

Drops of Water



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for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

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Reflections on Session Actions

By Ken Rowe

The United Methodist Church had a moment yesterday to tell the truth that Christians are not of one mind on homosexuality. It is ironic. On the day we focus on ecumenical worship, and witness to unity within diversity, the General Conference would turn around and continue the lie - that we are of one opinion and that Christian teaching on the subject is also of one mind.

Tuesday we had the opportunity for another type of truth telling as delegates processed through a number of petitions. The votes didn't go particularly well, but I am confident that our diversity of opinion will continue to be expressed no matter what the General Conference passes.

I'm generally optimistic about

the next 4 years and the rest of General Conference. I'm also optimistic that 3 out of 4 new members of the Judicial Council are moderate to progressive. The current conservative activist Judicial Council is not likely to continue without clear dissent.

The issues around lesbian,

gay, bisexual, and transgender concerns will continue as long as bishops, pastors, and members continue to have lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender children. We are here in the United Methodist Church.

It's not debatable.

Prayer Witness Continues

The silent prayer witness will continue today.

At the start of the morning, afternoon, and evening plenary sessions Tuesday volunteers for Common Witness partners Affirmation, MFSA and Reconciling Ministries Network lined the east and west lobby entrances to the convention center as well as the sky bridge from the Westin.

The morning witness lasted 90 minutes. The afternoon and evening witnesses lasted 30 minutes each.

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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.

It's All About Choices

By Diane DeLap

I've been thinking more & more the last weeks about the choices that we all make in our lives. From the moment we hear the alarm go off in the morning and decide to rise to "seize the day" or hit the snooze bar, we make decisions. Big, life changing ones, and little, insignificant ones. Who our life partner will be. What socks to wear. What school or college to go to. Pizza or yogurt for lunch. To vote for full LGBT inclusion in the UMC – or not. To push the yes button or the no button. To come out and live as our authentic selves. To put on a skirt or slacks for work. Those last two were both big decisions for me. As a transsexual, coming out and having the freedom to decide to wear a skirt to work were two of the biggest decisions I have made.

This morning I stood in Smithfield United Church in Pittsburgh and listened as people from our Common Witness coalition were given instructions about protest activities that were to take place today. I could see the concern as people made personal choices about the level of their involvement in those activities and I thought of those delegates who at the

same time were making choices about their votes.

My thoughts about the choices we make began several weeks ago, when my partner told me that a relative, one who I have loved as a mother for most of my life, was having difficulties struggling with my gender transition. She couldn't understand why I would "choose" this lifestyle. Why couldn't I just be satisfied with living my life the way God created me. Her struggles sadden me and I wish I could help her to understand that the choice is not to be transgender or not. I wish that she and others who talk about the choice GLBT folks make to come out could understand that it is not a choice of how to live our lives but rather if we will live our lives or not.

It may sound melodramatic to some – but for many – if not most of us – the choice is not if we will live lives as our authentic selves, but if we can survive the criticism and hate that those in our lifestyles receive or if we will simply succumb to the despair that comes with the realization that most of society doesn't

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care to understand our pain and would just prefer that we go away. Far too many of us oblige by deciding to terminate our time in this life. It quite literally is the life or death decision to live authentically or give up our lives in despair that we cannot be accepted by those who we care most for. For many of us that search for acceptance includes our church family and is why the choices that the current UMC General Conference makes are so important.

I know that many conservative United Methodists would prefer that the issue of homosexuality would go away, but it will not until the church recognizes that simply saying that “homosexual persons are of sacred worth” is not enough. Part of being a Christian is the desire to serve the Lord in whom our faith is placed. For many in the GLBT community, that desire to serve is heightened by the sense of gratitude we feel for the love and acceptance that comes with the decision to accept the grace that Christ offers.

The sense of self-criticism and doubt melts away as we feel God’s grace in our lives

and is replaced with an overwhelming desire to serve the one whose love we feel. When Christ’s church rejects us and tells us that we are not permitted to serve because, what is a part of our very nature, is “incompatible” with Christian service it is devastating.

The Church is supposed to love us as Christ does. How dare people who claim to represent Him say that another part of the body is “incompatible”? Some of us make the choice to fight back in anger and frustration. Others leave the church in anger and distrust rejecting the faith. Still others find comfort in other Church traditions that are more accepting.

Finally, the choices that we make have been weighing on my mind the past few weeks since I led the last week of our Adult Lenten study at the church we attend. We were studying Marcus Borg’s book “Reading the Bible Again for the First Time” and I had volunteered to lead the discussion of the last chapter on Revelation. Revelation has always been one of my favorite books. Perhaps because its message is one of

hope to oppressed Christians of the late first century, its message is particularly meaningful to me as part of an oppressed community within the Church today. To many, who seek to make its message a literal one, Revelation can be confusing. But to me the beautiful and powerful imagery of the end times and the message of hope that it brings is one of the most comforting of the Bible. In contrast to the message of the fall in Genesis stands the message of triumph of glory in Revelation.

However, one of the themes of Revelation is the message of the consequences of our choices. There will come for all of us the opportunity to stand before the throne of God and account for the choices of our lives. What that will consist of, I have no idea. The effect of the application of the all-encompassing grace of Jesus to those who claim him as Lord and Master, is unclear. I do know that even Jesus spoke of this judgment and the effect of the treatment of the outcasts of society on that judgment (Mt. 25). Clearly, our choices today will be accounted for at some point.

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To the delegates of General Conference I would suggest that you think carefully about your selections. The time is coming when you will stand before the Master and Creator of all and will answer the question “What have you done for these, the least of mine?” Will you be able to answer with assurance that you have stood firm for the inclusion of all Christ’s children, or will your decisions and the voices of those to whom they have brought pain and despair come flooding in to convict you?

Love Makes a Family Photo Exhibit Ends Tomorrow

Love Makes a Family is an exhibit of photographs and interviews with families that have lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. Be sure to see it during GC. Love Makes a Family is being shown in the meet-here.com space at 945 Liberty Ave. The display was arranged the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference Reconciling Ministries and Affirmation. The display closes at midnight tomorrow.

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Seeing Is Believing

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors: We’ll believe it when we see it!

Tuesday was a very hard day for the Drops of Water GC daily newsletter editors to sit in the plenary session.

Once again the church has upheld the lie that we choose to be different.

Once again the church has upheld the lie that “it’s just a behavior that we could change if we wanted to.”

Once again the church has ignored our stories of faith, pain, and suffering, of who we are, and how our different-ness has impacted our faith journeys.

Daily Events at GC

Hospitality Room at Smithfield United is open 6 a.m. – 10 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.

Once again the church has failed to minister to people struggling with the sexual orientation and gender identity they were born with.

Once again many progressives will give up on the church and go elsewhere. And the decline in membership numbers will be blamed, by conservatives, on lack of clarity, lack of doctrine, and lack of adherence to their definition of purity.

As one delegate put it Tuesday, the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors campaign is a waste of money because it just isn’t true.

***If We Have No Peace,
It is Because We
Have Forgotten that
We Belong to Each
Other.***

Mother Theresa