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THE LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR COALITION

WEDNESDAY MAY 18, 2016

LEAD,
BISHOPS!
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LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR NEWS



Photos by Jim Quinn.

Testemunho da Chuva da Estolas

por Rev. Vicki Flippin

No século antes de Jesus ser crucificado, o Crasso geral derrotou uma grande rebelião de escravos. Quando ele entrou em Roma, a estrada estava repleta com 6000 escravos pendurado em cruzes. A mensagem desse momento foi clara: PAVOR. Temam as consequências se você quebrarem as regras e as cadeias de seu cativeiro.

O medo é um companheiro familiar para pessoas LGBTQI que são chamadas por Deus para o ministério em nossa denominação. Medo da rejeição, medo de ser descoberta, medo de perder renda e seguro de saúde para as suas famílias. As mais de 150 cruzes que alinharam a caminhada para o Centro de Convenções esta manhã desafia a nós todos e nos lembra do medo que nossa igreja impõe a pessoas LGBTQI todos os dias. Cada uma destas cruzes contém uma estola do projeto Chuva de Estolas, representando pessoas LGBTQI chamadas ao ministério ordenado e impedidos de servir como ministros, ou convidados a ajudar com uma igreja que lhes pediu para ficarem em silêncio sobre sua orientação sexual ou identidade de gênero, bem como, aqueles que ministraram a pessoas LGBTQI e pagaram um grande preço por isso.

Para os cristãos a cruz significa medo E esperança: para o império de Roma, a cruz significava vergonha. Roma revestiam as estradas que levam ao centro da cidade, o lugar de poder, com os corpos daqueles que ousaram desafiar seu domínio.

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Chuva de Stoles Witness

par Rev. Vicki Flippin

Dans le siècle d'avant la crucifixion de Jésus, le général Crassus a vaincu une grande révolte des esclaves. Quand il entrait dans Rome, la route était bordée de 6000 esclaves suspendus sur des croix. Le message de ce moment-là était clair : LA PEUR. La peur des conséquences si vous enfreignez les règles et les chaînes de votre servitude.

La peur est un compagnon familier de LGBTQ les personnes qui sont appelées par Dieu dans le ministère dans notre dénomination. La peur d'être rejeter, la peur d'être démasqué, la peur de perdre les revenues et l'assurance-médical pour leurs familles. Les plus de 150 croix qui bordent l'allée dans le centre de convention, ce matin, nous interpellent tous de se souvenir de la crainte que notre église impose aux personnes LGBTQI tous les jours. Chaque croix contient une étole provenant du projet "Shower of Stole" et représente les personnes LGBTQI appellés au ministère ordonné, et empêchés de service ministériel ou demandé de contribuer à une église qui leur a demandé de se taire au sujet de leur orientation sexuelle ou l'identité de genre, ainsi que, ceux qui ont son service les LGBTQI à grands risque.

Pour les chrétiens, la croix signifie la peur ET l'espoir : Pour l'empire Romain, la croix signifiait la honte. Rome bordait les routes menant au centre-ville-lieu du pouvoir avec les corps de ceux qui ont osé défier sa domination. Nous adorons un Dieu

Shower of Stoles Witness

by Rev. Vicki Flippin

In the century before Jesus was crucified, the general Crassus defeated a great slave rebellion. As he entered Rome, the road was lined with 6000 slaves hanging on crosses. The message of that moment was clear: FEAR. Fear the consequences if you break the rules and the chains of your bondage.

Fear is a familiar companion to LGBTQI people who are called by God into ministry in our denomination. Fear of rejection, fear of being outed, fear of losing income and health insurance for their families. The 150+ crosses lining the walk into the Convention Center this morning challenge us all to remember the fear that our church imposes on LGBTQI people everyday. Each cross contains a stole from the Shower of Stoles project and represents LGBTQI people called to ordained ministry, and barred from ministerial service or silenced about their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as those who have ministered to LGBTQI people at great cost.

For Christians, the cross signifies fear AND hope: for the empire of Rome, the cross meant shame. Rome lined the roads leading to the city center—the place of power—with the bodies of those who dared defy its rule. We worship a God who knows what it is to fear the deadly consequences of truth and love. We worship a Christ who was humiliated, hurt, and silenced, AND whose love, justice, and courage transformed the world.

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Adoramos um Deus que sabe o que é temer as consequências mortais de se falar a verdade e de amar. Adoramos um Cristo que foi humilhado, ferido, e silenciado, E cujo amor, justiça, e coragem transformou o mundo.

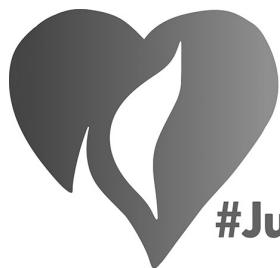
Esta manhã, no final da nossa caminhada ao centro do poder, também queremos que cada indivíduo participante na votações desta semana movam se através de uma fila formada por muitos dos 123 ministros Metodista Unida que assumiram serem LGBTQI na semana passada em uma carta histórica -- líderes estes que podem ser ainda mais prejudicados por nossas ações. Estes líderes cristãos corajosos e de princípio em nosso meio se recusam a serem mantidos em cativeiro por medo e optaram por seguir a Deus acima de injustas leis da Igreja, e corajosamente reivindican por si mesmos e pelas crianças e adultos LGBTQI de todo o mundo que a preocupação de Deus não é sobre quem você ama, mas como você ama; que não se trata de seus órgãos sexuais, mas que seus corações amem o povo de Deus. Então, VOCÊ vai seguir essa liderança? O que VOCÊ teme quando entra neste lugar, e como você vai viver as palavras sagradas deste dia: "O perfeito amor lança fora o medo" (I João 4:18)?

qui sait ce qu'il est à craindre les conséquences mortelles de la vérité et de l'amour. Nous adorons un Christ qui a été humilié, blessé, et réduit au silence, et dont l'amour, la justice, et le courage a transformé le monde.

À la fin de notre marche dans le centre du pouvoir, ce matin, nous avons également besoin de chaque individu participant au vote cette semaine pour se déplacer à travers la ligne d'un grand nombre des 123 ministres LGBTQI Méthodistes Unie qui se sont annoncés la semaine dernière dans une lettre historique - Ces dirigeants peuvent encore être lésés par nos actions. Ces leaders chrétiens courageux de principe au milieu de nous refusent d'être retenu captif par la peur, et choisissent de suivre Dieu plutôt que la loi injuste de l'église et affirment pour eux-mêmes et pour les enfants et les adultes dans le monde entier LGBTQI que la préoccupation de Dieu ne consiste pas à qui vous amour, mais plutôt comment vous aimez ; il ne s'agit pas de vos organes sexuels, mais plutôt votre cœur pour le peuple de Dieu. Alors, allez-vous suivre leur exemple ? Que craignez-vous quand vous entrez dans ce lieu, et comment allez-vous vivre ces paroles sacrées ce jour-là : « L'amour parfait bannit la crainte » (I Jean 4:18)?

At the end of our walk into the center of power this morning, we also require each individual participating in the voting this week to move through a line of many of the 123 LGBTQI United Methodist ministers who have come out in the past two weeks with an historic letter--the very leaders who may be further harmed by our actions. These courageous and principled Christian leaders in our midst refuse to be held captive by fear, choose to follow God rather than unjust church law, and boldly claim for themselves and for LGBTQI children and adults all around the world that God's concern is not about who you love, but how you love; it is not about your sexual organs, but your heart for God's people.

Our witness this morning serves as a reminder of who we have lost... and who we still stand to lose. So will YOU follow their lead? What do YOU fear as you walk into this place, and how will you live out these sacred words on this day: "Perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18)?



#JustLove

Love Your Neighbor Coalition

Sunday Worship Service

At the Love Your Neighbor Coalition (LYNC) Worship service, LYNC volunteers and friends gathered to receive a word from God: hope for those heavy-laden by the harsh legislative blows of the past week, and vision for the challenging days ahead. **Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey** preached, particularly encouraging LGBTQ clergy to continue in their ministries with the confidence of those called by God and for all to persist in – whether or not the church would affirm their identities and viability as ministers in the coming days. On this liturgical holy day of Pentecost, wherein disciples were empowered by the descent of God's Spirit, with streamers and balloons, the congregation celebrated the Spirit of God among us all emboldening us to persevere knowing that "**God's time, God's plan**" would prevail.

