



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE COMMON WITNESS COALITION

- Affirmation Methodists for LGBTQ Concerns • Black Methodists for Church Renewal •
- Methodist Federation for Social Action •
- National Federation of Asian American United Methodists •
- Native American International Caucus • Reconciling Ministries Network •
- United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities

generalconference2012.org

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**Love Your
Neighbor
Chaplain**

813-200-8860

**Love Your
Neighbor Office**

813-416-5569

**Check out our
website at**

gc12.org

**Follow the
Twitter hashtag**

#gc12love

Let’s Talk about Supporting Women and Families

Do women, children, and families get the education, support and spiritual counsel called for by the United Methodist Church, merely because General Conference passes a resolution? No, it takes all of us, working with others, to make these positions known and to make available the resources needed to achieve the results the resolutions seek.

What would happen if The United Methodist Church were to withdraw its voice from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a leading religious coalition, which works do just that regarding matters of reproduction, women’s health and the concerns of the family?

What organization is in question?

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights (RCRC) fosters public dialogue about sexuality and reproduction embodying the values of liberation and wholeness that infuse the world’s religions RCRC:

- trains, resources and networks people of faith to be effective advocates for reproductive justice in order to influence the way in which individuals, institutions, and

communities at large think about sexuality and reproduction;

- provides opportunities for education, especially among at-risk populations, in order to improve personal decision-making, the cultural climate and public policy regarding sexuality and reproduction;

- partners with other advocacy groups to build coalitions that ensure the right and responsibility of women, couples and families to decide when, whether and how to bring children into the world.

(Read more about the values and mission of RCRC on their website at www.rcrc.org/about.)

org/about.)

This is consistent with United Methodist policy found in the “Resolution on Responsible Parenthood” (Resolution 2026, The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2008).

RCRC works in an interreligious context to discern the moral, spiritual and ethical concerns about abortion. The Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church are organizational members, bringing the

WOMEN, continued on page 11

The calendar item number on RCRC is 459 (in 4/30 DCA); petition # 20989. Recommendation: Vote AGAINST petition.

Delegates Urged: Oppose ‘Plan UMC’

courtesy of MFSA

MFSA has determined that Plan UMC violates basic democratically held principles of The United Methodist Church (three in particular, listed in analysis, below) held by members of the Love Your Neighbor Common Witness Coalition, Ethnic Caucuses, GBCS, GCORR, GCOSROW, UMRP, and UMKR.

Plan UMC cannot be sufficiently amended to take the church in a positive direction, and no other existing comprehensive restructuring plan has a chance of being supported by the plenary or can be sufficiently amended within the constraints of the patience of the plenary to address the concerns with those plans.

Fortunately, Plan UMC is not the only option General Conference has before it.

Thus, MFSA supports adoption of the agencies’ own board restructuring plans.

In its analysis, MFSA has determined Plan UMC violates three basic principles:

1. Full inclusion and equal opportunities for participation in The United Methodist Church for all of God’s people

- a. Plan UMC vests a mere 21 members serving on the General Council for Strategy and Oversight (GCSO) with the responsibility of representing the full diversity of the UMC.

- b. Plan UMC has been developed outside of a global process of discussion, and despite Plan UMC assertions to the contrary, there was no consultation with authors of the MFSA restructure plan in the development of Plan UMC

- c. Central Conferences are af-

ected negatively. Though representing approximately 35-40 percent of total church membership, in Plan UMC they make up: less than 12 percent of total general church board membership, less than 17 percent of program board and GCSO membership, and 7 percent of membership on UMCOM.

2. No system or structure will prevent full participation because of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, or other protected categories.

- a. Plan UMC is a highly complex plan needing more time for all delegates to digest, analyze and prepare to perfect, including providing translation. Twenty-four hours is not enough time to consider approximately 80 pages of information.

- b. GCORR and GCOSROW, which are designed specifically to monitor will no longer be independent commissions and the most powerful UMC structure between General Conferences has oversight of them, including evaluation, finances resources and selection of their chief staff. This seriously compromises effective monitoring/auditing.

3. Broad-based collaborative decision-making and accountability structures.

- a. Plan UMC is an extremely authoritarian model that concentrates power and dismantles general church and Annual Conference accountability structures. Who then monitors and provides accountability for the GCSO?

- b. The GCSO has the powers to:

- i. Select all program agency general secretaries.

- ii. Evaluate all general secretaries according to the self-interests of its members and in respect to a mandate that has never been approved by General Conference, is a local church matter that is the purview of local churches, and is disconnected from many of the missions and mandates that General Conference has assigned to the agencies.

4. Withhold General Conference-approved funding from agencies and oversee the audits of the agencies.

Therefore, we urge opposition to Plan UMC.

MFSA came to General Conference to advance several principles that we feel are crucial in any restructuring plan. The full list can be found in the plumbline on church restructuring at www.plumbline.org.

Petitions 20374 and 20375 on page 347 of the ADCA are constitutional amendments essential for Plan UMC or IOTC to work. These allow the General Conference to delegate its authority to organize the General Boards and the budget of the UMC. Authority would be concentrated in the hands of the few. Without these amendments, all changes to budget and structure would continue to have to be approved by the General Conference.

Welcome Enabled Service and Authenticity

by Lauren Austin

I was born and raised in The United Methodist Church, always went to Sunday school, and youth group, and continued to be involved with my campus ministry through college.

I love Wesley's theology. At church, I found people who inspired and guided me throughout my life.

The UMC has truly shaped who I am. As a young adult, I found a United Methodist church to attend while in grad school and have been going there ever since.

I am in love with the UMC because of its attention to social justice. I became a social worker because of what my faith and The United Methodist Church has taught me about God's kingdom.

Because of my faith, now I work at a food bank with people who are hungry.

I am also a woman. And I am in love with a woman.

I did not truly come out to myself or my friends and family until about a year and a half ago. I married and divorced a man, all before I turned 25 (and I'm only 26 now).

When I came out to my family and friends, they embraced me and told me they loved me. In that regard, I am so lucky.

And my girlfriend loves me and I love her. And I know that God loves us too.

But I was afraid to come out at church. I

know what The United Methodist Church says about homosexuality and I was afraid that the people who love me for everything else about me would reject me for this one thing even though God doesn't.

One Sunday, a few months after I came out to my family and friends, we had a guest preacher at church. She asked what God was telling us to do, right now, that we were afraid to do, that we felt God pulling us towards, but we weren't doing yet.

Usually when I hear sermons like this, I think of the things I have not yet done to fight poverty or injustice. What things should I be doing to make the lives of the poor better, but I haven't done yet?

But this time, God spoke into my heart. If I can't share my joys and fears and be authentic at church, where can I? Why haven't I told anyone at church yet?

So I came out that day to the safest person I could think of: Rob, who sings with me in choir, and who welcomed me to the church when I first joined as a married young woman four years ago.

Rob gave me the biggest hug, and as I told him about my fear, and told him I didn't know where it was safe, he assured me, "it's safe everywhere."

As tears streamed down my face, with Rob's arms around me, I knew I could find

the courage to live authentically at church.

I still don't wear my sexual orientation on my sleeve at church or in my work with faith-based food pantries. I am careful about who I share it with because there is still so much hatred in the world and I worry that it will get in the way of everything else.

But being a part of the Reconciling Ministries Network and the Common Witness Coalition, I have found love and acceptance within The United Methodist Church, and I have hope that our efforts are leading the church to a better place.

I pray that at this year's General Conference, the incompatibility language is struck from the "Book of Discipline," and that my brothers and sisters in Christ can pursue their dreams of ordination regardless of who they love.

No one is perfect, but everyone deserves to be loved by their church.

Lauren Austin is a lifelong United Methodist currently living in Richmond, Va., with experience working for non-profits focused on homelessness, hunger, and faith-based advocacy. This is her first General Conference.

Love Your Neighbor Coalition Pledge

WE PLEDGE TO make a just church our reality by:

Working for racial justice and resisting exploitive systems that teach racial/ethnic superiority and inferiority.

Building public expressions of inclusiveness and affirmations of diversity in our church and societies.

Welcoming gender diversity and establishing policies and practices that share power across gender lines.

Including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender person in our membership and ministry.

Supporting seminaries, mission institutions and global partners in providing inclusive and shared leadership.

Supporting the work with women, children, and youth by United Methodist Women and the Women's Division.

Seeking to honor and reconcile our differences, speaking respectfully with one another in love.

Grounding our ministries in a broad understanding of church, community, environment, and world.

Acting on reducing carbon, radiation, and other pollutants while refusing to give in to cynical despair.

Documenting and announcing specific actions toward these commitments to encourage others.

Living our Wesleyan tradition as people of the warmed heart, enlightened mind, and extended hand.

Being United Methodists who embrace our unity in Christ, even in the midst of diverse opinions.

Shaping our lives according to the good news of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made visible in our midst.

of women's health and access to the education, resources, and medical care that are necessary to save women's lives?

Rev Rebecca Clark is an ordained elder in the New England Annual Conference, who loves the rich United Methodist heritage of justice and grace.

Becca serves in Montpelier, Vermont, where she lives with her husband Benjamin and their two children, Arianna and William.

Are We Withdrawing Our Support for Women's Health?

by Rebecca Clark

Subcommittee 1 of Church and Society B focused on petitions dealing with reproductive rights. The deliberations began with deep and honest conversation about abortion and the health of women and children around the globe.

Delegates shared openly, honestly, and often tearfully about their passions concerning abortion, and found many areas of connection.

Many, like myself, had experienced infertility or pregnancy loss; many knew individuals whose mothers had considered abortion; many told stories of women who were maimed, were permanently debilitated, or died as a result of either carrying a pregnancy at great threat to her life and health or as a result of seeking an abortion from someone other than a medical provider.

Having created a space for dialog and Holy Conferencing, the subcommittee then worked for an entire day on paragraph 161J of the "Book of Discipline," the paragraph that describes the church's position on abortion. We discovered pretty quickly that there was definite division in the room, with many votes on controversial points dividing 9 to 14.

Even given this fact, however, the process was collaborative and largely positive.

The resulting petition was very similar to the one proposed by the General Board of Church and Society, with only a couple of pieces with which progressive delegates objected.

In the full committee session, we were able to strike those two phrases, which would have significantly restricted our denomination's support of reproductive choice. Delegates removed language that would have required doctors to offer women anesthesia for the fetus before performing any abortion services, and emphasize only the risks to the physical life of the mother.

While the results on paragraph 161J were positive in both subcommittee and full committee, the same cannot be said for other matters regarding women's health and reproductive choice.

Most notably, both the subcommittee and the full Church and Society B committee voted to require the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries Women's Division to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (see also, article above).

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) is the only faith-based group working for women's reproductive rights in the United States and beyond.

The United Methodist presence in the RCRC has been successful in swaying the focus of that entity away from solely focusing on abortion to working for education, advocacy, maternal and fetal health, and access to contraception and when necessary, safe and legal abortion in the United States and, through connections with its affiliates, around the world.

In both subcommittee and committee, opponents of the RCRC lifted information that was factually inaccurate, but also blocked attempts to allow a representative from either the General Board of Church and Society or the Women's Division to speak to the actual policies and practices of the RCRC and the UMC's involvement with them.

Based largely on the lack of information and clarity about the RCRC, delegates voted to withdraw from the organization, which raised at least two questions: how can misinformation and lack of information be counterbalanced so that delegates can vote fairly? And, is The United Methodist Church truly withdrawing its support

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

• Love Your Neighbor Lunch Speakers Series
David Weekley, Transgender Extension Ministry

• Daily Communion is provided by Affirmation
Officiants: Lyn Ellis and Laci Adams
Location: The Tabernacle; Time: 5:15 p.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2012

• Love Your Neighbor Dance Event
All Day - watch for it!

