

Drops of Water



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for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

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Caucus Platform Urges End of Discrimination

The National Council of Affirmation, meeting in Sacramento in January 2004 drafted this General Conference 2004 Platform Statement which summarizes the organization's focus of energy for the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The document focuses on the traditional values of inclusion which our caucus has stood for since its founding in 1975 as well as highlights growing edges within the movement. The platform statement "We Are The Church" was informed by the work of a strategic vision-ing committee and local listen-ing posts that occurred in the last two years.

Affirmation is the national caucus within The United Methodist Church for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

Concerns. The National Council meets three times a year in various parts of the United States and is made up of

lay and clergy with leadership shared equally by men and women.

Continued on Page 3

Affirmation to Host Trans- gender Conversations during Common Witness Luncheon

Today's lunch time at Smithfield United Church will include the opportunity to view a portion of the New England Annual Conference Reconciling Ministries Committee video production entitled, "Transgender Conversations: Experience and Reflections by Three United Methodists." Diane DeLap, an Affirmation Council member and one of the three participants in the video, will host the presentation, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., which will include an opportunity to discuss with her pending legislation relating to Transgender persons serving as UMC clergy.

The Faith and Order Committee has two petitions, one to prevent anyone who has begun or completed the process of gender transition from serving as a Pastor in the UMC, and a second directing the Church to utilize existing psychological,

Continued on Page 3

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Only Affirmation's spokespersons, Peggy Gaylord and Ken Ian Rowe, may represent the official positions of the organizations. All articles in *Drops of Water* reflect the opinions of the individual authors and are not necessarily the official position of Affirmation: United Methodist.

Coeditors: Judy WestLee & Gary Shephard

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Affirmation's Mission Statement

Affirmation: United Methodist is an activist caucus of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, our families, and friends, organized to speak for ourselves. Together we:

- * Proclaim a gospel of respect, love, and justice;
- * Relentlessly pursue policies and processes that support full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in all areas and levels of The United Methodist Church;
- * Overcome the barriers that diminish our common humanity by excluding or judging people because of their race, gender, class, or physical abilities;
- * Empower people to undertake works of inclusion and justice where they are.

Hot Water Topics...

Affirmation has always been about recognition of our baptism vows. We have also been about acknowledging the hot water that the church is in by being decades or centuries behind the times.

During the course of General Conference, Affirmation will be distributing Hot Water Topic sheets on various subjects that relate to our Platform Statement or issues that arise from GC. These are considered

resources for the church, and while not policy statements from Affirmation, they are a gift to the church from Affirmation.

Hot Water Topics in development include Intersexuality, Gender Spectrum(s), Unions vs. Marriages, as well as others.

Contact Ken Rowe, kianrowe@earthlink.net or 415-595-0180 if you have thoughts on what will get us in Hot Water.

MFSA Presents

MFSA presents "An Evening of Entertainment and Recognition for Excellence in Social Justice Ministry".

Saturday evening MFSA will be presenting its Ball Award for Excellence in Social Justice Ministry.

The program will also feature the Montana Logging and Ballet Company. This quartet is devoted to social justice through satire and song. They can often be heard on National Public Radio's Weekend Edition Sunday. General Conference 2004 is bound to give them plenty of raw material.

When: Saturday May 1, 2004 at 8 p.m.

Where: First UMC Pittsburgh, 5401 Centre Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15232.

Cost: \$25 (\$15 low income) Tickets available in the Hospitality Room at Smithfield United Church and meet-here.com (see Event Column on p. 4 for addresses).

The church building is accessible.

Transsexuality...

Continued from Page 1

spiritual and emotional evaluation criteria to determine the fitness of all Clergy candidates – including those identified as Transsexual or Transgender. In addition, the Higher Education and Ministry Committee has before it a proposal from MFSA to authorize a study of Transgender issues with a report to be submitted to the next General Conference.