As the rousing sermon came to a close, **Mark Miller** led the congregation in a song of response, reiterating a truth that stood against the pronouncements of numerous legislative sessions, plenaries, and the church's doctrine:

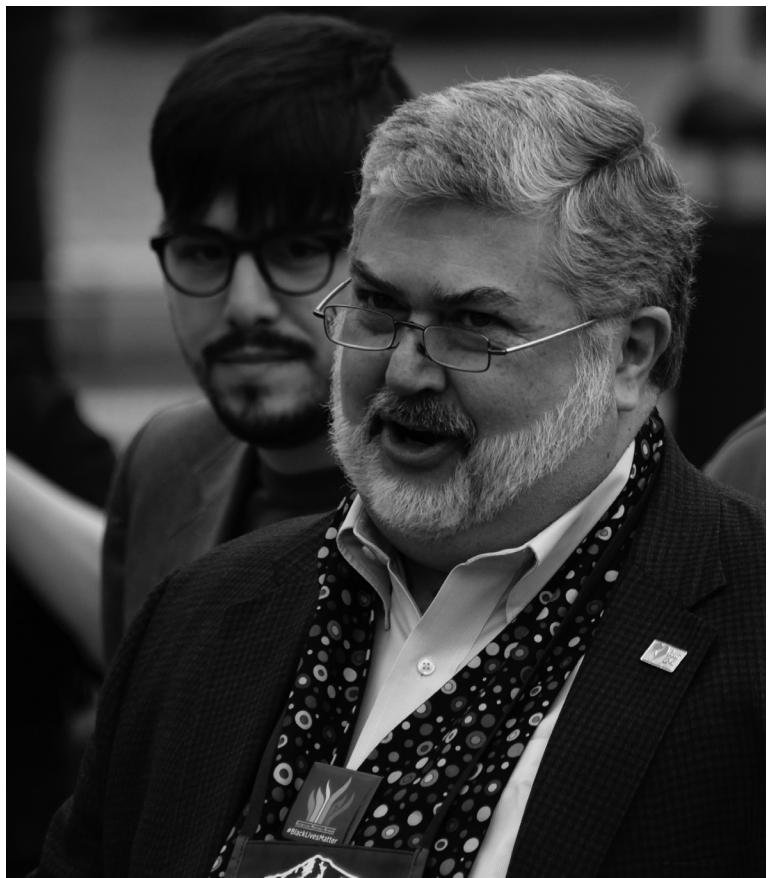
"We are children of God. We are not going away."



Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey.



Photos by Dave Jerde, Erica West, and Ben Roe.



Photos by Dave Jerde and Jim Quinn.

The Jericho March

by Karen Humphrey

For seven days, small groups or individuals with signs, circumnavigating the Oregon Convention Center, called for the end of the UMC's exclusionary language against LGBTQI people, and demanded justice for oppressed people everywhere.

Monday morning, over 100 people showed up for the final March, which ended with a rally in front of the building. Shouts of "Tear Down these Walls!" rang in the air.

David Meredith, pastor of Clifton UMC in Cincinnati, Ohio and now a candidate for Bishop, shared this message: "Flip the script of fear" and trust God for "an end to the silencing, sentencing, exclusion and harm of LGBTQ voices in the UMC" and for justice for all in the church.

Now, we wait for the walls to fall.



Photos by Dave Jerde.



Lead, Bishops

by Julia Frisbie, Editor-in-Chief

On Monday night, LYNC received word about behind-the-scenes conversations between Bishops and leaders from both ends of the political spectrum that might result in a schismatic proposal and a moratorium on church trials. We were told that this information was becoming public, and we wanted our volunteers to hear it from us. So our Coalition Coordinator, Rev. Steve Clunn, immediately broke the news at an all-volunteer meeting in the Tabernacle. Our volunteers spread the word to their networks on social media. Our message was clear: we will not take a position until we hear from our bishops. We are waiting for our bishops to lead.

In the night, our brothers, sisters, and siblings from the other side of the aisle called foul, saying that we had breached confidentiality by sharing this news.

On Tuesday morning, Bishop Ough read a prepared statement from the Council of Bishops admitting our brokenheartedness and calling for unity. He also told us that the Council of Bishops is not of one mind on this issue. While acknowledging the harm and admitting that we're not all of one mind was a step in the right direction, this wasn't the kind of leadership we needed to take a position.

Bishop Ough followed his statement with a press conference. In this press conference, when he was asked about the supposed breach of confidentiality, he said: "I actually don't have a sense that confidentiality has been breached." Several times, he called for safe space to share creative ideas about how to move forward. Rev. Amy DeLong reminds us: "Safe space cannot be declared. It has to be created." When our clergy risk their livelihoods for who they are, who they love, or which marriages they perform, we do not have a safe space. When asked how he would create safe space, Bishop Ough was unable to give any concrete examples, and said that the Council of Bishops did not have the authority to table harmful proposals such as mandatory penalties.

On Tuesday afternoon in the plenary room, LGBTQI persons and allies tied their own hands together with rainbow stoles and sang *Bind Us Together, Lord*. During this witness, a new motion came from the floor and the General Conference asked the Bishops to reconvene. Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of Church of Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, told the Bishops: "You have the right to call a special General Conference to focus on this particular issue of how do we reorder our life so we have a chance to move forward, whatever that looks like. We need your help... so we don't leave Friday, as we did four years ago, having accomplished very little and finding ourselves still stuck as a denomination." LYNC agrees that we need stronger leadership from the Council of Bishops on this issue.

On Tuesday evening, 28 Bishops released a pastoral letter about the now 123 LGBTQI clergy who have outed themselves in the past two weeks. Many of these clergy were present this morning at our Shower of Stoles demonstration, symbolizing the people that our denomination risks losing if it continues its discriminatory stance. The Bishops affirmed these

pastors' call to ministry and declared: "We call The United Methodist Church to repentance for its lack of love for all God's children, and for its arrogance in believing that we establish the boundaries of God's love. May we learn from our LGBTQI United Methodist religious leaders who give witness to us of what it means to love without exception as God loves." LYNC wants to express deep gratitude to these 28 Bishops for speaking out in truth and love even though the Council of Bishops is not of one mind.

What will happen on Wednesday morning? We don't know yet. Ever since our leadership team first discussed it, LYNC has taken a strong and principled stand against splintering the church (read more on page 12). But if the Bishops will lead, we are willing to listen. We can't take a stand until we know the details. But, for the love of our brokenhearted church, we will come to the table if safe space is created.

What Happens On Sunday?

by Rev. Kelly Turney, co-author of *Holy Conversations*

In response to a question about how the Bishops could better take ownership of the narrative of the church and its mission, Bishop Ough said, "After GC ends on Friday, what happens on Sunday? Thousands of United Methodist pastors will take to their pulpits to proclaim the gospel. And on Monday, thousands of laypeople will return to their work, many who feel called to that work. How do we get that word out?"

It isn't a surprise that Bishop Ough, like others who enjoy the power and privilege of the system, is unable to imagine the very negative consequences, of those who are persecuted and prosecuted by the Book of Discipline language and current GC legislation. So what happens after General Conference ends this Sunday if it has been business as usual? If either by our inaction or through the strengthening of punitive language, we have left in place the discrimination based on sexual orientation?

LGBTQI people throughout the world will continue to experience violence in the midst of a deafening silence from church leaders. Many LGBTQI folks will not find a safe space in which to worship. Queer youth will hear the news report and will question their compatibility with God. Thousands of United Methodist Women and parents will mourn the message that their children and grandchildren and their relationships and marriages are not worthy. They will cry out for how hard we are making it for their family members. Secular Christians who have left the church will feel justified in their departure knowing that The UMC is so hateful that it has become irrelevant. Those who have worked for social justice for years within the denomination will offer a prayer of confession that the church is not there yet. Clergy allies will be unable to be in ministry to all their people without fearing penalties and persecution.

What happens Sunday morning? Many of those gathered in reconciling congregations, who are following the call of their baptismal vows to resist the forces of evil in whatever form they present themselves, will, once again, realize that evil is within their own church.



Women as Trusted Moral Agents

by Mary Lawson

The concept of Reproductive Justice began to take shape when members of a women of color delegation returned from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt. Since then we've come to understand that the complete physical, economic, and social well-being of women and girls will be achieved only when they have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions. They need to be able to decide about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction for themselves, their families, and their communities.

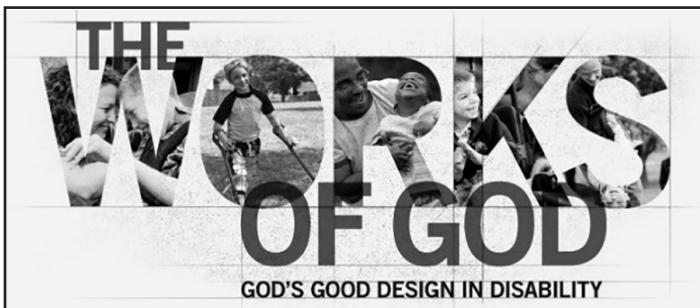
As a long time member of the board of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) and an attendee at the last six General Conferences, I am well aware of diverse realities in relationship to GC delegates' understanding about reproductive issues. For some, supporting reproductive health, rights, and justice is about sexuality education, access to appropriate contraception, and safe, legal, and accessible reproductive health services, including abortion care. For others, these conversations all too often tend to focus only on the hot button issue of abortion.

*Neither of these definitions is adequate
for understanding what it means to be
a supporter of reproductive justice.*

In calling on General Conference to consider the impact of proposed legislation, it is my hope the delegates will view reproductive health, rights and justice from this lens of intersectionality. The United Methodist Women's update of their Responsible Parenthood resolution embodies this concept, as does the proposed renewal of the resolution on hospital mergers.

