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THE LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR COALITION

THURSDAY MAY 19, 2016

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR NEWS



On Wednesday morning, volunteers held a silent vigil to represent the clergy that have been defrocked for their position on LGBTQI inclusion. Photos by Dave Jerde.

On the Bishops' Plan

by Julia Frisbie, Editor-in-Chief

Today, the Council of Bishops proposed a plan designed to keep the church from splintering over its discriminatory stance on LGBTQI rights. This plan would:

- Create a diverse Commission to research and revise the Book of Discipline's language about LGBTQI people.
- Call for a special session of General Conference in 2018 or 2019 to address the Commission's work.
- Limit, but not eliminate, complaints brought against clergy on the grounds of their sexual orientation or stance on gay marriage between now and the called General Conference.
- Defer votes on all human sexuality petitions coming before the 2016 General Conference.

We're grateful to the Council of Bishops for making a recommendation to the body. While many of us believe that this should have happened decades ago, we know that it took guts to do it yesterday. "Business-as-usual" isn't working. We're glad for an alternative. And we are especially grateful for the recommendation to defer voting on discriminatory legislation.

Our two major concerns are:

1. Who will be appointed to this Commission? In a press conference, Bishop Ough stated that, "We're gonna need to have all the voices at the table, or folks will not trust or engage in anything that might emerge." But he was not able to explicitly state that there would be LGBTQI people on the Commission. LYNC asserts that there will need to be multiple LGBTQI voices-- not just a token representative-- on this Commission in order for its work to be relevant.
2. On Tuesday, Bishop Ough called for safe space for dialogue. Unless complaints, trials, and penalties stop, there is no safe space for the queer leaders whose voices we will need to hear in order to stop the harm in our Book of Discipline and our church culture. We call for a complete moratorium on disciplinary actions against LGBTQI people and any clergy who marry them.

Yesterday, the General Conference passed this plan by a narrow margin. We'd be naïve not to expect additional pushback today. No matter what happens, we'll still be standing up for the people on the margins. If discriminatory petitions are brought

to the floor, we will respond in an effort to stop more harm. But for now, we are cautiously optimistic about this plan, which would allow for unity without uniformity. We are holding our Bishops and our Church in prayer.

Our primary concern is for our LGBTQI brothers, sisters, and siblings, who have been on an emotional roller coaster over the past two days as this plan has gone through many cycles of death and resurrection. It directly affects their livelihoods and their ability to belong in a family of faith. Anyone who needs pastoral care should call Affirmation's hotline, available 24 hours: 612-425-5215

The Sand Creek Massacre

by Rev. Bea Fraser-Soots



Photos by Dave Jerde.

Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky of the Mountain Sky Area led a service of remembrance and United Methodist repentance for our part in the Sand Creek Massacre of two Native American villages.

Historian Gary L. Roberts, author of a book about the story of the Sand Creek Massacre, recounted the attack on the Arapahoe and Cheyenne villages, during which many people were slaughtered. In November 1894, three devout Methodists, Governor Evans of Colorado, Bishop Simpson, and layperson John M. Chivington, conspired to execute this attack on the villages where the Native Americans had been promised safety.

Many visitors who are descendants of the massacred communities were present. They performed and dedicated a new song during this event. This group reached out with friendship to the denomination that had been complicit in the slaughter of many of his ancestors. The General Conference body responded with a standing ovation. Bishops then presented these honored guests with gifts.

Monica Corsaro, delegate from the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference, commented on the power of the Sand Creek presentation. She had a deep conversation with a Congo delegate as they reflected together on how colonialism has impacted America and Africa. Unfortunately, the African delegate had experienced little willingness from Europeans to discuss the atrocities experienced on that continent. Monica expressed her gratitude for Chebon Kernell's powerful testimony told at the Jupiter Tabernacle Tuesday night.

In closing, Willie Walks-Along spoke movingly about the need to not only remember the massacre and its victims, but also move on toward understanding that, "We are all human beings who worship the same God" and that all must be treated with human dignity.



Photos by Ben Roe.

Native Peoples Stand With Palestinians

by Cynthia Kent, Native American International Caucus

Today we looked at the sins of colonialism and the effects it had on the past and present lives of Native Peoples.

The taking of land for the use by others is called "Manifest Destiny." If you look at a map of the U.S. and a map of Palestine, both have been slowly inhabited by another group of people, mostly by force.

The Native Peoples were placed on reservations in their own lands and this is also happening to Palestinians. They are prisoners in their own land.



We as Native Peoples stand in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We understand their struggle to keep their land and identity. We must work to keep them safe and help them keep their land so that they can again be a whole community with homes, jobs, and educational opportunities for future generations.

Let us as a church not stand back and watch this happen to the Palestinians as in our past when we stood back when this was happening to Native Peoples.

Letting Go of Us and Them

por Lynn Swedberg

Dans son mouvant discours épiscopal le mercredi, Monseigneur Palmer a appelé tous à arrêter de se tourner les uns vers les autres, voyant dans l'autre l'image de Dieu. Aurions-nous peut-être sur tous les côtés de divers problèmes bien de revenir à nos racines d'école du dimanche et chanter « Je suis l'église, tu es l'église, nous sommes l'église ensemble. » Nous pourrions réciter et vivre l'impératif "tu aimeras ton prochain comme toi-même ».

L'un des bons endroits pour commencer à faire ceci c'est avec nos principes sociaux bien-aimés. Bien que le contenu nous incite à élargir notre cercle, le contenu de plusieurs des principes ne le fait pas. Comme Ces principes seront réécrites dans les années qui viennent, nous exhortons les auteurs de lâcher tous les langages qui fait l'« autre » des groupes qui sont actuellement sur les marges, et qui intègre la réalité que nous sommes tous le Corps du Christ.

