

Drops of Water



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

May 6, 2004 GC 2004 Issue #7

It's Time to Stand Up

*By Ken Rowe,
Affirmation co-spokesperson*

This morning history will be made. The General Conference as a body had a chance to make history earlier this week to truly be a church of Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors. That chance was lost. But this morning after worship you are

invited to join our friends and allies as members of Affirmation, RMN and MFSA are joined by SoulForce to circle the bar of the General Conference. It will be a chance to allow the delegates who don't know our faces and our stories, to look us in the eye; to hear our voices; and to witness to the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We invite you to Stand Up with us. If you feel so called, we also invite you to Stand Up and join the Everflowing Stream of Witnesses who will be encircling the conference floor for 15 minutes. At the end of that time, you are also invited to make a statement by coming out of the conference session and joining in a SoulForce Rally. The rally will be 20-30 minutes in a designated area just outside the West Entrance of the

Murder, Suicide Stories Requested

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issue is still a physical life and death issue for many of our brothers and sisters, not just an issue of what the church is going to do with us or allow us to do. Yes, it impacts us if we can't have holy unions or be ordained, or can't agree to disagree—but if

we're not alive, these issues are irrelevant.

We are looking for names of LGBT United Methodists (people who were somehow connected to the UMC however loosely—family, attendance,

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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.

Is It Time for a Schism?

*By Peggy Gaylord,
Affirmation Co-Spokesperson*

I and others of our coalition had an interesting opportunity to meet with some of the leadership of the Good News, Confessing Movement and others.

I think it's ironic that none of us from our coalition leadership mentioned schism as an alternative. I expressed that Affirmation remains committed to full inclusion of all, where all means all. In my growing up years, I found that the Methodist Church allowed for a diversity of opinions. I graduated from high school in 1971, so no restrictive language related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender had yet been written into The Book of Discipline (General Conference started in 1972).

In 1972 when I could vote for the first time, there were three Methodist-identified Presidential candidates—George McGovern, George Wallace, and Shirley Chisolm, reflecting some significant diversity. I grew up believing that we could co-exist with differences such as these because we had a common core belief in Jesus Christ and the necessity of acting on our call to live out the gospel. As I have expressed often throughout this General

Conference, I see nothing exclusionary about Christ's example.

Even if we were to agree that homosexuality is a sin as purported by a number of delegates speaking on the floor—with which Affirmation clearly doesn't agree—I remember Tony Campolo asking, why are we targeting this particular sin? There are only a handful of references in the Bible, including the Old Testament, that might be interpreted as being specific about homosexuality; there are over 500 references to greed. Why aren't we taking greed more seriously?

Affirmation uses consensus to make our organizational decisions. Parliamentary procedure is majority rule with minority consent, essentially only two positions. This does not allow for working through to create something new whereas consensus often allows for a new possibility, something that none of us had thought of. How can we do that within the UMC? How can we enact our belief: "In God, all things are possible"?

T-Shirts? What T-Shirts?

For many General Conferences it's been an Affirmation tradition to produce a T-shirt for each General Conference. And so it was this time as well. We had a lovely design idea that went with the water theme, and we were going to use an unbleached natural cotton with a color rainbow. Before our design person could complete the artwork, she had a death in her family. When she got things settled down after that she found that her computer had crashed and she couldn't get the computer fixed and get the design done in time.

So we didn't have a themed T-shirt this year. If you've been by our table in the hospitality

room, however, you know we have nice looking short and long sleeve shirts in the natural color with the Affirmation logo embroidered in black and pink. The short sleeve shirts are \$30 and the long sleeve are \$35. If we don't have your size in stock you can fill out a shirt order form (available on the table) and we'll get it for you in our next order.

You only have until noon tomorrow to buy an Affirmation shirt at GC.

You can also order shirts from us directly after GC. Ordering instructions are on our web site: www.umaffirm.org.

Stand Up...

Convention Center (the side away from the river).

Delegates, Bishops, Staff and Visitors are encouraged to join in the Everflowing Stream of Justice and Love. It is your decision to return to your chairs or bleachers at the end of the 15 minutes or join Soul Force outside for the brief rally. If at any time you need to return to your seat, please feel free to do

so, or find a place to Stand Up in solidarity.

This demonstration is not a time for civil arrests or violating church rules. It is a time to Stand Up and deliver the clear message that we will not stand still for violations of baptismal vows and we will continue to create a Justice Loving church.

Murder/Suicide Stories...

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friends, partners, etc.) who were murdered or who committed suicide. Even if the name can't be published, we'd like to know of the tragedy. One suggestion is to create a web page of remembrance. Our intent was to focus on this message in our presence at General Conference 2004, but because of the stigma involved, we have not been able to assemble even anecdotal evidence.

Please send names and/or stories to Peggy Gaylord, co-spokeperson of Affirmation at aMiracleToday@pronetisp.net or P.O. Box 2988, Binghamton, NY 13902-2988.

Daily Events at GC

Hospitality Room at Smithfield United is open 6 a.m. – 10 p.m. today (Thursday, May 6) and 6 a.m. -1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Friday, May 7).

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

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. today & tomorrow at Smithfield United Church.

MOTHER LOVE

*Why don't you leave!
They shout,
murmur,
demand,
whimper.*

*Why not go where you're welcome,
which isn't here.
Don't you know
about majority rule?
about rule of law?
about discipline and order?*

O God, I know.

*And I know about
living,
scared and faithful,
to another rule:
do not abandon the babies.*

*And so I stay,
dancing,
arguing,
weeping,
loving—
refusing to leave,
so long as you have babies
and
some of them are gay.*

**Jeanne Knepper
March 26, 1999**