OUT Awards
By Rev. David Meredith - Affirmation Council Member

Join Affirmation, our OUT nominees, our United Methodist allies, and our Soulforce friends at a banquet celebrating those who boldly and vividly live OUT their faith and witness as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer United Methodist Christians. Come OUT for a while, have fun, and join the party!

At the banquet, two persons will be presented with an OUT Award. One award will be given to an OUT lay person (a non-credentialed and unpaid member/witness in the church) and the second will be given to an OUT professional (a credentialed and/or paid professional in the life of the church). Nineteen persons from all parts of the country have been nominated. Each has been invited to attend the banquet. All will be recognized and honored. The OUT award winners will be announced and presented at the banquet.

The festive banquet will be a Tapas Night where a variety of many tasty foods will be available in small portions. There will be vegetarian and vegan options.

Please send reservations with check (made out to Affirmation) or credit card information to Affirmation at PO Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204-1021. There is only room for 150. Please make your reservation quickly. Deadline for receipt of reservations is April 18.

It’s Time to Be Out
By Tim Tennant-Jayne - Affirmation Council Member

OUT - What does it mean? And particularly, what does this word mean for Affirmation at General Conference 2008 in Fort Worth, Texas?

In the Queer (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender persons, and Allies) community, the word ‘out’ usually refers to being open and public and safe about your sexual orientation. For other people, the word ‘out’ means not being a part of something. For Affirmation folk, OUT means both of these. We want everyone to be OUT and be able to be open and public and safe about whom they are, and we want the exclusionary words in our Book of Discipline to be OUT of it.

Our General Conference 2008 logo reflects this desire. It features an androgynous person stepping OUT into God’s wonderful world. The rainbow colors recall God’s promise of love to Noah, his family, and to all future generations. These colors also are the historic rainbow colors of the Queer community. This will be our image at General Conference. It will appear on our newsletter, on our materials, and on our T-Shirts. (The T-Shirts will also feature the words: “You’re following a self avowed, practicing United Methodist” on the back.) It will define
**Sweets For Sweets**  
**Be There At GC 2008**

In the Sweet Spirit of Queen Vashti who liked her women more than her King -
In the Sweet Spirit of Jonathan who loved David -
In the Sweet Spirit of DaVinci and Georgia Harkness
In the Sweet Spirit of Mary Rose Denman and Julian Rush -
In the Sweet Spirit of each of you -
Please join us for an evening of Sweets for Sweets!

An evening of celebration for the United Methodist LGBTQ community.

In Ft. Worth at General Conference 2008
It will be a sweet old time.
Tentatively planned for the evening of Sunday, April 27.
Drop-in when you can. Leave when you’re ready.
Food and beverages will be provided.
There’s a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place.
There are sweet expressions on each face and I know that it’s the spirit of the Lord.
Sweets for Sweets!

Questions? Contact members of the Affirmation Council when we all are at General Conference.

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**Bruce Hilton Passes On**

We were saddened to learn of the death of the Rev. Bruce Hilton on March 14, 2008. Bruce was a steadfast pioneer and crusader of many social justice issues.

Bruce will be remembered as a pioneering medical ethicist; author; columnist; journalist; United Methodist Clergyperson; jazz musician; member of the Sacramento 68 and long time advocate for the rights of minorities, women, and the LGBTQ community.

Bruce was preceded in death by his wife, Virginia, who died in October, 2007.

On the issue of LGBTQ rights, Bruce said: “The Bible is clear about hate. Hate is wrong.”

We will dearly miss a wise counsel and a good friend.
Affirmation folk and supporters. We will be OUT there! But OUT also expresses what we want the delegates at General Conference to do! We want the hate-filled words that claim we are ‘incompatible with Christian teaching’ to be OUT of the Discipline. We want the angry words that deny our brothers and sisters the opportunity to be ordained clergy persons who are fully open and honest OUT of the Discipline. We want the unhealthy words that deny the Church the option of financially supporting loving ministries to be O U T of the Discipline. We want the discriminatory words that deny the recognition of our relationships O U T of the Discipline. We want the harming words that refuse us even membership within our denomination to be O U T of the Discipline. We want people to see that we are not just a late 20th-century human creation, or something that began in San Francisco or New York, but to see that we are also O U T in the Bible.