Il n'y a pas « eux » et « ils » dans l'Église, et l'Église appartient à aucun groupe de personnes qui a le pouvoir de donner ou de refuser l'autorisation à d'autres à se joindre à eux. Pourtant, nos principes font apparaître que certains groupes sont dans le centre de langue tandis que d'autres ne sont pas. Par exemple, la section dans la Communauté Sociale qui couvre les droits des personnes handicapées stipule : "Nous reconnaissons et affirmons la pleine humanité et de la personne de tous les individus souffrant de troubles mentaux, physiques, développementaux, neurologique, et les conditions psychologiques ou handicapées en tant que membres à part entière de la famille de Dieu. Nous affirmons également leur place dans l'église et la société ".

Comme il est écrit, alors que bien intentionnée, cette déclaration est paternaliste et découle d'une vision sociale plus tôt des personnes handicapées en tant que bénéficiaires de programmes de bienfaisance ou médicales pour les aider et les corriger. Ce qui manque c'est le langage appelant à la justice, le leadership par les personnes handicapées, égalité des opportunités, et le changement sociétal. Aussi ne pas présent dans ces descriptions est les mots pour encourager les congrégations et les organismes à mener des ministères avec les personnes handicapées d'une manière inclusive plutôt que "le mise-a-apert" manière. La ségrégation des ministères des handicapés continue encore à se répandre dans certaines parties de l'église, généralement en raison d'une croyance que les personnes handicapées sont plus confortables avec des pairs. Parfois, l'église n'essayer pas d'intégrer les enfants mais devrait avoir d'autres options lorsque les besoins des enfants handicapés ne peuvent être satisfaites dans les programmes typiques. Peut-être la structure de la classe doit être modifiée afin que le développement de la foi de tous se produise dans une communauté authentique, où tous sont engagés dans la formation de disciples actifs et l'établissement de relations, plutôt que le modèle dominant où l'école du dimanche ressemble beaucoup à l'éducation scolaire et les enfants devraient rester assis et absorber l'information.

Nous pouvons apprendre à utiliser des expressions telles qu'enfant de Dieu, frères et sœurs, membres de la communauté de foi. Par exemple, le Guide du Leader de la Mission des Femmes Methodist Unie Etude sur le Handicap et l'Eglise, utilise intentionnellement des expressions telles que « ceux d'entre nous qui vivent avec une perte auditive » ou « membres avec et sans handicap. » Pouvons-nous apprendre à cesser " d' autreliser " les personnes différentes de nous-mêmes, et au lieu de se réjouir de notre diversité et les dons que nous tous apportent à la table

by Lynn Swedberg

In his stirring Episcopal Address on Wednesday, Bishop Palmer called for us to stop turning on each other and turn to each other, seeing in each other the image of God. Perhaps we on all sides of various issues would do well to return to our Sunday School roots and sing "I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together." We could recite and live out the imperative "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

One place to start doing this is with our beloved Social Principles. While the content inspires us to expand our circle, the wording of many of the principles does not do so. As the principles are rewritten in the coming years, we urge the authors to let go of all the language that makes the "other" of groups who are currently on the margins, and instead incorporates the reality that all of us are the Body of Christ.

There is no "them" and "they" in the Church, and the Church belongs to no one group of people who has the power to give or withhold permission for others to join. Yet our principles make it apparent that some groups are in the speaking center while others are not. For example, the section in The Social Community which covers the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states: "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."

As written, while well-intended, this statement is paternalistic and stems from an earlier social view of persons with disabilities as recipients of charitable or medical programs to aid and fix them. What is missing is language calling for justice, leadership by persons with disabilities, equal opportunities, and societal change. Also not present in these descriptions is wording to encourage congregations and agencies to carry out ministries with people with disabilities in an inclusive rather than set-apart manner. Segregated disability ministries are still prevalent in parts of the church, usually because of a belief that persons with disabilities are more comfortable with peers. Sometimes the church does try to mainstream children but then should have other options when the needs of children with disabilities cannot be met in typical programs. Perhaps the structure of the class needs to be changed so that faith development of all occurs in genuine community, where all are engaged in active discipleship training and relationship building, rather than the dominant model where Sunday School looks a lot like public education and children are expected to sit still and absorb information.

We can learn to use phrases such as child of God, sisters and brothers, members of the community of faith, siblings, and kin. For instance, the Leader's Guide for the United Methodist Women Mission study on Disability and the Church, intentionally uses phrases such as "those of us who live with hearing loss" or "members with and without disabilities." May we learn to stop "othering" persons different from ourselves, and instead rejoice in our diversity and the gifts that all of us bring to the table!



Hands Upon the Threshold

by Rev. Dr. Val Rosenquist

TRIGGER WARNING:

This article includes a Bible story about rape and violence.

“You need to be punished! You should be disrobed!” “You should be ashamed! I hope they strip you of your robes!”

The messages seethe with anger and judgment, unified in their call for authoritative response.

I am a United Methodist pastor. When I presided over the wedding of two men on April 23rd 2016, in the sanctuary of Charlotte First United Methodist Church, I anticipated anger, pushback, and the filing of complaints by other United Methodists, living out their understanding of faithfulness. I did not expect them to express their disagreement in the language and imagery of sexual violence.

THE BIBLE AND RAPE

It should come as no surprise, though. We are people steeped in the Word of God, and

rape is normative in our scriptures. The Torah calls for the raping of the women as the usual conduct of war. The prophets feature God as rapist, justified in punishing the disobedient bride, Israel. Commands for disrobing, for displaying nakedness and the resultant shame, accompany the declaration of God's intended ravishment:

“... remove your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be seen. I will take vengeance...” Isaiah 47: 2-3 NRSV

“...it is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up, and you are violated.” Jeremiah 13:22 NRSV

“I myself will lift up your skirts over your face, and your shame will be seen.” Jeremiah 13:26 NRSV

Such imagery would have shocked our ancestors in the faith not because of the sexual violence itself, but because the violence was directed at men. God was treating them like women! Women had no rights, no personhood. Powerless, they depended on the protection of the men who owned them. Too many texts detail the violence perpetrated against them. Perhaps the saddest is the rape of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19.

