UCC (ONA)
 United University (ML, RC)
 Wilshire UMC (RC)

Los Gatos

First UMC (RC)

Malibu

Malibu UMC (RC)

Marin City

St. Andrews Presbyterian (ML)

Milpitas

Sunnyhills UMC (RC)

Modesto

College Avenue Congregational (ONA)

Newark

Holy Redeemer Lutheran (RC)

North Hollywood

St. Matthew's Lutheran (RC)

Toluca Lake UMC (RC)

Oakland

Faith Lutheran (RC)
 Lake Merritt UMC (RC)
 Lakeshore Avenue Baptist (W&A)
 Lutheran Peace Fellowship (RC)
 Montclair Presbyterian (ML)
 Plymouth UCC (ONA)
 St. Paul Lutheran (RC)

Palo Alto

Covenant Presbyterian (ML)
 First Evangelical Lutheran (RC)
 First Presbyterian (ML)
 St. Andrew's UMC (RC)
 University Lutheran (RC)

Pasadena

First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Richmond

Grace Lutheran (RC)

Riverside

First Congregational (ONA)

Sacramento

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer (RC)

San Diego

First Lutheran (RC)
 First Unitarian (WEL)
 Pacific Beach UMC (RC)

San Francisco

Bethany UMC (RC)
 Calvary UMC (RC)
 Christ Lutheran (RC)
 Dolores Street Baptist (W&A)
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)
 First Mennonite Church (SCN)
 First St. John's UMC (RC)
 First Unitarian Society (WEL)
 First United Lutheran (RC)
 Glide Memorial UMC (RC)
 Hamilton UMC (RC)
 Noe Valley Ministry (ML)
 Pine UMC (RC)
 Seventh Avenue Presbyterian (ML)
 St. Francis Lutheran (RC)
 St. John's UCC (ONA)
 St. Mark's Lutheran (RC)
 St. Paulus Lutheran (RC)
 Temple UMC (RC)
 Trinity UMC (RC)

San Jose

Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran (RC)
 First Christian Church (O&A)
 New Community of Faith (W&A)
 St. Paul's UMC (RC)

San Leandro

San Leandro Community (W&A)

San Mateo

College Heights UCC (ONA)

San Rafael

Christ in Terra Linda Presb. (ML)
 Faith Lutheran (RC)
 First Congregational (ONA)
 First UMC (RC)

Santa Barbara

La Mesa Community (ONA)

Santa Cruz

Grace UMC (RC)

Santa Monica

The Church in Ocean Park (RC)

Santa Rosa

First Congregational UCC (ONA)
 UU Fell. of Sonoma Co. (WEL)

Saratoga

Grace UMC (RC)

Sausalito

First Presbyterian (ML)

Stockton

First Christian (O&A)

Sunnyvale

Congregational Community (ONA)
 Raynor Park Christian (O&A)
 St. John's Lutheran (RC)

Tiburon

Community Congregational (ONA)
 Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran (RC)
 Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

Vacaville

St. Paul's UMC (RC)

Vallejo

Fellowship UMC (RC)
 First Christian (O&A)

Walnut Creek

Mt. Diablo UU (WEL)
 Walnut Creek UMC (RC)

West Hollywood

Crescent Heights UMC (RC)
 West Hollywood Presbyterian (ML)

Yucaipa

Faith Lutheran (RC)

COLORADO

Arvada

Arvada Mennonite (SCN)

Aurora

Parkview Congregational UCC (ONA)

Boulder

Community UCC (ONA)
 First Congregational (ONA)

Colorado Springs
All Souls Unitarian (WEL)

Denver
Capitol Heights Presbyterian (ML)
Park Hill Congregational UCC (ONA)
Sixth Avenue United (ONA)
Spirit of Joy Fellowship (SCN)
St. Paul's UMC (RC)
Washington Park UCC (ONA)

Evergreen
Wild Rose UCC (ONA)

Fort Collins
St. Thomas University Lutheran (RIC)

CONNECTICUT

Coventry
Second Congregational (ONA)

Fairfield
First Church Cong. (ONA)

Glastonbury
First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)

Hamden
U Society of New Haven (WEL)

Hartford
Central Baptist (W&A)
First Church of Christ, UCC (ONA)

Madison
Shoreline UU Society (WEL)

Mansfield Center
First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)

Middletown
First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)