In the Transgender Conversations video, Rev. Susan J. Morrison, pastor of the Lexington (MA) UMC, conducts a roundtable discussion with the Rev. Sarah Flynn, Diane, and Jeff Johnston as they recount their experiences in the church, their reflections on scripture, and their journeys to resolve their gender identity. Both Rev. Flynn and Diane are male-to-female transsexuals while Jeff Johnston is a female-to-male transsexual. Rev. Flynn is a retired United Methodist pastor

who served churches both before and after her transition. Jeff Johnston was born into a United Methodist family, and was baptized and confirmed in the United Methodist Church. He brings the perspective of a young adult to the conversation. He is a member of Cambridge Welcoming Ministries at Grace UMC, Cambridge (MA).

The 45-minute video comes with study materials and resources and will be available at the presentation.

The platform reads:

Continued from Page 1

We, as Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, call on the 2004 General Conference to act as Christ's Church to reject the powers of evil and proclaim an end to discrimination upon lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in church and society.

We support efforts at all levels to propose changes in the Discipline that acknowledge, support and encourage growth and ministry of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender youth, adults, families and allies. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ordination
- appointment

- covenant relations
- supporting varieties of relationships
- affirming that the sacraments are available to all
- renouncing policies that promote discrimination and violence against LGBT people.

We believe that the arguments over these issues are diversions to the church to keep The United Methodist Church from reaching out to the least, the lost, and the lonely in the world. We yearn to use our gifts for healing as Jesus directed us.

We affirm the independence and academic integrity of schools, colleges, universities and seminaries related to the United Methodist Church.

We affirm the mission and integrity of all the general

boards, agencies and commissions.

We affirm the continued movement of local churches to celebrate “open hearts, open minds, and open doors.” The 2004 General Conference is our time to put these words into Gospel action.

Affirmation historically has **stood for making** inclusiveness real in the church. Inclusiveness is rooted in the reality that all are saved in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ and that the church, those called by God's grace to follow Christ, consists of many members with different gifts. The church has often insisted that one of the parts of the body is actually the whole body, consequently denying the other

Continued on Page 4

Platform...

Continued from Page 3
parts of the body.

For the church to be fully the church, we United Methodists must root out the racism corroding its institutional life, the sexism continually reinforced by a system of male privilege, and the dependence on class privilege at the heart of our institutional functioning. We rejoice in the many gifts given by the Spirit to the church's many different parts, and deplore all efforts to exclude to any degree, whether by intention or effect, any group from participation in the life and ministry of the church. A diverse church celebrates the lives of individuals of all sexual orientations, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, racial/ethnic groups, physical and mental abilities, ages, and variety of relationships.

In 2004, we recommit to build Christ's Church for this and future generations: a church willing to witness, a church willing to grow, a church for all people who identify as United Methodists.

National Spokespersons

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Members Invited to Annual Affirmation Corporate Meeting

The corporate annual meeting of Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Concerns, Inc., will be at 2 p.m. (1:30 sign-in and reception) Saturday, May 1, 2004, at Smithfield United Church, 620 Smithfield St., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. All Affirmation members are invited to participate.

Members wishing to vote in the election for the Board of Directors must be credentialed during the signing in time. If your membership is not current you will need to bring it current to be able to vote.

The items of business will include:

- Elections of five members for three-year terms to the Board of Directors
- Election of members to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors
- Change all corporate papers to reflect the name "Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns"
- Report of the Strategic Visioning Plan
- Any other business that the Directors deem appropriate.

The Directors constitute the Affirmation Council.

Daily Events

Hospitality Room at Smithfield United is open 6 a.m.–11 p.m. weekdays through Thursday, May 6.

Weekday Breakfast and Legislative Briefing For Delegates (Volunteers and Visitors welcome) 7 – 8 a.m. Smithfield United.

Weekday Common Witness Delicious and Affordable Lunches for delegates, volunteers and visitors at Smithfield Church, 620 Smithfield St., between 12 noon and 1:30 p.m. weekdays.

Shower of Stoles is on display in the Hospitality Room at Smithfield United.

Love Makes a Family Photo Exhibit on display 6:30 a.m. to midnight at meet-here.com, 945 Liberty Ave., between Smithfield United and the convention center. Enter the main door, sign in at the desk, then go through the door on your right.