The nameless concubine, her master, and his servant needed to seek shelter for the night in Gibeah, in the territory of Benjamin. An old man extended his hospitality, bringing them into his household and offering dinner. That hospitality only applies to the males, though. Soon men of the town, fearing the stranger and wanting to exert their power, demand that the householder turn out the Levite, that they might gang rape him. The householder recoils at the thought: he has promised hospitality to this stranger! He offers instead his own virgin daughter and the concubine: “Ravish them and do whatever you want to

them,” he invites.

To save himself, the master shoves his concubine out the door. As Phyllis Trible notes in *Texts of Terror*, “Symbolically, the door or doorway marks the boundary between hospitality and hostility,” (73). Outside, says the biblical text, “they wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go,” (verse 25). The woman fell down at the door of the man's house.

The text continues, “In the morning her master got up, opened the doors of the house, and when he went out to go on his way, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold.” She is unresponsive to his command to get up, so he puts her on a donkey and returns to his home, and does the unthinkable: he slays her, and dismembers her, sending pieces of her body throughout Israel.

“Of all the characters in scripture, she is the least,” summarizes Trible. “Appearing at the beginning and close of a story that rapes her, she is alone in a world of men. Neither the other characters nor the narrator recognizes her humanity.” She concludes: “Captured, betrayed, raped, tortured, murdered, dismembered, and scattered—this woman is the most sinned against,” (80-81).

THE USE AND MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE AND INTERPRETATION: Dis-Membering the Body

We continue to sin against this woman, and all victims of sexual violence in scripture, when we consciously or unconsciously use their stories to justify the subjugation, marginalization, exclusion, and punishment of others. Our practices influence our wider community to engage in physical and sexual violence against those perceived as “the other.”

Such a way of sinning is not new to us.

Civil rights activist and United Methodist minister Gil Caldwell recently condemned the Bible-based mistreatment of Blacks practiced by Methodist Churches. (Where can we find *On A Simple Plan*?) He is calling on United Methodists at General Conference to “Acknowledge, Admit and Confess these words: ‘We have been wrong in our Biblical interpretations that justified our mistreatment of Blacks.’” He cites the misinterpretation of the “curse of Ham” that resulted in the justification of slavery and segregation. He notes a similar development around our treatment of those who are LGBTQ: “During those days [segregation] I heard/read about ‘The authority of Scripture,’ ‘Apostolic Faith,’ ‘Christian Truth,’ ‘Wesleyan Heritage,’ as justification for the racial segregation we who were Black experienced within the Methodist Church. Today I hear/read these same phrases linked to our United Methodist language and legislation about ‘The practice of homosexuality.’”

He continues: “Our inability as United Methodists to acknowledge and admit that ‘We were wrong in using the Bible to support our bias against Blacks,’ makes possible today's use of the Bible to support our bias against same gender loving couples and the clergy who marry them.”

Indeed, many in positions of power within the church have used today's text, Judges 19, to justify their bias against gay men. By misinterpreting the



Photo by UMNS.

text as a condemnation of homosexuality rather than a condemnation of gang rape and a mandate to extend hospitality to the stranger, the church has given legitimization to the perpetration of violence against gay men—many of whom are in fact gang raped and murdered as “punishment” for their alleged sin. Gay men are put in their place as inferior/sinful women, and allotted the same treatment. LGBTQ persons of color are the most endangered.

If we as United Methodists enter into this text of Judges 19, we find ourselves condemned. We are “the man” that the prophet Nathan might rightly point to. We have ostensibly opened our doors to all who would come in, but in reality, we do not convey hospitality to all. Our LGBTQ neighbors are the “other” we fear, and so we legislate against them. Those pastors who would object to this oppression—those who come out as LGBTQ, those who advocate for same sex weddings—those pastors all too frequently are shoved out the door, into the hostility of a vocal mob calling for our shaming, our disrobing, our vindictive punishment.

We United Methodists are guilty of dis-membering the Body.

REDEEMING THE TEXT: Can We Re-Member the Body?

Our LGBTQ siblings now crowd our doorways. Their hands are on our thresholds. The United Methodist Church has a choice to make at General Conference. We can continue our current practice of allowing only some of the benefits of membership, but refusing to offer true hospitality. We can continue to deny their full personhood, treating them as less than those professing to be heterosexual. Or we can remember who we are: children of a loving God, created in God's image and called good. We can claim full membership in the Body of Christ for all of God's children. We can, in fact, re-member this Body—take the scattered and broken parts and bring them back together and begin the healing process. We can be agents and bearers of shalom.

It's time to stop the violence.

The Time is NOW to Divest from Fossil Fuels

by Mike Koob

Climate change is real, it is caused by human activity, and it will have an increasingly and negative impact on all life, including human life.

God created and called creation very good. All of Creation derives its high value primarily because of our understanding of this gift we have from God the Creator.

Our climate and atmosphere have been very stable since before the emergence of human civilization about 10,000 years ago. The ocean levels and polar ice caps haven't changed much in this time. But with the advent of the industrial revolution, when people started burning fossil fuels in earnest, the situation changed.

Extracting, transporting and burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) puts greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. Cumulative addition of these gasses is like putting another blanket on when the temperature is already just about right.

Among the many disruptions caused by climate change is melting ice and rising sea levels. The world's coastal cities and low lying countries (Baltimore to Bangladesh) would flood. With over seven billion people on the planet and hundreds of millions flooded out, population migration would be highly problematic. Mass migrations would dwarf the current Syria tragedy.

The gospel injunction is to love our neighbor, not drown them, not sicken them, not make it impossible for them to grow their crops, but to love them.

I honor the work of the coal miners, geologists, oil workers and others in giving us the electrical and mechanical power that has benefited humans for these past few centuries, but now it is clear that we cannot release all of the carbon still in the ground. If we did, it would be catastrophic to all living things.

We did not know before what we know now. What we have no excuse for ignoring now, however, is at odds with the fossil fuel company's core business plan: business as usual. They are not equipped or motivated to build the technology needed for sustainable energy. In fact, the leaders of these companies through proxies continue to spread doubt about what their own

scientists know to be true. These business people are profit savvy. They know that every day they can delay the rapid transition to renewable energy is another big payday for them. They are doing great harm to all of us.