• Love Your Neighbor Lunch Speakers Series
Albert Otshudi Long, Central Conference Delegate and young adult
Location: The Tabernacle; Time: 12 noon

• Daily Communion is provided by Affirmation
Officiant: David Weekley
Location: The Tabernacle; Time: 5:15 pm

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Publisher	Ann Craig
Editor	Erik Alsgaard
Managing Editor	Ben Roe
Contributing Editor	M. Theresa Basile
Graphic Designer	Jennifer L. Peterson
Assistant Publisher	David Braden

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Justice Requires Action to Stop Subjugation of Palestinians

by Desmond Tutu
Reprinted with permission

A quarter-century ago I barnstormed around the United States encouraging Americans, particularly students, to press for divestment from South Africa. Today, regrettably, the time has come for similar action to force an end to Israel's long-standing occupation of Palestinian territory and refusal to extend equal rights to Palestinian citizens who suffer from some 35 discriminatory laws.

I have reached this conclusion slowly and painfully. I am aware that many of our Jewish brothers and sisters who were so instrumental in the fight against South African apartheid are not yet ready to reckon with the apartheid nature of Israel and its current government. And I am enormously concerned that raising this issue will cause heartache to some in the Jewish community with whom I have worked closely and successfully for decades. But I cannot ignore the Palestinian suffering I have witnessed, nor the voices of those courageous Jews troubled by Israel's discriminatory course.

Within the past few days, some 1,200 American rabbis signed a letter — timed to coincide with resolutions considered by the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) — urging Christians not “to selectively divest from certain companies whose products are used by Israel.” They argue that a “one-sided approach” on divestment resolutions, even the selective divestment from companies profiting from the occupation proposed by the Methodists and Presbyterians, “damages the relationship between Jews and Christians that has been nurtured for decades.”

While they are no doubt well-meaning, I believe that the rabbis and other opponents of divestment are sadly misguided. My voice will always be raised in support of Christian-Jewish ties and against the anti-Semitism that all sensible people fear and detest. But this cannot be an excuse for doing nothing and for standing aside as successive Israeli governments colonize the West Bank and advance racist laws.

I recall well the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail in which he confesses to his “Christian and Jewish brothers” that he has been “gravely disappointed with the white moderate ... who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of jus-

justice; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action;’ who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom. ...”

King's words describe almost precisely the shortcomings of the 1,200 rabbis who are not joining the brave Palestinians, Jews and internationals in isolated West Bank communities to protest nonviolently against Israel's theft of Palestinian land to build illegal, Jewish-only settlements and the separation wall. We cannot afford to

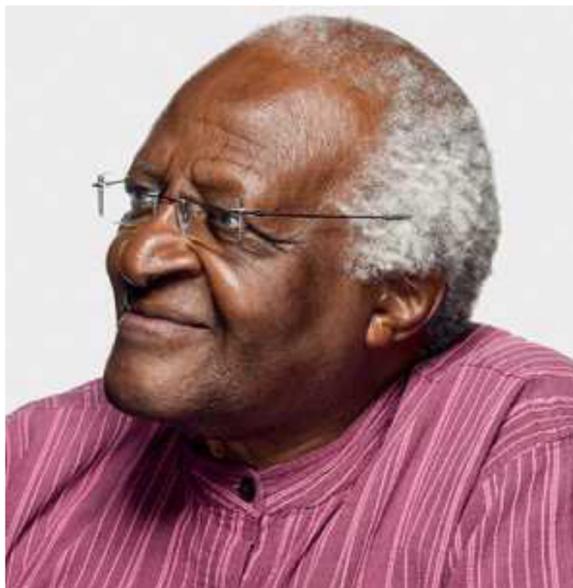
stick our heads in the sand as relentless settlement activity forecloses on the possibility of the two-state solution.

If we do not achieve two states in the near future, then the day will certainly arrive when Palestinians move away from seeking a separate state of their own and insist on the right to vote for the government that controls their lives, the Israeli government, in a single, democratic state. Israel finds this option unacceptable and yet is seemingly doing everything in its power to see that it happens.

Many black South Africans have traveled to the occupied West Bank and have been appalled by

Israeli roads built for Jewish settlers that West Bank Palestinians are denied access to, and by Jewish-only colonies built on Palestinian land in violation of international law.

Black South Africans and others around the world have seen the 2010 Human Rights Watch report which “describes the two-tier system of laws, rules, and services that Israel operates for the two populations in areas in the West Bank under its exclusive control, which provide preferential services, development, and benefits for Jewish settlers while imposing harsh conditions on Palestinians.” This, in my book, is apartheid. It is untenable. And we are in desperate need of more rabbis joining the brave rabbis of Jewish Voice for Peace in speaking forthrightly about the corrupting decades-long Israeli



Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu.

domination over Palestinians.

These are among the hardest words I have ever written. But they are vitally important. Not only is Israel harming Palestinians, but it is harming itself. The 1,200 rabbis may not like what I have to say, but it is long past time for them to remove the blinders from their eyes and grapple with the reality that Israel becoming an apartheid state or like South Africa in its denial of equal rights is not a future danger, as three former Israeli prime ministers — Ehud Barak, Ehud Olmert and David Ben Gurion — have warned, but a present-day reality. This harsh reality endured by millions of Palestinians requires people and organizations of conscience to divest from those companies — in this instance, from Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions and Hewlett Packard — profiting from the occupation and subjugation of Palestinians.

Such action made an enormous difference in apartheid South Africa. It can make an enormous difference in creating a future of justice and equality for Palestinians and Jews in the Holy Land.

Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, is archbishop-emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa.

Church Within A Church Movement: Coalition Witness Supplemented by JustChurch Activities

by Lois McCullen Parr

“Members of this justice ministry are in Tampa to share a message of hope, faith, and justice,” Executive Director Cathy Knight (sic) says.

Standing alongside the Common Witness Coalition, the Church Within A Church Movement (CWACM) is “heeding the call to BE Church in new ways, to build the inclusive and just church.

“The UMC continues to do harm, bully, and disenfranchise lesbian, transgender, bisexual, and gay people of faith,” says Knight. “We cannot minimize the pain being leveled in the name of ‘faithfulness to scripture’ and this Movement stands for the Gospel message that God's love is available to all.”

CWACM came about “in response to and immediately following the UMC General Conference 2000,” according to the Rev. Greg Dell.

Dell, along with Rev. Susan J. Morrison (Massachusetts), became coordinators of the “Professing Church” arm of the Clergy Alliance formed at the RMN Convocation in 2001 — a remodeling theology of congregations.

Growing from a United Methodist relationship, CWACM has held two “Ecumenical Extraordinary Ordinations in a Methodist Tradition Minus the Closet,” in 2008 and 2011.

The Ordination — for “those denied ordination because of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, inclusive progressive theology” — is one of several working strategies of the Movement, which also includes: church planting, anti-racism, providing resources, and cultivating ecumenical partnerships.

“We are called to hold the church universal accountable to be an inclusive community. The sin of exclusion manifests itself as white privilege, male privilege, heterosexual privilege, economic privilege...and through imperialism in the forms of fear, hate, greed, arrogance, domination and violence,” reads the conclusion of CWACM's theological statement (found at www.cwac.us).

CWACM's “JustChurch” Tampa activities included dinner and conversation in the Sail Pavilion last evening, just outside the Tampa Convention Center. The Movement hosts were Knight; two CWACM-Ordained Clergywomen and their wives (Rev. Annie Britton and Terry Schwennesen; and Rev. DeLyn Celec and Sarah Celec); and Dave Lafary, a former UMC clergyman who turned in his credentials three years ago when he chose to no longer remain in the UMC closet.

Celec was the Worship Coordinator for the Common Witness Coalition Worship on Sunday, April 29, where one of her original songs was the closing hymn. Britton & Celec were among those serving Holy Communion at the LYN Tabernacle earlier this week.

Knight says, “2012 is the 10th anniversary of the CWAC Movement, and programming will focus on taking the Movement's message of faith, hope and justice on the road to connect with our Movement members and new friends, culminating in Chicago, October 19-21 for our anniversary celebration.” Knight says.

“To find out more about the Movement, invite CWACM to create a ‘JustChurch’ event with your progressive faith community, or follow the CWACM at twitter.com/#!/CWACMovement.”

The Rev. Lois McCullen Parr is a Reconciling United Methodist and CWACM member.



Amy DeLong and Leo Yates demonstrate at the May 1 session of General Conference, calling on delegates to defeat or remove legislation that discriminates against people based on their sexual orientation. A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffery.

Candler Students Form Impressions of General Conference

by Tom Cullens

A large group of seminary students from Candler School of Theology are in Tampa for the entire convention.

Students in "Advanced Polity and the General Conference" shared their gifts of observation and insight. As this class, led by the Rev. Dr. Anne Burkholder, takes part in all that General Conference encompasses, it is important for delegates and visitors to recognize what these sharp observers note as significant. Burkholder is Associate Dean of Methodist Studies and Professor in the Practice of Ecclesiology and Church Leadership at Candler.

Hear the voices of four of these Candler students.

Stephanie Foretich: There are very important and divisive issues that are discussed in legislation, around the world, and within the Church. The world is truly watching our process, with press releases, tweets, and even a PBS documentary.

In addition, the presence of the Holy Spirit is in our midst, as prayer is happening in-between votes. I LOVE that our polity makes people in the Church talk about real issues with which we disagree, encouraging us to wrestle with each other's opinions, not ignore them. It is a wonderful thing that building relationships, listening to one another, and allowing everyone's voice to be heard is inherent in our polity, even if it is emotionally exhausting.

Darin Arntson: The brilliant Molly Vetter once asked me, "So, was that spirit-led, or anxiety-led?" The overall tone of this General Conference has brought to the surface the real fear and distrust that often guide our decisions as a denomination.

While change in our structures and relationships in ministry may "streamline" our current practices, we lack the trust in one another—and in the leaders to come—to truly experience a transformation of our own. Somewhere, among those who have yet to be heard, is the prophetic voice we are yearning for, with the vision to guide us forward. My hope is for us to hear and trust the message when it comes.



L-R, Candler School of Theology students Katie Ullmann, Stephanie Foretich, Jared Evans, Darin Arntson. Photo by Tom Cullens.

Jared Evans: I have experienced the ways in which so many "behind the scenes" groups work at General Conference and the astounding amount of "lobbying."

Any group can organize, research, and make connections to advance legislation or

worship service) that his experience has made him passionate. The young adults are clearly passionate, but how are we directing our passion?

Katie Ullmann: One of the sentiments frequently expressed by young adults at

municates verbally and non-verbally and the way others perceive him or her. I hope my generation will work to express their voice not only through their words but also through actively becoming the church to which the Spirit is leading all of us.

"I hope my generation will work to express their voice not only through their words but also through actively becoming the church to which the Spirit is leading all of us."

elections. With hard work, determination, and participation in a variety of roles, the voice of "young adults" can be heard. Being a delegate or voicing an opinion in committee or on the floor is not the only way to be heard. Rev. Dr. James Cone said on Sunday (during the Common Witness Coalition

General Conference is that they are not being heard. I myself have felt unheard at times, yet I know many young adults in the church who do feel heard.

Perhaps this is because these individuals are in the world being the church. Dialogue is both the way that a person com-

Tom Cullens is a graduate of Duke Divinity School and Wesley Theological Seminary.

Flash Mob Proves 'You Can't Stop the Beat'

by Kathy Gilbert, UMNS

In a break from a day of debating church policy, about 30 young people made weary delegates a little giddy with an energetic rendition of "You Can't Stop the Beat" from the musical Hairspray, staged during the late afternoon break of General Conference.

Creating a "flash mob," the group danced

is one of the many things my generation — particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer — youth have to offer to the church," said Jamie Michaels, a master of divinity student at Pacific School of Religion and a candidate for ordination in the California-Nevada Annual (regional) Conference.

have been planning the event since February. Sit said he even put the dance moves on a YouTube video so people could learn them before they got to General Conference.

"I believe in The United Methodist Church and I believe we can offer a prophetic voice in the 21st century, but that is not going to happen if we I don't have all voices at the table," he said. "Any form of oppression is hurting the church. I am passionate about creating a church that reflects the kingdom of God."

The song, "You Can't Stop the Beat" aptly illustrated their point, he said.

"In the past, the U.S. and other parts of the world were segregated based on race. My feeling is that today it is segregated based on sexual orientation and gender identity," said Anne Lynch, 21, from the Baltimore-Washington conference. "Through the mode of dance we wanted to express God is already with us and we are just waiting for the church to catch up."

