



Volume 8 Issue 11

December, 2013



I hope this note finds all of you well and rested, and that each of you had a wonderful Christmas time, and a smooth slide into 2014. My prayer is that God will bless us this coming year; open our hearts, our minds and our doors, so that all might know God's amazing love. So every year, when New Year's comes around I make a New Year's resolution, most of them fail, some stick but it seems that all of the time those resolutions have to do with me, often only me. This year I will change that...let me tell you a story.

*Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.*

*Every afternoon, when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite details, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine this picturesque scene. One warm afternoon, the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man could not hear the band - he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words. Days, weeks and months passed.*

*One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was deeply saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.*

*As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.*

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*Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window besides the bed. It faced only a blank, dull looking wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man had been blind and could not have even seen the wall on the other side of the window. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."*

This year my resolution will be to think more of others. There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. Maybe some of you will take on this challenge with me, let me know if you do, and keep me in the loop...

...peace my friends, and may 2014 be your most amazing year yet, rene'

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## **Why this is my church...**

I have searched for a church to attend for several years and have finally found the one that makes me feel welcome, accepted for who I am, and comfortable. I have experienced churches that are over formal and completely sermon based to churches that are extremely laid back and mostly worship music based. My first time entering Longview United Methodist Church I was greeted warmly by its members and immediately felt like I had entered my own personal sanctuary.

My reason for attending was to support my sister Jenna, who was interested in coming to a church that accepted all sexual orientations. What I found was a place where I found a pastor who is able to blend music and sermon in a way that keeps me looking forward to my Sundays. I am not a religious person but I do feel that it is good for my children to experience it and have the option to pursue it. I believe in a higher power and though I can't say for sure what that higher power is I can say that this church has given me something else to believe in, the belief that there can be a place to take your children that is focused on giving to others and the community and the only thing they ask for in return is to attend with an open mind, an open heart, and a willingness to be accepted with open arms.

Nina Halk



# wedding

**\*\*Nina and John Phillips are being married in our church on January 1st at 6:00 pm. The congregation is invited!**

## Schedule changes

Please note on your January calendar that some meeting dates have been changed due to the New Year holiday falling on the first Wednesday of the month.

- The Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday January 8th at 7:00 pm.
  - The Book Club will meet on January 15th at 7:00 pm at Sharon Fosburg's home. Address is: 2673 42nd Ave.
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**Your generosity is overwhelming and so very much appreciated!**

**Our "Angel tree" had 22 tags hanging on it and each one of them was taken by a member of our congregation and replaced with a gift.**

**You didn't know who would be receiving the gift and those receiving the gifts don't know exactly who gave them the gifts. All any of us need to know is that people who needed gifts received them and the love of Christ was shown through those gifts.**

**Those who received your kindness want you to know that you made Christmas very special for them this year!** sf

## United Methodist Women

- All women of the church are welcome and encouraged to attend
- 1st Thursday of each month 10:30 am

## United Methodist Men

- All men of the church are welcome and encouraged to attend
- Third Wednesdays 7:00 pm

## Women's Book Group

- Meets 2nd Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. (except July and August) in member's homes.

## Sunday School

- Each Sunday Sept through May  
9:30 a.m.

## Adult studies

- Adult Sunday school class
- "Change the World"  
Sunday 9:30 am in the fellowship hall

## Music

- The "Unity Crew" rehearses Sundays at 9:00 am and Tuesdays at 7:00 pm

## **10 Things You Can't Do AT CHRISTMAS While Following Jesus - by Mark Sandlin**

Ah, Christmas! The most wonderful time of the year. A time to gather with family and friends, and, with a smile on our faces, pretend we aren't quietly measuring who received the best present and which relative really, really needs to stop drinking. A time to hang tinsel and baubles from the tree, and time to hang-up our hopes of losing that last 10 pounds this year. Such a joyous season!

The real point here is that Christmas is what we make of it. For Christians, however, there are some very specific things you can't do if you want to actually honor and follow the person we celebrate this season. So, I give you my "10 Things You Can't Do AT CHRISTMAS While Following Jesus."

### **10) Celebrate Consumerism.**

For many folks, Christmas starts standing in line on Thanksgiving Day. 'Tis the season for mass consumerism. Regardless of where you think it began, Christmas has slowly drifted into the bog of consumer madness. Like frogs in a pot of slowly boiling water, we never saw it coming. For Christians, this is particularly problematic because the guy we are celebrating this time of year told us that collecting stuff here on Earth is not the way to follow him.