Workers in these fossil industries, who through no fault of their own are being displaced, need to be made whole. Job training in the new renewable energy industries ought to be provided and unemployment benefits extended. There are credible plans and visions of transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy for all purposes by 2050. A tremendous number of operations and construction jobs will be created in the new industries. (Google "Solutions Project 50 states/50 plans.")

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has considered Fossil Fuel Divestment for the last two years and today or tomorrow the General Conference will consider divestment. Resolutions have been brought forward by 11 annual conferences and the General Board of Global Ministries. United Methodist believe and practice socially responsible investing (SRI). We align our investments with our values. We have provisions in our Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions that prohibit investment in, among others, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, gambling and nuclear armaments. It's wrong to profit (or collect dividends) from companies in these activities.

It is also wrong to profit from wrecking the planet. Sometimes shareholder advocacy is a SRI response and sometimes divestment is a SRI response. If the core business of the company we consider investing in is not in alignment with our values then the SRI response is divestment.

Fossil fuel divestment has sprung up as a grassroots movement in Annual Conferences around the country. Although the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) has taken steps to divest from some coal companies, they have argued against the resolutions coming forward.

But here's the truth: the GBOPHB's advocacy has been mild, and the climate crisis is extreme. Our response needs to be proportional to the reality that we face. The time is NOW to divest from fossil fuels.

Mike Koob is a Lay Member of Annual Conference from Middletown UMC, and Chair of the Environment Justice Group. This piece was originally published on fossilfreeumc.org/blog



Joseph Russ blows the Shofar at the end of the Jericho March. Photo by Erica West.

Trouver la paix au milieu de la tempête

por Rev. Dr. Derrick Spiva

S'étant réveillé, il menaça le vent, et dit à la mer : Silence ! tais-toi ! Et le vent cessa, et il y eut un grand calme. (Marc 4:39).

Après une journée de rafting rivière avec un grand groupe de jeunes et collègues pasteurs de jeunes, mes collègues plonger dans les jeux me jeta dans Kings River en Californie. Je fus immédiatement pris par un puissant courant, et mes bonnes compétences en natation étaient rendues nulles et inutiles. La rivière en furie me balayé. J'étais convaincu que c'était fini pour moi. Mes mains instinctivement ont attrapé la main de quelqu'un et je tenu fort pour la chère vie. J'ai vécu une assurance surnaturelle que l'espoir ne m'avait pas échappé, mais me tenais en place. Il était mon refuge paisible et à la protection d'une force écrasante puissant, et il a produit un calme particulier ... ce fleuve qui donne la vie n'a pas été bon ou mauvais ; il était juste.

Quand je m'étais levé de l'eau et que je voyais que mes collègues et les campeurs avaient craint au pire. J'ai retenu mon souffle, je demandai quel était le bras qui m'a sauvé de la noyade. Silence de mort, personne ne pouvait pas parler pendant plusieurs secondes. Puis une âme courageuse répondit : « Personne. » Bien qu'ils aient tenté à plusieurs reprises de monter une opération de sauvetage, le courant était trop fort pour l'un d'eux puisse même s'approcher près de moi.

De nombreuses années se sont écoulées depuis cette expérience. Par cette réflexion les l'Esprit Saint m'a appris que "la paix qui dépasse la compréhension" est essentiel aux intempéries le plus puissantes des tempêtes, peu importe le combat ou le défi que nous pouvons faire face.

Depuis quelque temps, j'étais un père célibataire élevant 4 enfants. Croyez-moi quand je dis qu'il y avait plusieurs années de tornades, ouragans, typhons, orages, tsunamis et les jours déprimants tout simplement pluvieux, surtout pendant les années d'adolescence. Cela m'a obligé à aiguiser mes compétences de trouver la paix. Je sais que cela semble différent pour chacun de nous. Pour certains, la paix vient avec la méditation de l'Écriture, la lecture d'un livre inspirant, ou profiter de la nature. D'autres peuvent trouver la paix dans l'exercice, le vélo et de détente avec de bons amis. Beaucoup aiment la musique, œuvres d'art ou d'un journal. Passer du temps avec un animal de compagnie préféré peut être très réconfortant. Pour moi, la méditation tranquille, le yoga et une bonne évacuation de film m'aident à déduire perspective. Quelle que soit votre passion, adonner vous à trouver la paix et la tenir ferme comme je tenais ferme à se "bras sauveur de vie" qui m'a empêché de se noyer dans la rivière.

Qui est notre consolation dans les moments difficiles ? C'est une question importante que nous contemplons pensivement l'avenir de notre Communauté de la foi Methodiste-Unie. Jésus a dit : "Très sincèrement, je vous le dis, celui qui croit en moi fera les œuvres que je l'ai fait, et ils vont faire encore de plus grandes choses que celles-ci." (Jean 14 :12).

Encontre Paz No Meio Da Tempestade

por Rev. Dr. Derrick Spiva

E Jesus despertando, repreendeu o vento, e disse ao mar: Cala-te, aquieta-te. E o vento se aquietou, e houve grande bonança. (Marcos 4:39)

Há muitos anos atrás, quando servia como ministro da juventude em uma época que grupos de jovens eram bem financiados, eu e vários pastores de jovens locais promovemos um acampamento de verão ao longo do rio Reis, no sul da Califórnia para mais de cem jovens. Após um dia de canoagem no rio turbulento meus colegas me jogaram no rio durante uma brincadeira. Eu fui imediatamente levado por uma corrente poderosa quando todas as minhas grandes habilidades de natação se tornaram nulas e sem efeito. O rio feroz me varreu. Eu estava completamente convencido de que o fim havia chegado. Minhas mãos instintivamente agarraram o braço de alguém, e eu segurei bem apertado pensando na minha preciosa vida. Esta foi uma garantia surreal que a esperança não tinha desaparecido, mas me manteve no lugar enquanto produzia uma calma peculiar. Foi o meu abrigo e proteção de paz contra uma força esmagadoramente poderosa. Esse rio de vida não foi ruim e nem bom, simplesmente foi...