This is what Affirmation means by being O U T this year at General Conference. We will be O U T for you and we want you to be O U T with us.

Affirmation at General Conference - the Early Years

General Conference 1980 at Hooker Hotel

By Mary Gaddis

(Editor’s Note: Mary Gaddis was a founding member of Affirmation. She served us 6 years as a National Spokesperson. She died March 27, 2006, of complications from a car accident. In the e-mail her partner, Judy Cayot, sent to family and friends announcing Mary’s death, said: “We have lost [in body at least] that beautiful, ornery, outrageous, generous, challenging woman.”

The following is part of an interview recorded during General Conference 2004 for the Affirmation Oral History project.)

For the 1980 General Conference, Affirmation had talked with a college in the Indianapolis area, and we had an agreement to house the group, and the cafeteria was going to be there. Somebody at that college talked with some Affirmation members afterward and essentially said, “The Methodists told people in town not to have housing for you.” So we found this “hooker hotel”, and they were great! It was like the marginalized people lined up together. It worked fabulous!

The agreement we had with the college was cancelled, and a handful of us went to the convention center the week before General Conference. We literally walked out in all directions looking for a place to stay. I can’t remember who I was with, but I facetiously said “How about that?” pointing to a sign that

(Continued on page 4)
said, “San Antonio Inn, Rooms $15 an Hour”. I said “What the hell; let’s go check it out.”

It had two wings of rooms. Whoever was at the counter went and got (I think) the owner. Because we were actually going to arrive early and stay late, we needed the rooms for ten to fourteen days. They kept asking us; “You want rooms for ten to fourteen days???”

We kept saying, “No, not for the hour, every day. We’re going to be here for fourteen days. We want this many rooms, and no we don’t want to pay $15 an hour.” We talked it through, and got what we needed. We put out the word quickly, this is where to come and stay. They pretty much gave us a whole wing.

One of the times it was literally like this. I picked up the phone and said, “Hello.” They said, “We’re looking for Diane. We want to know if Diane needs clean sheets in her room.”

I said, “No, she doesn’t need clean sheets, but she’s in this room.”

“OK, we’re also looking for Michael. Does Michael need clean sheets?”

“No, Michael doesn’t need clean sheets, but Michael’s in this room.”

After about the fourth person, I said, “Everybody’s in this room, and we don’t need clean sheets.”

“Everybody’s in that room?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you sure you don’t need clean sheets???”

That’s exactly what he said, “Are you sure you don’t need clean sheets???”

It was mostly an ecological thing. If somebody was doin’ whatever they were doin’ and wanted clean sheets, they could have them.

We would go down to the office. But we didn’t need clean sheets every day. It took them about three days to really get it. After they got it, they were so appreciative. I mean, can you imagine cleaning a room every hour. That’s a lot of sheets and a lot of bed changing. They were thrilled that we wanted the sheets changed every three days. And we were going to pay for the whole time we were there. It worked out great!

I think they actually charged us the hourly rate per day. Instead of $15 an hour, they charged us $15 a day.

All of the TVs got the porn channels and only a few TVs got local news channels. They would watch us and thought it was fascinating, because we’d come home at night and at different times, there might have been 40 people there. We’d all cram into the few rooms that got local news. I know they must have been saying, “What are they doing in there? Do you think they need clean sheets?”

But it was a very pleasant walk to the convention center, and it was a perfect place for us to be.

The 1980 General Conference had made available rooms for all of the caucuses. So like Good News caucus, and the Women’s Caucus rooms. They weren’t spectacular rooms, but they were rooms. So Affirmation requested a room, and they gave us a room. No one who knows me will claim that I’m a very neat and clean and “notice dust” person. But that place was filthy. I think they had stuff stored in there from when they built the Convention Center. We went in there with rags to clean off the chairs to unfold, so that we could have a place to sit. One of the times when we were sitting there having a meeting, the rats came crawling across the back of the room. It was awful, but that’s where we started with this General Conference.