New Haven
Church of Christ in Yale Univ. (ONA)
First & Summerfield UMC (RC)
United Church on the Green (ONA)

Noank
Noank Baptist (W&A)

Rockville
First Lutheran (RIC)

South Glastonbury
Congregational Church (ONA)

Stamford
St. John Lutheran (RIC)

Storrs
Storrs Congregational (ONA)

Waterbury
South Congregational (ONA)

Westport
Unitarian Church (WEL)

Windsor
First Church UCC (ONA)

DELAWARE

Newark
New Ark UCC (ONA)

Wilmington
West Presbyterian (ML)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington, D.C.
All Souls Unitarian (WEL)
Augustana Lutheran (RIC)
Christ Lutheran (RIC)
Christ UMC (RC)
Church of the Reformation (RIC)
Community of Christ Lutheran (RIC)
Dumbarton UMC (RC)
First Congregational (ONA)
First Trinity Lutheran (RIC)
Foundry UMC (RC)
Georgetown Lutheran (RIC)
Grace Lutheran (RIC)
Riverside Baptist (W&A)

Sojourner Truth Cong. UU (WEL)
St. Paul's Lutheran (RIC)
Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

FLORIDA

Clearwater
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Gainesville
United Church (ONA)
UU Fellowship (WEL)

Key West
Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

Orlando
First Unitarian (WEL)

Pinellas Park
Good Samaritan (ML, ONA)

Tallahassee
United Church (ONA)

Tampa
First United Church (ONA)
Good Samaritan Presb. (ML)
John Calvin Presbyterian (ML)
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Clifton Presbyterian (ML)
Grant Park-Aldersgate UMC (RC)

HAWAII

Honolulu
Church of the Crossroads (ONA)
Honolulu Lutheran (RIC)

ILLINOIS

Carbondale
Church of the Good Shepherd (ONA)

Champaign
Community UCC (ONA)
McKinley Memorial Presbyterian (ML)
St. Andrew's Lutheran (RIC)

Chicago
Albany Park UMC (RC)
Augustana Lutheran (RIC)
Broadway UMC (RC)
Christ the King Lutheran (RIC)
Christ the Mediator Lutheran (RIC)
Ebenezer Lutheran (RIC)
Grace Baptist (W&A)
Grace UMC (RC)
Holy Covenant UMC (RC)
Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)
Immanuel Lutheran (RIC)
Irving Park Christian (O&A)
Irving Park UMC (RC)
Lake View Lutheran (RIC)
Lincoln Park Presbyterian (ML)
Mayfair UMC (RC)
Nazareth UCC (ONA)
Norwood Park UMC (RC)
Peoples Church (ONA)
Resurrection Lutheran (RIC)
St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)
St. Paul's UCC (ONA)
Trinity Lutheran (RIC)
United Church of Rogers Park (RC)
University Church (ONA, O&A)
Wellington Avenue UCC (ONA)

Elmhurst
Maywood House Church (RIC)

Evanston
Lake Street Church of Evanston (W&A)
Hemenway UMC (RC)
Wheadon UMC (RC)

Oak Park
Euclid Avenue UMC (RC)
Good Shepherd Lutheran (RIC)

Rockford
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Waukegan
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Wilmette
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Winfield
Winfield Community (RC)

INDIANA

Bloomington
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Indianapolis
Disciples Peace Fellowship (O&A)
First Congregational UCC (ONA)
Northeast UCC (ONA)

South Bend
Southside Christian (O&A)

West Lafayette
Shalom UCC (ONA)

IOWA

Ames
Ames Mennonite (SCN)
Lord of Life Lutheran (RIC)
University Lutheran (RIC)

Cedar Rapids
Faith UMC (RC)

Clinton
Clinton-Camanche, Iowa MFSA (RC)

Davenport
Davenport Unitarian (WEL)

Des Moines
First Unitarian (WEL)
Plymouth Congregational UCC (ONA)
Trinity UMC (RC)
Urbandale UCC (ONA)

Iowa City
Faith UCC (ONA)

KANSAS

Kansas City
ecumenikos (ML, ONA, O&A, RC)

Olathe
St. Andrews Christian (O&A)

Topeka
Central Congregational UCC (ONA)

KENTUCKY

Henderson
Zion UCC (ONA)

Louisville
Central Presbyterian (ML)
Third Lutheran (RIC)
Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

