



Affirmation

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER CONCERNS
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Judicial Council Witness

By Diane DeLap Spokesperson for National Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns

From Wednesday October 24th through Friday October 26th I participated in a witness event in San Francisco organized by members and clergy of the California-Nevada Annual Conference to coincide with the meeting of the Judicial Council. This effort was financially supported by the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), Affirmation, and the Reconciling Committee of the New England Annual Conference among others.

Beginning Wednesday evening with a public witness in the Justin Herman Plaza in the Embarcadero, the event continued with a candlelight vigil march to the Fisherman's Wharf Hilton where the Judicial Council meetings were being held. At the Hilton, a webcast and press conference was held in a meeting room across the hall from the Judicial Council meeting room. This meeting room was used as a Hospitality Center throughout the three-day Witness. During the press conference, I was interviewed along with Troy Plummer, Executive Director of

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Farewell to Ken Rowe

By Jim Palmquist Affirmation Council co-convenor

This newsletter marks the end of the six-year term on the Council for our Co-Spokesperson, Ken Rowe from San Francisco. Ken brought great ideas, perspectives and energy to Affirmation, and we will miss his contribution. Besides being a Co-Spokesperson for three years, Ken participated in our Lynx Committee, and ended up chairing that committee. Lynx is involved with our relationships with other organizations inside and outside the UMC. For several years, Ken led our efforts with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force sponsored National Religious Leadership Roundtable. Ken also helped lead our Communications and Program/Spiritual Formation Committees. Ken was our Co-Spokesperson during the time of General Conference 2004 in Pittsburgh, and was involved in all the major activities at that event. He wrote a series of flyers for GC 2004 called "Hot Water Topics", tying into the GC theme of water washed. Those articles dealt with issues like gender and identity, Q & A about bisexuality and marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships. These documents gave delegates and attendees at GC 2004 more information about our issues. Frequently people have these questions, but don't know whom to ask about them. He also led our participation at WOW 2003 in Philadelphia. The Affirmation Council gives sincere thanks for his years of service to the organization. We look forward to working with him in our future work.

Judicial Council Witness (Continued from page 1)

RMN, and others. During the public witness, I presented a press release from Affirmation prepared for the event. The text of that press release follows this article.

On Thursday afternoon, a webcast discussion was conducted in the Hospitality Center between Troy Plummer, Dawnne Woodie, and me. Dawnne is a San Francisco transwoman who is a former Baptist preacher, and currently is TransSpirit Ministry Coordinator of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of San Francisco, and Executive Director, Outreach Program for Transgenders In Crisis. The Judicial Witness webcasts are available via video on demand at www.ceedtv.com/Reconcile.htm.

Thursday night, Dawnne and I conducted a Transgender worship service in the Hospitality Center with one of the Judicial Council members in attendance. Friday evening students from the Pacific School of Religion conducted a worship service.

Since the Hospitality Center/Witness meeting room was located across from the room that the Judicial Council was using for their deliberations, we had several opportunities to interact with Judicial Council members. I had an opportunity to spend about 30 minutes in conversation with one of the Judicial Council members.

The Judicial Council had several matters under discussion of concern to Affirmation. The most important was the request by members of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference to overturn a decision by the Bishop of that Conference to continue in appointment Drew Phoenix, a pastor who had completed gender transition from female to male. In addition, a request was made to clarify requirements for notification of change of name when change of gender is involved.

One notable absence from the Judicial Council meeting was that of James Holsinger, conservative president of the Judicial Council and President Bush's nominee for U.S. Surgeon General. Holsinger issued a statement on the eve of the meeting that he was concerned that his nomination could become an "unnecessary and unproductive distraction."

Several days after the Judicial Council adjourned, their rulings on these issues were made public. On both of these issues the Judicial Council refused to overturn the Bishop's rulings on these matters. In Decision No. 1074 the Council states "A clergy person who remained in good standing in the annual conference is required to be continued under appointment. A

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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.

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

* Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.



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PRESS STATEMENT

Presented during the San Francisco Judicial Council Open Air Witness at Justin Herman Plaza

My name is Diane DeLap. I am here today representing Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns as their National Spokesperson. Affirmation is an independent voice of LGBTQ United Methodists and allies.

As an evangelical pastor for almost 20 years, I prayed and struggled to deny my gender identity. Finally I found peace with God when I accepted that I am transgender. When I decided that it was time for me to live my life as the woman God wanted me to be, I found a welcoming United Methodist Church. Their love and acceptance was vital to my successful transition.