At that General Conference, I was doing mime in whiteface almost all of the time. The General
Conference had a day to honor the military chaplains. So, I had a full military uniform on and was in whiteface. I wanted to get blank cartridges and seeds to hand out, but couldn’t get blanks. We went to a gun shop, and all they had were loaded cartridges. I had these live shells in one hand and seeds in my other hand. I’d just walk up to people, never said a word, just offer them both.

I don’t remember why exactly, but there was tight security. The security people there opened the doors for me to help me get in. There was a Church and Society legislative session with people waiting outside the room because it was too crowded to get in. The security person saw me coming, opened the door, tapped somebody inside on the shoulder, and told them to get out so I could go in.

I did a whole mime presentation about coming out. I was in whiteface all the time. Frequently, when I couldn’t stand it, I’d grab somebody and we’d go into the bathroom or the janitor closet. I’d say, “What’s going on; I haven’t heard anything.” Well, I’d talk to people, but I had no idea what a good job I had done about not speaking in public.

Affirmation had a worship service late in the conference. It was in this magnificent building, and it was up probably one-and-a-half or maybe two stories of stairs. When people arrived, I was out front in whiteface greeting people. We did everything on a wing and a prayer. We found some young man who was a good organist and asked him and one of the men from Affirmation to provide the organ music. I was supposed to preach part of the sermon. So there I was in whiteface, and I walked up the steps to the pulpit. You had to walk up to it. God’s supposed to stand there, not me. I opened the mime door, and walked through it, and started talking. There were audible sounds in the congregation like, <gasp!> I had no idea I’d been that great. People were like, this is a real miracle! It was hysterical.

But that’s where we started. And it’s been growing ever since. We grew in ’84, started the Reconciling Congregation Program (RCP) movement, and that was a dozen people at the most, standing outside the doors of General Conference handing out I think half sheets. We’ve always done a daily newsletter at General Conference, but in addition to the daily newsletter, we handed out a half page about this nifty little idea called RCP.

General Conference Special Events

Parents Reconciling Lunch, Wednesday, April 23, begins at 11:30 am.

Come to hear Rev. Bill Taylor speak and for the presentation of the Hilton Award.

MFSA Immigration Rally, Thursday, April 24, begins at noon by the Water Gardens.

Affirmation Trans panel Thursday, 5:00 pm, Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC).

Affirmation & Soulforce Trans Meet & Greet, Friday, 12 noon in General Worth Square.

MFSA Speaker Series - First Christian Church Sanctuary, 1:15-2:00 p.m. Begins Friday, April 25.

RMN Youth and Young Adult Rally and March, Saturday 1:00 pm, First Christian Church Sanctuary.

Affirmation, OUT Awards, Saturday evening, at ITC, followed by Soulforce showing of the award-winning documentary film “For the Bible Tells Me So” in General Worth Square.

RMN Worship – First UMC, 800 W. 5th Street, Ft. Worth, TX, Sunday, April 27, at 2:00 pm.

Affirmation Sweets for Sweets event for LGBTQ, tentatively Sunday evening, April 27, Details TBA.

Seeking Volunteers for Clandestine General Conference Work Assignments!

Do you like secrets? Do you want to do important reconciling work? Do you want to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you like mysteries? If you answered yes to any of the above questions then you qualify for this assignment. Work will be described in a mission advance once volunteers are found. Again, we need YOU!!! Please e-mail umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com.
Some Drop Out, Others Come OUT.
Some Turn Away from their Faith, Others Live It OUT.
Some Hide Out, Others Shout OUT Their Identity.
You are invited to
honor and celebrate them at the
OUT Awards Banquet
Saturday, April 26
6-8 p.m.
at the
Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC)
1001 Jones St., Fort Worth, TX 76102
During General Conference 2008
Tickets: $20 per person
Following the banquet, march to General Worth Square for public witness and viewing of the award-winning documentary film “For the Bible Tells Me So” presented by Soulforce.

Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns
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