



March, 2015

Well here we are...I am sure by now most of you know that I had a little hospital stint there on Ash Wednesday last month. Looking back it seems like it's a pretty appropriate day to be entertaining contemplating thoughts, concerning life and death decisions. Within a couple of hours of sharing our Ash Wednesday Service with Vonda and the fine folks at Kelso UMC, I went from being perfectly well to a swollen leg from a rapidly moving infection (cellulitis), while lying on my bed in a quaking fetal position and a fever of a 103, wondering if this was the big one. Contemplating, should I get up any moment now and let Jennifer in on what is happening. And in the middle of that fever induced state I had a Jesus moment. Seems like God doesn't just only talk in the shower, lol, but also during times of total un-clarity caused by extreme heat. Who would have ever thought the devil didn't have a patent on working in the heat.



As I was there lying in bed thinking about getting up and sharing my dilemma with Jennifer it occurred to me that I might be making a life and death decision here. I could just stay in bed and let whatever was happening to me just happen...it may have been the end of my story. Or I could decide to get up and choose life. While choosing life not only for me, but also for Jen and Ryan, and Bella. That small decision, to share or not to share came with a possible big verdict.

So here is my take away. We go thru life every day making small choices, deciding on tiny things which could in the end lead us down the path of big conclusions, like what shall I have for lunch today, might be a life or death decision in a real physical way for me down the road. In the same manner we also make choices every day which either lead us closer to God, or further away from God...in other words those choices also lead us to life or to death conclusions, but in a spiritual way. So as we make small decisions we often do not see far enough out, or deep enough down. But be sure, both the physicality of life and the spirituality of life are very much connected with each other, and often choosing death on either path will lead us down death period.

As we move through Lent towards Easter Sunday, as we move towards the cross with Jesus, be thinking about Life and Death, because we are never too far from either. Jesus had to make a few decisions during this month a couple thousand years ago. It seem to me he chose life, what will we chose?

Peace Rene'

Reconciling Ministry Network Annual Gathering



Mark your calendars for March 21 for the annual Reconciling Ministry Network conference which will be held at Bellevue United Methodist Church from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 pm. The Reconciling Ministry Network works within the United Methodist Church for full inclusion of LGBT folks within the life of the church.

The keynote speaker will be Bishop Melvin Talbert on Biblical Obedience. He has been involved in a challenge to his performing a marriage for two United Methodist men in, I believe, Mississippi. The challenge was successfully resolved by a pledge for more study of the issue of homosexuality in the church and without penalty to Bishop Talbert. The current church Book of Discipline does not allow clergy to perform same sex weddings. This part of the Book of Discipline is being challenged by clergy, inspired in part by Bishop Talbert's claim to Biblical obedience to love one's neighbor as being superior to the statements in the Book of Discipline.

There will also be several workshops of interest: Helping Families with Coming Out Issues; Sexuality - What We Don't Discuss; Transgender 101; Living Your Welcome, and other workshops. These are very exciting and pertinent topics for our church and community.

We can carpool up to the conference and can easily sign up for the conference online. If we have a group of more than five going, we can get a discount rate of \$40 or more per person. There will be scholarships available. Let Sharon Fosburg or Barbara Vining know if you are interested in attending.

Hey guys,

It's that time of year again. Easter is right around the corner! Skyler and I swung by today and took a little inventory, I see we still have quite a few eggs and the bean bag toss game is from last year! Woo-hoo! I also saw a few baskets!



So what do I need from everyone? Well, here is my list:

*Volunteers! I have (possibly) 7 boy scouts that are planning to come or help beforehand, I need to know in advance who is coming day of, and who wants a project for before, so that I can sort out name tags.

*Pre wrapped candy, toys, stickers, you name it! What would you want to find in an egg?

*Raffle tickets! I think I may be able to get these cheap or free, but if anyone has a lead on a way to do that, let me know! (I'll be showing off Sunday what the raffle tickets are for! Will you be there!?)

*Game ideas: This is a big one. We are looking at a coloring station, pick a duck, fishing and bean bag toss. Anyone have any other ideas? Maybe want to design and run one?