General Conference delegates should also be aware that my organization, RCRC, embodies this concept of intersectionality in the promotion of human rights including the human right to have children, to not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments. This includes supporting a woman in making decisions about when and if she will have children based on what is best for herself and her family, in light of her faith and with the medical counsel of her doctor and of others she chooses to involve. RCRC does not advocate for or against abortion. We do advocate for making sure women have full access to reproductive healthcare services including safe and affordable contraception, and to safe and affordable abortion services should be a woman's decision. RCRC, as a multi-faith organization encompasses a range of theological perspectives on reproductive issues. While the coalition groups have diverse views about abortion as do United Methodists, all affirm women are trusted moral agents in decisions about childbearing.

TONIGHT @ 8:00 PM
Volunteer hangout & debrief!
Jupiter Hotel



How Our Churches Can Reach Out To Persons With Disabilities And Their Families

by Roger Boe, MD

The Love Your Neighbor Coalition's vision statement reads: "we believe in a church that opens its buildings and systems to people with disabilities, welcomes those with physical, mental and psychological challenges, and works to incorporate every person as they are, with their gifts and challenges."

I am a pediatrician who has spent much of his career working with children and adults with disabilities and their families. I often saw their deep discouragement over the lack of acceptance, and the lack of opportunities and services for themselves and for those they cared for, in their communities, in their schools, and even in their churches. For the past two years I have led classes for the United Methodist Women's Mission U on The Church and Persons with Disabilities, both in the Oregon-Idaho and Rocky Mountain conferences. During our small group discussions with pastors and laity, the most moving and significant contributions came from the parents and family members of persons with disabilities, and from persons with disabilities themselves. I wish that their messages could have been heard by every Methodist church, even shouted from the pulpits. Many families had stopped going to church because they felt excluded, and they needed inclusion! Inclusion proved to be a key word in all of our discussions.

There are no easy solutions to the complex problems that cause this exclusion of persons with disabilities from our church life. At the risk of oversimplifying, some approaches that would be helpful can be summarized in four words: Awareness, Accessibility, Availability, and Advocacy.

AWARENESS: We need to be aware that between 15 and 20% of all persons have significant disabilities. Disability interferes with a person's ability to work, to play, to function in society, and to participate fully in the life of our churches. Half of these disabilities are visible, such as blindness or deafness, or cerebral palsy. Half of them are invisible, mental illness being the most common. We also need to educate ourselves as much as we can about the nature of these disabilities, and about how we can best help these persons integrate into our churches, and also how we can best support families and caregivers.

ACCESSIBILITY: Assessing and addressing physical accessibility is an important first step. Imagine what it would be like to be a person in a wheelchair or with blindness or deafness. What would you need to feel welcome? In addition, we need to address some invisible barriers that make the person feel unwelcome, what I call involuntary inhospitality. We need to reach out to greet them, and not hesitate to invite them to participate in activities.

AVAILABILITY: We need to consider what resources and services we need to provide that will enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in the life of our churches.

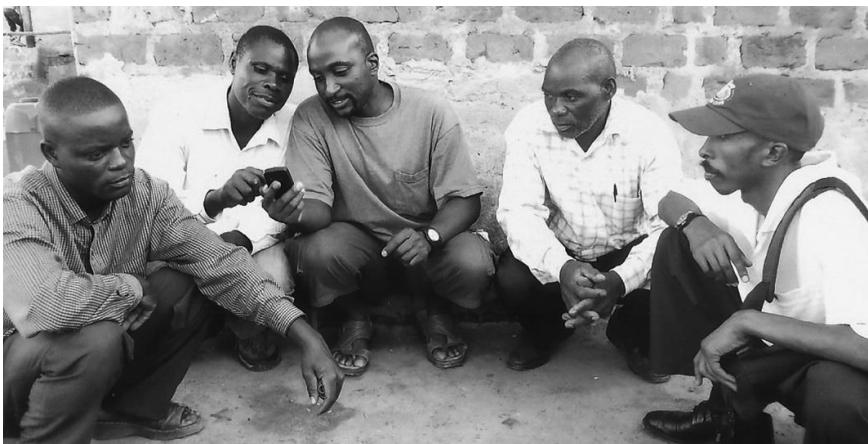
ADVOCACY: Advocacy means going to bat for persons with disabilities and their families. That may be to help change individual attitudes and practices that are harmful and demeaning. It also may be to change laws and systemic practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities. We need to fully support the precepts of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a landmark national legislation passed in 1990 that protects the rights and recognizes the special needs of persons with disabilities. We also need to ensure that our churches recognize and follow the dictates of this legislation.

Need help with any of this? I would suggest that all of us should start by reading the section on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, and taking it to heart:

We recognize and affirm the full humanity and personhood of all individuals with mental, physical, developmental, neurological and psychological conditions or disabilities as full members of the family of God. We also affirm their rightful place in both the Church and society. We affirm the responsibility of the Church and society to be in ministry with children, youth, and adults with mental, physical, developmental, and/or psychological and neurological conditions or disabilities whose particular needs in the area of mobility, communication, intellectual comprehension, or personal relationships might make more challenging their participation or that of their families in the life of the church and the community. We urge the Church and society to recognize and receive the gifts of persons with disabilities to enable them to be full participants in the community of faith. We call the Church and society to be sensitive to, and advocate for, programs of rehabilitation, services, employment, education, appropriate housing, and transportation. We call on the Church and society to protect the civil rights of persons with all types and kinds of disabilities.

The DisAbility Ministries Committee of the United Methodist church has an excellent webpage full of links and resources than can help us to reach out and be in full ministry to persons with disabilities and their families.

Dr Boe is a semiretired pediatrician who is currently the medical director of a residential facility for citizens with disabilities. He is a 50 year member of the Pocatello UMC and currently chairs the Mission Committee.



Denis Iraguha with the cell phone--a lifeline to Affirmation partners.

Denis Iraguha com o telefone celular - uma salva-vidas para os parceiros da Afirmação.



Young women joining together to create a small business. As jovens mulheres se unem para criar um pequeno negócio.

Nós estamos com os LGBTQI Ugandenses

por Ann Craig

“Enforece-os!” foi a manchete de um jornal local Ugandense que combinada com a passagem da lei Anti-Homossexualidade na Uganda, forçando as pessoas LGBTQI da Uganda a se esconderem caso não pudessem sair do país. Essa lei ameaçava com prisão as famílias, amigos e vizinhos que não denunciassem pessoas por serem gays. Vizinhos e os proprietários de imóveis forçavam os Ugandenses LGBTQI a fugir de suas casas. Eles perderam empregos, comunidades e famílias.

Em agosto, a Afirmção iniciou uma parceria com o povo LGBTQI de Uganda, para ajudar homens e mulheres a estabelecer duas pequenas empresas para ajudá-los a sobreviver. Com um pequena investimento, tornou-se possível através do legado de Tim Tenant-Jayne, um ativista de longa data com a Afirmção, possibilitemos que eles construíssem um salão de cabeleireiro e uma fábrica de tijolos.

Nós conectamos pela primeira vez com LGBTQI Ugandenses de Fé antes da Conferência Geral de 2012 assim que a Coligação Ame Seu Próximo se conectava com os Metodistas Unidos na África Oriental e Ocidental. Neste processo nós nos encontramos Denis Iraguha, capelão para pessoas LGBTQI que trabalhava com o Bispo Christopher Senyonjo. Seu ministério é visitar membros da comunidade em suas casas quando eles estão lidando com HIV/AIDS ou rejeição da família.

Quando a lei Anti-Homossexual pediu a pena de morte para gays, Denis e outros quatro homens foram forçados a sair de suas casas e fugiram para a fronteira de Ruanda. Em poucos meses a lei foi declarada inconstitucional, e as coisas se acalmaram um pouco. Denis e sua equipe retornaram para Kampala, capital do Uganda, mas com nada a seus nomes.

Hoje, eles têm uma chance. Através do apoio da Afirmção, eles poderão ter uma oportunidades e restaurar o seu senso de dignidade. Não há garantias. Embora eles estejam sendo cuidadosos, a perseguição ainda acontece. Vamos continuar orando para o sucesso de seu salão de cabeleireiro e da fábrica de tijolos.

Afirmção está na vanguarda. Apoiamos quarenta LGBTQI ugandenses que estão orando por tempos melhores. Afirmção tem sido uma força para a justiça desde que a linguagem de “incompatibilidade” foi primeiramente aprovada, e deu à luz a Rede de Ministérios de Reconciliações. Fomos os primeiros a adicionar o “T” e o primeiro a ter Liderança Transgênero. Hoje, somos um dos primeiros engajados na África com pessoas LGBTQI que estão tentando sobreviver a perseguição, esta que é muitas vezes feita em nome de Jesus.

Ore e trabalhe conosco. John Wesley disse: “O mundo é minha paróquia”.

Metodistas Unidos deve falar contra a violência contra as pessoas LGBTQI em todos os lugares.

We Stand with LGBTQI Ugandans

by Ann Craig

“Hang Them!” was the headline in a local Ugandan paper that, combined with the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, forced Ugandan LGBTQI people into hiding if they could not get out of the country. The law threatened family, friends, and neighbors with imprisonment if they didn’t turn people in for being gay. Neighbors and landlords forced LGBTQI Ugandans to flee their homes. They lost jobs, communities, and families.