### **9) Forget Those Without Food.**

Jesus once said that when we feed the hungry we are feeding him. Anyone want to guess what it means when we ignore the hungry? How about ignoring the hungry as we scrape the leftover Christmas ham from our plates into the trash? Maybe we need to change the name of the season to Gluttonousmas? Too many presents, too much food – too little consideration for those in need.

### **8) Forget Those Without Shelter.**

No room at the inn. One of the key moments in the story Christians celebrate is the moment when Jesus was almost born in the streets of Bethlehem. Our need to clean up the Christmas story assumes that the innkeeper told them to use the manger but the Bible says no such thing. There was no room at the inn, leaving Mary to place her newborn child in a smelly feeding trough. For that night they were without shelter. Throughout his life Jesus would spend his ministry with no place to lay his head. This time of year we celebrate a homeless man. Do our actions, do the places we place our money, honor that?

### **7) Forget About Immigrants.**

We three kings from orient are. Besides sounding like Yoda wrote a Christmas carol, there are a number of things messed up about that line. We don't actually know how many there were. They were magi, not kings. We also do not know where they were really from other than "from the East." What we do know is they were foreigners and their revelation of the real king's plans to kill all newborn boys to put an end to Jesus turned Jesus' family into immigrants in Egypt. Our Christmas story is replete with images of people journeying to new lands. Christmas should cause Christians to recommit to embracing immigrants.

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## **6) Miss The Message About Resisting Abusive Power.**

Mary and Joseph and their family had to flee their homeland because King Herod strong-handedly used his power to squash out what he saw as a threat to his power. I can guarantee you two things; One, in the house where Jesus grew up, the narrative of why they had to flee to Egypt and of the senseless deaths imposed on other families by the powerful was a story that was told time and time again. Two, the focus on abuse of power in Jesus' teaching and his constant willingness to confront it was no accident. Christmas should cause Christians to recommit to confronting those who abuse power.

## **5) Forget Those Without Presents.**

If you have two coats give one away. In announcing the coming of Jesus, John the Baptist told us what God was asking of us. Coats were just an example – a place holder if you will. If you have two Christmas presents give one away.

## **4) Insist Your Religious Celebration Rule Them All.**

This time of year far too many Christians remind me of Gollum and his Precious. (A LoTR shout out in a Christian Christmas post! C'mon Peter Jackson, give me some promo love!) One holiday to rule them all: "We nee-eeeds it. They stole it from us!" Never mind that Jesus was Jewish or that there is a list of other celebrations that occur this time of year, there's a certain cultural privilege in the air that seems so very un-Christian to me. You can just about bet that the folks calling out for the dominance of Christmas would be singing a new song if Judaism were the dominant religious culture and this time of year radio stations across the land played Chanukah songs. Well, metaphorically they would be singing a new song – maybe a few even literally.

## **3) Get Mad About "Happy Holidays."**

On a related note, you know what "holiday" is short for, right? Holy day. Do you really have a problem with people calling Christmas a holy day?

## **2) Think That It Is Actually Jesus' Birthday.**

Um. So... dang, this is hard and I'm really sorry to be the one telling you. Um, let's see. Remember how when you were growing up the Sunday school teacher told you it was Jesus' birthday? Yeah. Well, um... they lied. Yeah. Sorry about that. We don't actually know when Jesus was born. It was probably in the spring or summer because "the shepherds watched their flocks by night" – something which definitely didn't happen in the winter.

## **1) Confuse The Religious Observance With the Secular Holiday.**

It may be that December the 25th was picked as the date to celebrate Jesus' birth to compete with or even to adopt the followers of the pagan celebration of Saturnalia, which included decorating with evergreens, gift giving and parties. (Hmmm, why does that seem so familiar?) I bring this up to make a simple point; A lot of our "War on Christmas" problems would rightfully go away if we simply acknowledged that there are two celebrations of Christmas each year. One is religious and one is not. Most of this article actually points to the issues that happen when we conflate them. So, let's stop doing it.

## **BIBLICAL OBEDIENCE**

Rev. Frank Schaefer explains his penalty decision

*Rev. Frank Schaefer was found guilty by The United Methodist Church for officiating at his son's same-sex wedding. Schaefer was given the following penalty: Suspend Rev. Frank Schaefer from all ministerial duties effective immediately for 30 days. If there are any violations of the Discipline during these 30 days, his credentials will be surrendered to the annual conference. During these 30 days, Rev. Schaefer must take the opportunity to discern his newly discovered calling for the LGBT community. If at the end of these 30 days Rev. Schaefer has determined that he cannot uphold the Discipline in its entirety, he must surrender his credentials. The District Superintendent of record shall monitor the progress. Rev. Frank Schaefer will provide a written report to and interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry within 30 days regarding his call and his willingness to uphold the Book of Discipline in its entirety.*

**The following is a statement prepared for a press conference December 16, 2013, explaining to the press what he plans to say to the church concerning his penalty.**

### **Statement by Rev. Frank Schaefer**

As most of you know, I was found guilty of violating the Discipline of The UMC on account of performing the wedding of my son, Tim, to another man by the UM trial at Spring City, PA last month.