I look forward to talking to everyone Sunday and getting this rolling. We are planning on April 4th at 10 or 11 am is my current understanding!

Thanks!

Amberjean

God Loves Gardens

"The act of gardening can teach us something about ourselves, about our interdependence with the world of nature, about the relationships between work and creativity, and about how we might begin to discern those spiritual facts that elude us in other aspects of life. Gardening can also be an expression of community and conversation – another way to say that God is with us on the earth, a way to picture God's presence with us – through the gifts of nature and gardening together." - Edythe Neumann



The Bible is strong on gardening. Whether in Genesis, Jeremiah or the Gospels, gardens play a prominent role in God's plans. Life even starts in one. A garden is a wondrous place where we can "meet" with the Lord and marvel at His miracles. It's a place to love your neighbor, care for creation and grow veggies. Gardens can meet needs and at the same time celebrate the bounty of God's good earth; a way to grow both food and community; a way to honor and care for people and for the planet.

Our own Church Garden is off to a good start! We have collected tires to use to make raised beds and are in the process of gathering good soil and the seeds to plant in it. What we need now is the community to make it all grow!

Our first get together will be a tire painting party! Join us Saturday, March 7 at 11:00 am (weather permitting) and bring your creative spark! The rest will be provided. Additional dates will follow for planting parties, tending parties and the harvest! Some genuine blessings will grow between us as we work together to provide a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables to low income seniors and disabled persons in our own neighborhood.



Contact Sarah McCoy at 270-5352 if you need any more information and let us know if you can make it to our first event.

Tide Me Over serves the food needs for those who come through our doors, especially at the end of the month. The Tide Me Over sacks situated on the table in the narthex are for those in and outside our congregation who need a little bit extra to tide them over. So far, we have had at least eight sacks taken since Christmas. So, the food is much needed.

We keep track of the number of sacks taken by writing in a notebook when sacks are prepared. We spent \$130 in the new year to restock our shelves. We buy the necessities- cereal, peanut butter, tuna fish, canned chicken, and also some prepared foods like chili and pasta sauce. We also rely on your donations each month to keep the shelves stocked.

Thank you again for your donations of food and non food items. You are helping those in need every week.



By Heather Hahn | Feb. 11, 2015 | MAPUTO, Mozambique (UMNS)

The United Methodist Church could have openly gay clergy and clergy could officiate at same-sex marriages if a proposal affirmed by a denomination-wide leadership body prevails. The Connectional Table plans to draft legislation that members hope can be “a third way” in church’s long debate over homosexuality. The body on Feb. 10 overwhelmingly affirmed a proposal to remove prohibitive language that makes it a chargeable offense under church law for clergy to be “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” or to officiate at same-sex weddings. The action was not a formal vote, but the reported results of two hours of small-group discussions. The Connectional Table will take up proposed legislative language for an actual vote when it meets in May in Nashville, Tennessee.

The approach would leave the question of whether to perform a same-sex marriage up to individual clergy, just as the Book of Discipline — the denomination’s law book — now allows clergy to decide which couples to wed. Clergy would not be required to bless same-sex unions. Conferences also would continue to determine who to ordain as authorized by the denomination’s constitution, but would have the option of ordaining openly gay individuals. At the same time, the proposal notes that the denomination “historically has not condoned the practice of homosexuality and has considered the practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” It also retains the denomination’s ban on using church funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.”

Bottom line: If this proposal prevails, clergy would not risk church trials or the loss of their credentials for officiating at same-gender weddings or coming out as being gay.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY

The United Methodist Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, since 1972 has proclaimed the practice of homosexuality “incompatible with Christian teaching.” The book prohibits United Methodist churches from hosting and clergy from performing “ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions.”

The 2012 General Conference rejected efforts to change that language, including a proposal to say the church was in disagreement about homosexuality. The denomination’s top lawmaking assembly will next convene in 2016.

Officiating at same-sex unions is a chargeable offense under the Discipline. Clergy convicted in a church court can face a loss of clergy credentials or lesser penalties. The book also allows for complaints against clergy who officiate at same-gender unions to be resolved without a trial. That has been the case with some recent high-profile complaints, including one against retired Bishop Melvin G. Talbert.

