

SHALOM TO YOU

Shalom Ministries

*A United Methodist ministry of empowerment, education and justice,
working with churches who want to welcome ALL of God's Children*

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CALENDAR

Wednesday, **May 19**, 2004—2-5 p.m.

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

Newsletter folding
Lincoln Street UMC
5145 SE Lincoln Street
Portland, OR 97215

COMING EVENTS

Wednesday—Saturday, June 9-12, 2004
Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference
Salem, OR

Thursday, June 10, 2004 Noon
SHALOM MINISTRIES LUNCH
Goudy Commons, Willamette University

Some Links

Shalom Ministries
www.shalomministries.com
Reconciling Ministries Network
www.rmnetwork.org
Affirmation
www.umaffirm.org
PFLAG
www.plfag.org

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

Extending the right to marriage is front-page news, and passionately debated in both church and political arenas. In his book, *Same-Sex Marriage?* Marvin Ellison analyzes the arguments of advocates and critics of same-sex marriage, revitalizing and moving the debate forward.

According to Daniel Maguire, Professor of Moral Theology, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, "Heterosexuals have no monopoly on love and Marvin Ellison brilliantly shows in this book that the right to marry is a human right, not an award for being heterosexual."

*From "That All May Freely Serve"
February 2004*

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

"The map tells me that it is almost 3,000 miles from Syracuse, NY to Portland, OR, but this past week the map and the heart tell different stories. Though I was in Syracuse and my daughter and her partner of six years were getting married in Portland, the distance melted in the glow of new possibilities. To say I am proud, to say I am grateful is so much of an understatement. I thank you as a father. I thank you as a citizen of this country. I thank you as a human being."

Paul Barfoot, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, on the wedding of his daughter and daughter-in-law, Tina and Melissa

"It is intolerable to ask another generation to endure life as outcasts while those with privilege debate the right time for justice. The right time for justice is always now."

*Bonnie Tinker,
in an opinion piece in the Oregonian*

SHALOM TO YOU 2004 FOLDING DATES

May 19 Jun 16 Jul 14 Aug 11 Sep 15 Oct 13 Nov 17 Dec 15

On the street...

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Through the Sacrament of Baptism

we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation

and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

UM Book of Worship

I have been thinking about Baptism quite a lot lately. The theme for General Conference 2004 is “water washed, spirit born.” Baptism is the sacrament (rite that confers sanctifying grace) which acknowledges the presence of God in the life of the baptized, and which verbalizes the church community’s commitment to care for the water washed and spirit born.

I don’t remember my own baptism. I was an infant, born into a family with a long tradition of active participation in Christian community. My parents and grandparents helped me understand as I grew, that my baptism was a sign of God’s presence in me and the church’s promise to help them raise me in the faith—a child of God. I have always felt at home in the church, nurtured by my faith community and allowed to develop into a faithful adult, committed to bringing the message of God’s grace to everyone I meet.

And now, it seems being “water washed and spirit born” is a gift of God that can be taken back, rescinded. There are loud voices in the church who are saying “if you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, your baptism doesn’t count. You are NOT acceptable before God. We will pray for you, but we cannot condone whatever we determine your ‘sins’ to be.

Through baptism
you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit
into God’s new creation
and made to share in Christ’s royal priesthood.
We are all one in Christ Jesus.
With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you
as members of the family of Christ

UM Book of Worship

It would seem we are actually are not all one in Christ Jesus. At least some in the United Methodist Church are focusing on one particular aspect of a person—their sexuality. Often misusing scripture passages totally out of context to prove their position, these people are calling for the church to impose limits on who is acceptable for ordination, for marriage and even for baptism.

At a recent event for area clergy sponsored by a group supporting Oregon’s Defense of Marriage Amendment, Dr. James Dobson (Focus on the Family) told a group of over 2000 people that if this amendment preventing marriage equity is not passed, the Gospel of Christ will be severely hampered. He claims the traditional family is the primary vehicle to convey the eternal truths of Scripture. Since most come to Christ before their 18th birthday, the family is critical to a child’s development in the faith.