Depois do meu eventual resgate, eu sei da água para ver meus "apavorados" colegas e campistas que temiam o pior. Recuperando o fôlego, perguntei de quem era o braço que me impediu de ser levado pela correnteza. Silêncio mortal ... Ninguém conseguia falar nem por alguns segundos. De repente, uma alma corajosa respondeu: "Ninguém". Embora eles tinham tentado repetidamente, a corrente era muito forte para que qualquer um deles pudessem chegar perto para me resgatar.

Muitos anos se passaram depois desta experiência. A reflexão através do Espírito Santo me ensinou que a "paz que ultrapassa todo o entendimento" é essencial para resistir à poderosa tempestade, não importa o tamanho da luta ou desafio que podemos enfrentar.

Por algum tempo eu fui um pai solteiro criando 4 crianças. Acredite em mim quando eu digo que foram vários anos de tornados, furacões, tufões, tempestades, tsunamis e dias chuvosos simplesmente deprimentes, especialmente durante os anos de suas adolescência. Isso me obrigou a aperfeiçoar minhas habilidades para encontrar a paz. Eu compreendi que somos todos diferentes. Para alguns é meditação sobre as escrituras, leitura de um livro inspirador, ou apreciando a natureza. Outros podem encontrar a paz em exercícios físicos, andando de bicicleta e relaxando com bons amigos. Muitos gostam de música, arte, ou escrever um diário. Passar tempo com seu animal de estimação favorito pode ser muito confortante. Para mim, foi um pouco de meditação, yoga e um bom filme para agrupar perspectivas. Qualquer que seja sua paixão, se comprometa a encontrar a paz e se segure nela, assim como eu me segurei nos "braços da vida" que me salvaram do afogamento naquele rio. Quem é o nosso conforto em tempos de aflição? Assim como nós cuidadosamente contemplamos o futuro da nossa Comunidade Metodista Unida de fé. Em verdade, em verdade vos digo: Aquele que crê em mim (Jesus), esse também fará as obras que eu faço, e as fará maiores do que estas (João 14:12).

Find Peace In the Midst of the Storm

by Rev. Dr. Derrick Spiva

Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (Mark 4:39).

After a day of wild river rafting with a big group of youth and fellow youth pastors, my colleagues playfully tossed me in California's Kings River. I was immediately caught by a powerful undercurrent, my good swimming skills rendered null and void. The raging river swept me away. I was convinced the end had come. My hands instinctively grabbed hold of someone's arm and I held tight for dear life. I experienced a surreal assurance that hope had not escaped but held me in place. It was my peaceful shelter and protection from an overwhelmingly powerful force, and it produced a peculiar calm... this life-giving river wasn't good or bad; it just was.

When I arose from the water I saw my sheet-white colleagues and campers had feared the worst. Catching my breath, I asked whose arm kept me from drowning. Dead silence... None could even speak for several seconds. Then a brave soul replied, "No one." Though they had tried repeatedly to mount a rescue, the current was too strong for any of them to even get close to me.

Many years have passed since this experience. Reflection through the Holy Spirit has taught me "peace that surpasses understanding" is essential to weathering the most powerful of storms no matter what struggle or challenge we may face.

For some time I was a Single dad raising 4 kids. Believe me when I say there were several years of tornadoes, hurricanes, typhoons, thunderstorms, tsunamis and just plain rainy depressing days, especially during the adolescent years. This required me to sharpen my peace-finding skills. I realize this looks different for each of us. For some, peace comes with meditating on scripture, reading an inspiring book, or enjoying nature. Others may find peace in exercise, bike riding and relaxing with good friends. Many enjoy music, artwork or journaling. Spending time with a favorite pet can be very comforting. For me, quiet meditation, yoga and a good film escape help me gather perspective. Whatever your passion, commit to finding that peace and hold on as I held on to the life saving "arm" that kept me from drowning in the river.

Who is our comfort in times of trouble? It is an important question as we thoughtfully contemplate the future of our United Methodist Community of faith. Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these." (John 14:12).



Cher Eveque Silencieux:

Pendant des années, vous avez dit à vos clergés de venir en conversation avec vous pour faire les mariages entre les gens de même sexe dans nos églises et dans notre ministère. Vous nous avez demandé de rester dans la lettre de la loi de l'église afin que vous puissiez nous soutenir. Vous nous avez rappelés que les méthodistes-unis ne sont pas d'accord. Vous avez prétendu être une voix pour l'unité.

Votre ministère a été très stratégique dans votre propre positionnement et celui de votre cabinet pour éviter des procès dans votre Région Episcopale. En 1992, je serais heureux qu'un évêque travaillerait avec moi pour atteindre les autres en toute sécurité dans le ministère. Cependant, en 2016 notre église a besoin d'évêques qui fidelement accueillent tout le monde et qui appellent prophétiquement notre église à changer. Notre monde a besoin de nous conduire à l'inclusion de tous.

Je crois que la position de notre église aujourd'hui perpétue et renforce le sectarisme envers les lesbiennes, gays, bisexuels, transgenres, queers et intersexués membres de nos églises et nos communautés. Nos politiques soutiennent ceux qui refusent d'ouvrir les portes de l'église ou de la société à toute personne. Quand les bonnes gens sont silencieuses, l'exclusion et la violence seront incontestés.

Votre silence donne libre cours à la visible violence par des gens qui croient qu'ils sont moralement justes comme ils matraquent et les gays de viol et les lesbiennes. Beaucoup de gens ont été condamnés. Beaucoup de jeunes se sont suicidés. Beaucoup des meilleurs et les plus brillants membres ont quitté notre église. Lorsque vous êtes silencieux, les actions des évêques qui soutiennent le sectarisme et la condamnation parlent pour notre église. Je refuse de me taire quand un évêque pousse ses collègues à quitter la dénomination.