I believe that it is time for the Church to abandon its drive to exclude people who seem different. The history of groups that the Church has excluded is long and painful. In the early days of the church Gentiles were excluded. African Americans and women still struggle for respect. For decades the Church has been trying to exclude Christians who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Now transgender people are being asked to disappear. But we are still here! We are here because Jesus invited us as he invites all – and all means all!!

Nothing in the Bible speaks against transgender people. Even Jesus said that some people are born eunuchs so he understood that there are natural variations in gender identity, and encouraged acceptance for these who would be called Transgender today. He welcomed anyone who would follow him. Outcasts were included in spite of condemnations by religious leaders. Gender was not a block to God's kingdom for Jesus-- he taught women and they supported his ministry.

God's creation is full of variations in gender. The church is called to help everyone grow in love and service to God and neighbor regardless of gender or other identities. I believe the church follows the teachings of Jesus when it accepts the service of transgender people like Drew Phoenix, who clearly have the gifts and graces for ministry. As a matter of fact when the 2004 General Conference was asked to vote on legislation that excluded transgender people from being pastors, it was soundly defeated.

It's time for the Church to abandon the politics of exclusion and to start following Jesus again. He reached out to include anyone who heard the good news, and began to love God and neighbor. The church that carries His name should do no less. Today I call on the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church to reject the politics of exclusion and affirm the inclusive example of Jesus by accepting the service of Drew Phoenix and other Transgender pastors.

It's Not Easy

By Diane DeLap Spokeperson for National Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns

In the words of that famous American philosopher, Kermit D. Frog, “It’s not easy bein’ green.” Kermit’s point was that he blended in with the background of green leaves and “so many other ordinary things.” Beginning in the 1970’s, generations of children have heard and understood Kermit’s message about the difficulty being uncomfortable with yourself. By the end of his little song though Kermit admits, “I am green and it’ll do fine, it’s beautiful! And I think it’s what I want to be.”

Every transperson I’ve known, and I’ve known hundreds, if not thousands, has struggled with their gender identity from early childhood. Most of the time they and their parents couldn’t identify the issues as related to gender identity, but as they grew older and as more information became available, they recognized the markers that had been there through their lives.

I’ve known from as far back as I can remember that I wasn’t the same as other boys and girls. As I grew up in the 1940’s and 50’s I remember being repeatedly told that I needed to “act like a boy!” There was obviously something that I was doing, even as a preschooler, which projected my feelings that I was a girl. But I learned. I learned to “act like a boy.” There was a real sense that I was “acting” a part.

It’s really hard to describe what gender confusion is all about. I suppose it’s like trying to describe color to a blind person. If you haven’t experienced it, it’s hard to grasp the concept. For most persons, whose perception of their gender matches their physical characteristics, the concept of being confused about gender is completely foreign. The usual description of a “woman trapped in a man’s body” doesn’t really do justice to the level of confusion I experienced and what I observed in others like me. I felt like my life was out of “sync.” A better description, in my estimation, is that of the sound-picture synchronization of a movie.

For most of humanity, gender perception and sexual characteristics are “in sync.” There is not any confusion or conflict between the two parts. For me, however, it was like the “sound” part of my life didn’t match the “picture” part of my life. When you watch a movie that has sound out of sync with the picture, it requires intense concentration to try to match the two elements so that you can make sense out of the story. There is a real sense in which matching the gender-sex elements when they are out of sync requires a great deal of concentration. I went through life in constant tension – trying to force these elements into sync. Daily life becomes a constant effort to force these two parts to come together.

Most of us who struggle with this issue come to a point in our lives when we can no longer manage the tension, and come down to the most basic of choices – life or death; a life that involves gender transition to resolve the conflict, or death. Unfortunately too many of us find the alternative – ending life – to be the easier choice. Many who say that gender transition is a choice do not understand that the “choice” is not to be transgender or not. The choice is between a life that resolves the gender-sex conflict by matching the physical sex characteristics to the gender perception, or no life at all.

I was about ten years old when Christine Jorgenson returned to the U.S. following her gender transition in Denmark. I remember the feeling of hope I initially had that it was possible for me to do what she had done to become a girl. Then there was a feeling of hopelessness that came when I heard the derisive comments and jokes made about her by the media as well as my family and friends. As much as I wanted to, I realized that this was not something that I could do.

