

# Affirmation



An Independent Voice for

United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

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## Fall Affirmation Retreat

### Creating Change from the Inside Out

October 15-17, 2004

*Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. – Margaret Mead*

*For thou art journeying from midnight through darkness to God-be-praised! – Anonymous Quaker Woman on the Underground Railroad*

Affirmation's long-awaited retreat, "Creating Change from the Inside Out" will be held in Chicago, Illinois from October 15-17, 2004. Retreat sessions and meals will take place at the International Conference Center, 4850 N. Sheridan Rd. and lodging just a few blocks away at the Lakeside Motel, 5440 N. Sheridan Rd. (See the registration form insert for further details.)

Following so soon after the bruising battles of the 2004 United Methodist General Conference, this retreat will provide a nurturing place for GLBT folks, friends, and allies to engage in a process of healing, speaking our truths, and reflecting on the many ways God's Spirit still calls us to joy and freedom.

Drawing on the work of Parker Palmer, Thomas Beech, and the Fetzer Institute, our time together will explore four key principles in seeking to create change:

- q Every person has access to an inner source of truth, named in various wisdom traditions as "soul," "spirit," or "heart," a source that can be accessed to guide the work we do, but that is often neglected in social change movements.
- q We can create open and trustworthy spaces in which people can listen for and speak their own truth without fear, and listen to the truth of others without rushing to judgment.
- q We can be drawn, through the use of poems, stories, dance, and art, toward the deeper questions of meaning and purpose that arise in our work.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Progressive UM Groups to Meet in Chicago October 15th

On October 15th the boards of Affirmation, MFSA, RMN, and Church Within A Church will meet together, along with representatives of other progressive and ethnic caucuses. The meeting, to be held at First UMC at the Chicago Temple will focus on common goals and efforts in the wake of the 2004 United Methodist General Conference.

Following up on a May gathering in Washington, DC, this meeting will seek to focus on expanding understanding of how the various groups can work together toward common goals of inclusiveness as well as to expand understanding of each other's special areas of interest.

The meeting will begin with a discussion of white privilege, and how it impacts the Church as well as the individual groups. Following an afternoon of interchange among the groups concerning priorities, the day will conclude with a time of worship and prayer.

## AFFIRMATION NATIONAL COUNCIL TO HOLD FALL SESSION IN CHICAGO

October 15-18 will be a full and exciting time of gathering for Affirmation leaders and constituents. It will begin with National Council members joining board/council members of other United Methodist progressive partners on Friday, October 15 for a day of reflection, dialogue, and worship. (See the related article on page 1.)

Next, Affirmation Council members will join other Affirmation constituents for the long-awaited retreat that begins Friday evening after dinner, and concludes mid-day Sunday. We look forward to the leadership of Randy Miller and Judy Cayot as we explore "Creating Change from the Inside Out." (See related article on page 1 and the registration insert.)

The Chicago days will culminate with the regular Fall meeting of Affirmation's elected National Council members, beginning after lunch Sunday, October 17 and ending late afternoon Monday, October 18. This is an important organizational meeting following General Conference and the Annual Corporate Membership meeting that occurred May 1st in Pittsburgh.

Agenda items for the October 17-18 Council meeting include:

- ◆ Assigning 2004-07 leadership roles
- ◆ Receiving the final report of Affirmation's Strategic Visioning Task Force and charting its implementation
- ◆ Planning Affirmation's 30th Anniversary events for 2005

If you have items to suggest or input for our work, please e-mail us at [umaffirmation@yahoo.com](mailto:umaffirmation@yahoo.com). We look forward to input from Affirmation members.

### Special Notice

Recently the Affirmation post office box (PO Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204) was closed due to a procedural error. It has been re-opened.

If you've had mail or a donation returned, send it again. Alternatively, you can send us email at [umaffirmation@yahoo.com](mailto:umaffirmation@yahoo.com) or donate online at <http://www.umaffirm.org/donate.html>.

We're sorry for the inconvenience. We'll do our best to make sure it doesn't happen again.

## Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication.

Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

Co-Editors:

Jan DeLap  
Diane DeLap

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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.