Mon ministère inclus faire plusieurs mariages de gens de même genre, car ils ont été légal dans mon état et la bénédiction des relations avant l'option de mariage était légal. Les Églises où je sers ont hébergé des services. Je prévois de vivre publiquement et joyeusement mon appel au ministère pour toutes les personnes. Je choisis d'être obéissant à mon appel à la Parole, sacrement, et de l'ordre dans notre monde.

Un jour, nous allons travailler ensemble pour mener joyeusement l'église dans une nouvelle saison de la suite de l'appel de Dieu à accueillir et servir toutes les personnes. Ce jour-là, je serai fier de dire, celui-ci est mon évêque.

Votre collègue clergé

Caro Bispo Omisso,

Por anos você tem dito ao vosso clero para vir e conversar com você sobre fazer casamentos de pessoas do mesmo sexo em nossas igrejas e em nosso ministério. Você nos disse para nos mantermos dentro das leis da igreja, para que você possa nos apoiar. Você tem nos lembrado que Metodistas Unidos não concordam. Você afirmou ser uma voz para união.

Seu ministério tem sido muito estratégico, se posicionar e posicionar seu gabinete para evitar julgamentos em sua Área Episcopal. Em 1992, eu teria ficado satisfeito com o bispo que estava trabalhando comigo para chegar com segurança ao ministério. No entanto, em 2016 a nossa igreja precisa de bispos para receber fielmente todas as pessoas e profeticamente chamar a nossa igreja para mudanças. Nosso mundo precisa de nós para liderar uma inclusão audaciosa.

Eu acredito que a posição atual da nossa igreja, perpetua e capacita e a intolerância contra lésbicas, gays, bissexuais, transgêneros, intersexuais, ou pessoas que não seguem o padrão da heterossexualidade, sejam membros de nossas igrejas ou das comunidades.

Nossas políticas apoiam aqueles que se recusam a abrir as portas da igreja ou da sociedade para todas as pessoas. Quando as pessoas boas são omissas, a exclusão e a violência ficam impunes.

Seu silêncio dá livre curso à violência causada por pessoas que acreditam que são moralmente justos para bater ou estuprar e gays e lésbicas. Muitas pessoas foram condenadas. Vários jovens cometeram suicídio. Muitos dos melhores e mais brilhantes deixaram a nossa igreja. Quando você está em silêncio, as ações dos bispos que apoiam a intolerância e condenação falam pela a nossa igreja. Me recuso a ficar em silêncio quando um bispo incentiva colegas a deixarem a denominação.

Meu ministério incluiu realizar vários casamentos de pessoas do mesmo sexo desde que foi legalizado no Estado em que vivo e a bênção aos relacionamentos antes da opção de casamento era legal.

Igrejas em que eu servi tiveram serviços religiosos. Eu pretendo publicamente e alegremente viver o meu chamado para o ministério que inclui todas as pessoas. Eu escolho ser obediente a minha vocação, para chamar o Mundo, para o Sacramento, e Ordem para o nosso mundo.

Um dia vamos trabalhar juntos para levar alegria para a igreja, de um jeito novo de seguir ao chamado de Deus, para acolher e servir a todas as pessoas. Neste dia, eu terei orgulho de dizer que este é o meu bispo

Seu colega de clero.

Dear Silent Bishop:

For years you have told your clergy to come and converse with you about doing same gender weddings in our churches and in our ministry. You have told us to stay within the letter of the church law so that you can support us. You have reminded us that United Methodists do not agree. You have claimed to be a voice for unity.

Your ministry has been very strategic in positioning yourself and your cabinet to prevent trials in your Episcopal Area. In 1992, I would have been pleased with a bishop who was working with me to safely reach out in ministry. However, in 2016 our church needs bishops to faithfully welcome all people and prophetically call our church to change. Our world needs us to lead with bold inclusion.

I believe our church's position now perpetuates and empowers bigotry toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex members of our churches and communities. Our policies support those who refuse to open the doors of the church or society to all people. When good people are silent, exclusion and violence go unchallenged.

Your silence gives free rein to vigilante violence by people who believe they are morally righteous as they bludgeon and rape gays and lesbians. Too many people have been condemned. Too many youth have committed suicide. Too many of the best and brightest have left our church. When you are silent, the actions of bishops who support bigotry and condemnation speak for our church. I refuse to be silent when a Bishop pushes colleagues to leave the denomination.

My ministry has included doing multiple same gender weddings since they have been legal in my state and the blessing of relationships before the wedding option was legal. Churches where I have served have hosted services. I plan to publicly and joyfully live out my call to ministry for all people. I choose to be obedient to my Calling to Word, Sacrament, and Order to our world.

One day we will work together to joyfully lead the church into a new season of following God's call to welcome and serve all people. On that day, I will be proud to say, this is my bishop.

Your clergy colleague



Love Prevails

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



Images from Tuesday's witness where hundreds of LGBTQ United Methodists & their allies tied their hands with rainbow stoles & sang "Bless Be The Tie That Binds" as delegates gathered & during their session.
#DisruptGC #UMCGC



Council of Bishops president Bruce Ough issues a not-unanimous statement on behalf of the Council. They recommend GC2016 defer all votes on human sexuality & create a commission to revise the entire current policies of the UMC related to human sexuality. The special commission would do their work to be submitted to specially called GC in 2018 or 2019. Through that time the Book of Discipline would be upheld while working to avoid further complaints, punishments and harm. Love Prevails is dubious about all commissions as they have been proposed before. Yet be clear that this statement is the result of our movement's pressure on the institutional church to create change.
#DisruptGC #UMCGC



Images from Wednesday's courageous and beautiful Queer Clergy Witness on the floor of General Conference. #DisruptGC #UMCGC



Queer clergy are here and claim their space! #UMCGC #DisruptGC



No Matter What Lies Ahead, We Remain Committed

by Rev. Dr. Pamela Lighstey and Matt Berryman

Wow. What just happened? We're sure some of you are asking that regarding yesterday's decisions. As many of you know, the Bishops submitted a proposal entitled **"An Offering for a Way Forward."** In that proposal they recommended that the General Conference immediately defer all votes related to "human sexuality" legislation for this GC.