Lynch said she was there today for her brother, who is gay.

"Since we were very young he felt unaccepted by society and the church and he tried to hurt himself many times," she said. "If I stood by and did nothing — like the church is asking me to do — his blood would be on my hands."

During the global assembly, the church

will be debating more than 70 pieces of legislation related to gay rights.

"At the moment what has happened in legislative committees are not going in our favor," said Kara Johansen Crawford, 22, serving as a mission intern in Colombia.

She said the language "incompatible with Christian teaching" remains intact despite legislation wanting to strike those words from Para. 161F in the Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book. Legislation from the Global Young People's Convocation held in 2010 was also not approved. That language would have said "we don't agree but we can work together," she said.

"It is really harmful language and just a grand irony of the church," she said. "We speak so much about inclusion and welcoming everyone in — open hearts, open minds, open doors, rethink church — yet so many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer folks are just so burned by their experiences of the church and the exclusion they have felt over the years."

If full inclusion doesn't happen at this General Conference, Kari Collins, 24, said they would keep trying.

"Young people have something to contribute, we are bringing change with us and you can't hold us back."



and sang for about five minutes, filling a large portion of the second floor of the Tampa Convention Center with joy, laughter and applause.

"Someone said to me, 'You know, everybody was really happy for five minutes.' I want to say to General Conference that this

"I wonder if the church is willing to lose us?" she asked.

Tyler Sit, a first-year master of divinity student at Candler University (and a dancing machine), lead the mob. He and other members of MOSAIC, Methodist Students (Young People) for an All Inclusive Church

“He aquí que estoy haciendo una cosa nueva”

Isaías 43:19

Por el Obispo Jack Tuell

Obispo Jack M. Tuell, una vez que un oponente del ministerio completo con las personas homosexuales en la Iglesia Metodista Unida, ahora dice: “Dios es viva, viva en este momento, revelando nueva verdad para nosotros.”

La religión nunca ha sido conocido como una fuerza en la vanguardia de hacer cosas nuevas. Vanguardia no ha sido una frase usada para describir a la iglesia a lo largo de la historia. Por el contrario, la iglesia se percibe generalmente como una fuerza de conservación, tratando de mantener los valores tradicionales que han llegado del pasado. Todo esto es bueno - hay verdad y valor en el centro de la fe religiosa, que es inmutable y debe ser honrado y venerado. Juan Wesley reconoció esto en la colocación de la tradición como una de las cuatro guías para nosotros, junto con la escritura, la experiencia y la razón.



Jack and Marji Tuell

Pero la lección de las Escrituras de hoy nos recuerda que Dios siempre está dispuesto a hacer una cosa nueva. Además, nos recuerda que el Dios que adoramos no es un Dios estático, capaz sólo de que nos habla de dos, tres o cuatro mil años atrás. Por el contrario, Dios es viva, viva en este momento, revelando nueva verdad para nosotros aquí, ahora, en este año de Nuestro Señor de 2012.

Dios está revelando nueva verdad en muchas áreas de la vida. Uno que es cada vez más claro es que Él nos está hablando en el tema de la homosexualidad.

Soy consciente de que muchas personas se sienten incómodos ni siquiera mencionar este asunto y deseo que acaba de salir. Soy consciente de eso, porque me he sentido exactamente de la misma manera. También soy consciente de que no es el tema más importante de la Iglesia Metodista Unida se enfrenta. La cuestión más importante es hacer discípulos, para compartir el amor de Dios en un mundo que está sufriendo. Pero la homosexualidad es el tema más volátil y potencialmente divisivas que nos enfrentamos, y creo que Dios está a punto de hacer algo nuevo entre nosotros.

La novedad que Dios está haciendo en medio de nosotros en este momento es que nos muestre que la homosexualidad no es simplemente un acto o actos de desobediencia a la ley de Dios y los mandamientos, pero es un estado del ser. Es una identidad que Dios ha dado a algunos de sus hijos. Es lo que son.

¿De qué manera esta afirmación - esta cosa nueva - de pie en contra de cuatro de Juan Wesley pruebas de la verdad cristiana: la escritura, la tradición, la experiencia y la razón?

ESCRITURA: Dos veces en el Libro de Levítico y una vez en el libro de Romanos son las condenas de la actividad homosexual. Uno en el Levítico indica que la muerte es el castigo por tales actos. En verdad, hay casos de actos homosexuales, que deben ser

condenados, incluso hay casos de actos heterosexuales, que deben ser condenadas. No me cabe duda de que el escritor de Levítico y que San Pablo tenía una buena razón para escribir como lo hicieron.

Pero cuando nos referimos a la escritura, tenemos que recurrir a la totalidad de la Escritura. Cuando hacemos eso, el mensaje central y abrumador es el amor incluyente de Dios para toda la humanidad. Los estudiosos de todas las opiniones han coincidido en que un versículo de la Escritura es verdaderamente el “evangelio en una cáscara de nuez” - el amado Juan 3:16: “Porque tanto amó Dios al mundo que dio a su Hijo unigénito que todo el que cree en él no perezca, sino que tenga vida eterna (NVI).”

El gran amor de Dios en Cristo barre algunas prohibiciones específicas de distancia, a pesar de que están en la Biblia. ¿Cree usted que? ¿Hay alguien aquí se divorciaron? Jesús eliminó casi todos los di-

vorcios. ¿Hay alguien aquí a una mujer? Pues bien, Pablo no se descarta, pero se descartó de hablar en la iglesia. ¿Hay alguien aquí comen carne de cerdo? Específicamente prohibido!

El mensaje soberano de la Biblia es la rentadora de Dios, todopoderoso amor que prevalece sobre todas las cosas, y lo coloca prohibiciones específicas en el contexto de la época y el lugar y la situación en la que fueron escritos.

TRADICION: Recordamos Tevya en El violinista en el tejado cantando “Tradición” En cuanto a la homosexualidad, no es tanto que la tradición ha estado activamente en contra de ella, pero que la tradición ha estado activamente encubriendo. La tradición es que es un tema tabú - envuelta en el misterio - indescriptible - innombrable. Como consecuencia de ello, nuestra verdadera tradición es la ignorancia. Así que en esa medida, tradición de la iglesia no ayuda mucho.

En otro sentido, sin embargo, tenemos una larga tradición de cambio. Hace unos 150 años, en muchas de nuestras iglesias, los metodistas creían que la esclavitud era bíblica y ordenado por Dios. Hasta 1920, la Iglesia Metodista en su disciplina prohibida (o tratado de prohibición) “El baile, el teatro va-, y la tarjeta de juego.” Pero tenemos una larga tradición, mucho de que por fin clasificar lo que es verdaderamente importante sobre lo que es incorrecta o sólo marginalmente importante. A la larga, siempre hemos sido capaces de discernir cuando Dios está haciendo algo nuevo en nuestro medio. Esta capacidad de cambiar se encuentra entre la más noble de nuestras tradiciones.

EXPERIENCIA: De todas las cuatro pruebas de la verdad cristiana, la experiencia es en algunos aspectos la más profunda y de largo alcance. Es lo que nos mueve cuando ninguna otra cosa.

Juan Wesley era un académico, un sacerdote legalista, Anglicana sentimiento de culpa y repulsivo poco antes de experi-

mentar el amor de Dios en su corazón de corazones - antes de su corazón, como él escribió, fue “extrañamente calentado”. Se cambió su vida. Hizo la diferencia entre su terminando un clérigo olvidado de la Iglesia de Inglaterra y lo que es - un hombre recordado, respetado y seguido por millones de personas, uno de los grandes padres espirituales de la raza humana.

¿Cuál es el papel de la experiencia en el tema que nos hablan de la actualidad? Es el encuentro personal con la angustia, el dolor, el dolor, el sufrimiento, la desesperación que las actitudes hostiles y prejuicios pueden tener en las personas de orientación homosexual.

¿De qué manera este encuentro ocurrido? Una forma es cuando los padres se dan cuenta de que su hijo es una persona de orientación homosexual. Ellos comparten intensamente e íntimamente en la lucha, tal vez la negación, muchas veces la angustia, pero en última instancia la aceptación del niño a quien dio a luz y que aman. No es de extrañar que esos padres se reúnen con otros en grupos tales como PFLAG (Padres, Familiares y Amigos de Lesbianas y Gays) para lograr la comprensión y el cambio. Porque ellos han experimentado de primera mano algunas de las heridas profundas, en el fondo que acompaña a este problema en nuestra iglesia y en nuestra sociedad.

En mi propio caso, sobre la base de mi limitado entendimiento, me fui con la opinión predominante, aunque no incluye ningún odio. Me dije a mí mismo: “Después de todo, Dios creó a los hombres y mujeres diferentes y complementarias entre sí físicamente y emocionalmente, tal vez. Desde mi punto de vista como una persona heterosexual, heterosexualidad debe ser lo que Dios espera de toda su creación.” Era de sentido común para mí.

Yo estaba equivocado. Fue una experiencia que me mostró que estaba equivocado.

En realidad, fueron varias experiencias en el trabajo. Cuando presidió el juicio del reverendo Gregory Dell, pastor de la Iglesia Metodista Unida Broadway en Chicago, me enteré de una congregación formada por cerca de 40% de gays y lesbianas, situado en una comunidad de composición similar. Bajo la ley de nuestra denominación, el reverendo Dell fue acusado de “desobediencia a la orden y la disciplina de la Iglesia Metodista Unida”, para la realización de un servicio de la santa unión de dos miembros de su congregación, dos hombres gays.

Estos dos hombres eran activos en su iglesia como ujieres, los miembros del Comité de Finanzas, y los participantes regulares. Ellos habían estado viviendo como socios desde hace varios años, pero había estado teniendo problemas en su relación. Ellos vinieron en busca de consejo espiritual de su pastor, y quería tener algún tipo de servicio de la oración o bendición de su compromiso. Ellos sentían que les fortalecía y convertirse en mejores socios. Reverendo Dell acordó llevar a cabo un servicio pequeño e informal, que tuvo lugar en septiembre de 1998.

Los hechos del caso no fueron impugnadas. Para llevar a cabo este servicio, el tribunal lo declaró culpable y lo suspendió del ejercicio del ministerio. Eclesiásticamente hablando, la decisión fue correcta. Tal como yo entiendo el Espíritu de Dios, que estaba mal.

Durante dos largos días que supervisó este juicio de un dedicado, lleno de energía, el ministro de compasión, el cuidado y capaz, con 30 años de servicio leal a nuestra iglesia. Esta experiencia, junto con otras experiencias, estoy seguro, me hizo cambiar de opinión. Empecé a ver lo nuevo que Dios está haciendo.

MOTIVO: cortes Razón en ambos sentidos. Durante mucho tiempo, la razón me dijo que la creación de Dios del hombre y la mujer descartó cualquier cosa menos la heterosexualidad. Pero la razón, enrique-

cido por la experiencia, en realidad me dijo lo contrario.

Muchas veces me he tomado la cuestión con argumentos que equiparan los prejuicios contra la homosexualidad con los prejuicios contra la raza. Que se opuso porque la raza es claramente una condición que se nació con el, mientras que la homosexualidad involucrados comportamiento que está sujeto a la voluntad humana. Una vez dicho esto, es razonable creer que Dios podría crear algunas de ellas con una orientación hacia el mismo sexo, puesto dentro de ellos la misma unidad fuerte de la sexualidad y el amor que está presente en las personas heterosexuales, a continuación, el decreto que tal unidad debe ser absolutamente reprimida y negada? Esta razón no sólo desafía, pero es cruel, insensible y arbitraria - cualidades extrajeros a Dios, como nosotros lo conocemos en Jesucristo. Razón apoya la creencia de que Dios está en el proceso de hacer una cosa nueva.

En el juicio de Gregorio de Dell, los dos hombres que se encontraban los participantes en el servicio de la unión aparecieron como testigos. En el stand, en respuesta a las preguntas, un hombre le dijo sobre su padre, un pastor de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Missouri, una de las denominaciones más conservadoras de Estados Unidos. Le pidió a su padre para llevar a cabo el santo servicio de la unión. El padre se negó lamentablemente, sobre la base de la posición de su denominación, sin embargo, asistieron al servicio. Después, en la recepción, el padre llevó en una oración pública de bendición para su hijo y su pareja.