The penalty given to me by the trial court on Nov. 19th was a 30-day suspension at the end of which I was charged to come up with a decision. If, at the end of the 30 days, I determined that I cannot uphold the UM Book of Discipline in its entirety (which contains the ban on UM ministers to perform same-sex unions), I was asked to surrender my credentials.

I have had many conversations with many friends and supporters over the last month, many of them urging me to simply say: "Yes, I can uphold the Church's law book in its entirety." Many said that I could interpret that in my own mind as I wanted. And I gave that serious consideration. I wanted to find a way of answering truthfully and still keep my credentials in the church. I have really wrestled and agonized over this, but finally came to the conclusion that...

1. My honest answer has to be: No, I cannot uphold the Book of Discipline in its entirety. In fact, I don't believe anybody can. It's impossible to uphold the Discipline in its entirety because it is filled with competing and contradictory statements. It reflects the diversity of convictions we hold as United Methodists. In the words of Prof. Thomas Frank: "The UMC is a big tent!" And that's reflected in the Discipline.

For instance, those who perform same-sex weddings are in violation of para. 2702, but those pastors who refuse ministry to same-sex couples are also in violation of other provisions of the Discipline that demand of our pastors to be inclusive and to provide equal ministry to all people (para. 140, 161).

Frankly, my conscience does not allow me to uphold the entire Discipline because it contains discriminatory provisions and language that is hurtful and harmful to our homosexual brothers and sisters. It denies them their full humanity. I simply cannot uphold those parts of the Discipline.

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2. I also cannot in good conscience surrender my credentials voluntarily as I feel called to represent, minister to, and advocate for tens of thousands of LGBT members and their families within the United Methodist Church. I have received hundreds of petitions from LGBT members, colleagues, and even three bishops, not to surrender my credentials. By surrendering my credentials, I feel as though I would abandon those under my spiritual care and especially those I feel called to advocate for.

I also believe that the jury's penalty stipulation is against the Book of Discipline. In my understanding, a trial court does not have the right to require of a defendant to voluntarily surrender his credentials based on a conditional or a future action that has not yet occurred.

3. On Thursday, Dec. 19, I will meet with The Board of Ordained Ministry. This body could decide to leave my credentials in place and affirm me as a voice for the LGBT community—a decision which would demonstrate a willingness to engage in a new dialogue and discernment process and a path toward healing. Or the Board could decide to defrock me.

If allowed, I would like to continue to be a minister in The United Methodist Church,

- a. committed to providing a ministry to all people under my care,
- b. continuing to advocate for our LGBT community within The UM Church
- c. while working toward changing the discriminatory language and provisions in our Book of Discipline.

I am hopeful that we can and will accomplish these changes. It's only a matter of time!

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### ***The Associated Press 12-21-2013***

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - A United Methodist pastor from central Pennsylvania who was defrocked after officiating his son's gay wedding was invited by a California Methodist bishop to serve in her region in yet another sign of a split in the nation's largest mainline Protestant denomination. Frank Schaefer said he is deciding whether to accept the offer from Bishop Minerva G. Carcano to join the California-Pacific Annual Conference. The region includes California, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands.

"I'm actually leaning toward it right now, but I can't make that decision myself because it involves my entire family," Schaefer said. "We are considering it very, very seriously." Carcano does not have the authority to restore Schaefer's ministerial credentials but he said he would have most of the same rights and responsibilities as an ordained minister. Schaefer said it would not be a tenured appointment, unlike ordained ministers, and he would be paid less.

Read more at [http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20131221\\_ap\\_3535632315e649a1adedf89ea622d841.html#28YMPgOO3dOQui6F.99](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20131221_ap_3535632315e649a1adedf89ea622d841.html#28YMPgOO3dOQui6F.99)

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*The conviction of Rev. Frank Schaefer continues to evolve. We certainly pray for a peaceful and fair resolution. Much more information is available on line concerning Rev. Schaefer, both pro and con. Please do all you can to be informed on this issue. It is our responsibility as a Reconciling Congregation to be informed and ready to speak on the subject.*

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