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Affirmation

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

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Issue #8

Thinking Theologically Via Quadrilateral

by Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne
Affirmation Council Member

How do United Methodists do theological thinking? We use a process known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. What is this quad ra-whatsit? It is four steps we use to develop our beliefs, our decisions and our actions. What are these four parts? They are scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

Scripture – This is one part

of the process, yet also the bedrock. We must ultimately base all of our actions, beliefs and decisions on the words of the First and Second Covenants (aka Old and New Testaments) of the *Bible*.

Tradition – We view and understand scriptural passages through this lens. As part of the Protestant tradition, we understand certain passages differently than do our Roman Catholic or Orthodox sisters and

brothers. Other traditions are not necessarily wrong, but different. As Christians in the 21st Century, we seek to be aware of the rich variety of traditions from 2,000 years of Christian practice and beliefs, as well as the long-standing traditions of our Jewish heritage.

Reason – Here things begin to get a bit trickier. Reason means we use our minds to

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God's Truth Is Marching On...

by Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne
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"I'm tired of all this bickering and arguing about homosexuality. United Methodists have constantly voted against change. Let's go on to more important matters."

How often have we all heard that line (or variations of it) over the last several years and decades? And it's true. The United Methodist people have spoken. Yet perhaps the reason this issue keeps coming back and coming back and coming back and coming back is

because the people who have spoken haven't really been listening to God's voice in all of this. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons are in our society and in our church. And we are out to stay.

Some folk will quote a few scriptural passages for condemnation. We need to understand these verses in the light of God's redeeming love and grace. God's Word doesn't change; however our human understanding

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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
-Every day from 1:15 – 2:00 PM, First Christian Church

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



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Articles for the newsletter or comments may be sent to AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahoogroups.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.



Just Another Anonymous Story

Anonymous

"Just another anonymous story," you might say. Unfortunately for untold people whose jobs depend on keeping their sexual orientation secret, these stories within our community are all too common.

My journey toward accepting my sexuality found a turning point when a man I had never met wandered into church one Sunday wanting to talk. He was beyond nervous. He trembled. He had been attending a group at a nearby church for homosexual people who wanted to become heterosexual. The process was not working for him and they told him it was because he lacked faith. Without faith he was not saved and would burn in hell forever.

It was the first time I found myself speaking words to a stranger that I had often spoken to myself: "If God wanted you to be anyone else, you would not be who you are. Anyone who says that you are beyond grace is just wrong." I wish I knew that he really heard that. I tried to speak it clearly, but a lifetime of other voices was speaking to him too.

I began to wonder what would have happened if he had gone elsewhere. Would he have met condemnation

and stepped over into despair? Would he have lost the genuine faith that kept telling him his judges were wrong and that he truly is loved by God? I gave thanks that I was the preacher he approached. At the same time I felt angry at what was being done to him in Jesus' name.

The whole church is not as hateful as the people who "loved" him. As I grew up, my home church was a place where I felt true affection among members who disagreed on many issues. Faith, hope, and love: those alone mattered. I had been built up in important ways so that I could eventually say, "I will serve as I am called by God, regardless of the church's view of my sexuality."

In return, being gay has saved me from the arrogance of equating my views and opinions with God's. It has taught me to listen as I would also be heard. People who lock out their homosexual sisters and brothers have no idea of the high level of acceptance and humor one meets among them or of the abiding friendships that grow from shared desires for a just world. My vision of God's reign has been enriched by moments of grief around a panel of the AIDS quilt, of defiance

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actively understand our scriptures and our traditions. We understand the Bible as being a living document. We must interact with God's Word to us to fully grasp its' meaning. For one thing, translation is not an exact science. We are dealing with texts that were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek dialects from 2,000 to 4,000 years ago! The meanings of words change over time and concepts represented by some words change from language to language. (Example: 1st Century Christians had three different words and

understandings of the one word 'love' that we use today.) We must study the original meanings of these words and determine what their influence is on our modern lives.