My teenage years were horrible. It’s hard enough for the average teenager to figure out the boy-girl

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OUT Awards to be Inaugurated during General Conference 2008 in Fort Worth

Some Drop Out, Others Come OUT
Some Turn Away from their Faith, Others Live It OUT
Some Hide Out, Others Shout OUT Their Identity

Do you know anyone who is OUT?
Nominate them to receive an OUT Award from Affirmation
Submit Nominations for First Ever Affirmation OUT Awards

On Saturday, April 26th, Affirmation will host a banquet at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. At the banquet, two persons will be presented with an OUT Award recognizing them as **exceptional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer United Methodist Christians who are boldly and vividly living OUT their faith and witness.**

One award will be given to an OUT lay person (a non-credentialed and non-paid member/witness in the church) and the second will be given to an OUT professional (a credentialed and/or paid professional in the life of the church).

All nominees and nominators will be invited to the banquet. The OUT award winners will be selected by the Affirmation National Council. The awards will be presented at the banquet.

To nominate a person, please submit a single page nomination to David Meredith, 7000 Summit Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45243. Each nomination should include 1) the nominator's name, address, phone, e-mail, and description of relationship to nominee, 2) the nominee's name, lay or professional, address, phone, and e-mail, and 3) a narrative of the qualities, activities, and events that qualify the person as an **"exceptional lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer United Methodist Christian who is boldly and vividly living OUT their faith and witness."**

Deadline for nominations: February 29, 2008.

GC 2008 Delegates Need to Hear Your Story

By Diane DeLap

Affirmation is gathering the stories of GLBT United Methodists to present during GC08 in the Affirmation daily newsletter. We need the General Conference delegates to hear your stories so that when they vote for discrimination, they will see your face and hear again your story. When the important votes come up we want them to remember your story to remind them of their obligation to represent all UMC members, especially those who have been discriminated against.

It's easy to vote for principles that have no immediate consequences, but when we put a face on the pain that results from discriminatory legislation, delegates will be forced to think twice about their vote.

It's hard to write your story. I know it was difficult for me to put into words my journey. It's difficult to discuss personal events and feelings that we would prefer to leave in the past. You don't have to give specific details but it's important that delegates understand that their decisions result in real pain in the lives of other Christians. Please email you story to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com or mail it to Affirmation; PO Box 1021; Evanston, IL 60204 and indicate "Attn: GC08 Article" on the envelope.

Where is my Affirmation newsletter???

No it's not your imagination. It's been a while since we've put out a newsletter. One of the consequences of having a reduced Council size has been a significant reduction in the number of articles submitted to be published. Not only that, but there are fewer people to manage the important activities of Affirmation. Membership, fund raising, and planning for events as well as newsletter publishing all suffer. Affirmation is an all volunteer organization. We don't hire a staff to do our work. The point of this is that we need you to volunteer to serve as a Council member or on a committee. Without your help the important work of Affirmation will suffer. Instead of sitting there and complaining about the newsletter you missed or the sad state of affairs in the UMC, volunteer to be a part of the solution. To volunteer send an email to umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com and put "Nominations and Leadership Development" in the subject line.

Frequent Flyer Miles Piling Up???

Do you have a lot of Frequent Flyer miles you haven't decided how to use? Donating them to Affirmation helps someone who can't afford to go, be at General Conference 2008, and be your voice in creating change! Contact Jim Palmquist at bluemountain_at_entermail.net.

It's Not Easy *(Continued from page 4)*

relationship, but for someone like me it was impossible. I wasn't sure who I was. How could I figure out my relationship with other boys or girls?

So I played my part and "acted like a man." I figured that all this confusion came from the fact that I'd never had a relationship with a girl, and that when I found the right woman and got married, it would all go away. Then I met Jan and we fell in love. I wasn't acting, I really fell in love. We were married in the mid 1960's and I was sure all the gender confusion was past me.

What happened was exactly the opposite. We were together constantly, and I was intimately involved with a woman. I was learning what being a woman was really like. Instead of the gender confusion diminishing it increased exponentially. I thought I was going crazy. Finally, about six months after our wedding, Jan and I talked about what was going on. We decided that our love for each other was strong enough to overcome or survive this challenge.

In the late 1960's we became members of an independent fundamentalist Christian church. I dedicated my life to Christ. I believed Jesus' words, "...if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt. 17:20) My situation surely wasn't as hard as moving a mountain, so I felt that what I needed was to strengthen my faith and it would all go away. I decided to become a pastor, attended seminary, and ministered to several churches. It didn't go away.