LOUISIANA

New Orleans
St. Mark's UMC (RC)

MAINE

Ellsworth
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Rockland
The First Universalist (WEL)

MARYLAND

Adelphi
Pain Branch UU (WEL)

Baltimore
Christ the Servant Lutheran (RIC)
Dundalk Ch. of the Brethren (SCN)
First & Franklin Presbyterian (ML)
St. John's UMC (RC)
St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)

Bethesda
Cedar Lane Unitarian (WEL)
River Road Unitarian (WEL)

Columbia
Columbia United Christian (O&A)
St. John UM-Presbyterian (ML, RC)
UU Congregation (WEL)

Gaithersburg
Christ the Servant Lutheran (RIC)

Lanham
Good Samaritan Lutheran (RIC)

Rockville
Rockville Presbyterian (ML)

Silver Spring
Christ Cong. UCC (ONA)
Silver Spring Presbyterian (ML)

Takoma Park
Takoma Park Presbyterian (ML)

MASSACHUSETTS

Amherst
First Congregational UCC (ONA)
South Congregational (ONA)

Andover
Ballardvale United (ONA, RC)
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Auburn
Pakachoag (ONA)

Boston
Arlington Street (WEL)
Church of the Covenant (ONA, ML)
Mennonite Congregation (SCN)
Old South Church (ONA)

Braintree
All Souls Church (WEL)

Brewster
First Parish (WEL)

Cambridge
First Church, Congregational (ONA)
Old Cambridge Baptist (W&A)
University Lutheran (RIC)

Danvers
Holy Trinity UMC (RC)

Framingham
Grace UCC (ONA)

Greenfield
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Hingham
Hingham Congregational (ONA)

Holliston
First Congregational (ONA)

Jamaica Plain
Central Congregational (ONA)

Middleboro
First Unitarian Society (WEL)

Newburyport
Belleville Congregational (ONA)

Newton Highlands
Congregational (ONA)

Northampton
Unitarian Society (WEL)

Osterville
United Methodist (RC)

Provincetown
Universalist Meeting House (WEL)

Reading
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Roxbury
Church of the United Community (O&A, ONA)

Salem
Crombie Street UCC (ONA)

Shrewsbury
Mt. Olivet Lutheran (RIC)

Sudbury
The First Parish (WEL)

Wellesley
Wellesley Congregational (ONA)

Wendell
Wendell Congregational (ONA)

West Newton
First Unitarian Society (WEL)
Second Church in Newton UCC (ONA)

Williamstown
First Congregational UCC (ONA)
First UMC (RC)

Worcester
First Baptist (W&A)
United Congregational (ONA)

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor
Church of the Good Shepherd (ONA)
First UU (WEL)
Lord of Light Lutheran (RIC)
Memorial Christian (O&A)
Northside Presbyterian (ML)

Bloomfield Hills
Birmingham Unitarian (WEL)

Coloma
Coloma UMC (RC)

Detroit
Truth Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)

Douglas
Douglas Congregational UCC (ONA)

East Lansing
Ecclesia (O&A)
UU of Greater Lansing (WEL)

Kalamazoo
Phoenix Community UCC (ONA)
Skyridge Ch. of the Breth. (SCN)

Ypsilanti
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

MINNESOTA

Edina
Edina Community Lutheran (RIC)
Good Samaritan UMC (RC)

Mahtomedi
White Bear UU (WEL)

Mankato
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Maple Grove
Pilgrims United (ONA)

Minneapolis
Community of St. Martin (RIC)
First Congregational (ONA)
First Unitarian Society (WEL)
First Universalist (WEL)
Grace University Lutheran (RIC)
Hennepin Avenue UMC (RC)
Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)
Judson Memorial Baptist (W&A)
Lyndale UCC (ONA)
Mayflower Community Cong. UCC (ONA)
Our Savior's Lutheran (RIC)
Prospect Park UMC (RC)
Spirit of the Lakes (ONA)
St. Andrew's Lutheran (RIC)
Temple Baptist (W&A)
University Baptist (W&A)
Walker Community (RC)
Wesley UMC (RC)

New Brighton
United Church of Christ (ONA)

Northfield
First UCC (ONA)

Robbinsdale
Robbinsdale UCC (ONA)

St. Cloud
Univ. Luth. of the Epiphany (RIC)