This is a win because it prohibits any legislative action that would further harm LGBTQ people and threaten the cause of justice. The term "human sexuality" is the language used in the proposal. It is not the language any of us would have chosen. Nonetheless, we understand what the Bishops are addressing.

Within that proposal, the Bishops called for creation of a special commission to handle the subject of human sexuality. Questions have been asked about the make-up and people are concerned about what that commission will look like. Will there be an imbalance of power? Bishop Ough confirmed at a press conference that queer voices will be represented on the commission.

In addition, the commission's work may last until the next GC, but if it completes its work before 2020, then they will call a special conference. As the commission is doing its work, the Bishops have promised to look for ways to avoid church trials and because this comes from the FULL council of bishops, that is an unprecedented commitment.

In the past, only a few bishops committed to avoiding church trials. Some people feel like this is nothing, that nothing was accomplished yesterday, that this is nothing but a delay tactic. We realize that many of our constituents are upset and angry. But the alternatives that were quickly shaping up on the floor of GC would have led to a disastrous ending.

Therefore, we are hopeful about the prospects that this proposal offers. We also celebrate Judicial Council Decision 1318 handed down yesterday which confirms that a mandatory penalty during the "just resolution" process is, indeed, unconstitutional. This is a significant decision as we move forward together in Biblical Obedience, and prohibits a greater threat towards pastors who choose to be in ministry with all their parishioners equally.

It's important to recognize that the work of LGBTQ people and their allies created this opportunity and this moment. Our work in the weeks prior to and during this GC became not only critical work for The UMC, but for the entire movement and for LGBTQ persons and allies all across the world.

It's been the collaborative effort of members of the Love Your Neighbor coalition who have worked tirelessly for justice with The UMC. We want to thank all of you for the critical work of organizing and advocating that is creating change not only within The UMC, but beyond. But it cannot stop. We promise you that no matter what lies ahead that we are committed to seeing the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in this church.



by @MiriamDobson

GENDER: a fun guide

THIS IS FINN.

FINN WAS ONCE TOLD THAT GENDER LOOKS LIKE THIS:

(and that that was the end of it.)

boy girl

this is called the "gender binary."

FINN ISN'T SO SURE.

I THINK GENDER LOOKS LIKE THIS:

boy? girl? both? neither?

A SQUIGGLY MESS

QUIZ TIME!

Q: HOW CAN WE FIND OUT FINN'S GENDER?

1 GENITALS?

(NO! Finn's genitals ≠ Finn's gender)

2 SEXUAL ATTRACTION?

(NOPE. ALSO IRRELEVANT)

3 HOW FINN DRESSES?

(let's have a fancy dress party!)

(... DEFINITELY IRRELEVANT)

ALSO, THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

STOP. EDUCATION TIME!

DID YOU KNOW?

In many parts of the world, societies recognise more than two genders!

Or that gender is like a spectrum that some people slide back & forth along!

THIS HAS BEEN THE CASE THROUGHOUT HISTORY

*NOT AS FUN AS HAMMER TIME BUT MORE USEFUL.

HERE IS ONE DEFINITION OF GENDER:

"the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women." - WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

AND OTHER GENDERS TOO!

So some people are happy as the gender they were given at birth.

And some people identify as having a different, or changeable gender - or no gender at all!

IN THE END, WE'RE ALL STILL TRIANGLES *

Ask what pronouns they would like you to use when talking about them!

*OR, PEOPLE!



Gender 101

by Erica West

Most of us understand our gender as inextricably tied to the sex assigned to us at birth by our doctors. We live our lives by the gender roles described by the social expectations of societal conceptions of what makes a boy or a girl.

However, some understandings of gender are more complicated than our physical genitalia. Here is a handy guide to help unpack the concept of gender and explain some of the terms you may have heard being thrown around this General Conference. First, some terms we might be more familiar with:

sexual orientation: Who we are romantically and physically attracted to. The acronym "LGBTQ" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) is often used in conjunction with this term and gender identity.

sex: The way someone was assigned at birth based on the appearance of their genitalia. One's sex is also determined by a person's secondary sex characteristics (i.e., body hair, body shape, breast tissue, menstruation/lack of menstruation, voice depth, chromosomes, and hormones). Because there are so many variables, sex is a spectrum.

We usually understand sex and gender in a binary way. This "binary" is a concept based upon societal norms that one can only be either a man or a woman, only possessing either femininity or masculinity. However, gender can be understood in broader ways than that. Here is a breakdown of some of the most important concepts that fall under the gender umbrella.

Gender identity - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

The term "LGBTQ" has been used throughout this year's General Conference, however, even though all of the letters are lumped together the "T" of LGBTQ actually has very little to do with sexual orientation; in fact it refers to an individual's gender identity.

Trans/transgender - An umbrella term applied to those whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans identities exist on a spectrum - not everyone decides to transition from male to female and vice versa. For some, their gender identity does not fit neatly into a binary, and they embody masculine and feminine traits or reject gender all together. Additionally, not every transgender person experiences "dysphoria" or the feeling they are trapped in the wrong body.

Cisgender - A term used applied to those whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender presentation - The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine). Gender expression is not necessarily connected to gender identity.

Conclusion: Hopefully this guide can help clear up some of the confusion around the rapidly changing terminology in the LGBTQ community - just like the words in every language, and our opinions, these terms are constantly evolving!

The Story I Never Thought I'd Live to Tell

by Ben Weger

Originally published on rmnetwork.org on March 31, 2016

Spoiler alert: I'm not a lesbian.

I will never forget that day in the 9th grade when I was grabbed by my shirt collar and slammed against a wall of lockers... "you're a lesbian, you just don't know it yet."

I had, after all, gone out for the Varsity Soccer team (having never played a game of soccer in my life) just because I thought the coach was super hot. I ate lunch each day with my teammates, but no one ever told me I was sitting at the lesbian table. Well... not until my back crashed into those lockers. Those words stung. Not because they were true, but because they didn't fit. I knew I wasn't a lesbian, but I also knew I was only attracted to females. But I had no way of articulating how those things were both simultaneously true for me.