## ***Affirmation Retreat***

*(Continued from page 1)*

- q We can join in a respectful, evocative, and yet challenging communal inquiry about the inner dimensions of creating change that will not only affirm us, but stretch us and correct us, since all of us reflecting together are more insightful than any one of us reflecting alone.

Together we will affirm that our journey into the fullness of God's promise for our lives, our churches, and our world is both an inward and an outward trek. Truly lasting changes come about only when we can bring our whole selves to the struggle. Through a variety of creative exercises, including group discussions, journaling, worship, singing and dancing, we will challenge the "roadblocks" that hold us back, and celebrate the unique gifts and talents that each of us has to share. The retreat will end with an invitation to every participant to recommit to the struggle for full inclusion.

Judy Cayot and Randy Miller will be our facilitators for this exciting retreat. Both Judy and Randy have a long-time affiliation with Affirmation, having served as national spokespersons and members of the National Affirmation Council. In addition to this, Judy Cayot is Youth Director at Epworth United Methodist Church in Berkeley, CA (a Reconciling Congregation), and recently completed the Labyrinth Facilitators' Training through Veriditas. Judy has a background in camping and childcare, and believes in the power of play! Randy Miller is the owner and principal consultant in Kujichagulia – Creative Management Consultants (KCMA), a management services company dedicated to creating social change. Randy also teaches in the area of Social Ethics, and is actively involved with the United Methodist Church at the local, jurisdictional, and national levels.

### **Details – Details – Details**

**Meeting Location:** Retreat sessions and meals will take place at the:  
International Conference Center  
4850 N. Sheridan Rd.  
Chicago, IL.

**Lodging:** Lakeside Motel, 5440 N. Sheridan Rd.

**Date & Time:** October 15 – 17, beginning at 7:30 PM on Friday Night, and ending at 12:30 PM on Sunday.

**Cost:** \$125 per person including registration fee, meals, and lodging figured at two persons in a room.

**What to Bring:** A sense of joy and adventure, a willingness to play and risk, and musical instruments, a notebook to journal in, informal dress, etc.

## **“Love Makes A Family” Display At GC2004**

The *Love Makes A Family* photo exhibit was a powerful witness at GC. Many thanks to the anonymous donors who made it possible to pay for the costs associated with the display. Thanks also to the Affirmation volunteers (Jim Palmquist and Peggy Gaylord, among others) who made the arrangements, put up and took down the display, and arranged for shipping it to its next display location.

We know at least 60 people signed the guest book for the display. There were a lot of positive comments.

Keep an eye out for other displays of Love Makes A Family.

If you'd like to arrange for the display of Love Makes A Family, contact:

### **Family Diversity Projects**

PO Box 1246

Amherst, MA 01004-1246

413-256-0502

[info@familydiv.org](mailto:info@familydiv.org)

Their web site is [www.familydiv.org](http://www.familydiv.org).

## **INCARNATION**

*Truly*

Thirty to forty percent of homeless youth were thrown out or had to leave their homes because they are homosexual.

*I tell you,*

Homosexual youth commit suicide at a rate that is two to three times higher than the rate for other adolescents.

*just as you did it*

Parents lose custody of their children and visitation rights because they are lesbian or gay.

*to one of the least of these*

Men and women are evicted or burned out of their homes because someone thinks they are gay or lesbian.

*who are members of my family,*

Gay men and women are routinely beaten up, or murdered, for being homosexual.

*you did it unto me.*

Jeanne G. Knepper

November 10, 1998

## Biographical Notes on New Affirmation Council Members

### Rev. Margo Tenold

I guess you could say that ministry is my fourth career. I was originally trained as a teacher (Russian--but it's very rusty now), worked as a CPA in the pre-computer era, stayed home to raise two great kids and then, with "fear and trembling," answered a call to ministry. I was ordained in 1993 in the Cal-Nevada Annual Conference, and have served a small church in the Santa Cruz Mountains, a large suburban church in the San Jose area, and a small urban church near Stanford. I have a passion for spirituality and social justice and am now taking a year (or so) off to finish an advanced degree and write a dissertation, and work on the Affirmation anthology.