The Book of Discipline states that marriage is between a man and a woman. It also affirms that all people are of sacred worth, that all are in need of the church’s ministry, and that God’s grace is available to all. The church implores congregations and families not to reject gay and lesbian members and friends.

A 'third way'

The Rev. Kennetha J. Bigham-Tsai, who serves on the Connectional Table's legislative writing team, described the approach as a possible "third way" that can help the church end its impasse on human sexuality and focus more on mission. She is a district superintendent in the West Michigan Conference.

"We've tried to allow some exercise of conscience, to allow for varying beliefs, to allow for varying practices within different contexts," she said, "and to open a space for grace where people can live together in unity with their different beliefs."

Any legislation adopted by the Connectional Table would go to the 2016 General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly. Ultimately, General Conference would decide.

The Connectional Table's process

The Connectional Table is a United Methodist body of clergy and lay people from around the world that acts as a sort of church council for the denomination, coordinating its mission, ministry and resources.

The body's discussion followed a motion it affirmed in April 2014 after the first of three public panels on human sexuality. After hours of discussion, the body approved "parallel paths" of dialogue and work toward changing the Discipline "to fully include LGBTQ persons in the life of the church." The initials stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.

At this month's meeting, the legislative team presented three directions for the full body to consider in response to that motion.

The first was to bring no changes to General Conference on this matter.

The second option was what the legislative team called "full inclusion," removing all references in the Book of Discipline that cast homosexuality in a negative light.

The third approach was what the legislative team recommended and was ultimately accepted.

Bigham-Tsai invited Connectional Table members to discuss each possibility in small "table conversations" and then report back on each option. Many of the tables had people of differing views regarding what Scripture says and what the church should say about homosexuality. Before introducing discussion of each approach, the body prayed for God's guidance and the church's unity. Thirty-six of the body's 59 members attended the meeting in this southeastern African country.

Affirmations, objections and possibility

The Rev. Fred Day, the top executive of the denomination's Commission on Archives and History, reported that the consensus at his table was in support of the third option. "We think it is a powerfully important middle way," he said. "In its own way, it says the Spirit is not done with us on this matter yet. It's clear because of our disagreement we

need to allow for us to gain a sense of clarity for how the Spirit is leading.”

But that view was not unanimous. The Rev. Harald Rückert of the South Germany Conference said six people at his table supported the approach and one said “maybe, but with concerns.” “It’s the only model we can see right now that allows us to stay in our covenant as The United Methodist Church even though we are of different minds on homosexuality,” he said. However, Matthew “Theo” Williams of the Liberia Conference, said it would be best if the Connectional Table made no move to change how the denomination treats homosexuality. “In Africa, to even discuss the issue of gays or lesbians is taboo,” he told the body.

He later pointed out to United Methodist News Service that because of church teachings, elders and deacons in Africa are not allowed to have more than one wife. “It is the same thing (about homosexuality), the missionaries told us the Bible says, ‘One man, one wife.’” Many African United Methodists share Williams’ belief in the denomination’s current stance. Still, Benedita Penicela Nhambiu of the Mozambique South Conference observed to UMNS that Africans are not monolithic in how they regard same-sex relationships. H. E. Joaquim Chissano, the former president of Mozambique, wrote an open letter to African leaders last year calling for an end to discrimination “against people on the basis of age, sex, ethnicity, migrant status, sexual orientation and gender identity.” Nhambiu said she personally thinks the option most Connectional Table members affirmed “is viable,” but she wondered how would be received within the gay community.

Minnesota-Dakotas Area Bishop Bruce Ough, chair of Connectional Table, described the discussion as “one of the better and sustained conversations” of which he’s been a part on this topic. “There was really a spirit of trying to listen to one another, and I hope that will continue.”



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We begin on Thursday February the 19th with a 6 week class from noon to 1 pm @ the United Methodist church in Longview. After the first 6 weeks of class we will continue to meet for support every first Thursday of every month for lunch at a Restaurant TBA.

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March 1st	Church History
May 3rd	United Methodist Church History
June 7th	The Reconciling Church
August 2nd	Church Membership

(continuing through April 2016—Come to one or all!)