St. Paul
Macalester-Plymouth United. (ML, ONA)
Mennonite Fellowship (SCN)
St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran (RIC)

Wayzata
St. Luke Presbyterian (ML)

MISSOURI

Kansas City
Abiding Peace Lutheran (RIC)
All Souls Unitarian (WEL)
Fountain of Hope Lutheran (RIC)
Kairos UMC (RC)
St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)
Trinity UMC (RC)
Van Brunt Blvd. Presbyterian (ML)

St. Louis
Centenary UMC (RC)
Epiphany (ONA)
Gibson Heights United (ML)
St. Marcus Evangelical UCC (ONA)

University City
Bethel Lutheran (RIC)

MONTANA

Missoula
University Congregational UCC (ONA)

NEBRASKA

Omaha
First Lutheran (RIC)

N. Las Vegas
Wesley UMC (RC)

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hanover
Our Savior Lutheran (RIC)

Jaffrey
United Church (ONA)

Milford
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

Plymouth
Plymouth Congregational (ONA)

NEW JERSEY

Cherry Hill
UU Church (WEL)

Morristown
Unitarian Fellowship (WEL)

Plainfield
First Unitarian Society (WEL)

South Orange
First Presbyterian & Trinity (ML)

Titusville
UU of Washington Crossing (WEL)

NEW MEXICO

Santa Fe
Christ Lutheran (RIC)
Unitarian Church (WEL)
United Church (ONA)

NEW YORK

Albany
Emmanuel Baptist (W&A)

Binghamton
Chenango Street UMC (RC)
UU Congregation (WEL)

Brookhaven
Old South Haven Presbyterian (ML)

Brooklyn
Church of Gethsemane (ML)
First Unit. Cong. Society (WEL)
Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian (ML)
Park Slope UMC (RC)
St. John-St. Matt.-Emmanuel Luth. (RIC)

Buffalo
Amherst Community (ONA, O&A)
Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

Churchville
Union Congregational (ONA)

Craryville
Craryville UMC (RC)

Dobbs Ferry
South Presbyterian (ML)

Gloversville
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Grand Island
Riverside Salem (ONA)

Henrietta
John Calvin Presbyterian (ML)

Huntington
UU Fellowship (WEL)

Kingston
Trinity UMC (RC)

Manhasset
UU Cong. at Shelter Rock (WEL)

Marcellus
First Presbyterian (ML)

Merrick
Community Presbyterian (ML)

Mt. Kisco
Mt. Kisco Presbyterian (ML)

Mt. Sinai
Mt. Sinai Congregational UCC (ONA)

New York
Broadway UCC (ONA)
Central Presbyterian (ML)
Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew (RC)
Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian (ML)
Grace & St. Paul's Lutheran (RIC)
Jan Hus Presbyterian (ML)
Judson Memorial (ONA, W&A)
Madison Avenue Baptist (W&A)
Metropolitan-Duane UMC (RC)
Our Savior's Atonement Lutheran (RIC)
Park Avenue Christian (O&A)
Riverside (ONA, W&A)
Rutgers Presbyterian (ML)
St. Peter's Lutheran (RIC)
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)
Unitarian Ch. of All Souls (WEL)
Washington Square UMC (RC)
West-Park Presbyterian (ML)

Oneonta
First UMC (RC)
UU Society (WEL)

Palisades
Palisades Presbyterian (ML)

Poughkeepsie
Unitarian Fellowship (WEL)

Rochester
Calvary-St. Andrews (ML)
Downtown Presbyterian (ML)
First Unitarian (WEL)
Lake Avenue Baptist (W&A)
The House Church (ONA)
Third Presbyterian (ML)
Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

Saratoga Springs
Presb.-New Eng. Cong. (ML, ONA)

Saratoga Springs UMC (RC)

Sayville
Sayville Congregational UCC (ONA)

Schenectady
First Unitarian (WEL)

Williamsville
UU of Amherst (WEL)

Yorktown Heights
First Presbyterian (ML)

NORTH CAROLINA

Chapel Hill
Church of the Reconciliation (ML)
United Church (ONA)

Durham
Eno River UU Fellowship (WEL)

Raleigh
Community UCC (ONA)
Pullen Memorial Baptist (W&A)

Wilmington
UU Fellowship (WEL)

Winston-Salem
First Christian (O&A)
UU Fellowship (WEL)

OHIO

Brecksville
United Church of Christ (ONA)