Sean cuales sean nuestras creencias acerca de la homosexualidad, podemos, como cristianos, hacer menos que afirmar las relaciones de compromiso de nuestras hermanas y hermanos en Cristo?

En unas pocas semanas 988 delegados se reunirán en Tampa por la Conferencia General, que marca 228 años de vida de nuestra iglesia. Estas son buenas personas, dedicadas Unidas cristianos metodistas que buscan sinceramente la voluntad de Dios para nuestra iglesia. Ellos han sido elegidos por sus colegas sacerdotes y laicos de todo el mundo y le confió una gran responsabilidad. Ellos tienen diferentes puntos de vista sobre éste y muchos se enfrentan.

Es imposible predecir qué acciones puede tomar, porque el Espíritu se mueve a su propio ritmo - “el viento sopla donde quiere.” (Juan 3:8) Pero creo que si los delegados están escuchando con atención, por encima de la competencia presiones de este grupo y que, van a oír la, pequeña voz susurro: “He aquí! Estoy haciendo algo nuevo, “y van a responder con fidelidad.

Amén.

Obispo Tuell es un obispo de la Iglesia Metodista Unida, ahora retirado. Después de una breve carrera como abogado en el Estado de Washington, se unió a la Conferencia Anual del Noroeste del Pacífico, donde sirvió como pastor y superintendente de distrito, y fue elegido tres veces a la Conferencia General y cuatro veces a la Conferencia Jurisdiccional occidental. Fue elegido para el episcopado en 1972. Sirvió a la zona de Portland durante ocho años, y el área de Los Ángeles desde hace 12 años, retirándose en 1992. Él y su esposa, Marji, tienen su hogar en Des Moines, Washington.

“Tazama! Nitatenda neno jipya” Isaya 43:19

Na Askofu Jack Tuell

Askofu Jack M. Tuell, aliyekuwa mpinzani wa huduma kamili na watu ushoga nchini United Methodist Church, sasa anasema, “Mungu yuhai, yuhai kwa wakati huu, na anatuonyesha ukweli mpya.”

Dini haijawahi kujulikana kama nguvu katika kupunguza makali ya kufanya mambo mapya. Avant garde sio maneno yame-shawahitumika kuelezea kanisa katika historia. Badala yake, kanisa huonekana kama njia ya kuhifadhi na kurejesha thamani za kale ambazo zilizokuwa tangu enzi za kale. Haya yote ni mazuri - kuna ukweli na thamani katika kituo cha imani ya dini ambayo haibadiliki na yasitahili kuheshimiwa. John Wesley alitambua haya kwa kuweka utamaduni kama moja ya miongozo minne kwetu, pamoja na maandiko, uzoefu na sababu.

Lakini somo tunalopata katika andiko la leo linatukumbusha kwamba Mungu huwa tayari kufanya kitu kipya. Zaidi inatukumbusha kwamba Mungu tunaye muabudu si Mungu tuli, mwenye uwezo tu wa kuzungumza na sisi kutoka miaka elfu mbili, tatu au nne iliyopita. Badala yake, Mungu yuhai, yuhai kwa wakati huu, na anatuonyesha ukweli mpya, sasa, katika mwaka huu wa Bwana wetu 2012.

Mungu anafunua ukweli mpya katika maeneo mengi ya maisha. Moja ambayo inazidi wazi ni kwamba, anasema na sisi kuhusu swala la ushoga.

Nafahamu ya kwamba watu wengi wana wasiwasi hata kutaja hili jambo na kutamani heri lingetoweka. Ninatambua haya, kwa kuwa niliyahisi haya kwa njia hiyo hiyo. Pia nafahamu ya kwamba hili sio swala lililo la muhimu zaidi linalo ikabili United Methodist Church. Swala muhimu zaidi ni kufanya wafuasi, kushiriki upendo wa Mungu katika dunia ambayo inaumiza. Lakini ushoga ni swala tata na zaidi na lenye uwezo wa kutugawanya, na naamini kuwa Mungu akaribia kutenda jambo jipya kati yetu.

Jambo jipya afanyalo Mungu kati yetu hivi sasa ni kutuonyesha kuwa ushoga siyo tu kitendo au vitendo vya kuasi sheria ya Mungu na amri, lakini ni hali ya kuwa. Ni utambulisho ambao Mungu amewapa baadhi ya watoto wake. Hivyo ndivyo walivyo.

Vipi madai haya - hii kitu kipya - cha simama dhidi ya vipimo vinne vya John Wesley kuhusu ukweli wa kikristo: andiko, mila, uzoefu na sababu?

MAANDIKO: Mara mbili katika kitabu cha Mambo ya Walawi na mara moja katika Kitabu cha Warumi ni kulaaniwa kwa tabia za kishoga. Moja katika Mambo ya Walawi unaonyesha kuwa adhabu kwa vitendo kama hivyo ni kifo. Kwa kweli, kuna matukio ya vitendo vya ushoga ambayo inapaswa kulaaniwa, hata kama kuna matukio ya vitendo jinsia tofauti ambayo inapaswa kulaaniwa. Sina shaka kwamba mwandishi wa Mambo ya Walawi na pia Paulo walikuwa na sababu nzuri kuandika kama walivyofanya.

Lakini tunaporejea kwa maandiko, tunahitaji kurejea kwa maandiko kikamilifu. Tukifanya hayo, ujumbe ya kati na la muhimu ni upendo wa Mungu kwa binadamu wote. Wasomi wa maoni mbalimbali wamekubaliana kuwa aya moja ya maandiko ni kweli “injili kwa kifupi” - mpendwa Yohana 3:16: “kwa vile Mungu aliupenda ulimwengu, hata akamtoa Mwana wake wa pekee ili kila mtu amwaminiye asipotee bali awe na uzima wa milele (NRSV).”

Upendo mkuu wa Mungu katika Kristo huondoa makatazo baadhi maalum, hata kama yamo katika Biblia. Je, waamini hayo? Mtu yeyote hapa aliyetalakiwa? Yesu alikataana talaka kivyovyote. Kuna mwanamke hapa? Naam, Paulo hakuwakatalia ninyi, lakini aliwakatalia kuzungumza kanisani. Kuna yeyote ambaye hula nyama ya nguruwe? Imepigwa marufuku!

ujumbe wa uhuru wa Biblia ni ukombozi wa Mungu, nguvu za upendo zinazopapewa kipau mbele, na maeneo maalum makatazo katika mazingira ya wakati na

mahali na hali ambayo yaliandikwa.

KITAMANDUNI: Tunakumbuka Tevya katika Fiddler juu ya paa akiimba, “tamaduni.” Kuhusu swala la ushoga, si kiasi kwamba mila imekuwa kikamilifu juu yake, lakini tamaduni hizo zimekuwa kikamilifu kuifunika tu. tamaduni ni kwamba mada yenyewe ni mwiko - yamefunikwa na siri - Isiyoweza kuzungumziwa - isiyoweza kutajwa. Kwa ajili ya hayo, utamaduni wetu halisi ni upuuzi. Hivyo kwa kiasi kwamba, tamaduni za kanisa hazina msaada sana.

Kwa njia nyingine, hata hivyo, tuna desturi refu ya mabadiliko. Baadhi ya miaka 150 iliyopita, kanisa nyingi zetu, Methodist waliamini utumwa umetokana na maandiko na umetuliwa na Mungu. Hadi 1920, Kanisa la Methodist katika nidhamu zake ilipiga marufuku (au ilijaribu kuzuia) “kucheza ngoma, kwetazama michezo ya kuigiza, na kucheza kadi.” Lakini kwa muda tuna tamaduni za hatimaye kuamua yaliyo muhimu kwa kweli, yasio sahihi au yaliyo na umuhimu kiasi tu. Kwa muda mrefu, tumekuwa na uwezo wa kutambua wakati Mungu anafanya jambo jipya katikati mwetu. Hii uwezo wa kubadili ni miongoni mwa ubora wa mila zetu.

UZOEFU: Kati ya vipimo vyote vinne vya ukweli wa kikristo, uzoefu ni baadhi ya njia ya ndani kabisa na ya umbali zaidi. Ni jambo la kutuendesha wakati hamna lingine la kutuendesha.

John Wesley alikuwa msomi, mwana-sheria, aliyejihisi kuwa nahatia na muasi kidogo, mhubiri katika Anglican, kabla kuhisi upendo wa Mungu moyoni wake wa mioyo - kabla ya moyo wake, kama alivyoandika, ilikuwa “amepaswa moto kwa jinsi isiyu ya kawaida.” Aligeuka kimaisha. Ilifanya tofauti na akaishia kuwa mshemanzzi aliyesahaulika wa Kanisa la Uingereza na yule mtu amekuwa - anavyokumbukwa, anavyoheshimiwa na kufuatwa na mamilioni, amekuwa mmoja wa baba kubwa wa kiroho kwa jamii ya binadamu.

Je, nini jukumu la uzoefu katika swala tunalozungumzia leo? Ni kukutana kibin-afsi na dhiki, maumivu, kujinyima, mateso, kukata tamaa, iliyoletwa na tabia na mitazamo wa hukumu kuhusu watu wa mwelekeo wa ushoga.

Haya huja kiviipi? Njia moja ni wakati wazazi hutambua kuwa mtoto wao ni mtu wa mwelekeo wa ushoga. Wao kushiriki mkazo na undani katika mapambano, labda kukataa, mara nyingi dhiki, lakini hatimaye kukubalika kwa mtoto ambaye waliomzaa na kumpenda. Ni ajabu ndogo ya kwamba wazazi kama hawa, hukusanyika pamoja na watu wengine katika makundi kama vile PFLAG (Wazazi, Familia na Marafiki wa Wasagaji na Mashoga) ili kuleta ufahamu na mabadiliko. Kwa maana wao wameji-nea haya wao wenyewe baadhi ya jeraha kina, kina kwamba inayombatana swala hili katika kanisa letu na katika jamii yetu.

Katika kesi yangu mwenyewe, kutokana na ufahamu wangu mdogo, nilienda pamoja na mtazamo uliopo, ingawa sikuweka chuki yoyote. Mimi nikajiambia, “Baada ya yote, Mungu ameumba wanaume na wanawake tofauti, nyongeza mmoja kwa mwingine kimwili na kihisia labda. Kwa maoni yangu kama mtu wa jinsia tofauti, watu lazima wawe kama vile Mungu anatarajia tokana na viumbe vyote.” kwangu hii akili ya kawaida tu.

Nilikosea. Kwa uzoefu nilipata kuwa nilikosea.

Kwa Kweli, uzoefu kadhaa nilipata kazini. Wakati nilishuhudia kesi ya Mchungaji Gregory Dell, mchungaji wa Broadway United Methodist Church Chicago, nilijipata kujua kuhusu kikundi kilichoundwa 40% watu mashoga na wasagaji, kilichokuwa katika jamii ya mifano kama hiyo. Chini ya sheria ya dhehebu yetu, Mchungaji Dell alishtakiwa kwa “uasi na utaratibu na nidhamu ya United Methodist Church,” kwa ajili ya kufanya huduma ya muungano takatifu kwa ajili ya wanachama wawili wa mkutano wake, mashoga wawili wanaume.

Hawa wanaume wawili walihusika katika kanisa lao kama watumishi, wajumbe wa kamati ya fedha, na washiriki wa kila mara. Walikuwa wakiishi kama washirika kwa miaka kadhaa, lakini walikuwa na shida katika uhusiano wao. Walikwenda kutafuta ushauri wa kiroho kutoka kwa mchungaji wao, na walitaka kuwa na aina fulani ya huduma ya sara au baraka ya aha-di zao. Waliona kwamba ingewaimarisha na kuwafanya wanandoa bora. Mchungaji Dell alikubali kufanya huduma dogo isiyorasmi, ambayo ilifanyika katika Septemba ya mwaka 1998.