As I begin work on the anthology that will celebrate Affirmation's 30 years of activism on behalf of LGBT UM's, I would appreciate having the opportunity before or after the retreat to interview any of you who have been part of Affirmation's history. I will arrive in Chicago by mid-afternoon on Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, and will leave in the late afternoon on October 19<sup>th</sup>. Please email me (revmargo@earthlink.net) if you would be available for an interview so that we can set up a time.

### Vivian Waltz

Vivian Waltz is currently vying for the record of the UMC's ministerial candidate with the longest ordination process! A certified candidate since the early 1990s, she earned her master of divinity at Boston University School of Theology in 1996 and was commissioned as a probationary deacon in Western Pennsylvania in 2001. "I've been dragging my feet each step of the way, waiting for a definitive sign that the United Methodist Church will truly open its doors to all God's children."

Vivian grew up in southwestern Connecticut and held various jobs in corporate accounting to pay for her undergraduate education in geology.

She was working in the environmental field as a hydrogeologist when she felt God's call to ministry. Shortly after graduating from seminary, her son, Jonah, was born, and her vocation as an at-home mom continued through the adoption of Rosita from Bolivia in 1999 and the birth of her second daughter, Charlotte, in 2000. Disillusioned with and rejected by conservative Methodist churches in Western Pennsylvania, Vivian began working as a K-12 substitute teacher last year.

Vivian is a co-convenor of Western Pennsylvania Reconciling Ministries. Her other advocacy work includes domestic violence and sexual assault counseling, anti-hate and racism work with local youth, prison visitation and Bible study, and environmental initiatives. She de-stresses by playing the piano and sings in the Johnstown (PA) Symphony Chorus where she loves performing Handel's "Messiah" at Christmastime!

## *National Council*

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## **We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!**

There are two vital ingredients to the Affirmation witness at General Conference. The first is volunteers giving hundreds of hours to do everything from handing out newsletters first thing in the morning to being a visible presence in the interminable plenary sessions.

The second is, of course, money. Money makes it possible for us to print a daily General Conference newsletter for the delegates. Money makes it possible for critical Affirmation volunteers to be in Pittsburgh for two weeks. Money makes it possible for Affirmation and the other coalition partners to rent office and meeting space.

For all of the contributions that made our witness at GC 2004 possible, thank you. No matter how big or how small, thank you. Those two words seem inadequate, almost, but what more can we say? Thank you.

If you gave at the T-shirt level, you should be getting your T-shirt soon. We needed a bit of a breather after GC.

If you gave at the Daily GC Newsletter level you should have gotten each day's newsletter as soon as we could get it off to you. If you didn't get the newsletters, your contribution came in too late for us to have the information in Pittsburgh. We're sorry.

If you gave at the GC Partner level and you told us you wanted to be listed, that list appears in this newsletter. If your name doesn't appear in the list, it's because we erred on the side of safety. We didn't want to unintentionally "out" an Affirmation supporter. If you forgot to check the "Please List" option, drop us a line and we'll list you in our next newsletter.

And once again, those most inadequate words: Thank you!

### **GC 2004 Partner List**

Merlin Ackerson

Nancy Hensley

Shirley Cooper

Philip and Sylvia Palmer

Dr. Zane and Carol Dubour

B. Scott Peterman

E. Dale and Frances Dunlap

Allyn C. Rieke

Alice Ann Dunnewald

Marilyn Van Tine

Edward English

Elsie Gauley Vega

Dr. and Mrs. Harry C Farrell, Jr.

Murden Woods

Patricia E. Farris

Rebecca Abts Wright

Jan Olson

## **Eight 4-Pagers in 10 Days With Time Left Over**

**By Judy WestLee & Gary Shephard**

Judy claims that she wound up co-editor on the GC 2004 Affirmation daily newsletter, *Drops of Water*, because she left the Affirmation Council meeting briefly to use the women's restroom. Gary's version of how he wound up co-editor mentions temporary insanity after having survived the GC 2000 Affirmation daily newsletter *Affirm! Table Manners*, and swearing he would never subject himself to that again.

Judy 'fesses up: "Actually, I consider it a great honor to be asked to co-edit that newsletter. And I got to edit it with my friend, Gary Shephard. All the better.