Chesterland
Community Church (ONA)

Cincinnati
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian (ML)

Cleveland
Archwood UCC (ONA)
Liberation UCC (ONA)
Pilgrim Congregational UCC (ONA)
West Shore UU (WEL)

Cleveland Heights
Church of the Redeemer (RC)
Noble Road Presbyterian (ML)

Columbus
Calvary Lutheran (RIC)
First English Lutheran (RIC)
First UU (WEL)
Redeemer Lutheran (RIC)
Third Avenue Community (RC)

Dayton
Congregation for Reconciliation (ONA)
Faith UCC (ONA)

Granville
First Baptist (W&A)

Norton
Grace UCC (ONA)

Oberlin
First Church in Oberlin (ONA)

Shaker Heights
First Unitarian of Cleveland (WEL)

Toledo
Central UMC (RC)

OKLAHOMA

Tulsa
UM Community of Hope (RC)

OREGON

Ashland
United Church of Christ (ONA)

Beaverton
Southminster Presbyterian (ML)

Corvallis
First Cong. Church (ONA)
First UMC (RC)

Estacada
Estacada UMC (RC)

Eugene
Unit. of Eugene & Lake Co. (WEL)

Klamath Falls
Klamath Falls Cong. UCC (ONA)

Lake Oswego
Lake Oswego UCC (ONA)

Milwaukie
Clackamas UCC (ONA)
Milwaukie UCC (ONA)

Portland
First Congregational (ONA)
First UMC (RC)
Metanoia Peace Community (RC)
Peace Church of the Breth. (SCN)
Southwest United (ONA)
St. James Lutheran (RIC)
University Park UMC (RC)

Salem
First Congregational UCC (ONA)
First Unitarian Society (WEL)
Morningside UMC (RC)

Springfield
Church of the Brethren (SCN)

PENNSYLVANIA

Devon
Main Line Unitarian (WEL)

Harrisburg
Unitarian Church (WEL)

Lansdale
Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

Levittown
United Christian Church (O&A, ONA)

Philadelphia
Calvary UMC (RC)
First UMC of Germantown (RC)
Old First Reformed (ONA)
St. Michael's Lutheran (RIC)
Tabernacle United (ML, ONA)
Univ. Lutheran of the Incarnation (RIC)

Wayne
Central Baptist (W&A)

RHODE ISLAND

East Greenwich
Westminster Unitarian (WEL)

Newport
Newport Congregational (ONA)

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia
Gethsemane Lutheran (RIC)

SOUTH DAKOTA

Erwin
Erwin UCC (ONA)

TENNESSEE

Knoxville
Tennessee Valley UU (WEL)

Memphis
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

Nashville
Brookmeade Congregational UCC (ONA)
Edgehill UMC (RC)
First UU Church (WEL)

TEXAS

Austin
First English Lutheran (RIC)
Trinity UMC (RC)

Dallas
Bethany Presbyterian (ML)
First Unitarian (WEL)
Midway Hills Christian (O&A)

Fort Worth
St. Matthew's Lutheran (RIC)

Houston
Bering Memorial UMC (RC)
Comm. of the Reconciling Servant (ML)

Plano
Dallas North Unitarian (WEL)

UTAH

Salt Lake City
South Valley UU Society (WEL)

VERMONT

Bennington
Second Congregational (ONA)

Burlington
Christ Presbyterian (ML)
College Street Congregational (ONA)

Middlebury
Congregational UCC (ONA)

Rutland
Rutland UMC (RC)

VIRGINIA

Alexandria
Mount Vernon Unitarian (WEL)
Peace Lutheran (RIC)

Arlington
Unitarian Church (WEL)

Harrisonburg
Sanctuary UCC (ONA)

Oakton
Fairfax Unitarian (WEL)

WASHINGTON

Chelan
Fullness of God Lutheran (RIC)

Federal Way
Wayside UCC (ONA)

Leavenworth
Faith Lutheran (RIC)

Marysville
Evergreen UU Fellowship (WEL)

Medical Lake
Shalom UCC (ONA)

Mountlake Terrace
Terrace View Presbyterian (ML)

Olympia
Comm. for Interfaith Celebration (ONA)

Pullman
Community Congregational UCC (ONA)

Richland
Shalom UCC (ONA)

