



Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER CONCERNS
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Still Here Queer God's Beloved

35th Anniversary Celebration Sept. 24 – 26, 2010

By Tim Tennant-Jayne, Co-Spokesperson

Yep! That still describes Affirmation. After 35 years, we are still here in the church, we are still Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer, and we are still very much God's Beloved. It's time to celebrate and have a birthday party. Like any birthday party, this is a time to look back at who we have been and what we have accomplished, as well as a time to look ahead at the journey we still have and the work still to be completed.

Affirmation will be hosting a gathering on the last weekend of September, the 24th through the 26th, in San Francisco, CA. We will begin Friday evening with a time of meeting and reacquainting with one another. Over the weekend we will move through recalling our past to looking ahead at what we need to do. Sunday we'll have a bit of ecclesiological disobedience. We will finish up at lunch time. This will

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What's In a Name?

By Tim Tennant-Jayne, Co-Spokesperson

This familiar quote from William Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, continues with "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Juliet feels that her love for Romeo has nothing to do with Romeo's family name. Yet the play revolves around the fact that Juliet's and Romeo's family names have everything to do with their lives and the play. Names are important.

Affirmation is considering how to change our name, again. According to our bylaws our name is officially, "Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns." Yet for a number of years, we've included the word "Queer" in our name and identification (check out the title of this newsletter). So we

[\(Name...Continued on page 5\)](#)

Justice & Joy Reigned

By Lyn Ellis, Co-Coordinator

During the Seder Feast, we sing a song called "Dayanu". Roughly translated from the Hebrew, it means, "If God had only (____), it would have been enough." Labor Day weekend, I was given the opportunity to attend the RMN Convocation, *Justice and Joy*. If God had only provided time in the glorious Rocky Mountains, Dayanu. If God had only arranged beautiful accommodations and terrific food, Dayanu. If God had only provided terrific speakers, wonderful worship, inviting workshops, and Bible study, Dayanu. But to add to all that, the incredible fellowship and the chance to meet so many wonderful people, it was more than enough.

We were treated to soul-lifting worship, speakers from all walks of life, Bible study and morning talks from the Three Simple Rules. But for me, the very best part was getting the chance to meet and fellowship with LGBTQI and allies from across the country. To meet some of the folks Affirmation is working for was an honor. It may have been my first Convo, but it won't be my last! I can hardly wait until next September when the fellowship will be resumed in San Francisco. *[Editors' note – see the article on page 1 about the Affirmation 35th anniversary celebration.]*

Thanks to all who were at Justice and Joy, making it a special space to meet God. Also thanks to the council and Stephan's partner for providing the best reception of the weekend "Sweets for the Sweet". It was awesome!

Meet Council Member Lyn Ellis

Lyn Ellis has been serving on the Affirmation council for about one and a half years, ever since her pastor David Meredith finished his term.

She had been wanting to join since the council met in Columbus, OH. Lyn and her family have attended Broad Street UMC there for six years. They started attending when she and her partner, Julie, first became foster parents, and they wanted to find a supportive church family.

Lyn comes to the United Methodist Church from the Brethren Church, where after three years of seminary, she was asked to leave because she had broken the "Morality Clause." She is once again wrestling with her call to ministry, and finding a place in the church to use her gifts. Currently, that place is with Affirmation.

Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication.

Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

Articles for consideration for publication may be submitted to:

AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahogroups.com

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

* **Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.**



We Spoke Often & Firmly to Many Issues

The Season of Pride

For Immediate Release August 12, 2009

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Tim Tennant-Jayne

Affirmation celebrates the recent decisions by the Episcopal Church to allow for the ordination of openly lesbian and gay clergy persons as bishops, and to encourage bishops to “provide generous pastoral response” to same-sex couples being legally married.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3255>

Survey Says, “We Are People of Faith”

For Immediate Release, Friday August 21, 2009

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Tim Tennant-Jayne

A survey of 9,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans by George Barna, a well-known evangelical pollster, reports that 70 percent of queer adults describe themselves as Christian and 60 percent say their faith is “very important” in their lives. These figures are only slightly lower than the general population, which records 85 and 70 percent on those rankings, respectively. Affirmation applauds these findings. They support what many of us have known anecdotally for many years. We are indeed people of faith.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3256>