Experience – And this is when we bring our own personal coloring to the mix. How does our personal relationship between God and ourselves affect what we say and do? John Wesley's love of preaching, his concern for the well-being of others, and his methodical nature led him to bequeath us with a church that values evangelistic outreach, ministry supporting

the poor and marginalized, and is very well-organized.

As an example, we technically use blends of four inks to create the wonderful colors used in our brochures, fliers, and printing jobs. [FYI: These are blue (cyan), magenta (reddish), yellow, and key (black).] You can work without any one or two of these colors, but the result will not be the same rich shades and hues we enjoy. Likewise, we can think theologically without using all four steps of the Wesley Quadrilateral. But then we aren't being Wesleyan.

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of God's Word does grow over time. In 1965 the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., when talking about how long it would be for racism to change in the United States, said:

“How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. How long? Not long, because: ‘Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on.”

Indeed, God's truth continues to march on for equality of races, equality of genders, and equality of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Look at the changes many of us have seen already within United Methodism. Once we considered the consumption of alcohol a critical sin. Until recently, our ritual forbade wine even within the celebration of Christ's Last Supper. Clergy were ordained or fired over whether they used liquor. Yet today it can again be a part of our worship, as it has been in Christianity for centuries. We do recognize over-indulgence as a problem. But moderate use is rarely even considered worth noting.

For many years, we denied ordination to women. Yet within just the last 50 years, we have recognized that God calls both men and women to special services. Has God's Word changed? No, our understanding of that Word has changed.

And for centuries, Christians considered usury (the collecting of interest on financial loans) a major sin. Yet today, what beginning congregation doesn't have a mortgage on their building? How many professional church workers have credit cards with which to make purchases for their congregations. And through numerous credit unions United Methodists even provide loans with interest.

“We are all God's Children.”

Likewise, the time has come to change our understanding of our bisexual, queer, transgender, lesbian and gay brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all God's children. We are created in the image of God. Today the world is changing and recognizing this truth. United Methodists also need to change. We have talked and talked. Now we need to listen to God's word.



Bless This Day, Indeed

Humility

Patience

Calling

Integrity

This is my request, my God I Am

Please bless this day for your people

Guide our choices

Surprise us with a miracle

*Astound us with your showering
grace*

*Let our hands work for your new
world*

*And finally, let laughter echo
and dancing fill the aisles*

And if it is not the anticipated miracle

*Then let the echoing agony of
stones*

*Set nerves and patterns on edge
Shatter old controls and rigid*

structures

*Into glittering confetti that
announces a parade*

*Let all who would be the people of
God*

Join the parade

*Dancing away from these
halls of power*

*Dancing into a waiting world
that knows and blesses our
ministries.*

*Oh fine God of shining colors and soft
touches*

Bless this day

Bless this day

Bless this day indeed.

Jeanne Knepper, 1992

(Just Another...Continued from page 2)

after the murder of Matthew Shepard, of laughter at a cabaret, or of joy at the baptism of a child welcomed into the life of its mothers. I even doubt that without having had my own experiences of oppression I would have learned the compassion necessary for effective pastoral ministry.

Church policy enforces a silence that limits a wider awareness of God's love. That I never lost a sense of God's love while I came to terms with the church being just plain wrong about my sexuality was itself an act of divine grace in

my life. When I have shared that struggle with other people trying to be faithful to God in their sexuality they have experienced it as a message of hope. It is my personal testimony but I cannot currently offer it to the church at large.

The church also loses the gifts and graces of a partner who must remain outside the picture. He has been patient

with my ministry but having been rejected firmly by his home church upon coming out, he remains bitter toward the church as a whole. I get to experience the joys of congrega-

tional life while he cannot share them with me. He, in his own right, has amazing insight into spiritual matters and the human soul; he is a talented musician; his cooking would overwhelm all of the covered dish dinners for counties around. The church loses all of that by declaring that he and I

"Only when the church lets people be who they truly are will the church truly be itself."

cannot be the couple that we are.

Only when the church lets people be who they truly are will the church truly be itself. When that happens, who knows what the Spirit will have in store?