In August of 2015, Affirmation began a partnership with Ugandan LGBTQI people to help a growing network of men and women establish two small businesses to help them survive. With a small grant, made possible by the bequest of Tim Tenant-Jayne, a long-time activist with Affirmation, we enabled them to launch a hair salon and a brickmaking business.

We first connected with Ugandan LGBTQI faith before the 2012 General Conference as the Love Your Neighbor Coalition reached out to United Methodists in East and West Africa. In the process, we met Denis Iraguha, chaplain for LGBTQI people who worked with Bishop Christopher Senyonjo. His ministry is to visit community members in their homes when they are dealing with HIV/AIDS or family rejection.

When the Anti-Homosexuality bill calling for the death sentence for gays passed, Denis and four other men were forced out of their homes and fled to the border of Rwanda. In a few months, the bill was declared unconstitutional, and things quieted down somewhat. Denis and his team made their way back to Kampala, the capital of Uganda, with nothing to their names.

Today, they have a chance. Through the support of Affirmation, they may be able to gain a foothold and restore their sense of dignity. There are no guarantees. Although they are being careful, persecution still happens. We will be praying for the success of the hair salon and brick making businesses.

Affirmation is on the cutting edge. We support forty LGBTQI Ugandans who are praying for better times. Affirmation has been a force for justice ever since the “incompatibility” language was first passed, and gave birth to the Reconciling Ministries Network. We were the first to add the “T” and the first to have transgender leadership. Today, we are among the first to be engaged in Africa with LGBTQI people who are trying to survive persecution—often in the name of Jesus.

Pray with us and work with us. John Wesley said, “The World Is My Parish.”

United Methodists must speak out against violence against LGBTQI people everywhere.



Pourquoi Je Me Bats Pour l'Eglise Qui M'a Presque Coûté Ma Vie

par Dennis Akpona, African Central Conferences Coordinator at Reconciling Ministries Network

Ayant grandi au Nigeria, j'étais forcé de cacher qui j'étais pendant que j'entendais mes voisins et les membres de ma famille répètent la rhétorique dangereuse qu'ils ont entendu à l'église. Je ne pouvais me tourner ni à ma famille non plus à mon église pour trouver du confort ou le sanctuaire. Je ne pouvais pas non plus faire confiance à mon pasteur, qui devrait censé être discret et un conseiller. Je me suis senti abandonnée par ma religion, qui insistée une telle haine sur moi.

Finalement, je me suis déplacé loin de ma famille pour l'université et là j'ai rencontré beaucoup de gens comme moi. Les centres communautaires étaient devenus des lieux de refuges pour être nous-mêmes. Mais mon secret sera bientôt rendu public après avoir commencé à travailler pour un programme de prévention contre le VIH. L'un de mes patients a été arrêté et torturé pour qu'il nomme homosexuels. Sous cette contrainte, il leur a dit que je travaillais avec un groupe de LGBTQ. Ils savaient que dès qu'ils m'ont, ils auraient accès à tous mes patients. J'étais piégé dans une rencontre à un arrêt de bus avec cet homme, où trois policiers m'ont battu et m'a arrêté.

Pendant que j'étais en prison, je priais pour la délivrance. Mais j'étais en colère contre Dieu et contre tout le monde. Mes amis ont appris de ma situation, et j'étais enfin à mesure de corrompre pour sortir de prison en acceptant de payer régulièrement les agents de la force de police. J'étais relâché, mais j'avais nulle part à aller. Ma famille avait appris de mon arrestation et mon frère avait dit que si j'étais gay, il serait celui qui me tuerait.

Quelques années plus tard, je m'étais exilé avec succès aux États-Unis. Mais j'ai beaucoup d'amis là-bas au Nigeria qui ont été tués ou se sont suicidés à cause de leur sexualité. Il y a beaucoup comme moi, qui cachent encore leur identité et vivent dans une peur mortelle tous les jours craignant qu'ils soient dévoilés. Cette vie de peur et de représailles ne peut pas continuer et certainement, ne peut pas continuer à être tolérée ou ignoré par l'Église Méthodiste Unie.

Comment un tel changement affecterait une nation conservatrice comme le Nigeria ? Deux façons :

Un mouvement : Dans un premier temps, l'acceptation des LGBTQ serait probablement considérée comme une influence simplement américaine. Mais L'EMU ne sera pas seul. La base de données Pew nous montre dans l'ensemble que, de nombreuses confessions et religions se dirigent vers l'acceptation des LGBTQ. Comme ces chiffres augmentent, les Nigérians vont prendre connaissance.

L'éducation hospitalière : Il y aura de possibilité de sensibilité culturelle et de formation pour les églises et les employés pour aider à éduquer la communauté globale. Avec ça nous sortirons de l'ombre et sans s'inquiète de notre sécurité personnelle, en particulier dans le sanctuaire de l'église.

Why I Fight For the Church that Nearly Cost Me My Life

by Dennis Akpona, African Central Conferences Coordinator at Reconciling Ministries Network

Growing up in Nigeria, I was forced to hide who I was while listening to my neighbors and relatives repeat the dangerous rhetoric they heard in church. I could not turn to my family, and I could not turn to my church for comfort or sanctuary. I could not trust my pastor, who was meant to be a confidant and counselor. I felt abandoned by my religion, which spewed such hate against me.

Eventually, I moved away from home for university and eventually met more people like me. Community centers became safe havens where we could be ourselves. But my secret would soon be made public after I began working for an HIV-prevention program.

One of my patients was arrested and tortured into naming gay people. Coerced, he told them that because I worked with the LGBTQ community, they would have access to all my patients. I was tricked into meeting this man at a bus stop, where three police officers beat and arrested me.

In prison, I prayed for deliverance. But I was angry at God. I was angry at everyone. My friends learned of my situation, and I was finally able to bribe my way out of prison by agreeing to regularly pay members of the police force. I soon left, but I had nowhere to go. My family had learned of my arrest, and my brother had said that if I were gay, he would be the one to kill me.

Years later, I successfully applied for asylum to the United States. But I have many friends back in Nigeria who have been killed or committed suicide because of their sexuality. There are many like me, who hide their identity and live in mortal fear every day that they will be revealed. This life of fear and retribution cannot continue and certainly, cannot continue to be condoned or conveniently ignored by The United Methodist Church.

How would such change affect a conservative nation as Nigeria? Two ways:

A movement: At first, LGBTQ acceptance would likely be seen as simply American influence. But The UMC would not be alone. Pew data shows us that across the board, many faiths and religions are moving toward LGBTQ acceptance. As these numbers grow, Nigerians will take notice.

Welcoming education: There would be opportunity for sensitivity and cultural training for churches and employees to help educate the global community. We could come out of the shadows and no longer fear for our personal safety, particularly in the sanctuary of the church.

Perhaps, if a policy change like this happened earlier, my life would have turned out differently. I would not have been forced to hide myself, to have my family disown me, to flee my homeland. Many lives would have been changed or saved had The UMC abandoned its anti-LGBTQ policies years ago.



Love Prevails

revolution 3-D: disclose(t), divest, disrupt

We believe the Holy Spirit demands the full inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people in the life of the church. For longer than the Israelites wandered in the wilderness the United Methodist Church has systematically and categorically denied the full humanity of LGBTQ people, intentionally deepening the soul-stultifying sin of discrimination, quadrennium after quadrennium. This injustice has been sustained by silence, timidity and cowardice instead of prophetic love. We have chosen the worldly rewards of ecclesial ambition, institutional maintenance and idolatrous allegiance to legalism over basic Gospel-mandated inclusion. We have fundamentally misunderstood what Heaven's presence on earth requires of us.

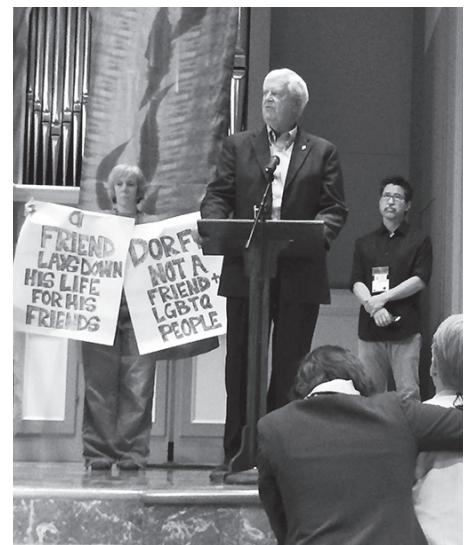
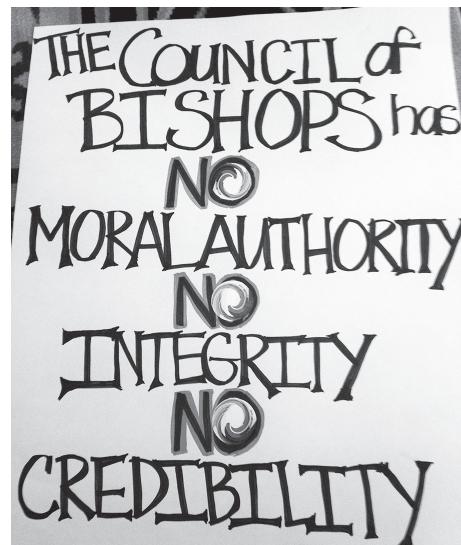
Having experienced the liberating truth imparted by the Spirit, we do not sit in silent acquiescence before the unjust laws of The United Methodist Church. We settle for nothing less than the complete removal of all discriminatory language against LGBTQ people in The Book of Discipline.