We Are Who We Are

For Immediate Release, Wednesday August 21, 2009

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Tim Tennant-Jayne

For many years those of us who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer have known of anecdotal evidence that our sexual orientation or gender orientation is a basic part of our make-up. Loving someone of the same gender is not a choice we consciously make one morning, nor is this something that can be changed by altering some ‘selection switch’. Likewise, the idea that a person wakes up one morning and decides to go through the emotionally and physically painful process to change their gender on a whim is just as ridiculous. Experience of psychological professionals has shown that such feelings cannot be ‘repaired.’ As the song says, “I am who I am.” Recently the American Psychological Association (APA) declared that no solid evidence exists that such “reparative” change is likely, and some research suggests that efforts to produce change could be harmful, inducing depression and suicidal tendencies. Affirmation applauds this recognition.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3257>

In All Things, Charity

For Immediate Release, Saturday August 29, 2009

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Tim Tennant-Jayne

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) made two very important decisions while meeting in Minneapolis, MN, at their Church-wide Assembly 2009. First they approved a social statement on human sexuality, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” which is very supportive of same gender orientation and gender identity while recognizing that there is not uniformity of opinion within the denomination. They also supported allowing local congregations to choose to call and ordain homosexual clergy who are living out their orientation. Affirmation applauds the ELCA for making these faith filled decisions and congratulates the organizations of Goodsoil for their work to ensure these actions.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3261>

No Easy Answers

For Immediate Release, Wednesday September 30, 2009

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Diane DeLap

It is an unfortunate by-product of the computer age that we seem to think that we can answer any question by a quick search on Google. We’ve even translated that tendency to our study of the Bible. A quick search of

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Time to Clean Out Your Closets

By Tim Tennant-Jayne, Co-Spokesperson

...and file cabinets, and drawers, and storage areas. As explained elsewhere in this newsletter, Affirmation will be celebrating our 35th Birthday in the fall of 2010. Now seems like a great time to put out a call for all old minutes, records, letters, brochures, buttons, shirts and any other items you might have. This is especially directed to longtime members and former Council members. We would like to do some sort of display of our history at the Fall Gathering. But also, we'd like to add more items to our official archives in Drew University.

Got some stuff you'd like to get rid of, and clean out that closet? Please send it to us at Affirmation, PO Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204-1021. Or do you still want to hold on to items, but also want to enhance our display and our archives? Then scan any papers and email them to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Archives"). Likewise, take a photo of any physical objects like patches or buttons, and mail those photos or send a scan of the photo. Please label any photos, objects, or papers with the date and some information about what it means or what was its purpose.

We will accept items for our historical archives at any time. However, for items to be included in our Fall Gathering display, they need to be sent by July 5, 2010. Check your cabinets, closets, and files. Got some older stuff you'd like to pass on to others? Now is a great time to do so.

(Still...Continued from page 1)
allow folk to either head home early, or stay and enjoy the sights of San Francisco; including Castro Street, Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz, or other local sights such as the Folsom Street Fair on Sunday afternoon.

You are invited to join us. Whether an Affirmation member or not. All are welcome. Details will be coming out in early spring. Registration begins at \$100 if you register by May 1st. We have secured a room rate of \$144 per room (for up to 4 persons per room) + 15.5% tax. Please note, that is \$144 per room! For one person, two, three or up to four people per room! Such a deal we can offer.

During the weekend, we will of course, focus on our 35 years of work in The United

Methodist Church. We'll highlight our gains and our challenges. Thus, as explained elsewhere, Affirmation is looking to gather more of our physical history (flyers, newsletters, minutes, press releases, etc.). But we are more than just the past. We'll also look forward to the future, to the 2012 General Conference and beyond.

As part of the weekend, there will also be an official Affirmation membership meeting. While the weekend is open to everyone, to be a voting part of the membership meeting, you must be a current, dues-paid member.

Watch for a flyer and more information coming out this spring. Make plans now to join us in San Francisco in September.

New Exciting Brochures Available!

The Affirmation brochure has been updated post GC 2008. If you'd like to help spread the word about Affirmation, let us know. We'll print and mail you a few. Keep in mind printing time. (The brochures take a fair amount of time to print.) Send an email to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Brochures") or drop us a line at:

Affirmation
PO Box 1021
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Update Your Contact Info!

It's important for you to notify us when you move. Relying on the US Postal Service's address correction service can be iffy at best. It also helps if we have an up-to-date email address in case your snail mail starts coming back. Email us at affirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Address Change") or drop us a line at: Affirmation, PO Box 1021, Evanston IL 60204-1021.

Seeking Very Out People

By Tim Tennant-Jayne, Co-Spokesperson

How comfortably out are you? Out enough to have your name linked to Affirmation in your local newspaper?