I guess Dobson forgot that Jesus was not married, or that he created ‘family’ among his followers, or that he reached out to and **included** those society had excluded. In our rush to obey the rules, we sometimes miss the point. It seems to me that Jesus was constantly saying to all who would hear, “don’t accept what you see on the surface—the laws of humans are intended to convey higher truths, and we must look beyond the obvious to get to the truths.” If we are water washed and spirit born, we are called to bring the good news

to those the rest of the world rejects. Our lives are “watermarked, a witness of assurance.” Remember your baptism! (*See www.rmnetwork.org for Reconciling Ministries Network plans for General Conference.*)

The God of all grace,
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
establish you and strengthen you
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
that you may live in grace and peace.
UM Book of Worship

Peace,
Don

THE KAREN DAMMANN TRIAL COURT DID NOT NULLIFY!

Richard Bentley wrote these words as the title to his article about the trial which was carried by UM Cornet. Bentley clarifies the differences between a church trial and a secular trial, saying the Dammann trial jury did not disregard the United Methodist Discipline, but rather upheld it. He points out that Dammann was charged with "engaging in practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teaching."

Bentley describes clearly what the trial court must do. “As part of a United Methodist church trial, the trial court receives a charge containing both the chargeable offense that allegedly happened and the specifications of the particular events that supposedly happened that constitute this chargeable offense. In the Karen Dammann case, the chargeable offense was ‘practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings.’ The specifications to demonstrate that she committed this chargeable offense revolved around instances in which she claimed to be ‘living in a partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship.’”

Bentley’s discussion of the verdict and the statement issued by the trial jury sheds light on what many thought would be an impossible decision. You may find the entire text of this article and several other articles related to the Dammann trial at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UMCalledOut/>

GOD DOING A NEW THING

Rev. Dr. Jeanne Knepper wrote about the Karen Damman trial in a UM New Service commentary dated March 25, 2004. Knepper sees the trial as prophetic and cites one observer’s comments that “The spirit of God was present without a doubt” at the trial. In

fact, every account of the trial I have read has included the characterization of the trial as “spirit filled.”

Dr. Knepper points to the deep division within the United Methodist Church and proposes that we acknowledge our differences and remain at the table; we can agree to disagree. Her description of the verdict supports her proposal: “The most telling part of the Dammann verdict is that not one member of the trial court was willing to vote to convict. All of the jurors were clergy members of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference who had agreed that they would be willing to set aside any personal convictions in order to apply relevant portions of the denomination's Book of Discipline. Yet, 11 voted to acquit, and two declared themselves undecided; none was convinced that the law of United Methodism required them to convict Karen Dammann.”

Knepper points to the General Conference debate which will undoubtedly be getting underway as you read this.

“The trial court's decision is a harbinger of change to come, whether it occurs through the actions of United Methodism's quadrennial General Conference or through the actions of United Methodists who are simply unwilling to ignore God's new thing.”

WHEN PRIDE IS NOT A SIN

PRIDE month daily meditations for family and friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered persons. By Don Frueh. Proceeds benefit Shalom Ministries. \$7 postage paid.

FROM THE AFFIRMATION PLATFORM 2004

We Are The Church.

We, as Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, call on the 2004 General Conference to act as Christ's Church to reject the powers of evil and proclaim an end to discrimination upon lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in church and society.

We support efforts at all levels to propose changes in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church that acknowledge, support, and encourage growth and ministry of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, adults, families, and allies. This includes, but is not limited to:

Ordination

Appointment

Covenant relations

Supporting varieties of relationships

Affirming that the sacraments are available to all

Renouncing policies that promote discrimination and violence against LGBT people.

We believe that the arguments over these issues are diversions to the church to keep The United Methodist Church from reaching out to the least, the lost and the lonely in the world. We yearn to use our gifts for healing as Jesus directed us.

SHALOM MINISTRIES PROCLAIMS

God loves all people

Our particular human form, including our age,
sexuality, gender, race, size, differing abilities
and sexual orientation, is a good gift of creation

God calls us to a life of love and justice

SHALOM MINISTRIES ADVOCATES

A healthy community
that delights in diversity

A just society that guarantees civil rights
and economic well-being for all

A grace-filled church that welcomes
the gifts of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.

A wholesome self-regard
that respects ourselves, each other
and our planet

Shalom Ministries is an outreach ministry of empowerment, education and justice serving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, people living on the social or economic edge, people who have been alienated from religion and churches who want to welcome any of these people.

Only by such action can the church acknowledge God's new rivers of grace flowing in the desert, join hands as one people of God and bridge the chasm that will otherwise tear the church apart.

*Rev. Dr. Jeanne Knepper
On possible reconciling action at GC 2004*