Ukweli wa kesi haukugobewa kamwe. Kwa ajili ya kufanya huduma hii, mahakamani alipatikana na hatia na aka achishwa kazi kutokana na zoezi ya huduma. Kulingana na tamaduni za kanisa, uamuzi huu ulikuwa sahihi. Naelewa kulingana na Roho wa Mungu, ilikuwa ni makosa.

Kwa muda wa siku mbili ndefu nilisi-mamia hii kesi ya Mchungaji aliyejitolea, mwenye juhudi, mwenye huruma, uwezo na kujali, mwenye miaka 30 ya huduma mwaminifu kwa kanisa letu. Uzoefu huu, pamoja na uzoefu wa wengine nina uhakika, una-sababisha mimi kubadili mawazo yangu. Nikaanza kuona kitu kipya Mungu anafanya.

S A B A B U : Sababu inakata pande zote mbili. Kwa muda mrefu, sababu iliniambia kuwa uumbaji wa Mungu

wa kike na wa kiume ilitawala nje kitu chote lakini uhusiano wa waume kwa kike. Lakini sababu, kuzidishwa na uzoefu, kwa kweli iliniambia vinginevyo.

Mara nyingi nimechukua swala hilo kwa hoja ambayo sawa na ubaguzi dhidi ya ushoga na chuki dhidi ya watu wa rangi tofauti. Nilichukua swala kwa sababu ni wazi kuwa mtu huzaliwa na rangi ilhali, ushoga inahusu tabia ambayo ni chini ya mapenzi ya binadamu. Baada ya kusema kwamba, je, ni sababu ya kuamini kuwa Mungu angeumba baadhi ya binadamuwenye mwelekeo wa jinsia moja, kuweka ndani yao ile ile nguvu endelevu la kujamiiana na upendo wa sasa katika watu wa jinsia tofauti, na kisha amri kwamba iwezekane kabisa kukataliwa na kunyimwa? Hii siyo tu linakosa sababu, lakini ni ukatili, unfeeling na holela - sifa kigeni kwa Mungu kama sisi kumjua Yesu Kristo. Sababu inasaidia imani kwamba Mungu yu katika mchakato wa kufanya jambo jipya.

Katika kesi ya Gregory Dell, wanaume wawili ambao walikuwa washiriki katika huduma ya muungano walikuwa mashahidi. Katika kiziba, ili kukabiliana na maswali, mtu mmoja alishuhudia kuhusu baba yake, Mchungaji katika Sinodi Missouri Kanisa la Kilutheri, mmoja wao. Babake kwa masikitiko alikataa, kwa misingi ya dhehebu lao, lakini walihudhuria huduma. Baada ya hapo, katika mapokezi, babake pia aliongoza katika maombi ya umma wa baraka kwa ajili ya mtoto wake na mpenzi wake.

Licha ya imani yetu kuhusu ushoga, tunaweza sisi kama Wakristo kufanya lolote chini ya kuthibitisha mahusiano kati ya dada zetu na ndugu katika Kristo?

Katika wiki chache wajumbe 988 watakusanyika katika Tampa kwa Baraza Kuu, kuashiria miaka 228 ya maisha ya kanisa letu. Hawa ni watu wazuri, wenye lengo United Methodist Wakristo kwa bi-dii kutafuta mapenzi ya Mungu kwa ajili ya kanisa yetu. Wao wamechaguliwa na wa-

tumishi wenzao na walei kutoka duniani kote na waliokabidhiwa jukumu zito. Wako mitazamo tofauti kuhusu masuala haya na mengi inayowakabili.

Ni vigumu kutabiri hatua gani wanaweza kuchukua, kwa sababu Roho huenda kwa kasi yake mwenyewe - “Upepo huvuma upendavyo.” (Yohana 3:8) Lakini naamini kwamba kama wajumbe watasikiliza kwa makini, juu ya mashindano ya shinikizo kjambo jipya, “na wao watajibu kwa uaminifu kujibu kwauaminifu.

Amina.



Jack and Marji Tuell

Wasifu wa Askofu Jack M. Tuell Askofu Tuell ni askofu wa Umoja wa Methodist Church, aliyestaafu. Baada ya kazi fupi kama mwanasheria katika Jimbo la Washington, alijiunga na Pacific Northwest Mkutano wa Mwaka ambapo aalifanya kazi kama mchungaji wa wilaya kama msimamizi, na amechaguliwa mara tatu katika Mkutano Mkuu na mara nne kwa Mkutano wa Magharibi Jurisdictional. Alichaguliwa kwa episcopacy mwaka 1972. Yeye aliwahi kuhudumu katika Portland kwa miaka nane, na eneo la Los Angmwao katika Des Moines, Washington.

'Behold! I am doing a new thing'

Isaiah 43:19

by Bishop Jack Tuell

Religion has never been known as a force at the cutting edge of doing new things. Avant garde has not been a phrase used to describe the church throughout history. Rather, the church is usually perceived as a conserving force, seeking to retain the traditional values which have come from the past. All of this is good--there is truth and value at the center of religious faith which is unchanging and ought to be honored and revered. John Wesley recognized this in placing tradition as one of four guidelines for us, along with scripture, experience and reason.

But our scripture lesson for today reminds us that God is ever ready to do a new thing. It further reminds us that the God we worship is not a static God, capable only of speaking to us from two, three or four thousand years ago. Rather, God is living, alive in this moment, revealing new truth to us here, now, in this year of our Lord



Jack and Marji Tuell

2012.

God is revealing new truth in many areas of life. One which is increasingly clear is that He is speaking to us in the issue of homosexuality.

I am aware that many people are uncomfortable even mentioning this matter and wish it would just go away. I am aware of that, because I have felt exactly the same way. I am also aware that it is not the most important issue The United Methodist Church faces. The most important issue is to make disciples, to share the love of God in a world that is hurting. But homosexuality is the most volatile and potentially divisive issue we face, and I believe that God is about to do a new thing among us.

The new thing that God is doing in our midst right now is to show us that homosexuality is not simply an act or acts of willful disobedience to God's law and commandments, but it is a state of being. It is an identity that God has given to some of His children. It is who they are.

How does this assertion--this new thing--stand up against John Wesley's four tests of Christian truth: scripture, tradition, experience and reason?

SCRIPTURE: Twice in the Book of Leviticus and once in the Book of Romans are condemnations of homosexual activity. One in Leviticus indicates that death is the penalty for such acts. In truth, there are instances of homosexual acts which should be condemned, even as there are instances of heterosexual acts which should be condemned. I do not doubt that the writer of Leviticus and that St. Paul had good reason to write as they did.

But when we turn to the scripture, we need to turn to the whole of the scripture. When we do that, the central and overwhelming message is God's inclusive love for all of humankind. Scholars of all opinions have agreed that one verse of scripture is truly the "gospel in a nutshell"-- the be-

loved John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life (NRSV)."

The overwhelming love of God in Christ sweeps some specific prohibitions away, even though they are in the Bible. Do you believe that? Anyone here divorced? Jesus ruled out almost all divorce. Anyone here a woman? Well, Paul didn't rule you out, but he ruled you out of speaking in church. Anybody here eat pork? Specifically prohibited!

The sovereign message of the Bible is God's redeeming, all-powerful love that overrides all else, and places specific prohibitions in the context of the time and place and situation in which they were written.

TRADITION: We remember Tevya in Fiddler on the Roof singing, "Tradition." Regarding homosexuality, it is not so much that tradition has been actively against it, but that tradition has been actively covering it up. The tradition is that it is a taboo subject--shrouded in mystery--unspeakable--unmentionable. As a consequence, our real tradition is ignorance. So to that extent, church tradition doesn't help much.

In another way, however, we have a long tradition of change. Some 150 years ago, in many of our churches, Methodists believed slavery was scriptural and ordained by God. Until 1920, The Methodist Church in its Discipline prohibited (or tried to prohibit) "dancing, theater-going, and card-playing." But we have a long, long tradition of finally sorting out what is truly important over what is either incorrect or only marginally important. In the long run, we have always been able to discern when God is doing a new thing in our midst. This capacity to change is among the noblest of our traditions.

EXPERIENCE: Of all the four tests of Christian truth, experience is in some ways the deepest and most far-reaching. It is the thing that can move us when nothing else can.

John Wesley was an academic, legalistic, guilt-ridden and slightly repulsive Anglican priest before he experienced the love of God in his heart of hearts--before his heart, as he wrote, was "strangely warmed." It turned his life around. It made the difference between his ending up a forgotten cleric of the Church of England and what he is--a man remembered, respected and followed by millions, one of the great spiritual fathers of the human race.

What is the role of experience in the issue we speak of today? It is the personal encounter with the anguish, the pain, the hurt, the suffering, the despair which harsh and judgmental attitudes can have on persons of homosexual orientation.

How does this encounter come about? One way is when parents realize that their child is a person of homosexual orientation. They share intensely and intimately in the struggle, perhaps the denial, often the anguish, but ultimately the acceptance of the child whom they bore and whom they love. It is little wonder that such parents gather together with others in groups such as PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) to bring about understanding and change. For they have experienced first-hand some of the deep, deep hurt that accompanies this issue in our church and in our society.

In my own case, based on my limited understanding, I went along with the prevailing view, although never including any hatred. I said to myself, "After all, God created men and women different, complementary to one another physically and perhaps emotionally. From my viewpoint as a heterosexual person, heterosexuality must be what God expects of all His creation." It was just common sense to me.

I was wrong. It was experience that showed me I was wrong.

Actually, several experiences were at work. When I presided over the trial of the Reverend Gregory Dell, pastor of the Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago, I learned about a congregation made up of about 40% gay and lesbian persons, situated in a community of similar makeup. Under the law of our denomination, Reverend Dell was charged with "disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church," for conducting a service of holy union for two members of his congregation, two gay men.

These two men were active in their church as ushers, finance committee members, and regular participants. They had been living as partners for several years, but had been having trouble in their relationship. They came seeking spiritual counsel from their pastor, and wanted to have some kind of service of prayer or blessing of their commitment. They felt it would strengthen them and make them better partners. Reverend Dell agreed to conduct a small, informal service, which took place in September of 1998.

The facts of the case were never contested. For conducting this service, the trial court found him guilty and suspended him from the exercise of ministry. Ecclesiastically speaking, the decision was correct. As I understand the Spirit of God, it was wrong.

For two long days I oversaw this trial of a dedicated, energetic, compassionate, caring and able minister, with 30 years of loyal service to our church. This experience, along with other experiences I am sure, caused me to change my mind. I began to see the new thing God is doing.

REASON: Reason cuts both ways. For a long time, reason told me that God's creation of male and female ruled out anything

At the trial of Gregory Dell, the two men who were the participants in the service of union appeared as witnesses. On the stand, in response to questions, one man told about his father, a pastor in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, one of the most conservative denominations in America. He asked his father to conduct the holy union service. The father regretfully declined, on the basis of his denomination's position, yet he attended the service. Afterwards, at the reception, the father led in a public prayer of blessing for his son and his partner.

Whatever our beliefs about homosexuality, can we as Christians do any less than to affirm the committed relationships of our sisters and brothers in Christ?

In a few weeks 988 delegates will gather in Tampa for the General Conference, marking 228 years of our church's life. These are good people, dedicated United Methodist Christians earnestly seeking God's will for our church. They have been elected by their fellow clergy and laity from all over the world and entrusted with a heavy responsibility. They will have differing perspectives on this and many issues facing them.

It is impossible to predict what actions they may take, because the Spirit moves at its own pace-- "the wind blows where it will." (John 3:8) But I believe that if the delegates are listening carefully, above the competing pressures of this group and that, they will hear the still, small voice whisper, "Behold! I am doing a new thing," and they will respond faithfully.

Amen.

Bishop Jack M. Tuell, once an opponent of full ministry with homosexual persons in The United Methodist Church, now says, "God is living, alive in this moment, revealing new truth to us."

but heterosexuality. But reason, enriched by experience, actually told me otherwise.

I have often taken issue with arguments which equated prejudice against homosexuality with prejudice against race. I took issue because race was clearly a condition one was born with, while homosexuality involved behavior which is subject to human will. Having said that, is it reasonable to believe that God would create some with an orientation toward the same gender, put within them the same strong drive of sexuality and love which is present in heterosexual persons, and then decree that such a drive is to be absolutely repressed and denied? This not only defies reason, but is cruel, unfeeling and arbitrary--qualities foreign to God as we know Him in Jesus Christ. Reason supports a belief that God is in the process of doing a new thing.