By the late 70's I was really confused. Nothing was helping to diminish these feelings. Jan was frustrated. We had a son who needed me as his father. We decided that we needed help so we spoke to a Christian counselor who was a member of our church. After several sessions I finally broke down and told him about my feelings of confusion about my gender. Surprisingly he didn't shake the Bible at me and declare my sin. He told me that I needed to stop worrying about this. He told me that God loved me regardless of my feelings, and that what I needed to do was to learn what God wanted for me to do about this in my life. As I began to pray – not that it be removed from my life – but for wisdom to know how to handle it, I began to find the beginnings of peace.

In the early 1980's we moved to a different region of the country. One day, as despair began to creep back in to my life, I called a help line. They referred me to a support group for "transvestites." This began our education about what was really happening in my life. As Jan and I interacted with others, male and female, struggling with their gender identity and with the spouses of these "transgender" persons, we began to learn where we fit in. I began to understand more about what was happening in my life and learned that it wasn't ever "going away."

By the late 80's we had integrated my transgender experience into our lives. I was satisfied, at this point, to express my gender identity through cross-dressing. We were active in our local church as well as the local transgender support group – careful not to mix the two. We held various positions in the church. I was a member of the church board as well as being a Bible school teacher, communion leader, and occasional preacher. We were uncomfortable though with our "secret life." I was also a member of the board of directors of the support group and Jan and I edited their monthly newsletter. We also worked with a national transgender organization, editing newsletters and helping in their office.

Finally we decided to discuss our transgender life with our pastor who was also a close friend. I had done some personal study and read a number of articles about the Bible's teachings related to transgender people. I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing that I could find in the Bible that indicated that being transgender was wrong. I also felt that the Bible's discussion of eunuchs indicated that transgender persons should be accepted by the church. I took my conclusions to the

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It's Not Easy (Continued from page 7)

pastor and as we discussed this, I asked for his prayerful study of these issues to see if I had missed anything or if there was anything wrong with my understanding of the various relevant passages.

After several counseling sessions, I attended a regular meeting of the church board. As the first order of business the pastor read a lengthy list of the reasons why my activities as a transgender person made me unfit to serve in any official capacity in the church. He then proposed that the board remove me from my current responsibilities and declare me unfit to serve in the future. The board accepted his proposition. I was devastated. I felt betrayed by my pastor and my friend as well as others on the board who were my friends. I felt that, at a time of great turmoil and questioning in my life, my church had cast me aside. After several months of attempting to resolve the issues with church leaders, we stopped attending church.

Throughout the 90's we continued to work to understand what God wanted me to do with my life. We had both worked with counselors who specialized in treating transgender clients. I was beginning to realize, for a number of reasons, that I was not a cross-dresser. I was a transsexual. That idea panicked me. I remembered what had happened to Christine Jorgenson and many others I had seen who had made the transition. I knew that there was a very real chance that I would lose Jan and our son as well as my job and most of my friends.

Finally, in 1999, following my son's graduation from college and his subsequent marriage, I decided that it was time for me to think seriously about beginning to transition to live as a female. Jan and I had several discussions, and found a gender counselor who also worked with couples who were going through this process. In our discussions we realized that if we were to successfully negotiate this process, we needed to establish a relationship with a supportive church.

I began to do some research and located a church in a neighboring community that was a "federated" or "united" church associated with both the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist denominations. It also proudly declared that it was "Open and Affirming" as a UCC congregation and "Reconciling" as a UMC congregation. After contacting the pastor of the church and receiving assurances that they would be accepting of us we began to attend regularly. We found them to be a warm and loving community that welcomed us as well as others of the GLBT community. We were not treated as second-class Christians because I was transsexual. We were welcomed and as time went on, became involved in various positions in the church.

In July 2001 I went through the legal process of transition. My name change was completed and my drivers' license changed, and I began to live as a woman. Later I had surgery that allowed a change to my birth certificate. It was a short while after my transition that I realized that the tension that came with the feeling of being out of sync was gone. I was at peace. What a gift!!

Our new church stood by me and prayed for me through my transition and, when I lost my job, through two and one-half years of unemployment. They prayed with us for our relationship with our son who struggled to accept the loss of me as his father and to accept me as a woman. They rejoiced with us as he began the journey back to acceptance and as we began to have more regular access to our grandchildren. They encouraged me as I began to speak out in Conference and national meetings about the need for the Church to understand and accept the transgender community as God's blessed children. What a contrast from our other church that rejected us!