The usual approaches of legislation-writing, story-telling, holy conferencing and relationship-building have served their purpose in the past, but have failed to end the discrimination that is destroying our church. General Conference 2016 in Portland has clearly demonstrated that the intent of the denomination is to deliberately destroy LGBTQ lives.

We will not continue to invest in approaches that have failed to halt the steady advance of intolerance. Over the last three years Love Prevails has engaged in a three-dimensional strategy to abolish the policies of discrimination against LGBTQ: **Disclose, Divest and Disrupt.**

We have traveled the country and disrupted Connectional Table and Council of Bishops meetings, demanding that church leaders of conscience do the right thing and join us in Disrupting the status quo, to the end of eliminating all of the discriminatory language towards LGBTQ people in The Book of Discipline. They have been unable and unwilling to stem the tide of hatred, homophobia and heterosexism that this General Conference session is clearly intending to advance.

The time for conversational persuasion and parliamentary approaches has passed. To ensure discrimination no longer flows uninterrupted, we Disrupt. We undermine all policies and procedures that limit or deny the full participation of LGBTQ United Methodists in the life of the church.



Celebrating Queer Voices

Queer Voices in Worship

by Kelly Turney

Editor's note: this reflection celebrates the LGBTQI voices visible in worship the first few days of GC

It all started with a tweet

"Let's play a game: how often can #UMCGC sing songs and lift prayers written by queer folks, while silencing us otherwise? #itstime #calledout" We were singing and clapping and stomping (because the rhythm of the song really requires it)

Mark Miller's kicked up version of "O for a thousand tongues to sing"

in opening worship Tuesday morning when I wondered, out loud, how many of the thousands of tongues singing were in queer heads?

My mathematical partner would answer 400 and then remind me that such calculations are "arithmetic"--

not quite rising to the level of mathematics.

What would the body of Christ be, I wondered, without those LGBTQI tongues to sing?

I tried to imagine, adapting John Lennon's lyrics: "Imagine, there's no gays in UMC," At least the self-avowed, practicing kind, (cause the so-called "Good News" folks say they don't object to the celibate kind)

But it wasn't easy, even though I tried.

Wouldn't the body be so diminished without those tongues

as to no longer be a body worthy of the body of Christ?

No longer worthy of praise?

Without the diversity of parts, once celebrated by Paul,

wouldn't the body return to the dust from which we came?

IF we managed, through parliamentary procedure of course, to cut out those LGBTQI tongues,

we might be left with a denomination in name, the UMC,

But it would not be the body of Christ.

That body would be elsewhere, enjoying the gifts of those

like Grace Cox-Johnson whose beautiful stoles enlivened opening worship,

or the colorful, out, trans, non-binary, youthful fabulosity of Aaron Pazan,

or the incredibly creative, detail work of a mind-reader,

worship team planner and floor manager like David Bone,

or the emotional, modulating talents of Mark Miller,

or the prayerful movement of a Randall Miller,

or the inspiring words of liturgical artists like Marcia McFee,

or the global musical sounds of Jorge Lockward,

or the ones whose full witness is shielded from view by our discrimination.

And that says nothing of all the other ways

LGBTQI people are integral

to the denominational body,

like the powerful story I heard today of the woman, her orientation unknown to most,

who created a celebrated UMC ministry.

Then there's the prophetic, poetic voices of the Indigo Girls,

Emily Saliers, a preacher's kid, daughter of Don Saliers,

whose sung responses grace the UM Hymnal and

whose reading of psalms brings them to life.

And Amy Ray, in church 3x a week growing up,

who loved her clergy-magician-uncle using tricks to illuminate Bible passages

(see these 3 ropes, poof, they're really 1, a symbol of the Trinity).

Indigo songs soothe the souls of weary delegates,

volunteers and Bishops Friday night.

The concert became church, albeit in a UCC sanctuary,

with voices of belief, witness, prayer

and the struggle to hold the system accountable to the gospel good news.

Should the body UMC look in the mirror, reflected there are beautiful parts--

racial, ethnic, gender identity, sexual orientation-- not enough, but some, all integral gifts of the whole.

And what of allies, those cut out of the body by mandatory penalties,

or silenced in their welcome?

And young people (can I get an amen for the youth delegates report?)

If those queer voices, who form the body of Christ, leave the church that uses their gifts while excluding their bodies,

I fear what would be left is not a body, more of a shell of our former selves,

(and here I can imagine Voldemort's twisted shadowy,

parasitic existence, before his return).

Because, if they go, the body goes with them.

And so I can imagine that I don't do this work of witnessing to the inclusion of the gospel, of insisting the UMC live into its motto of open hearts and minds and doors for "them" but for myself-- because I want to imagine myself as part of the body of Christ.

So I strain to hear, all those tongues to sing.

I do commit to be part of the body of Christ, wherever it goes.

Therefore, I go.



LYNC Stands Against Splintering the UMC



por Rev. Frank Wulf

Christ est notre paix. Il a fait les Juifs et les Gentils en un seul groupe. Avec son corps, il a brisé la barrière de la haine qui nous divise. Il a annulé les modalités de la loi afin qu'il puisse créer une nouvelle personne sur les deux groupes, ce qui rend la paix. Il les deux réconciliés comme un seul corps à Dieu par la croix, qui a mis fin à l'hostilité à Dieu.

(Ephésiens 2: 14-16)

Il n'y a pas de secret sur le fait que l'Église Méthodiste Unie est tout sauf uni. Nous sommes perpétuellement troublé par des conflits théologiques et sociaux allant de désaccords amers au sujet de la nature de Dieu et l'autorité de la Bible à tous-out batailles concernant le bon exercice de la sexualité et le rôle de l'Eglise dans la lutte contre les injustices économiques / politiques. Ces conflits ont toujours soulevé le spectre du schisme. L'idée a été longtemps amusé dans les conversations en coulisses entre les gens de différentes perspectives théologiques qui désespèrent que l'Eglise ne sera jamais en mesure d'atteindre un esprit commun sur les questions cruciales et profondément difficiles qui la divisent. Ce qui était autrefois parlé en privé, cependant, est maintenant crié sur les toits. L'appel à schisme est proclamé avec passion et de l'urgence par des groupes et des individus qui croient que les conflits sur la théologie et l'enseignement moral sont insolubles, qu'ils causent des dommages à la mission permanente de l'Eglise du Christ, et que le seul moyen d'atteindre la résolution est pour ceux qui ont des perspectives différentes théologiques (principalement en ce qui concerne l'orientation sexuelle) pour aller de leur côté.

Reconnaissant qu'il est toujours difficile à vivre ensemble dans le contexte de nos différences et désaccords. La Coalition Aimez Votre Voisin (LYNC) a pris une position ferme et de principe contre le schisme. L'unité de l'Eglise est pas et n'a jamais été enracinée dans uniformités de pensée, de croyance et de la pratique. Il est un don de Dieu. Comme l'auteur d'Ephésiens nous rappelle, «Christ est notre paix.» Dans ce contexte, la «paix» (Gk: Eirene) ne signifie pas la cessation des hostilités. Il est une traduction de l'ancien concept hébreu shalom, qui pointe vers la plénitude de la création de Dieu. Il est un rapprochement dans l'espoir de tout ce qui a été déchiré par notre ignorance humaine, l'égoïsme, la peur, la haine et la cupidité. Étant donné que l'Eglise est appelée à incarner cette shalom, de ne pas le nier, appelle à schisme semble profondément infidèle et profondément théologiquement erronée. Ils sont ancrés dans l'hypothèse que nos incompatibilités humaines de croyance et de pratique sont trop insolubles pour

by Rev. Frank Wulf

14 Pois ele é a nossa paz, o qual de ambos fez um e destruiu a barreira, o muro de inimizade, 15 anulando em seu corpo a Lei dos mandamentos expressa em ordenanças. O objetivo dele era criar em si mesmo, dos dois, um novo homem, fazendo a paz, 16 e reconciliar com Deus os dois em um corpo, por meio da cruz, pela qual ele destruiu a inimizade. [Efésios 2: 14-16 - Nova Versão Internacional (NVI-PT)]

Não há segredo o fato de que a Igreja Metodista Unida é tudo menos unida. Estamos perpetuamente incomodados por conflitos teológicos e sociais que variam de divergências amargas sobre a natureza de Deus e da autoridade da Bíblia a grandes batalhas relacionadas ao exercício da sexualidade e o papel da igreja na abordagem de assuntos sobre injustiças político-econômicas. Estes conflitos sempre levantam a possibilidade de separação de nossa denominação. Esse conceito tem sido frequentemente entretido em conversas de bastidores entre pessoas de diferentes perspectivas teológicas sem esperança que a Igreja vá ser capaz de alcançar uma mente comum sobre as questões cruciais e profundamente desafiadoras que dividem nossa denominação. O que antes era dito em privacidade, agora, está sendo gritado aos quatro ventos. A invocação para a separação está sendo proclamada com paixão e urgência por grupos e indivíduos que acreditam que os conflitos sobre a teologia e ensino moral são insolúveis, e que estes estão causando danos à missão permanente da Igreja de Cristo, e que a única maneira de conseguir a resolução é para aqueles com diferentes perspectivas teológicas (sobretudo no que diz respeito à orientação sexual) sigam caminhos separados.