Bishop Tuell is a bishop of The United Methodist Church, now retired. After a brief career as an attorney in Washington State, he joined the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference where he served as a pastor and district superintendent, and was elected three times to the General Conference and four times to the Western Jurisdictional Conference. He was elected to the episcopacy in 1972. He served the Portland Area for eight years, and the Los Angeles Area for 12 years, retiring in 1992. He and his wife, Marji, make their home in Des Moines, Washington.

‘Voici, Je fais une chose nouvelle’ Esaïe 43:19

Par l'Évêque Jack Tuell

L'évêque Jack Tuell, Une fois qu'un adversaire du ministère à part entière aux personnes homosexuelles dans l'Église Méthodiste Unie, dit maintenant, «Dieu est vivant, vivant en ce moment, révélant la vérité de nouveau pour nous.

La religion n'a jamais été connue comme une force à la pointe de faire de nouvelles choses. Avant-garde n'a pas été une expression utilisée pour décrire l'église à travers l'histoire. Plutôt, l'église est habituellement perçue comme une force conservatrice, qui cherche à maintenir les valeurs traditionnelles qui sont venues du passé. Tout cela est bon - il est la vérité et de la valeur au centre de la foi religieuse qui est immuable et doit être honoré et vénéré. John Wesley a reconnu dans la tradition de placer comme l'un des quatre lignes directrices pour nous, avec l'écriture, l'expérience et la raisonnement.

Mais notre leçon Écriture pour aujourd'hui nous rappelle que Dieu est toujours prêt à faire une chose nouvelle. Il nous rappelle en outre que le Dieu que nous adorons n'est pas un Dieu statique, capable seulement de nous parler de deux, trois ou quatre mille ans. Au contraire, Dieu est vivant, vivant en ce moment, révélant la vérité de nouveau pour nous, ici et maintenant, en cette année de notre Seigneur 2012.

Dieu révèle la vérité nouvelle dans de nombreux domaines de la vie. Un qui est de plus en plus clair, c'est qu'Il nous parle dans la question de l'homosexualité.

Je suis conscient que beaucoup de gens sont mal à l'aise même mentionné cette question et souhaite qu'il s'en aller. Je suis conscient de cela, parce que j'ai ressenti exactement la même façon. Je suis également conscient que ce n'est pas la chose la plus importante que L'Église Méthodiste Unie est confrontée. La chose la plus importante est de faire des disciples, de partager l'amour de Dieu dans un monde qui est mal. Mais l'homosexualité est la chose la plus volatile et potentiellement conflictuelles que nous devons relever, et je crois que Dieu est sur le point de faire une chose nouvelle en nous.

La chose nouvelle que Dieu fait au milieu de nous en ce moment est de nous montrer que l'homosexualité n'est pas simplement un acte ou des actes de désobéissance délibérée à la loi de Dieu et les commandements, mais il est un état d'être. C'est une identité que Dieu a donné à certains de Ses enfants. Il est de savoir qui ils sont.

Comment est-ce que cette assertion - cette chose nouvelle - se dresser contre les quatre tests de John Wesley de la vérité chrétienne: l'Écriture, la tradition, l'expérience et la raison?

L'ÉCRITURE: Deux fois dans le Livre du Lévitique et une fois dans le Livre des Romains sont des condamnations de l'activité homosexuelle. Un dans le Lévitique indique que la mort est la peine pour de tels actes. En vérité, il y a des cas d'actes homosexuels, qui doivent être condamnés, alors même qu'il y a des cas d'actes hétérosexuels qui doivent être condamnés. Je ne doute pas que l'écrivain du Lévitique et que saint Paul avait de bonnes raisons d'écrire comme ils le faisaient.

Mais quand nous tournons vers l'écriture, nous devons tourner vers l'ensemble de l'écriture. Quand nous faisons cela, le message central et écrasant, c'est l'amour inclusif de Dieu pour toute l'humanité. Les chercheurs de toutes les opinions ont convenu que l'un verset de l'écriture est vraiment l'«évangile en bref» - le bien-aimé Jean 3:16: «Dieu a tant aimé le monde qu'il a donné son Fils unique afin que quiconque croit en lui ne périsse pas mais ait la vie éternelle (NRSV).»

L'amour immense de Dieu dans le Christ balait certaines interdictions spécifiques de suite, même si elles sont dans la Bible. Croyez-vous cela? Tout le monde ici divorcé? Jésus exclu la quasi-totalité de divorce. N'importe qui ici une femme? En bien, Paul ne vous ai pas exclu, mais il vous exclut de

parler à l'église. N'importe qui ici mange du porc? Plus précisément interdite!

Le message souverain de la Bible est la rédemption de Dieu, tout-puissant amour qui l'emporte sur toute autre chose, et place des interdictions spécifiques dans le contexte de l'époque et le lieu et la situation dans laquelle elles ont été écrites.

TRADITION: Nous nous souvenons de Tevya dans Un violon sur le toit du chant, «Tradition» En ce qui concerne l'homosexualité, il n'est pas tellement que la tradition a été activement contre sa, mais cette tradition a été active pour le couvrir. La tradition veut que ce soit un sujet tabou - mystère - indicible - innommable. En conséquence, notre vraie tradition, c'est l'ignorance. Donc, dans cette mesure, tradition de l'Église ne nous aide pas beaucoup.

En d'autres termes, cependant, nous avons une longue tradition de changement. Il ya 150 ans, dans beaucoup de nos églises, les méthodistes cru l'esclavage était scripturaire et ordonné par Dieu. Jusqu'en 1920, l'Église méthodiste dans sa discipline interdite (ou essayé d'interdire) «la danse, aller au théâtre, et de jouer aux cartes.» Mais nous avons une longue, longue tradition de finalement le tri entre ce qui est vraiment important sur ce qui est incorrect ou que marginalement important. Dans le long terme, nous avons toujours été en mesure de discerner quand Dieu fait quelque chose de nouveau au milieu de nous. Cette capacité de changer est parmi les plus nobles de nos traditions.

EXPERIENCE: De tous les quatre tests de la vérité chrétienne, l'expérience est en quelque sorte la plus profonde et la plus ambitieuse. C'est la seule chose qui peut nous émouvoir quand rien d'autre ne peut.

John Wesley était un universitaire, légaliste, prêtre de culpabilité et un peu répugnant anglicane avant qu'il a connu l'amour de Dieu dans son cœur de cœurs - avant que son cœur, comme il l'écrivit, était «étrangement réchauffé.» Il a changé sa vie. Il a fait la différence entre son de se retrouver un clerc oublié de l'Église d'Angleterre et ce qu'il est - un homme se souvient, respectée et suivie par des millions, l'un des pères spirituels de grands de la race humaine.

Quel est le rôle de l'expérience dans la question que nous parlons aujourd'hui? Il est la rencontre personnelle avec l'angoisse, la douleur, le mal, la souffrance, le désespoir qui les attitudes dures et de jugement peut avoir sur les personnes d'orientation homosexuelle.

Comment cette rencontre ne se produire? Une façon, c'est quand les parents réalisent que leur enfant est une personne d'orientation homosexuelle. Ils partagent intensément et intimement dans la lutte, peut-être la négation, souvent l'angoisse, mais finalement l'acceptation de l'enfant dont ils portaient et qu'ils aiment. Il n'est guère étonnant que ces parents se rassemblent avec d'autres groupes tels que PFLAG (Parents, familles et amis des lesbiennes et des gais) pour favoriser la compréhension et le changement. Car ils ont connu de première main une partie de la profonde, blessure profonde qui accompagne cette question dans notre église et dans notre société.

Dans mon propre cas, basé sur ma compréhension limitée, je suis allé avec l'opinion dominante, bien que jamais, y compris toute la haine. Je me suis dit, «Après tout, Dieu a créé les hommes et les femmes différents, complémentaires les uns aux autres physiquement et peut-être émotionnellement. De mon point de vue comme une personne hétérosexuelle, l'hétérosexualité doit être ce que Dieu attend de toute Sa création.» C'était juste le bon sens pour moi.

Je me suis trompé. Ce fut une expérience qui m'a montré que j'avais tort.

En fait, plusieurs expériences ont été au travail. Lorsque j'ai présidé le procès du Révérend Gregory Dell, pasteur de l'Église Méthodiste Unie de Broadway à Chicago, j'ai appris une congrégation composée

d'environ 40% des gais et lesbiennes, situé dans une communauté de composition semblable. En vertu de la loi de notre dénomination, le révérend Dell a été accusé de «désobéissance à l'ordre et la discipline de l'Église Méthodiste Unie,» pour la réalisation d'un service de la sainte union de deux membres de sa congrégation, deux hommes homosexuels.

Ces deux hommes étaient actifs dans leur église comme huissiers, les membres du comité des finances, et les participants réguliers. Ils ont vécu en tant que partenaires pour plusieurs années, mais avait eu du mal à leur relation. Ils sont venus chercher des conseils spirituels de leur pasteur, et voulais avoir une sorte de service de la prière ou la bénédiction de leur engagement. Ils ont estimé qu'il serait de les renforcer et les rendre meilleurs partenaires. Le révérend Dell a accepté de mener un petit service informel, qui a eu lieu en Septembre 1998.

Les faits de la cause n'ont jamais été contestés. Pour la réalisation de ce service, le tribunal de première instance l'a reconnu coupable et l'a suspendu de l'exercice du ministère. Ecclésiastiquement parlant, la décision était correcte. Si je comprends bien l'Esprit de Dieu, il a eu tort.

Pendant deux longues semaines j'ai supervisé ce procès d'un dédié, énergique, compatissant, bienveillant et ministre capable, avec 30 ans de bons et loyaux services à notre église. Cette expérience, ainsi que les expériences d'autres, j'en suis sûr, me fit changer d'avis. J'ai commencé à voir la chose nouvelle que Dieu fait.

RAISON: la raison coupe dans les deux sens. Pendant longtemps, la raison me dit que la création de Dieu de mâle et femelle exclu quoi que ce soit, mais l'hétérosexualité. Mais la raison, enrichi par l'expérience, effectivement m'a dit le contraire.

J'ai souvent contesté par des arguments qui équivalaient préjugés contre l'homosexualité avec les préjugés contre la race. J'ai pris question parce que la race était clairement une seule condition était né avec, tandis que l'homosexualité impliqués comportement qui est soumise à la volonté humaine. Cela dit, est-il raisonnable de croire que Dieu créerait certains avec une orientation vers le même sexe, mis en eux le même lecteur forte de la sexualité et l'amour qui est présent chez les personnes hétérosexuelles, puis décréter que telle un disque est d'être absolument réprimé et nié? Cette raison non seulement défie, mais il est cruel, insensible et arbitraire - des qualités étrangères à Dieu comme nous le connaissons en Jésus-Christ. Le raisonnement soutient la conviction que Dieu est en train de faire une chose nouvelle.

Lors du procès de Gregory Dell, les deux hommes qui étaient les participants au service de l'union ont comparu comme témoins. Sur le stand, en réponse aux questions, un homme dit à propos de son père, un pasteur de l'Église luthérienne Synode du Missouri, l'une des confessions les plus conservatrices en Amérique. Il demanda à son père pour diriger le service union sacrée. Le père regret diminué, sur la base de la position de sa confession, et pourtant il a assisté au service. Ensuite, à la réception, le père a conduit dans une prière publique de bénédiction pour son fils et son partenaire.

Quelles que soient nos croyances au sujet de l'homosexualité, peut-on en tant que chrétiens en faire moins que d'affirmer les relations engagées de nos sœurs et frères en Christ?

Dans quelques semaines, 988 délégués

se réuniront à Tampa pour la Conférence générale, le marquage 228 ans de la vie de notre église. Ce sont de bonnes personnes, dédiées Unies chrétiens méthodistes en cherchant résolument la volonté de Dieu pour notre église. Ils ont été élus par leurs confrères et des laïcs de tous les coins du monde et chargé d'une lourde responsabilité. Ils ont des perspectives différentes sur cette question et de nombreux auxquels ils sont confrontés.