"Gary and I managed to get over to the convention center about once a day. We had press credentials, which gave us great seats and a table for note taking. A continuing stream of good material from council members and other allies supported us.

"We just put it together. Gary edited it so we had everything more or less in the same style. I laid it out. Truth told ... it was kind of fun. But then reporters and editors always have had a reputation for being a tad different from the rest of the world."

"It's almost like telephone poles going past while you're driving down the highway," says Gary. "With the quarterly newsletter, you have a few days to proof things and play with the layout. Daily newsletters, even at only four pages, have such a short cycle time. I'm sure people working for newspapers are used to this sort of thing. It's stressful for us amateurs."

Judy and Gary want to thank all of the volunteers that worked so diligently every morning handing out the newsletters. "The writers and editors can pour our hearts and souls into the newsletter every day. It doesn't do us any good if it doesn't get into the delegates' hands," Judy and Gary say.

The one thing that stands out the most in Gary's mind was an e-mail received at the newsletter e-mail address the first week. It was from a conservative who didn't agree with us, but he did congratulate us on our tone. He said that he was afraid that the groups coming to GC would take an inflammatory tone to make the strongest possible statement. Instead, he said, our newsletter portrayed a determination to stay the course and make a difference.

"Even if we didn't see any difference this time, we always hope that our witness at GC changes *some* hearts. Otherwise the daily GC newsletter wouldn't be worth the effort it takes to produce," says Gary.

Will Gary go for three GC newsletter editorships in a row? "Ask me in three years. I may say 'yes,' I may run out of the building screaming," he says with a wink. "And then again, maybe I'll get lucky and they won't ask me."

Will Judy do another stint in 2008? "Well," she replies, "we will be Ft. Worth, TX, which is close to Cowbutt, TX, where Gary lives. We'll see. We'll see. And, as Gary says, maybe I'll get lucky, too, and they won't ask me."

Our Affirmation GC 2004 daily newsletters - *Drops of Water* - are available at <http://www.umaffirm.org/gc2004/#drops> in both PDF and plain text format.

## **GC 2004 - A Watershed Event for the LGBT Movement in the UMC**

By Jim Palmquist, Affirmation Council

I was at GC 2004 from the day before it began to the day after it ended. My role for Affirmation was 'hole plugging', keeping our efforts staffed and moving forward, and supporting our logistics operations. I was not deeply involved in legislation nor in dialog at the leadership level with our partners and our opponents within the UMC. But what I saw at GC 2004 has not been widely reported. Here is the big picture as I see it.

We grew our movement immeasurably and undermined our opponents in very powerful ways. It was a watershed event. There is the issue of 'oppression by the majority'. This is the fact that 50.1% of the voting body decides the outcome of contested issues. We have been victims of it for over 30 years. I foresee very soon that we will become the majority, and unfortunately 'victimize' the minority within the UMC.

During the first day of GC 2004, I saw one of my conservative acquaintances who was a delegate. He asked me why we were at GC 2004 since the issues were decided at GC 2000. I understood his frame of mind. Whereas in 2000, we could get 33% on six key votes, because of the delegate selection changes, we could expect to get maybe 25% of the votes in 2004. The conservatives did not see a need to fight over LGBT issues on the convention floor. They let the Koreans, Filipinos and Africans speak of their extreme discomfort in their home societies if the UMC took an LGBT accepting stance. The case was closed. The conservatives let the international delegates close the issue, and avoided being seen as nasty themselves.

It is true that on an issue-by-issue analysis, we did not make much progress at GC 2004. However, the big picture is that the conservatives were shocked to their core by some of the voting. Given close votes at 60% to 40% and 55% to 45% against gay progress on a couple of issues, they were shocked completely. The pro-LGBT movement moved up 15 to 20% in voting from the 25% expectation after GC 2000.

The Smithfield activities, including the luncheon speakers attracting more than 500 people for the largest events and the low-cost breakfast and lunch every weekday, was a true blessing to our cause. The Smithfield/Meet-Here operations sent the message that our cause has come of age.