Affirmation is going to begin a new method of getting our message of God's love to a wider audience. We'd like to respond to more local issues by sending letters to the editor or placing items in local newspaper opinion pages. This works much better if the letter or op-ed piece comes from someone who is local, rather than from Diane or me.

But don't panic! This doesn't mean that you must write the letter on your own. As your co-spokespersons for Affirmation, we would provide you with the basic format of a letter that explains Affirmation's position. You could then add a few lines to make it specific to the current local issue and then send it in to the local newspaper. Oh, and if you do get published, we'd appreciate getting a copy. *[Editor's note: Send them to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Op Ed Published"), or snail mail a clipping. Be sure to include the name of the paper and the publication date.]*

Like to respond to those radical voices encouraging hatred of us? Be it in the secular press or church publications? Then let Diane or me know of your willingness and your specific issues. We can be reached at ddeleap_at_comcast.net or tennJay_at_usfamily.net.

(Name...Continued from page 1)
have to change our official name to at least reflect what we are calling ourselves.

Historically, Affirmation has taken the route of giving power to names by specifically naming who we and our members are. We've gone from "Gay United Methodists" to "Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns", to our current official and actual titles.

In keeping with this tradition, we would add the words, "Intersex, Allies and Queer Concerns" after the word "Transgender". There is indeed great value in actually naming just who we are. For far too long, many of our identities have been unnamed, misunderstood, ignored (at best), or persecuted by The United Methodist Church and by society at large.

However, while this action does proclaim value for individuals, it also means that our name is getting really, really long. And in this day of tweets, text messaging, and sound bites, length is not necessarily a good thing.

Thus the Council is proposing the shortening of our name to "Affirmation: United Methodists for Queer Concerns". An increasing number of people, especially younger folk, understand "Queer" as a more general, over-arching term for those of us who don't fit the 'normal' United Methodist member profile and those who support diversity. These people also recognize the historic hurt and pain of this Q word. But as was done with the pink triangle in the earlier years of our movement, they seek to reclaim this word from its hate-filled past.

Yet, Affirmation always has been, and continues to be, run by its members, rather than by the Council. What are **your** feelings about this change? Be aware that because of the current difference between our official name and our actual use name, we have to make a change.

The Council will discuss and vote on this at our spring meeting, April 16-18, 2010. Shall we lengthen our title to name all of who we are? And if so, exactly who are we and whom do we add? And who not? Or have we reached a time in our organizational life when we can actually shorten our title?

Please respond to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Name Change"), or drop us a line at Affirmation, PO Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204-1021.

Council Plans Birthday Bash

**By Stephen Mallett,
Co-Coordinator**

Affirmation Council met in the Boston area in October. We were hosted by Jan and Diane DeLap and we accomplished much in our two and a half day meeting. We all experienced writer's fatigue from signing Christmas cards.

At the top of our agenda, we discussed plans for Affirmation's 35th Anniversary Celebration and Gathering in San Francisco on Sept. 24-26, 2010. This is the weekend of the Folsom Street Fair and we are excited to anticipate being in San Francisco at the time of this event.

Please hold the dates on your calendars and we will give you registration information in the spring. Our plans include workshops, celebration, a banquet and worship. There will be plenty of free time on Sunday afternoon for those interested in attending the Fair.

We reviewed our reception at the RMN Convo in Estes Park in September. All agreed that we put on a fine party and got our name

and mission out there in front of both old allies and new friends. Tim Tennant-Jayne gave an especially eloquent invitation for persons to attend our reception in the plenary session of Convo that evening, and we had a great turnout.

We had a lengthy conference call with Ann Craig, Director of Religion, Faith and Values at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and former Affirmation council member and co-coordinator. She focuses on empowering faith groups to engage the media effectively.

We discussed ways to get wider distribution for our press releases and talked about General Conference 2012 in Tampa, FL, and how to increase our media presence. We will continue to consult with Ann about what it will take to make Affirmation high profile without creating a high volume of work.

We also discussed joining with other religious groups to work on decriminalization of queer folks internationally. We noted that we want to be more focused on civil

and human rights concerns both in the US and globally in addition to working for progressive change within our own church.

Additional areas of discussion included improving our website; recruiting additional volunteers to serve on the council; bylaw and fiscal year changes that can help us function more effectively; ideas for making our presence more effective at 2012 General Conference; a financial report from our treasurer, and discussion of whether to shorten our name, or continue to use the list which has grown from Gay and Lesbian to LGBTQ with suggestions that we could add additional categories. No decision was reached.