Reconhecendo que é sempre difícil viver juntos contra o pano de fundo de nossas diferenças e discordâncias, a Coligação Ame a Seu Próximo tem tomado uma posição robusta e de princípio contra a separação. A união da Igreja não é agora e nunca foi enraizada em uniformidades de pensamento, crença e prática. Essa união é um presente de Deus. Como o escritor de Efésios nos lembra: "Cristo é a nossa paz". Neste contexto, a "paz" (gr: eirēnē) não significa o fim de hostilidades. É uma tradução de shalom, um arcaico conceito hebreu, que aponta para a integridade da criação de Deus. É uma união em esperança de tudo o que foi dilacerado pela nossa ignorância humana, nosso egoísmo, medo, ódio e a nossa ganância. Dado que a Igreja é chamada a encarnar esse shalom, e não negá-lo, invocações para a separação parecem profundamente infiel e teologicamente falho. Essas invocações estão enraizadas na suposição de que nossas incompatibilidades humanas de crença e

by Rev. Frank Wulf

Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

(Ephesians 2:14-16)

There is no secret to the fact that The United Methodist Church is anything but united. We are perpetually roiled by theological and social conflicts ranging from bitter disagreements about the nature of God and the authority of the Bible to all-out battles concerning the proper exercise of sexuality and the church's role in addressing economic/political injustices. These conflicts have always raised the specter of schism. The idea has long been entertained in back-room conversations among people of various theological perspectives who despair that the Church will ever be able to achieve a common mind on the crucial and profoundly challenging matters that divide it. What was once spoken in private, however, is now being shouted from the rooftops. The call for schism is being proclaimed with passion and urgency by groups and individuals who believe that conflicts over theology and moral teaching are irresolvable, that they are causing harm to the ongoing mission of Christ's church, and that the only way to achieve resolution is for those with differing theological perspectives (primarily with regard to sexual orientation) to go their separate ways.

Recognizing that it is always difficult to live together against the backdrop of our differences and disagreements, the Love Your Neighbor Coalition has taken a strong and principled stand against schism. The unity of the Church is not now and never has been rooted in uniformities of thought, belief and practice. It is a gift of God. As the writer of Ephesians reminds us, "Christ is our peace." In this context, 'peace' (Gk: eirēnē) does not mean a cessation of hostilities. It is a translation of the ancient Hebrew concept shalom, which points to the wholeness of God's creation. It is a bringing together in hope of all that has been torn apart through our human ignorance, selfishness, fear, hatred, and greed. Given that the church is called to embody this shalom, not to deny it, calls for schism seem profoundly unfaithful and deeply theologically flawed. They are rooted in the assumption that our human incompatibilities of belief and practice are too intractable to be healed, even by the Spirit of God.

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être guéri, même par l'Esprit de Dieu.

Ceux qui prônent le schisme et nous appellent à séparer pour le bien de la mission de Jésus-Christ dans le monde ne parviennent pas à reconnaître que notre mission est liée à notre identité en tant que personnes qui ont été rassemblés dans le Christ et non pas seulement par le biais de nos propres efforts. L'unité dans la diversité est plus qu'un simple slogan; il est un accomplissement des plans de Dieu pour la réconciliation du monde. (Eph. 1:10) Unité, cependant, n'est pas l'uniformité. L'église primitive était rarement totalement d'accord sur rien. Bien au contraire! Controverses abondaient. Et pourtant, ils ont compris que ce qui les unissait n'était pas leur accord sur les questions de théologie ou de leurs points communs de la pratique. Ils ont été maintenus ensemble à la fois par leur foi commune dans le Christ et leur amour mutuel pour l'autre. John Wesley a lancé un appel pour les méthodistes chrétiens pour traiter les uns les autres de même dans son sermon intitulé *Esprit catholique*:

Bien que nous ne puissions pas penser de même, peut-on ne pas aimer aussi bien? Puissons-nous ne pas être d'un seul cœur, bien que nous ne sommes pas du même avis? Sans aucun doute, nous pouvons. Ici tous les enfants de Dieu peuvent unir, malgré ces différences plus petites.

Bien qu'il existe de nombreux facteurs qui déterminent les appels à schisme qui viennent à la Conférence générale 2016, la seule question qui monte à l'avant-garde est notre désaccord profond et parfois amer au sujet de l'inclusion complète des LGBTQI1 personnes dans la vie et le leadership de la communauté de foi. Il est à noter ces appels à schisme ne viennent pas de la communauté LGBTQI, qui a longtemps souffert des politiques officielles de l'Église d'exclusion. En fait, le contraire est vrai. Ces appels à schisme viennent avec ferveur de ceux qui souhaitent continuer la pratique de l'église d'exclure LGBTQI personnes de la plénitude de la vie et le ministère de l'Eglise. Ayant grandi fatigué d'écouter les voix de ceux qui crient pour la pleine intégration au sein de la communauté du peuple de Dieu, ils cherchent une église où des engagements sont définis par des règles strictes et rapide et où la fidélité est caractérisée par l'obéissance à ces règles.

Ironie du sort, le schisme ne peut pas atteindre l'objectif de mettre fin au conflit sur les questions liées à la LGBTQI inclusion, ou, d'ailleurs, d'autres questions. La notion erronée que deux dénominations théologiquement purs peuvent être créés à partir d'une dénomination en conflit limandes dans la réalité que les chrétiens sont socialement et théologiquement complexe et qu'ils sont rarement, voire jamais cohérente. Il y aura inévitablement des personnes LGBTQI et alliés dans toute dénomination nouvellement formée «traditionaliste», tout comme il y aura des personnes qui résistent à la pleine inclusion dans toute dénomination nouvellement formée «progressiste». Les jeunes, dont les théologies et les affiliations confessionnelles sont d'abord déterminées par leurs parents, vont changer à mesure qu'ils grandissent et de discerner plus pleinement qui ils sont et ce qu'ils deviennent. Qu'est-ce qui se passe, par exemple, lorsque les jeunes discernent que leurs orientations sexuelles

pratique são intratáveis para serem curadas, mesmo que através do Espírito de Deus.

Aqueles que promovem a separação e nos incentivam a dividirmos por causa da missão de Jesus Cristo no mundo não reconhecem que a nossa missão está ligada à nossa identidade como pessoas que foram reunidas em Cristo, e não apenas através de nossos próprios esforços. União em diversidade é mais do que apenas um slogan; é um cumprimento dos planos de Deus para a reconciliação do mundo. (Ef. 1:10) União, no entanto, não é uniformidade. A igreja primitiva era raramente em total acordo sobre qualquer coisa. Pelo contrário! Controvérsias eram abundantes. E, no entanto, eles entendiam que o que os mantinham juntos não era o seu acordo sobre questões teológicas ou suas práticas em comum. Eles se mantiveram unidos tanto por sua fé comum em Cristo como pelo seu amor mútuo de uns para com o outros. John Wesley apelou para os cristãos metodistas para tratarem uns aos outros de forma semelhante em seu sermão intitulado *Espírito Católico* [Catholic Spirit]:

Embora não pensarmos da mesma forma, não seria possível amarmos da mesma forma? Não poderíamos ser de um só coração, embora não sermos de uma mesma opinião? Sem qualquer dúvida, podemos. Nisto todos os filhos de Deus podem unir-se, não obstante essas diferenças menores.

Embora existam muitos fatores que propulsionam os pedidos para separação que estão vindo à Conferência Geral de 2016, a questão que se levanta para o primeiro plano é a nossa discordância profunda e às vezes amarga sobre a inclusão integral das pessoas LGBTQI[1] [Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transgêneros/Transexuais, Queer/Questionadores, Intersexuais], na vida e na liderança da comunidade de fé. Vale ressaltar que esses pedidos para separação NÃO estão vindo da comunidade LGBTQI, comunidade esta que por muito sofre exclusão devido políticas oficiais da Igreja. Na verdade, o oposto é verdadeiro. Estes pedidos de separação estão vindo mais ferventemente daqueles que desejam continuar a prática de exclusão de pessoas LGBTQI da plenitude da vida e do ministério da Igreja. Cansados de ouvir as vozes daqueles que clamam por inclusão integral na comunidade do povo de Deus, eles procuram uma igreja onde alianças são definidas por regras intransigentes onde a fidelidade é caracterizada pela obediência a essas regras.

Ironicamente, a separação não pode cumprir a meta de acabar com o conflito sobre questões relacionadas com a inclusão LGBTQI, ou quaisquer outras questões. A noção equivocada de que duas denominações teologicamente puras podem ser criadas a partir de uma denominação em conflito se cai perante a realidade que cristãos são socialmente e teologicamente complexos e raramente ou nunca consistentes. Haverá inevitavelmente pessoas LGBTQI e aliados em qualquer denominação "tradicionalista" recém-formada, assim como haverá pessoas que resistem a inclusão integral em qualquer denominação "progressista" recém-formada. Os jovens, cujas teologias e afiliações denominacionais são inicialmente determinadas por seus pais, mudarão à medida que crescem e passam a discernir mais plenamente quem eles são e o que eles estão se tornando.

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Those who advocate schism and call us to separate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world fail to recognize that our mission is bound up with our identity as people who have been brought together in Christ and not merely through our own efforts. Unity in diversity is more than just a slogan; it is a fulfillment of God's plans for the reconciliation of the world. (Eph. 1:10) Unity, however, is not uniformity. The early church was seldom in total agreement about anything. Quite the contrary! Controversies abounded. And yet, they understood that what held them together was not their agreement on issues of theology or their commonalities of practice. They were held together both by their common faith in Christ and their mutual love for each other. John Wesley appealed for Methodist Christians to treat each other similarly in his sermon entitled *Catholic Spirit*:

Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.

While there are many factors driving the calls for schism that are coming to the 2016 General Conference, the one issue that rises to the forefront is our deep and sometimes bitter disagreement about the full inclusion of LGBTQI[1] persons in the life and leadership of the community of faith. It is noteworthy these calls for schism are NOT coming from the LGBTQI community, which has long suffered from the Church's official policies of exclusion. In fact, the opposite is true. These calls for schism are coming most fervently from those who wish to continue the church's practice of excluding LGBTQI persons from the fullness of the Church's life and ministry. Having grown tired of listening to the voices of those who cry out for full inclusion within the community of God's people, they seek a church where covenants are defined by hard-and-fast rules and where faithfulness is characterized by obedience to those rules.

Ironically, schism cannot accomplish the goal of ending conflict on issues related to LGBTQI inclusion, or, for that matter, any other issues. The misguided notion that two theologically pure denominations can be created from one conflicted denomination flounders on the reality that Christians are socially and theologically complex and that they are seldom if ever consistent. There will inevitably be LGBTQI persons and allies in any newly-formed 'traditionalist' denomination, just as there will be persons who resist full inclusion in any newly-formed 'progressive' denomination. Young people, whose theologies and denominational affiliations are initially determined by their parents, will change as they grow and discern more fully who they are and what they are becoming. What happens, for example, when young people discern that their emerging sexual orientations or gender identities are in conflict with the teachings of their Church, but find that potential mentors are unable or unwilling to speak for fear of denominational repercussions? The conflict will not end just because we choose to divide. It will simply take on a different form. And, that new form of conflict may well prove to be even more destructive to our lives and ministries.

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émergentes ou identités de genre sont en conflit avec les enseignements de leur Eglise, mais trouver que les mentors potentiels sont incapables ou refusent de parler par crainte de représailles confessionnelles? Le conflit ne se terminera pas seulement parce que nous choisissons de diviser. Il sera tout simplement prendre une forme différente. Et, cette nouvelle forme de conflit peut bien se révéler être encore plus destructeur pour nos vies et nos ministères.

Nous prétendre que notre alliance comme méthodistes unis n'est pas principalement enraciné dans notre obéissance à Le Livre de Discipline. Notre alliance en tant que chrétiens est enracinée dans nos vœux de baptême:

1. de renoncer aux forces spirituelles de la méchanceté, rejettent les puissances mauvaises de ce monde, et repentir de nos péchés;
2. d'accepter la liberté et la puissance que Dieu nous donne pour résister au mal, l'injustice et l'oppression sous quelque forme qu'ils se présentent; et
3. confessent Jésus-Christ comme notre Sauveur, mettre toute notre confiance en sa grâce, et promettent de lui servir de notre Seigneur, en union avec l'Eglise que le Christ a ouvert aux personnes de tous âges, les nations et les races.²

Notre alliance comme méthodistes unis est enracinée dans notre engagement à vivre ensemble comme chrétiens Wesleyen, guidés par nos Règles générales, instruits par notre compréhension Wesleyenne particulier de grâce, unis par notre détermination "de répandre la sainteté scripturaire dans tout le pays", et lié par notre engagements connexionnelles se soutiennent mutuellement, se soucient les uns des autres, prient les uns pour les autres, et se tiennent mutuellement responsables dans l'amour.

Même si nous reconnaissions l'importance de la discipline de fournir l'ordre et la structure de notre vie ensemble, nous reconnaissions également qu'il est un document imparfait qui subit une révision tous les quatre ans. Nous croyons que la Conférence générale fait généralement de son mieux pour discerner le mouvement de l'Esprit de Dieu pour un moment historique particulier, mais nous sommes aussi douloureusement conscients que la Conférence générale échoue parfois pour y arriver. Il y a eu des moments où la Conférence générale a choisi par vote majoritaire pour institutionaliser les injustices qui sont clairement contraires à la volonté de Dieu. La Juridiction centrale et l'interdiction de l'ordination des femmes ne sont que deux des exemples les plus flagrants. Ceux qui ont cherché à faire face à ce racisme ecclésiastique et le sexisme ont également été accusés d'avoir violé notre alliance Wesleyenne en raison de leur refus de se conformer aux règles inscrites dans la discipline. Nous soutenons, en revanche, que ceux qui s'y opposent ouvertement l'injustice, au point même de désobéissance à l'ordre et à la discipline de l'Eglise, sont ceux qui restent le plus vraiment dans l'alliance. Ils refusent de permettre à l'Eglise de tomber plus loin et plus loin dans la désobéissance à la volonté de Dieu. On ne parle pas de schisme, mais de tenir l'Eglise responsable devant les idéaux les plus élevés de l'Évangile.

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O que acontecerá, por exemplo, quando jovens venham a discernir que sua orientação sexual ou identidades de gênero estão em conflito com os ensinamentos da sua Igreja, e encontram mentores incapazes ou não dispostos a falar por medo de repercussões denominacionais? O conflito não vai acabar só porque nós escolhemos a separação. Ele simplesmente irá assumir uma forma diferente. E, essa nova forma de conflito pode muito bem vir a ser ainda mais destrutiva para nossas vidas e ministérios.

Gostaríamos de afirmar que a nossa aliança como Metodistas Unidos NÃO está enraizada principalmente em nossa obediência a O Livro de Disciplina. Nossa aliança como cristãos está enraizada em nossos votos batismais:

1. a renunciar as forças espirituais do mal, rejeitar os poderes do mal deste mundo, e nos arrepender de nossos pecados;
2. a aceitar a liberdade e o poder que Deus nos dá para resistir ao mal, injustiça e opressão de qualquer forma eles se apresentam; e
3. a confessar Jesus Cristo como nosso Salvador, colocar toda a nossa confiança na sua graça, e prometem para servi-lo como nosso Senhor, em união com a Igreja que Cristo abriu para pessoas de todas as idades, nações e raças.

Nossa aliança como Metodistas Unidos está enraizado no nosso compromisso de viver juntos como cristãos Wesleyanos, guiados por nossas Regras Gerais, instruídos por nossa particular compreensão Wesleyana da graça, unidos por nossa determinação "de espalhar a santidade bíblica por toda a terra", e vinculados por nossos compromissos de conexão para apoiar uns aos outros, cuidar uns dos outros, orar uns pelos outros, e responsabilizarmos uns aos outros em amor.

Embora reconheçamos a importância do Livro de Disciplina em fornecer ordem e estrutura para nossas vidas conjuntas, nós também reconhecemos que este é um documento imperfeito que sofre revisão a cada quatro anos. Acreditamos que a Conferência Geral normalmente faz o seu melhor para discernir o movimento do Espírito de Deus para um particular momento histórico, mas também estamos dolorosamente conscientes de que a Conferência Geral, por vezes, não consegue acertar. Houveram momentos em que a Conferência Geral escolheu por maioria de votos para institucionalizar injustiças que são claramente contrárias à vontade de Deus. A Jurisdição Central e a proibição da ordenação de mulheres são apenas dois dos exemplos mais flagrantes. Aquelas que tentaram enfrentar esse racismo e sexismo eclesiástico também foram acusados de violar a nossa aliança Wesleyana por não querem cumprir as regras idolatradas na Disciplina. Poderíamos até argumentar, por outro lado, que aqueles que se opõem abertamente a injustiça, mesmo ao ponto de desobediência à ordem e à disciplina da Igreja, são aqueles que mais verdadeiramente permanecem e preservam a nossa aliança. Eles se recusam a permitir que a Igreja falhe mais e mais em sua desobediência à vontade de Deus. Isto não é sobre separação, mas um ato de manter a Igreja responsável perante os mais altos ideais do evangelho.

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We would claim that our covenant as United Methodists is NOT primarily rooted in our obedience to The Book of Discipline. Our covenant as Christians is rooted in our baptismal vows:

1. to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sins;
2. to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves; and
3. to confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.[2]

Our covenant as United Methodists is rooted in our commitment to live together as Wesleyan Christians, guided by our General Rules, instructed by our particular Wesleyan understanding of grace, united by our determination "to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land," and bound by our connectional commitments to support each other, care for each other, pray for each other, and hold each other accountable in love.