The demonstration on the convention floor in the second week was also a triumph. Probably less than 200 people entered the convention floor. I was in the last third of the pack. After we entered, the front of the line kept moving, but our segment stopped for a considerable period of time. At first, I could not figure out what had happened. Then I realized that eight people had entered the line in front of me. There were many hundreds who entered the line as we marched and the end of the line stopped to make room for them. Don Fado reported that 30+ Bishops stood in support of our demonstration. This level of support all over the floor caused serious concern among the conservatives, and was an eye-opener to our international delegates from Africa, etc. They began to realize the power of this movement.

Though conservatives had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for GC 2004, the tide is turning, and they could see that in the next GC, they may no longer have control of voting. So they drafted and offered us a schism document, hoping the progressives would leave the UMC. We have been in this battle since 1972, and leaving now is out of the question for most of us. This schism document is the proof that the conservatives see the handwriting on the wall. The oppression of the majority will remove their ability to control church policy in the future - maybe in the very near future (GC 2008).

GC 2004 was the turning point where conservative forces found their strategies failing, and the progressives found new wind in our sails. I would not have missed it for the world.

## **We Come To Build Bridges**

**By Judy WestLee**

Once years ago a friend of mine, her then 5 year-old son, and I went fishing. It was her son's first fishing trip. We fished from a dock. The young man caught a fish, and he was excited. Later I noticed he was quiet, which was unusual. I looked over to see what he was doing. He was feeding his just caught fish our bait worms! I asked him what he was doing. He explained he wanted to fatten up the fish so it would be bigger. We had a long discussion about patience and letting things come in their own time.

I am reminded of that incident as I contemplate what our United Methodist Church is going through today. I see there being three basic positions on the issue of "homosexuality." One group - perhaps the largest group - is undecided because of the conflicting information given. A second group is convinced by its understanding of the Bible and church history that homosexuality is a sin, that same-gender relationships are not blessed by the church, and that homosexual persons are "not fit" to serve as parish ministers. [Being one of those persons, I must tell you that language really hurts!]. The third group is equally convinced by its understanding of the Bible, our personal experiences, and study of recent medical research, that being "homosexual," i.e. attracted to the same gender persons, is a God-given trait rather than a behavior option, and that "homosexual" persons should be held accountable for the same behavior standards as are heterosexual persons.

And so there we are...at a standoff for many years... many General Conferences.

One of my New Testament professors in seminary, Dr. Fred Craddock, used to teach us hard lessons of the Bible by first carefully laying out one side of the argument, and then just as carefully laying out the other side of the argument. After going through all of that, Dr. Craddock would ask: "So, which opinion is right? .....Who KNOWS!" Dr. Craddock understood the reasoning of both positions.

As a United Methodist who would label herself as "progressive," I think I understand the position of those who want to limit what lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT) persons can do. But I ask those of that opinion to recognize our understandings, also.

The concept of local autonomy in deciding which route to take...no LGBT rights or full LGBT rights...should be left to Annual Conferences. John Wesley understood that churches and church locations vary, and that ministry must be tailored to fit each setting. Remember Article XXI of Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task (found on p. 64 of The Book of Discipline) allows the church to change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

We call upon everyone to understand we have different worldviews. We see things differently. Not that one view is wrong and another view is right. It's more of a "Who KNOWS?" situation.

For the past three years Affirmation has run a fund raising campaign called "Turning Walls into Bridges...Brick by Brick." The campaign explained "Now is a great time to break down the walls that divide us...brick by brick, opposition by opposition, and use those bricks instead to build a bridge of understanding and cooperation. Affirmation works to make space for all people, including you, within the UMC. We do it by taking down the walls of prejudice brick by brick, and instead of hurling those bricks at others, we use those bricks to build bridges of understanding."

Get to know us who disagree with you...of which ever view you identify. Ask us about our homes, our gardens, our dogs/cats, our children/step-children, our grandchildren/step-grandchildren (I have a great story about me teaching my 18-month old step-granddaughter how to eat a banana!). Let's get to know each other as 3-dimensional people rather than single issue people.

Let's get on with doing the work of the church rather than continuously disagreeing over this topic. Our world is at war. We have a horrendous AIDS epidemic. Our children need to be fed, have medical care, housed and educated. Our elders need to have access to medicine without having to choose between prescription drugs or buying food. Let's get excited about the things which excited Jesus. Please join us on this new bridge of understanding.