Il est impossible de prédire quelles mesures ils peuvent prendre, parce que l'Esprit se déplace à son propre rythme - «le vent souffle où il veut.» (Jean 3:8) Mais je crois que si les délégués sont à l'écoute attentive, au-dessus du concurrent pressions de ce groupe et que, ils vont entendre le reste, murmure la petite voix: «Voici! Je vais faire une chose nouvelle, «et ils vont répondre fidèlement.

Amen.



Jack and Marji Tuell

Évêque Jack M. Tuell
Mgr Tuell est un évêque de l'Église Méthodiste Unie, maintenant en retraite. Après une brève carrière en tant qu'avocat dans l'État de Washington, il a rejoint la Conférence annuelle Nord-Ouest Pacifique où il a servi en tant que pasteur et surintendant du district, et a été élu trois fois à la Conférence générale et quatre fois à la Conférence de l'Ouest juridictionnelle. Il a été élu à l'épiscopat en 1972. Il a servi la région de Portland pendant huit ans, et la région de Los Angeles pendant 12 ans, retraitant en 1992. Lui et son épouse, Marji, ce font leur maison à Des Moines, Etat de Washington.

A Vision and Dream of a UMC that Ministers to All

by Rev. Gil Caldwell

After all these years, I still feel a sense of excitement created by the United Methodist General Conference. The delegates are meeting and I remain in Asbury Park, NJ.

Years ago, my first role at a General Conference was as a page. Since then, I've been the clergy delegation leader, legislative committee chair, presenter on the Black Church, and even an activist as I was arrested at the 2000 General Conference in Cleveland.

I am now a retired minister, and I frequently compare myself to the "old men who dream dreams" that Joel "speaks" of in the Hebrew Bible.

I come from a long line of ministers who have been a part of The United Methodist Church through many changes and transformations. The United Methodist Church was "born" as a denomination on April 23, 1968 when The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches united to form a new denomination, one of the largest Protestant Churches with a membership of 12 million persons in the USA, Africa, Europe and Asia.

The United Methodist Church will continue to grow as an international denomination, but I will always see it as "America's Church," because of its ubiquitous presence throughout the nation. I once heard that there was a United Methodist Church in every county of the USA.

In 1968, Bishop Gerald Kennedy was on the cover of TIME magazine and the church was featured in the cover story. The denomination has sought to be a blend of the best of what I call a personal and a social gospel. Our social principles seek to relate our denominational mission and ministry to the current challenges that face humankind.

The United Methodist Church has also faced struggles. My father spent most of his ministry in the racially segregated Central

Jurisdiction. The start of my ministry was also marked by racial segregation, as I was initially denied admission to Duke Divinity School for being black. Finally, in 1968, the all-black Central Jurisdiction was merged into what is today The United Methodist Church.

It is exactly because of this rich history that it is hard to comprehend why the church has continued to pass legislation that places limits on clergy in committed same gender relationships. Many clergy throughout the denomination, including retired bishops, retired clergy, and active clergy, are making public declarations of their intent to perform unions and marriage ceremonies of same sex couples in those states and the District of Columbia where they are legal.

I have failed to understand why The United Methodist Church, with its history and heritage of affirmation, fairness, and commitment to the God-given human dignity of all persons, has chosen to resist full ministry for same gender couples.

Changing policies that prohibit United Methodist clergy from presiding at unions or marriage services for same gender couples is an issue that ought to be a "slam dunk" for The United Methodist Church. Logic, let alone our United Methodist commitment to the ministry of ordained clergy, is torn to shreds when United Methodist clergy are able to bless buildings and animals and homes, etc., but are not allowed to bless the loving commitment of woman to woman and man to man.

The United Methodist Church, as it did on matters of race, is lagging behind governmental actions and the attitudes of persons, particularly young persons, on acceptance and affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons and couples.



The military no longer enforces a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy for lesbians and gay men in the military, and yet the United Methodist Church expects its homosexual clergy to observe a church version of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

For those delegates who claim they are maintaining "tradition" as they vote to sustain current United Methodist language and legislation, I remind them that at one time some persons maintained and/or tolerated colonialism, slavery, the oppression of women, racial segregation, prohibitions against the ordination of women, and resistance to interracial marriage, because they represented long-held "traditions." The breaking of tradition is what established Christianity, Protestantism, and the United States.

This old, retired minister continues to dream a dream that our church can learn from its own history of overcoming exclusion to drop the barriers for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

The time is now.

With youth having visions an elders dreaming dreams, more congregations than ever are seeing that God is calling us to minister to all people – whether marriage, baptism, or membership.

The Rev. Gil Caldwell is a retired United Methodist Clergy from Asbury Park, NJ. This article first published in the Washington Post, April 30, 2012; reprinted under the fair use laws for educational purposes.

Grandmother Proud of Her GLBTQ Grandkids

by Jan Olson

Sunday at General Conference I had the great pleasure of attending a rally sponsored by my grandkids. I don't know if they could tell but I was bursting at the seams with pride.

It's likely they had no clue how I was feeling. Some of them probably don't even know who I am. But why wouldn't my grandkids know me? Let me tell you, with a little history.

I became involved with Affirmation 27 years ago. I put myself in a category that I affectionately call the "old-timers." I feel very much a part of Affirmation's birthing and raising of the "Reconciling Congregations Program," which later came to be known as the "Reconciling Ministries Network."

RMN birthed MoSAIC (Methodist Stu-

dents for an All-Inclusive Church). When I thought of this familial relationship between Affirmation and MoSAIC, I felt a bond even before I had officially met any of them.

When I took the time to sit down with members of MoSAIC at General Conference 2008 I told them I thought of them as my grandkids. I also explained the relationship between the organizations because many did not know the history. My heart melted when the response from some of them (mostly "awww") made me realize they, too, like the concept.

And here's some of what I learned in 2008 from the grandkids:

- They want to hear our stories as well as tell us their stories;
- They have embraced the word "queer"

in describing themselves and this old-time lesbian needs to get over whatever negative connotation still floats around in her head about that word;

- They don't want to just hear "you are our future" but want very much to be our present, (and they truly and exceptionally show that at GC2008 and here at GC2012)
- At least one of them already has a mormor (Swedish for grandma) but is willing to have another;
- They struggle with finances just like many of us "old-timers" did when we first got involved with Affirmation;
- There's no need for a telephone when you can text-message;
- They are willing to work and struggle and act-up to make sure the UMC

notices (sound familiar anyone?);

- They keep the hours that we grandparents used to keep when we were their age;
- They are people you should get to know—their enthusiasm is contagious.

Now, four years later I had the chance to be at their rally. I heard their voices. I saw their strength. I witnessed and felt their love for each other, for God and for the church. I also heard their pain, disillusionment, anger and frustration with that same church. They reminded me so much of Affirmation and me in our younger years. But why wouldn't they? They are my grandkids after all.

Jan Olson is treasurer of Affirmation: United Methodist. She lives in the Chicago area with her partner of 18 years, Nancy.

'...I go praying and hoping...'

Editor's note: the following is taken from the Rev. Karen Oliveto's blog, written en route to Tampa last week.

In 1972, when The United Methodist Church declared that lesbian and gay people are incompatible with Christian teaching, the church moved from a pastoral response to one of judgment. But, on what basis do you rest your convictions?

I've heard many people say that this is what the scriptures tell us.

Really?

Out of all the verses in the Bible, from the handful of times that homosexuality may be mentioned, you are going to make a whole group of people second-class citizens in the body of Christ?

Do you hold as strong convictions on other parts of scripture: the Bible is very clear about what we should do with menstruating women and divorce. Where are our restrictions around these issues?

The Bible advocates the stoning of children who swear at their parents and an economics that borders on socialism (check out Jesus, and the early church in Acts); are we going to advocate for these? There are also prohibitions about eating shellfish, but I don't see any petitions calling for a boycott of Red Lobster.

So my hunch is that the Bible really isn't at the heart of this conversation. After all, the church has managed to move from an acceptance of slavery to seeing it as an abomination, and while scriptures say that women ought to be silent, woman preachers are now acceptable (although I know some of you still think this was a mistake).

Why can't our understanding of those few verses also be evolving, being reformed by the Holy Spirit as other verses have?

You often say this will break with church tradition. The church has broken with its own traditions over and over again as it seeks to be faithful to God in the challenges and opportunities of a new age. The Reformation and the ordination of women are but two examples of the church "changing its mind."

We do not require celibacy for our pastors, yet this is a break from Christian tradition. Tradition is always evolving as it encounters the realities of a new age. We all have seen Christian traditions reshaped over the generations, so this isn't a strong argument, either.

The truth is, LGBT persons have been serving faithfully in the church for generations: Sunday School teachers, choir directors, youth workers, UMW members,

trustees, organists, pastors, and yes, even bishops.

This isn't going to stop any time soon just because of prohibitions in the "Book of Discipline." God keeps calling LGBT persons to serve in the UMC. The UMC has enjoyed the fruits of their labors, and will continue to do so. Can we at least agree on this truth?

A powerhouse for justice, the Rev. Karen Oliveto is a past RMN Board President in risk-taking ministry at Glide UMC in San Francisco.

WOMEN, continued from page 1

view of The United Methodist Church into the discussion since 1973.

What does it mean working in coalition?

Working collaboratively with coalitions to achieve purposes like the health and safety of women is important to carrying out the principles of The UMC. To work in coalition with an organization does not constitute an endorsement or embrace of every aspect of that organization, or all the views of other members of the coalition, but it does establish relationships and ongoing conversation with coalition partners and co-sponsors. Sometimes it can amplify the impact of the coalition on shared perspectives.

What role has General Conference had in reviewing UM participation in this coalition?

As recently as 2008, after a well-informed discussion, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church voted to the continued membership of both the Women's Division and the General Board of Church and Society in RCRC. (See Resolution 3204 in The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2008.)

Is there a Financial Relationship between the UMC and RCRC?

Neither the General Board of Church and Society nor the Women's Division provides any funds to support RCRC.

What does the Church say about abortion?

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2008, ¶161J, "Abortion," says,

Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child. We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of

gender selection. (p. 105, emphasis added)

Resolution 2026, "Responsible Parenthood," addresses this as well (The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2008).

In 1973, the Supreme Court struck down laws that criminalized abortion because of the number of women suffering from self-induced or back alley abortions. With options not available to low-income or rural women who choose abortion, today's advocates are concerned about women returning to unsafe and illegal methods to obtain them as access is increasingly limited.

Also of concern is the availability of contraception and reproductive counseling. Hospital mergers can limit access to these needed services. As Resolution 3208, "United Methodist Response to Hospital Mergers," states,

...such mergers often put the availability of AIDS prevention information, fertility services, artificial insemination, tubal ligations, vasectomies, condom distribution, contraceptive medication and devices, "morning after" pills, and abortion services at risk. ...

...the effect of these mergers is most severe in poorer communities that have limited health care options to begin with ...

How does the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice help?

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice brings the moral power of religious communities to support reproductive choice through education and advocacy. The coalition seeks to give clear voice to reproductive issues which may be most severe for people of color, those living in poverty, and other under-served populations.

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice supports access to sex education, family planning and contraception, affordable child care and health care, and adoption services as well as safe, legal, abortion services, regardless of income. As an organization committed to reproductive justice, RCRC works for public policies that ensure the medical, economic, and educational resources necessary for healthy families and communities that are equipped to nurture children in peace and love.

A Serious Language Barrier

by Bob Kaylor

I spent most of an afternoon last week sitting in on the Faith and Order legislative committee. This was the committee that considered all the petitions relating to theology and doctrine, along with several petitions about homosexuality and its compatibility with Scripture and Christian tradition.

Say what you will about these petitions. I certainly have my opinions about them and it was probably a good thing that I was a silent observer!

What struck me most about the debate of the subcommittee dealing with homosexuality and ordination, however, wasn't so much the content as the dialogue itself.

Imagine, if you will, a squared up series of tables where about 30 or so delegates are sitting. About two-thirds of the group are American Methodists, while a third are from other countries--mostly United Methodists from Africa.