We officially approved 3 Council members: Laci Adams, Walter Lockhart and Jan DeLap.

On Sunday evening we had the pleasure to worship at Cambridge Welcoming Ministries. Pastor Tiffany Steinwert was busy giving the invocation for the march in Washington, so our own Laci Adams preached a fine sermon in Tiffany's place.

(We Spoke...Continued from page 3)

BibleGateway.com or BibleStudyTools.com will give us as many quotes and interpretations as we need on most any subject from whatever Bible version (including Greek and Hebrew), concordance, or commentary we like. Unfortunately such a search for quick and easy answers too often leads to incomplete and false conclusions.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3264>

**Affirmation Celebrates Signing of Hate Crimes Act
For Immediate Release, Wednesday November 4, 2009**

By Affirmation Co-spokesperson Tim Tennant-Jayne

Affirmation celebrates that President Obama has signed into law the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act*. It's time that a nation that promises "liberty and justice for all" ensures justice for *all* people.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/message/3266>

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*** Note: substitute the symbol “@” for the letters “_at_” in the email addresses above.**

A Monthly Gift Does Wonders

By Jan Olson

Are you aware that many (if not all) banks have a way to make monthly donations to your favorite organizations without having to write a check or even remember to do it each month?

Several Affirmation members have chosen to make a monthly pledge to Affirmation and a number of them use their bank's program to do so. Like clockwork, each month Affirmation receives a check from these members without them lifting a pen, licking a stamp, addressing an envelope or going to a postal box. This is so good for Affirmation because it gives us a consistent income to pay our monthly expenses.

If you pay your bills online (or if you don't but have been meaning to start), will you consider a monthly or quarterly pledge to Affirmation? It's easy and will greatly help Affirmation in its continued fight for an inclusive United Methodist Church.

If you are unable to contribute through an on-line program, there are still other easy ways for you to donate. Our organization recently opened a PayPal account which allows you to make a donation with a credit card without us having to pay the exorbitant charges levied by the credit card companies (which we were charged even when we didn't get any credit charge donations in a month). PayPal also accepts payments through bank account withdrawals if you don't want to use a credit card. Just go onto our website at www.umaffirm.org and click the "Donate Online".

Contributions can be sent to:

*Affirmation
PO Box 1021*

Evanston IL 60204-1021

*Or can be made on-line by going to
www.umaffirm.org and clicking on
"Donate On-line"*

Of course, we will also be glad to get your donation by a check sent to our Evanston post office box which is listed elsewhere in this newsletter. The manner in which you donate is not as important as the fact that you are donating to our organization. Also know that your donations are needed and appreciated. Without your consistent and generous support, Affirmation would not be able to continue its work to be sure "All means All" becomes a reality in the United Methodist Church. So please, give what you can, as often as you can.

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Affirmation Pokes Its Head Into the 21st Century

By Gary Shephard, Newsletter Co-Editor

We've talked about electronic distribution of the newsletter off and on for years. Ten years, in fact. We're finally getting to the point of actually doing it.

We'll be sending emails to everyone who has checked the "I Would Like To Receive Communications By Email" box on a contribution form, asking if they want to receive the newsletter by email. We'll give you a choice. You can have an emailed PDF, a hardcopy newsletter, or both. The PDF only option, of course, saves a tree (or at least a branch) and postage. You'll need to download a copy of the PDF reader if you don't already have it (it's free at the Adobe web site, www.adobe.com). The newsletters can be sizeable, 250K up to 1MB, so you might want to stay with paper if you're on a slow connection. (The phone company only got around to putting DSL in my neck of the woods October 2006, not that I remember the day I hooked up the router, or anything. I refuse to admit to dancing around like Daffy Duck shouting "Woohoo! Woohoo! Woohoo!")

If you'd like to receive future newsletters by email and you're not sure we have a valid email address for you, well, email us with your name (so we can match the email to the correct member) to affirmation_at_yahoo.com (Subject: "Newsletter"). If you'd like to provide any updates to your member information while you're at it, that would be good, too. (Snail mail address updates are always welcome, too.) No update is too trivial. Only today I was poking around in the membership database and saw that much to my horror we had a member's name spelled wrong. Granted it was only one letter...still, names are important. Let us know, too, if you get membership or fund raising letters with strange looking salutations. Also, if you know someone who suddenly stopped getting mail from us, have them drop us a line. We may have gotten their mail back and didn't have any way of reestablishing contact.

But I digress. Electronic newsletters are coming! But don't fear – if you want a paper newsletter you won't be left out.

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