

Drops of Water



Published Daily During GC 2004 by Affirmation: United Methodists
for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

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Come Pray With Us

Prayer Vigil Planned Day of LGBT Votes

We understand several votes related to full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons in the church will take place on Tuesday. Prior to these votes, people will gather at 6:30 a.m. Tuesday at Smithfield Church, in the Common Witness Hospitality Space, to begin a prayer witness and procession.

Once before in 1964 progressive Methodists gathered at Smithfield for prayer and procession around General Conference. They prayed for the end of segregation and the end of the Central Jurisdiction. On Tuesday, we join their prayers and historic actions to end segregation and injustice in the United Methodist Church.

All those who would like to “have the mind that was in Christ and walk as Jesus walked” (as suggested by John Wesley) are invited to come to Smithfield Church at 6:30 a.m.. Tuesday. We will proceed from there to the Convention Center where we will kneel in prayer.

**Be Sure to Visit
Shower of Stoles
Display in Common Witness
Area of Smithfield Church
Open 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. Monday thru Thursday**

This Newsletter
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Only Affirmation's spokespersons, Peggy Gaylord & Ken Ian Rowe, may represent the official positions of the organization. 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: Gary Shephard & Judy WestLee

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Affirmation's Mission Statement

Affirmation: United Methodist is an activist caucus of lesbian, gay, bisexual, & 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.

Drops of Water

By Diane DeLap

I was probably about 8 or 9 years old when I first saw the Flume Gorge in New Hampshire's Franconia Notch State Park. I remember we were on our annual vacation to New Hampshire, and had rented a lakeside cabin on Silver Lake, NH. We were on one of our "day trips" as my mother called them. These were usually opportunities for my parents to gaze at beautiful mountain scenery, while I sat, bored, in the back seat of the car, wishing I was back at the lake swimming.

This time though was different. Following a short walk into the woods, we came upon the most amazing sight I had yet seen in my young life. The Flume Gorge is a 10 to 15 foot wide, 70 foot deep, crack in the granite extending 800 feet into the base of Mount Liberty through which a small stream cascades. Beginning at "Table Rock" at the top, water flows down, around, and through several of the most amazing waterfalls, coursing through the gorge that it has cut through the basalt that solidified in a

crack in the solid granite of the mountain. It was astounding to me then to realize that this small stream had cut its way through solid rock.

I have been back to the Gorge several times, and a few years ago I even took my own bored pre-teen son to the Gorge and watched that same sense of wonder come over his face. Each time I return I am reminded that lasting change does not just come through cataclysmic eruptions, but can also come through the slow erosion of a persistent force on a seemingly impregnable object. The eroding effects of that small stream of water are clearly visible on Table Rock, and even more so when I stand in the Gorge and realize that this deep crack was formed by the persistent flow of water through time. I'm sure that many of us have had similar experiences, maybe at the Grand Canyon or some other natural wonder.

The United Methodist Church is in a time of struggle. The last General

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Conference was, to many, a cataclysmic event that brought turmoil and destruction. I have spoken to many people who attended GC2000 who were shocked and dismayed by the attitude of exclusion and distrust that was fostered by the actions of the General Conference. I have heard the voices of those who say that we need to move on from issues of inclusion and get on with the "business of the Church." When I hear that, I always wonder what their idea of the "business of the Church" is, if it does not put a priority on inclusion of those who have been most marginalized by society. I am also concerned about others who seem to feel that the battle is un-winnable and who, in frustration, give up, many times abandoning the church.

To both sides of the conflict, Affirmation's General Conference 2004 theme speaks of our commitment to the long, tiresome, thankless task of being the drops of water that will eventually wear away the rocks of exclusion and bigotry. Based on Holly Near's and Meg Christian's 1970's

song "The Rock Will Wear Away", it declares our solidarity with those of our number from the past who have given themselves to the effort, as well as those who will come in the future to continue our efforts. To those who hope by continuing a policy of exclusion based on distrust, misinformation, lies, and distortions, we say that we are here at this time to continue to be like drops of water to wear your opposition down. When we are gone, others will take our place to continue the struggle. The day will come when the rock of bigotry will wear away, and the light of God's love for

all his people will come shining through like the sun shining through the forest into the darkness of the Flume.

"Can we be like drops of water falling on the stone splashing breaking dispersing in air Weaker than the stone by far but be aware that As time goes by the rock will wear away."

*Meg Christian & Holly Near, Singers & Songwriters, © 1976
Thumbilina Music BMI/
Hereford Music ACAP*

Corporation Meeting Reported

Affirmation held it's annual corporate meeting at 2 p.m. May 1 in the Common Witness space at Smithfield United Church.

Three new council members were nominated and elected. An additional three candidates were nominated, but could not be contacted regarding their willingness to serve. They will be added to the candidate pool and will be

contacted prior to the fall council meeting.

Ken Rowe and Peggy Gaylord gave a brief history of the organization, as well as updating the membership on what we've been doing since GC 2000. Mary Gaddis gave a report from the Strategic Visioning team. A full report on the visioning process will appear in the spring or summer quarterly newsletter.

Love Makes a Family

Love Makes a Family is an exhibit of photographs and interviews with families that have lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. Through first-person accounts and positive images, this exhibit seeks to challenge and change damaging myths and stereotypes about LGBT people and their families. Love Makes a Family helps in the process of dismantling the destructive power of prejudice and intolerance, thereby making the world a safer place for all families.

Love Makes a Family is being shown in the meet-here.com space at 945 Liberty Ave., just two short blocks from the convention center and a block from Smithfield United Church, during regular open hours, generally 6:30 a.m. to midnight.

Love Makes a Family was arranged to be at General Conference by the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference Reconciling Ministries and Affirmation.

Delegates: Please Vote What's on Your Heart

If Not You, Who? If Not Now, When?

Lunch Videos Repeated

If you missed the lunch time video and discussion sessions on transgender or bisexuality issues last week, you have one more chance to see them. Diane DeLap, an Affirmation council member, will host the lunch time discussions Monday and Tuesday from 12:45 to 1:45 p.m. The transgender issues discussion will be Monday, with the bisexuality issues discussion on Tuesday. They will be held in a room off of the Common Witness space at Smithfield United Church.

Daily Events at GC

Hospitality Room at Smithfield United is open 6 a.m. – 2 p.m. and 7 – 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.

Do You Have A News Item, Story, Or Calendar Item for *Drops of Water?*

Send it to

AffirmationNewsletter@yahogroups.com.

If you send an attachment, please paste the text of your item into the body of the email too. You can page us at 800-946-4646 pin 1434076 to make other delivery arrangements.