Later that year, I woke up from a dream where I was making out with the high school cheer captain. I was mortified.

I was an active part of my Southern Baptist youth group and if I knew anything, I knew that "gay was not okay." So, I did the most logical thing I could think of and made a habit of having a boyfriend.

I remember feeling so alone, because these feelings I was having were so shameful. And my shame continued to translate into a very deep, very dark depression.

From the Beginning...

At four years old I remember laying in bed and wondering what happened. When would they tell me...? I knew there was some great secret that was being withheld from me, I just wasn't sure why. Something happened when I was born and my parents had to make a choice – boy or girl. At least that was the narrative that looped in my mind throughout my childhood. I was sure there had been an accident during my birth, because I was missing part of myself. I knew something was anatomically wrong with me. I don't know how you know something like that before you even start Kindergarten... but I did.

"You're a tomboy." "You'll grow out of it." "You'll feel different when you're older." "You'll change your mind." "But you're so pretty." "I can't wait to see what you look like when you really find yourself – you'll be beautiful."

Those are just some of the well intended, but harmful, things that were spoken to me over the years. Purses, makeup, dresses... I hated all of it. I preferred boys' clothes over girls' clothes. I didn't like that I had to play softball – I wanted to play baseball. When I was 8 or 9, someone got me a tweety bird shirt. The print was fairly feminine, but it was cut and buttoned up like a baseball jersey – I loved it. At one point, I somehow ended up with a pair of Simpsons boxers – I loved them.

As a kid my uncles would call me "little feller". I think they meant it to be derogatory, but the truth is I loved it. I felt like they saw me for who I really was.

Time went by and I grew older, and it became clear that I had a normal girl body with normal girl parts.

And nothing had ever been more disappointing.

More to the Story...

For my whole life not only have I felt great disappointment at not being able to have the life experiences I wanted, but my body has looked wrong and my clothes have never fit right. I had hoped for a beard and I ended up with breasts. And for most of my life I felt stuck. I didn't see anyway I could reconcile this inner truth with my external world. The idea of disappointing my family overwhelms me. The reality of being turned away by the Church I have given my whole life to, takes my breath away. And I have lived in a paralytic state for years. But the truth is that being transgender is not something that can be cured. No amount of prayer, psychotherapy or social conditioning could change the fact that I have a male brain in a female body.

Knowing that there is no "cure" to take this away and being deeply fearful of what transitioning to male might mean for my life has held me hostage for years. However, when I asked myself the question "what would you do if you weren't worried about how people will respond?" the answer was always "transition fully and live my life as a male."

I've always known that transitioning from female to male was possible, scientifically speaking. But it took time, lots of time, for me to build up the courage to

admit to myself that it would be a mistake to continue living as a female. It took even more time to understand that any hesitation I have is rooted in the fear of how others will respond and that those hesitations are greatly outweighed by what it would cost me to continue my life as a female. And so I made the decision to begin the process of becoming who I've always been.

I think we really like our boxes and our categories. There's something in us that needs a label and a neat explanation for all that we encounter. But try as we may, there is always more to the story. There is always information I don't know, experiences I've never had and influences I can't understand. I try to remember that when I encounter things that don't fit into my predefined categories. I don't always do a good job, but I try.

No Longer a Slave to Fear...

In June of 2015 I scheduled top surgery (which is trans-speak for a bilateral mastectomy with free nipple grafts; essentially I had my breasts removed and my chest reconstructed to have a masculine appearance). It had long been an unspoken goal of mine to do this before I turned 30. And on January 12, 2016, just 45 days before turning 30, I accomplished this goal. When I made the decision to move forward with scheduling top surgery, I did so from a thought process of "let's try this and see if it is enough for me," but as my surgery date came closer I became more certain that top surgery would never be "enough."

On the second to last Sunday that I led worship prior to surgery, I found myself singing the song No Longer a Slave after the message. The lyrics to the chorus are:

I'm no longer a slave to fear,

I am a child of God.

I'm no longer a slave to fear,

I am a child of God

And as I sang out those words from my guts (because if you know me, I really can't sing any other way), the Holy Spirit confirmed the lyrics in my heart. No longer a slave to fear. A child of God. Fully known and fully loved. Just as I am.

And just like that, I was free. Free to begin the process of becoming who I've always been. Confident in God my creator to be present with me in this difficult season. Confident in my incredible wife and her unconditional love for me. Confident in my trusted group of friends to walk this path alongside me.

The Cost...

Most good things comes at a cost. The decision to be my true self cost me my job and, for now, my career. The church I was working for had been fully informed and incredibly supportive until I began the conversation of changing my name and pronouns. Prior to that conversation, I had been amazed at the church's willingness to support me through this process. After I had top surgery in January, I was not permitted to return to work and was forced to resign. I was given a three month severance to assuage their guilt and left to tell my two year old daughter (every time she asks), "I'm sorry honey, you can't go to church and watch daddy sing anymore."

I'm sure not everyone will be able to understand this about me and I accept that this decision will cost me some relationships. I am grateful for the community and support system I have that allows me to be comfortable taking that risk.

No sane person would choose a call to ministry and a queer lifestyle. But neither of those things are a choice. So, for now, I wait. I wait to discover if there is a place in the United Methodist Church for a transgender man with a calling to ministry.

Moving Forward...

After having top surgery in January, I began hormone replacement therapy on February 3, 2016. I filed for my legal name change on March 11, 2016. I am changing my name first name to Benjamin, my maternal grandfather's name. I am changing the spelling of my middle name from Lea to Lee, to match my father's middle name. You will notice that I will be changing my accounts on social media to be consistent with my new name and pronouns.

Thank you to those of you who choose to journey with me as I step out into this vast darkness of the unknown.

– Ben





Read it on our app!



Photos by Ben Roe and Dave Jerde.

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

If you need pastoral care, please call 612-425-5215