Perhaps the most important change I have experienced is the change in my understanding of my transgender nature. It's not a burden to bear or a problem to be overcome. It's not a sin to be forgiven or a flaw to be suppressed. It's a gift from God to be lived. It's who God wants me to be. Today I rejoice that God has given me the great gift of living in two genders. Like Kermit, I can finally say, "I am green (or, in my case, transsexual) and it'll do fine, it's beautiful! And I think it's what I want to be."

Where There's A Will

By Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne, Affirmation Council

Recently I decided it was time to finally write my will and update the beneficiary lists for my pension plan and life insurance. While the majority of any monies I leave will go to surviving family members, I decided that this would be an excellent time to tithe. So the first 10% of each of these (my estate, pension, and life insurance) will go to Affirmation. Thus, helping the work continue even when I can't be a part of it. Besides, as an inactive UM pastor, it gives me enormous pleasure to think of United Methodist Pension funds supporting Affirmation. You too can have this joy. Consider remembering Affirmation when you declare beneficiaries for pensions, life insurance, 401Ks, wills, etc.

In addition, I also directed that any monies collected at my memorial service go to Affirmation. I hope that all this will be a long time from now, but it's good to have the planning done.

Report from the Treasurer

By Jan Olson, Affirmation Treasurer

Affirmation ended its fiscal year on April 30, 2007, and it's great to report that we ended the year in the black. This was made possible by the Council significantly tightening our expenditures and by the support from our members and friends. Whenever an organization can end a budget year by taking in more money than it spends it is reason for celebration.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. The current fiscal year (May 1, 2007 – April 30, 2008) will have considerably increased expenses due to General Conference 2008. For Affirmation to continue to be a strong, visible presence at General Conference, we will be asking our members and friends to reach deep into their pockets. With your generous response we will be able to continue the fight for a truly inclusive United Methodist denomination.

Judicial Council Witness (Continued from page 2)

clergy person's good standing cannot be terminated without administrative or judicial action having occurred, and all fair process being accorded. All clergy name changes, regardless of the reasons for the name change, are to be placed under minute question # 91. The Judicial Council does not reach the question of whether gender change is a chargeable offense or violates minimum standards established by the General Conference."

Clearly the Judicial Council felt that the Discipline does not cover the issue of Transgender Clergy. However, it is to be expected that conservative elements in the Church will push the 2008 General Conference to restrict the ordination and appointment of persons who go through gender transition. Mark Tooley, Executive Director of The Institute on Religion and Democracy's Methodist focus group UMAction, stated, "We expect the upcoming General Conference in 2008 will respond with legislation that upholds traditional Christian teachings about the sacredness of the human body. Christianity's traditions strongly argue against any affirmation of transsexuality or sex change procedures. UMAction calls upon the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church ... to address trans-sexuality and sex change procedures. Christian tradition clearly affirms the divine gift of maleness and femaleness, seeing sexual identity as an unchangeable gift from God rooted in physical reality, not fluid perceptions."

It is clear that the conservative attempt to exclude from the United Methodist Church all who do not measure up to their own restrictive understanding of the world will continue to expand. Affirmation will continue to stand for full inclusion of all of God's children in the Church. And "all" means "all." An "Open Door" is not "open" if any are excluded.

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AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR:
UNITED METHODISTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND

Affirmation Vision for the United Methodist Church

At its October meeting in Columbus, OH, the Affirmation Council decided to explore our vision for the United Methodist Church as an anchor for our work. Here is what we envision for the UMC:

- ✠ Our movement is really a reformation of Christianity
- ✠ The Church needs to go beyond full inclusion
 - An apology for exploiting/marginalizing LGBTQ people
 - Adequate Church employment for all called to serve
 - An end to clergy abuse by the Church
- ✠ Truly put on the mind of Christ and accept all kinds of differences
 - Other faiths, gender differences, races, sizes, sexual orientations, social positions, ages, and embracing those with different economic situations.
 - It was not in Jesus' nature to hate or discriminate
- ✠ Honor separation of Church and state
 - In marriage ceremonies/licenses
 - Faith based initiatives
- ✠ Sing "I am the Church..."
 - Reform yourself before you try to reform others
- ✠ Sing "Jesus loves me..."
 - Really mean it
- ✠ Our movement is part of a progression through Christian history to increase welcome.
 - Jesus calls us to do our share in broadening the welcome in this time.



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<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut>