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Affirmation

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

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General Conference 2008 Fort Worth, TX

Issue #6

That Face, That Spirit, That Mary

by Judy Cayot

The day I met Mary Gaddis in October of 1982, she was a presenter at a “Workshop on Homosexuality” (later renamed – Workshop on Homophobia.) At the introductory session she wore jeans and leather – her best imitation of a bull dyke. For the second half of the event, she was dressed in an elegant three-piece gray suit, panty hose, dress shoes and bra.

Her intention was to shake people’s assumptions – make them think.

That evening, Mary told me about Affirmation and invited me to the next gathering in Los Angeles. We went together, two of four women among 60 men, where we laid plans for General Conference 1984. A year later, we were in Baltimore handing out Affirmation newsletters, singing in the hallways, putting on ties for “dress-up”

day (one of the many street theater stunts Affirmation volunteers organized that year), and Mary appeared in white face – doing her “Coming Out” mime.

Street theater, mime in particular, was a favorite of Mary’s. At General Conference 1980 she dressed as a mime for several days – never speaking, opening doors for folks, offering in her

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Faith Journey Leads to Unexpected Destination

by Jeff Miller

It took God many years to finally convince me that God’s good creation was affirmed within my gay orientation. I had spent years in depressive warfare against the reality of that creation. Finally, I was able to stop the denial and accept me openly as I was, a gay man, a gay United Methodist Pastor. At that point I was completing 30 years of full-time service in

the Western Pennsylvania Conference. Thirty years as pastor, as Conference Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, as Jurisdictional Youth Coordinator and as one who served on General Church Agencies. Thirty years of faithful and effective service– and I was always and continue to this day to be the same person, called by God into ministry...but no

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Pastoral Care Support Line 612-353-7445 thru end of GC

Breakfast – Every day from 7:30 – 8:30 AM First Christian Church. Last breakfast Sat 5/3.

Lunch – Every day from 12:00 – 2:30 PM First Christian Church. Last lunch Fri 5/2.

MFSA Speaker series 1:15 – 2:00 PM, First Christian Church

Reconciling Closing Communion Fri 5/2 after GC ends. Late.



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Articles for the newsletter or comments may be sent to AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahooogroups.com*

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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.



Debate Is So 20th Century

by Gary Shephard

In the past we've tried to make progress by having discussions on lesbian, or gay, or bisexual, or transgender issues.

That's all so 20th century though, don't you know? At one point I was willing to participate in such a discussion because I thought it might move us forward a little bit.

Been there, done that, it's about as much fun as being the frog the tenth grade biology class dissected last week. Not only would I let myself be taken apart and criticized at a microscopic level (by people who, truth to tell, had little room to talk) I usually didn't even get a "thank you" afterwards.

Who in this (semi) enlightened day and age would put a black man or woman at the front of the room and discuss them? Or a Jewish person? Muslim? Downs Syndrome? A person with physical challenges? A person with mental challenges? But let that person be lesbian, gay,

bisexual, or transgender, well, it's open season.

I mean, really, lesbians are all sickos. And gays are all perverts. Those bisexuals – well, they just can't make up their minds, can they? And those transgender persons, they're just not content to live in the body God gave them. They have to go hacking it up, making it a travesty of what they were born with.

Of course that's not true. And you know what? We've been telling the truth about

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ourselves ever since the organization was founded in 1975. And still you close your ears.

Let us know when you're ready to open your doors and listen with open hearts and open minds. We'll be

here to tell you our stories of painful self discovery, and coming to terms with how we were born, of coming to the truth as God revealed it to us. But we're not going to "discuss" or "debate" or "study" it. This is our lives. This is our truth. This is our line in the sand.

When you're ready to accept that, let us know. We'll be here waiting.



(That Face...Continued from page 1)

cupped hands either kernels of corn or bullets (your choice). When she finally spoke at a news conference, several people were stunned – they thought she was mute. So completely did she embody the mime.

The challenge for Mary was never whether or how to be “out” in the church. The challenge was how to manage her outrage at the injustices within a church that raised her in the knowledge that she was a beloved child of God - how to make change and stay whole in the process. Before General Conference 2000, Mary shipped some tools and copper to Cleveland. To maintain sanity and an even keel, she spent time on the sidewalk across the street

from the Convention Center, soldering candlesticks and making necklaces out of copper pipe. We sold them to raise money for the progressive coalition.

In the on-going work of the church – Commission on Status and Role of Women, Conference Trustees, District United Methodist Women, local church committees – Mary was always a vocal presence. Though a dynamic off-the-cuff speaker, at General Conference Mary often used her body and / or her clothes to speak for her, to embody the fight for justice. Her mime allowed her to play with people in an anonymous way. The white face was a paradox of self-protection and vulnerability. Silent yet powerful. That face is missing this year.

After Mary died, I wrote in an email to friends, “Mary’s great heart gave out, but her spirit is indomitable. Watch out! It may come along to nudge you when you least expect it.” You may see in the halls of General Conference someone wearing a vest or jacket with the words, *Justice – not Just Us* painted on the back - clothes that Mary decorated and wore. She is among us. Her spirit informs our work. I say again, watch out.

Mary Gaddis (August 13, 1949-March 27, 2006) was cospokesperson for National Affirmation from 1976-88. As a member of Affirmation and later MFSA, she attended General Conference in 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 2000, and 2004. Mary and Judy were partners for 23 years.

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longer deemed worthy by the UMC.

I thank God for my children, my parents and extended family that has loved me and has recognized the joy that integrity and honesty has brought to my life. I thank God for the First UMC of Pittsburgh because they provided me sanctuary and a place where my gifts could still be used, now as a lay person.

I found no support during the coming out process from any of my “friends” and associates in the conference. My wife, who was also a DS was unable to

be supportive. The Bishop never contacted me, and my DS never spoke with me about what was happening. I was left alone and hurting. As one of my pastors at First Church said, “The church is one of the few places where they shoot their wounded.” How truly sad, yet how true to my experience!

I know that the Love of God in Jesus Christ my Lord continues to bless me and I know

that although rejected by the Church that nurtured me, I am nurtured and enlivened by

“I know that the Love of God in Jesus Christ my Lord continues to bless me and I know that although rejected by the Church that nurtured me, I am nurtured and enlivened by the breath of God whom I believe is moving to bring holy change to the church where pain and misery is perpetuated by homophobia and abuse of the Holy Scriptures.”

the breath of God whom I believe is moving to bring holy change to the church where pain and misery is perpetuated by homophobia and abuse of the Holy Scriptures. So may it come quickly.



A Social Principles Quiz

By Rev. Dr. Jeanne Knepper

How well do you know our social principles? Can you match behaviors with their descriptions?

Warning: some behaviors have multiple descriptions.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An ordering of life that perpetuates injustice 2. War 3. National policies of enforced military service 4. Violence and war 5. The death penalty 6. The practice of homosexuality 7. Gambling 8. Our economic life 9. Constructing or perpetuating barriers to physical or mental wholeness or full participation in community. 10. Current media preoccupation with dehumanizing portrayals 11. Racism | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Exploitive, abusive or promiscuous sexual relations 13. Commercialization and exploitation of sex 14. Family violence 15. Sexual harassment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Beyond the parameters of acceptable Christian behavior B. Incompatible with the gospel. C. Frustrates God's loving purposes for humankind D. A menace to society E. Interferes with the moral mission of the Church. F. Antithetical to the gospel itself. G. The selfish spirit H. Deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life I. Destructive of good government J. Denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> K. Immoral L. Cheapens and degrades human personality M. Incompatible with Christian teaching. N. Detrimental to the covenant of human community O. Contrary to the nurturing community P. Degrade humankind and violate the teachings of Christ and the Bible. Q. Unjust R. Plagues and cripples our growth in Christ S. Sin T. Incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. |
|--|--|--|

Three of these behaviors are listed as chargeable offenses. Do you know which ones they are? Can you name one of them?

For 36 years, the church has focused a whole lot of time and energy on one behavior. Even if you agree with the Social Principles in its evaluation of our lives, don't you think this is a bit out of balance?