While we recognize the importance of the Discipline to provide order and structure for our lives together, we also recognize that it is an imperfect document that undergoes revision every four years. We believe that the General Conference generally does its best to discern the movement of God's Spirit for a particular historical moment, but we are also painfully aware that the General Conference sometimes fails to get it right. There have been moments when the General Conference has chosen by majority vote to institutionalize injustices that are clearly contrary to the will of God. The Central Jurisdiction and the ban on women's ordination are but two of the most egregious examples. Those who sought to confront this ecclesiastical racism and sexism were also accused of violating our Wesleyan covenant because of their unwillingness to abide by the rules enshrined in the Discipline. We would argue, by contrast, that those who openly oppose injustice, even to the point of disobedience to the order and discipline of the Church, are those who most truly remain in covenant. They refuse to allow the Church to fall further and further into disobedience to the will of God. This is not about schism, but about holding the Church accountable to the highest ideals of the gospel.

Along these lines, we would claim that the narrow majority votes by which the General Conference has continued to maintain its exclusionary stance toward members of the LGBTQI community hardly represents discernment. It reveals that the Church is not of a common mind on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, but it hardly demonstrates, as some have claimed, that "Schism has already taken place in our connection."^[3] Rather, it points to the need for deeper and more fervent prayer and a much greater openness to the work of God's Spirit to perfect us in love. We have to do the hard work of struggling together and holding each other accountable in love. Only so do we stand a chance of rising out of our personal prejudices into the fullness of God's kingdom. As

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Le long de ces lignes, nous prétendre que les votes de la majorité étroite par laquelle la Conférence générale a continué de maintenir sa position d'exclusion envers les membres de la communauté LGBTQI représente à peine le discernement. Elle révèle que l'Église est pas d'un esprit commun sur les questions liées à l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre, mais il montre à peine, comme certains l'ont prétendu, que «Schisme a déjà eu lieu dans notre connexion »³. Au contraire, il souligne la nécessité pour de plus en plus fervente prière et une plus grande ouverture à l'œuvre de l'Esprit de Dieu pour nous perfectionner dans l'amour. Nous devons faire le travail difficile de lutter ensemble et tenir mutuellement responsables dans l'amour. Seulement ainsi nous situons-nous une chance de monter sur nos préjugés personnels dans la plénitude de Le Royaume de Dieu. Comme La Coalition Aimez Votre Voisin (LYNC), de discerner le mouvement de l'Esprit de Dieu est entravée par des règles et des déclarations qui visent à exclure les LGBTQI personnes de participer pleinement à l'Eglise, et nous nous engageons à poursuivre la lutte pour renverser ces règles. Nous ne le ferons pas, cependant, en se séparant de ceux d'un esprit différent, mais en continuant à se livrer à des moyens qui peuvent être conflictuelles et provocateur, mais sont néanmoins aimer. Nous avons appris la valeur des relations et sont de plus en plus conscients du fait que la fabrication et le maintien de relations ne sont pas périphérique, mais est au cœur de notre mission en tant que peuple de Dieu.

Appels à schisme sont plus que juste l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre. Ils sont enracinés dans de profondes divisions sur la théologie et la pratique chrétienne ... ce que nous croyons la nature de Dieu, le sens de la grâce, l'autorité de la Bible et la façon dont nous choisissons de vivre en tant que disciples de Jésus-Christ commis à la transformation du monde. Et pourtant, à son noyau le plus profond, le schisme est toujours sur le contrôle des ressources. Ceux qui appellent à schisme cherchent le pouvoir d'utiliser les ressources d'une manière qui sont compatibles avec leurs valeurs et leurs rêves. Et pourtant, le schisme se révélerait désastreux pour la capacité financière de l'Eglise et porterait gravement atteinte à notre mission globale. L'Eglise méthodiste unie est capable d'accomplir l'énorme travail qu'il fait pour le monde à travers UMCOR, le Conseil Général des Ministères Globaux et d'autres conseils et organismes, précisément parce qu'elle est unie. Ceci est une preuve de la puissance qui vient de travailler ensemble - même à travers nos différences - dans l'unité qui vient à nous comme un don de Dieu. Notre tâche est de donner chair à ce de Dieu et en faire une réalité.

1) LGBTQI se réfère à des lesbiennes, gays, bisexuels, transgenres, queer / questionnement et intersexé.

2) "Le baptismale Pacte I" dans The Hymnaire Méthodiste Unie (1999; Nashville: La United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), p. 36.

3) Rev. Maxie Dunham, cité dans "Déclaration à la presse: En ce qui concerne l'avenir de l'Église Méthodiste Unie," Bonnes Nouvelles Magazine (le 22 mai, 2014). <http://goodnewsmag.org/2014/05/regarding-the-future-of-the-united-methodist-church/>

Ao longo destas linhas, poderíamos afirmar que os estreitos votos majoritários através do qual a Conferência Geral tem continuado a manter a sua postura excludente em relação aos membros da comunidade LGBTQI dificilmente representa discernimento. Ele revela que a Igreja não é de um comum acordo em questões relacionadas à orientação sexual e identidade de gênero, mas dificilmente demonstra, como alguns já disseram, que "Separação já ocorre em nossa conexão."^[2] Em vez disso, aponta para a necessidade de um aprofundamento e maior fervor em oração, e uma maior abertura para a obra do Espírito de Deus para nos aperfeiçoar no amor. Temos que fazer o duro trabalho de lutarmos juntos e mantermos uns aos outros responsáveis em amor. Somente então, teremos uma chance de irmos além dos nossos preconceitos pessoais ao rumo da plenitude do reino de Deus. Como a Coligação Ame a Seu Próximo, afirmamos que nossa capacidade de discernir o movimento do Espírito de Deus é impedida por regras e declarações que são idealizadas para excluir pessoas LGBTQI de participação integral na Igreja, e nos comprometemos a continuar nossos esforços para derrubar esses regras. No entanto nós não vamos fazer isso através da separação entre pessoas de diferentes opiniões, mas continuando a empregar formas que podem ser instigadoras e de confronto, mas no entanto, em amor. Nós reconhecemos o valor de relacionamentos e estamos tornando cada vez mais conscientes do fato de que fazer e manter relacionamentos não é um ato periférico para, mas questão central em nossa missão como povo de Deus.

Pedidos de separação vão além de questões sobre orientação sexual e identidade de gênero. Estes pedidos estão enraizados em profundas divisões sobre teologia e prática cristã ... o que nós acreditamos sobre a natureza de Deus, o significado da graça, a autoridade da Bíblia e como decidimos viver como seguidores de Jesus Cristo comprometidos com a transformação do mundo. E, no entanto, em sua essência mais profunda, a separação é sempre sobre o controle dos recursos. Aquelas que pedem por separação buscam o poder de utilizar recursos de forma que sejam consistentes com os seus valores e os seus sonhos. E, no entanto, a separação se revelaria desastrosa para a capacidade financeira da Igreja e prejudicaria gravemente a nossa missão global. A Igreja Metodista Unida é capaz de realizar o tremendo trabalho que ela faz no mundo através de UMCOR, Junta Geral de Ministérios Globais e outras juntas e agências precisamente porque está unida. Esta é uma evidência do poder decorrente de nossos trabalhos conjuntos – mesmo com diferenças - na unidade que vem a nós como um dom de Deus. É nossa tarefa incorporar este presente de Deus e torná-lo uma realidade.

[1] LGBTQI referece a pessoas Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transgêneras/Transsexuais, Queer/Questionando, Intersexuais

[2] Rev. Maxie Dunham, citado no "Comunicado de Imprensa: Quanto o futuro da Igreja Metodista Unida," Good News Magazine (22 de Maio de 2014). <http://goodnewsmag.org/2014/05/regarding-the-future-of-the-united-methodist-church/>

the Love Your Neighbor Coalition, we assert that our ability to discern the movement of God's Spirit is impeded by rules and statements that are designed to exclude LGBTQI persons from full participation in the Church, and we commit ourselves to continue the struggle to overturn these rules. We will not do so, however, by separating from those of a different mind, but by continuing to engage in ways that may be confrontational and provocative, but are nevertheless loving. We have learned the value of relationships and are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that making and maintaining relationships is not peripheral to but is at the heart of our mission as God's people.

Calls for schism are about more than just sexual orientation and gender identity. They are rooted in deep divisions over Christian theology and practice... what we believe the nature of God, the meaning of grace, the authority of the Bible and how we choose to live as followers of Jesus Christ committed to the transformation of the world. And yet, at its deepest core, schism is always about the control of resources. Those who call for schism seek the power to utilize resources in ways that are consistent with their values and their dreams. And yet, schism would prove disastrous to the Church's financial capacity and would seriously undermine our global mission. The United Methodist Church is able to accomplish the tremendous work that it does for the world through UMCOR, the General Board of Global Ministries and other boards and agencies precisely because it is united. This is evidence of the power that comes from working together – even across our differences – in the unity that comes to us as a gift of God. It is our task to give flesh to this gift of God and make it a reality.

[1] LGBTQI refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Intersex.

[2] "The Baptismal Covenant I" in The United Methodist Hymnal (1999; Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), p. 36.

[3] Rev. Maxie Dunham, quoted in "Press Statement: Regarding the Future of The United Methodist Church," Good News Magazine (May 22, 2014). <http://goodnewsmag.org/2014/05/regarding-the-future-of-the-united-methodist-church/>



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