Seattle
Broadview Community UCC (ONA)
Central Lutheran (RIC)
Findlay Street Christian (O&A)
First Baptist (W&A)
Pilgrim Congregational (ONA)
Plymouth Congregational (ONA)
Prospect UCC Cong. (ONA)
Ravenna UMC (RC)
Richmond Beach Cong. UCC (ONA)
University Baptist (W&A)
University Christian (O&A)
University Congregational (ONA)
Wallingford UMC (RC)

Spokane
Unitarian Church (WEL)

Suquamish
Community Cong. (ONA)

Vancouver
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

White Salmon
Bethel Cong., UCC (ONA)

WEST VIRGINIA

Wheeling
UU Congregation (WEL)

WISCONSIN

Brown Deer
Brown Deer UCC (ONA)

Eau Claire
Ecumenical Religious Center (RIC)
University Lutheran (RIC)

Madison
Community of Hope UCC (ONA)
First Baptist (W&A)
First Congregational UCC (ONA)
Orchard Ridge UCC (ONA)
University UMC (RC)

Milwaukee
Church of the Reformation (RIC)
Cross Lutheran (RIC)
Plymouth UCC (ONA)
Village Church, Lutheran (RIC)

Racine
Our Savior's Lutheran (RIC)

Sheboygan
Wesley UMC (RC)

CANADA

ALBERTA

Edmonton
Unitarian Church (WEL)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver
Unitarian Church (WEL)

ONTARIO

Thunder Bay
Lakehead U. Fellowship (WEL)

Waterloo
Olive Branch Mennonite (SCN)

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon
King of Glory Lutheran (RIC)

CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Key:
LCM=Lutheran Campus Ministry
UCM=United Campus Ministry
UMSF=United Methodist Student Fellowship

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA

Cal-aggie Christian House, UC-Davis (RC)
Pride Alliance, Chapman U., Orange (O&A)
UCM, USC, Los Angeles (RC)
Wesley Fdn., UCLA (RC)
Wesley Fdn., UC-Santa Barbara (RC)

COLORADO

LCM, CU-Boulder (RIC)

DELAWARE

Wesley Fdn., UD, Newark (RC)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

UMSF, American U. (RC)

ILLINOIS

UMSF, Ill. Wesleyan, Bloomington (RC)
UCM, No. Illinois, DeKalb (RC)

INDIANA

LCM, IU, Bloomington (RIC)

IOWA

LCM, UI, Iowa City (RIC)

MICHIGAN

Guild House, UM, Ann Arbor (O&A, ONA)

MINNESOTA

LCM in Minneapolis (RIC)

LCM, SCS, St. Cloud (RIC)
Stud. Cong., St. Olaf, Northfield (RIC)

NORTH DAKOTA

Univ. Lutheran Center, NDSU, Fargo (RIC)

OHIO

UCM, OU, Athens (O&A, RC, W&A)
Wesley Fdn., Oh. Wesleyan, Delaware (RC)

OREGON

LCM in Portland (RIC)
Wesley Fdn., UO, Eugene (RC)

PENNSYLVANIA

LCM at Kutztown (RIC)

TEXAS

LCM, UT, Austin (RIC)

WASHINGTON

LCM, WU, Bellingham (RIC)
Wesley Club, UW, Seattle (RC)

WISCONSIN

LCM, LaCrosse (RIC)
LCM, Metro Milwaukee (RIC)
LCM, UW-Stout, Menomonie (RIC)

CANADA

SASKATCHEWAN

Luth. Stud. Movement, Saskatoon (RIC)

JUDICATORIES

More Light Synods (ML)
Synod of the Northeast

Open and Affirming Conferences (ONA)
California/Nevada N.
Central Pacific
Connecticut
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
New Hampshire
Ohio
Rocky Mountain
Southern California

Open and Affirming Regions (O&A)
Northern California/Nevada

Reconciled in Christ Synods (RIC)
Eastern North Dakota
Eastern Washington-Idaho
Greater Milwaukee
Metro Chicago
Metro Washington, D.C.
Pacifica
Rocky Mountain
Sierra-Pacific
Southeast Michigan
Southeast Pennsylvania

Reconciling Conferences (RC)
California-Nevada
New York
Northern Illinois
Troy

NATIONAL MINISTRIES

Gen'l Comm. on Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns (RC)
Lutheran Student Movement—USA (RIC)
Methodist Fed. for Social Action (RC)