Every time someone speaks, two or three translators--who are also sitting at or around the table--need to translate it into French for the Africans, or from French to English for the Americans. People speak in short bursts of sentences, wait for translation, and then move on. It's a painstaking process to just get the words out and heard.

But that's not the most difficult part of the process. What really became evident to me as I listened today was the fact that even if we're using the same language, we use words quite differently.

Take the word "inclusion," for example.

One African delegate wanted to clarify what that word meant to everyone else around the table. The translation made it frustrating for him and everyone else but it was an honest question. Several American delegates got up and tried to explain it, but each gave a different definition based on their particular perspective.

For some, inclusion means that everyone is welcome as they are and celebrated, while, for others, inclusion is just the first step in a larger process where we are accepted as we are but we're not called to stay that way.

For some, inclusion means participation while, for others, it must lead to transformation. The African delegate kept trying to get his question clarified but the committee chair eventually ruled his question as "inflammatory" and stopped him cold. I wonder how his translator handled that.

This seems to me to be a microcosm of the underlying problem of much of the dialogue here (not all of it, mind you, but much of it).

We United Methodists have a serious language barrier. One delegate talks about the "quadrilateral" as the way we interpret Scripture (on a level with tradition, reason, and experience), and another delegate holds up Wesley's dictum that the Scripture is primary with the other three acting as lenses.

One delegate talks about inclusion with the mantra "all means all," while another reminds us that inclusion isn't valuable unless it leads to transformation.

We are seriously divided on issues like the authority of Scripture, the meaning of Jesus, the reality of resurrection, the nature of sin, and a whole host of other issues and terms we define quite differently. Even the people who don't need translators to hear one another can't really seem to understand each other. And sometimes, when we try to define the terms, others are quick to rule our definition as out of order.

I spent a lot of time walking around the convention hall today pondering this serious language barrier and wondering if it can ever be breached. It's more like Babel than Pentecost--everyone speaking their own language but no one being able to understand the words.

I am doing my best to look for the good things here and there are, indeed, signs of hope in many places. But like the bishops have been saying throughout the Conference, only a movement of the Holy Spirit is going to enable us to revive this Church. Only a common language will enable us to move forward. Pentecost birthed a church in the beginning. I think we need it again if we're going to continue!



‘The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.’
John 1:14 (The Message)

'I Am About Evangelism'

Editor's note: Giselle Lawn paused during General Conference to talk to Love Your Neighbor News about her experience of General Conference and The United Methodist Church.



Giselle Lawn.
Courtesy of RMN

This is my first time at General Conference. I grew up Catholic and spent 20 years as a Baptist. When I shared the fact that I was transgender, I was asked to leave. Eventually, I found a home in The United Methodist Church.

Personally I have not experienced persecution. But last week, as I sat in one of the committees, listening to debate, I realized my United Methodist Church does not love me and I am not welcome here. It took me this long to realize this because even in my North Georgia Conference, I am welcomed and appreciated personally.

Back home I visit periodically with a transgender support group. When I attend, I listen to the stories of the people who have

lost everything—who are searching for anyone who loves them and for direction in their lives. It saddens me that I can't say, "Come with me to the UMC; we all welcome you."

I was thinking of them as I was lying on the ground at the die-in. When the church tells people that God does not love them, it can kill the soul and give violent people an excuse to assault people who are perceived to be different.

We need to reach out. I am about evangelism, about bringing people to the Lord. What is the church thinking about when it turns these people away? Somehow we've failed the great commission. Where is Jesus in that?



Delegates from Côte d'Ivoire consider legislation on May 1 at the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Fla. A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose.

Homosexuality Generates Lively Discussion

by Ben Roe

Lively discussion was generated last week in the second sub-committee on Administrative Complaints of the Higher Education and Ministry Legislative Committee, as delegates considered petition #20028 for removal of language prohibiting same-gender unions, reported Deborah Weekley in a luncheon conversation "Love Your Neighbor News." Weekley is a volunteer legislative monitor for the Love Your Neighbor Coalition.

She noted that one person in the group who had been thought to favor more restrictive rules actually advocated for removal of the negative language. She also noticed that most of those who were advocating removal of restrictive language were from states where same-gender unions were legally recognized in some form.

A concern for the state of the church was voiced by those who were supportive of removal of the restrictive language, saying that they were losing LGBT members in large part because they were going to other churches where they would be more welcomed and where their commitments to each other would be honored and celebrated. A similar concern was voiced by those in support of the current language, but from the opposite point of view.

Differences in biblical interpretation arose. One African-American delegate from Baltimore-Washington noted that if literal biblical interpretation was affirmed, "many of us here wouldn't be allowed at the table, including the women sitting here and myself."

A major problem with the discussion was the difficulty in hearing each other; the Legislative Committee split up into three smaller sub-committees, but they all shared the same room.

The discussion was to be continued af-

ter lunch in a quieter place, but the topic moved on after lunch and didn't finish until it was picked up again on Friday morning. But this time the whole committee convened together, and the discussion on #20028 was again lively and polarized.

Those who spoke against removing the restrictions about same-gender issues were primarily from Africa, along with one Caucasian woman from the plains states, who said that marriage was only between a man and a woman.

Extensive discussion in the plenary highlighted the extremes. African delegates reminded Americans that "your missionaries brought us the faith and told us we were going to hell if we didn't give up our culture," including polygamy. "Now you're telling us something else."

One person said that in African culture it was taboo to talk about sexuality, much less homosexuality. Others said that they were told not to come back to their country if they voted to remove the restrictions. The speakers insisted that if the current language was changed, "our churches would be empty."

Those speaking in favor of the removal of the negative language said that in their country, they were being told that people were leaving their churches because of the current stances. The petition 20028 was defeated 37-41 with 3 abstentions. Other petitions rejected were 20875, 20998, 20999, and 21000.

To resolve this impasse, the Holy Spirit will need to be moving mightily!

Ben Roe is managing editor of Love Your Neighbor News.

God's Love is for Everyone Transgender UMC Pastor of Nearly 30 Years, Rev. David Weekley

by Lois McCullen Parr

"God has always loved me," writes the Rev. David Weekley. "Just as I am. Even when I didn't accept and love myself, I knew God loved me... God's love is for everyone."

Weekley, who is in Tampa with his wife Deborah and the Love Your Neighbor Coalition, "passed" for nearly 28 years as David, a male pastor in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference.

Working for the Reconciling Ministries Network as a part of the movement for full inclusion of all persons in the UMC led Weekley on his own personal journey toward authenticity.

Weekley, who made his transition 37 years ago while earning his BA, began to "feel the discomfort of not revealing the fullness of who I am – that is, letting people know I am transgender."

That uneasiness, coupled with a courageous Japanese-American congregation who taught him about "facing and transforming pain," led Weekley to come out in a sermon and the publishing of his autobiographical journey, "In From the Wilderness."

In his book, Weekley describes how he never felt like the girl whose body he had, and heard hope in the news story of Christine Jorgensen, whose male to female sex reassignment surgery in Sweden made history in 1952.

"I thought, 'if Christine can go from male to female, I ought to be able to go from female to male,'" described Weekley, "and I started saving money to go to Sweden for surgery."

Weekley credited his college counselors

and supporters who helped him to discover a path to his transition at the Cleveland Clinic in the United States, and tells the way in which his transition from female to male became his path to the healing of anguish and the journey to hope for wholeness of life.

"I always knew I was a child of God," Weekley said, "and when my transition was complete, I knew for the first time that I was fully the person I was created to be."

"In from the Wilderness" is described as "the story of a Transgender man, a Christian, an ordained minister, a loving husband and father – a human being. It is his challenge to his denomination and to all Christians...to consider the truth of gender identity and sexual orientation as God given gifts, to be celebrated and embraced."

"I have felt shut out, discouraged, unloved, and unwelcome by the church," Weekley said. "I know what that's like."

Weekley said he lived through years of loneliness and unhappiness, years when he stayed away from the church that rejected and condemned him. "But," he said, "my faith in God and the Jesus I discovered in the gospels was the only reason I survived that time."

Weekley cites many favorite passages in the Bible that sustain him, naming especially Psalm 139 and "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." He said he's found solace, inspiration, strength, and encouragement from Scripture, "particularly those passages where Jesus stood firm for what he believed to be truth in the midst of anger, ridicule, gossip, and rejection."

Weekley said 28 years of leading Wor-

ship, Bible study, prayer groups, outreach and other ministries have supported and sustained him.

"Since sharing my personal history... some colleagues and friends have turned away," he said, yet, "faith in what I know to be true about myself and my relationship with God in Christ continues to sustain me."

His hope for General Conference is that his "beloved denomination reaffirms John Wesley's message of prevenient grace for all persons."

Weekley prays that the Wesleyan quadrilateral will guide decision-making this week: "Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience negate all types of discrimination and call us to include all persons in the church."

"Many people are watching and waiting

to see if they will be welcome at that particular portion of God's altar known as The United Methodist Church."

Weekley speaks at the LYN Tabernacle noon luncheon today, and will hold a book signing there on Thursday.

Rev. David Weekley pastors Sellwood and Capitol Hill United Methodist Churches in Portland, Oregon; his blog reaches out to LGBTQ persons and their allies who have felt rejected in the church – follow him at www.shermanswilderness.org. He is on the Transgender Extension Ministry of RMN, and the newest Board member for Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Concerns.



MFSA Executive Director Jill Warren participates in the die-in on Monday, April 30. Photo by Tom Cullens.

love makes a family



The issue isn't the gender of the person I love, but the qualities of the relationship. Scripture has a lot to say about compassion, love, and justice as the marks of a faithful relationship. What I love about my partner, Darin, is how playful he is. We pray together at meals and we share the Lutheran church and a spiritual life with each other. We talk about God together. I'm a better person when I'm with Darin. He helps me live into my higher self.

—Pastor Bradley Schmeling (at left in photo)

One of the things that drew me to my partner, Bradley, was that we both have a deep love for our church, our faith, and our ministry. But the deepest love that we shared—the church—was a source of pain for both of us. It's like when folks come out to their families and suddenly the relationship changes. I'd been a Lutheran all my life, served in the ministry, and was loved and supported, but when I chose to share that I was in a gay partnership, I had to resign my ministry. I became a United Church of Christ minister until the Lutheran Church changed its policy and I could come back home.

—Pastor Darin Easler (at right in photo)

When I began my relationship with Darin, I told my bishop. The bishop had to enforce Lutheran Church policy, so he filed charges against me. In 2007, I was put on trial and removed from the clergy. Even though the jury ruled that I was a good and faithful pastor, the policy left them no choice but to remove me. My trial was a catalyzing event that led to the policy change in the Lutheran Church in 2009, which now allows pastors in committed, monogamous relationships with same-gender partners to serve.

—Pastor Bradley Schmeling

Most of the images in the media that people associate with gay people don't reflect our lives at all. As straight folks get to know us, they will realize that there aren't a whole lot of differences. All relationships are negotiated on a daily basis. Together, you learn how to communicate and to trust and rely upon your partner. There is nothing unusual about our daily life as a gay couple. I remember the day I came home and water was flooding the kitchen from a burst pipe. I was mopping it up, thinking, "The church wants to put us on trial for this?"

—Pastor Darin Easler



Bring these Family Diversity Projects photo-text exhibits to your church

WE HAVE FAITH:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clergy and People of Faith Speak Out

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM:

Portraits of People with Disabilities

IN OUR FAMILY:

Portraits of All Kinds of Families

LOVE MAKES A FAMILY:

Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender People & Their Families

OF MANY COLORS:

Portraits of Multiracial Families

PIONEERING VOICES:

Portraits of Transgender People

"It is the baptized children of God we are talking about. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender family members are already our sisters and brothers in Christ. They are already pastors and church leaders. These photos of loving families remind us that it is time for our official policies to catch up with the leading of the Holy Spirit. There are no second class citizens in the family of God."

—Bishop Melvin G. Talbert

To bring the exhibits to your community, please contact: FAMILY DIVERSITY PROJECTS • 413-256-0502 • info@familydiv.org • www.familydiv.org