

Beyond Inclusion News

Denver, Colorado

Friday, July 7, 2000

Visit us in Booth 137!

MANY THANKS TO OUR VISITORS

The Beyond Inclusion Booth was flooded with visitors on Thursday, and we are grateful for your interest, even if it might have been sparked by discovering that we are among the Diocese of Virginia's top Ten Booths because we have fresh popcorn! We apologize for running out of popcorn supplies early, and will try to do better in the future. We're thrilled that you came by to chat, and hope more of you will drop by in the coming days.

FOLKS YOU MIGHT MEET AT THE BOOTH

Tim Safford has been Rector at Christ Church, Philadelphia for almost two years. Before that, he was Senior Associate at All Saints Church, Pasadena, California. Christ Church is an urban parish with a historic physical plant, and is working on inclusion, as well as many other programs.

Anne Breck Petersen is a life-long Episcopalian, who grew up in Denver. In fact, her parents are still members of St. John's Cathedral parish. Anne has been on the staff at All Saints Church in Pasadena California for 22 years. She's here to work on Beyond Inclusion because she has always wanted to accept people the way God made them, and to celebrate that. She likes being in a church that connects directly with the real world.

ED BACON ON UNITY

We have heard much about unity in the opening days of General Convention. We frequently hear unity mentioned in connection with "the homosexual issue." The appeal to unity takes a variety of forms: "The Church has not yet reached consensus." "We don't want to disturb our relationship with the wider communion." "We should surrender all preoccupation with divisive controversy and join together in mission." No matter the form, unity is currently used for a common purpose – to delay taking a stand in favor of blessing same sex unions.

There is no doubt that unity is a core value of our faith. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17). Paul noted that God's work in Christ was reconciliation (2 Cor. 5). To follow Christ is to desire unity. As we seek unity, it is crucial that we understand it from the perspectives of Christ's life and ministry. Jesus must have struggled with the issue of whether unity was the primary goal or the by-product of the goal of his ministry. Was unity his most important goal? Was unity the first thing Jesus sought? Clearly not

AT BOOTH 137

If your parish is seeking resources for exploring inclusion, we have

- ▽ Liturgies, parish discernment process documents, guidelines, sermons, and resource lists, in both paper and on diskette.
- ▽ Copies of *Heterosexism, an Ethical Challenge*, by Patricia Beattie Jung and Ralph F. Smith for sale at \$20 apiece. Patty will be the speaker at Integrity's Luncheon next Monday, July 11.
- ▽ Brochures, buttons and stickers
- ▽ Popcorn

Jesus taught and embodied a priority of values: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt.) Jesus' first priority always was God's Reign and the alignment with God's love (righteousness) that the Reign of God realized. That is what justice is – alignment with God's love. Unity without that alignment is not Christian unity. The kind of unity Jesus prayed for will be "added to us" in the Church if our first priority is seeking God's Reign and its alignment with God's love.

Henri Nouwen distinguished between ministry arising from the house of love versus concerns arising from the house of fear. He said that Jesus always countered concerns arising from the house of fear with ministry arising from the house of love. Jesus frequently moved forward to heal, take stands with, invite to table, AND bless those outside the bounds of consensus prior to teaching agreement among those who were anxious about preserving unity. Jesus' supreme act of love in laying down his life for his friends was not done in the midst of consensus and unity. All abandoned him except one disciple and a community of women. But Jesus was confident that placing love before fear would in time calm the storms of fear and raise all those he loved to abundant and everlasting life.

The Risen Christ bids this General Convention to join in a mission of love to everyone – including those who have found the love of their life to be someone of the same sex. There is no stronger expression of love that the Church could send to those who are daily victims of hate, violence and exclusion. Let us pray that no segment of this Convention has made a pact with a unity rooted in anxiety and

fear. Rather, let us first continue to seek God's Reign and its justice for all. Unity will then be a gift of the Holy Spirit.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

As reported by our Legislative Correspondent Peggy Adams yesterday, Committee 25 has sent its Report no. 1, on C008 (Continued Dialogue on Gay & Lesbian Relationships) to the House of Deputies, recommending adoption with amendment. The full text of the Resolution is as follows. The text is copied verbatim from the legislative report:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That we, the members of the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church commit ourselves to continue the process of mutual sharing, study and discernment concerning human sexuality, so that we remain open and connected to one another despite our differences, and so we can permit the Holy Spirit to act in our midst; and be it further Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention requests the House of Bishops, in consultation with others, to prepare for presentation to the 74th General Convention a pastoral study guide on "heterosexism" which has been characterized as a systemic form of injustice in which heterosexual persons are advantaged economically, societally, as well as in other respects, at the expense of homosexual persons.

WHAT IS HETEROSEXISM?

After referring our readers to the Booth for information on heterosexism, it now seems appropriate that we should reprint here the text of the beyond Inclusion statement on that topic. Copies are available at the booth.

When persons and structures create advantages for one category of God's children to the disadvantage of another group in God's family, such discrimination injures everyone. We use the word "racism" when those who are seen as having white skin are favored at the expense of those who are of color. "Sexism" describes the structure of discrimination when men are favored at the expense of women. When that same structure is applied to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, it is called "heterosexism."

Heterosexism is the systemic expression of discrimination against those who, as part of God's good creation, are sexually attracted to those of the same sex. Heterosexism includes judging homosexuality and homosexual love as disordered and immoral.

When that which God has created good is judged immoral it is

- ▽ an instrument for spiritual violence to those whose very identities and families are vulnerable ["We make them doubt that they are the children of God, and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy." Desmond Tutu]
- ▽ an encouragement for self-hatred, in frequent instances so strong that it results in suicide
- ▽ an unjust avoidance of using the same criteria to judge whether same-sex relationships and heterosexual relationships are wholesome or not
- ▽ a means for experiencing God as sadistic and unloving.

As long as the Church perpetuates the evil of heterosexism, the Church contributes, through its silence and its example, to a society in which people perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered are fired from their jobs, evicted from their housing, excluded from their families, physically and emotionally harmed, or killed. Within its own body the Church marginalizes and closets its gay and lesbian members and clergy. Closeted life is destructive to all in the community, especially our gay and lesbian youth.

The Church will express the joy and transformed life which is ours in Christ when we work together to dismantle heterosexism and all interlocking structures of injustice which impair the glory of God as every human being free and fully alive.

WHO ARE WE?

Beyond Inclusion, an organization of gay and straight people together, wants to convince the mainstream parishioner, and help the mainstream parish, move toward blessing same-sex relationships. Beyond Inclusion testifies that same-sex relationships are holy and beautiful in the sight of God, are theologically and liturgically justifiable, are by the church. Beyond Inclusion also recognizes that all justice issues -- homophobia, racism, sexism, and xenophobia -- are interrelated; all come from the same source. Where you find one, you are likely to find the others.

After Convention, here's how to contact us:

- ▽ www.beyondinclusion.org
- ▽ 626/583-2740
- ▽ 132 N. Euclid Avenue
Pasadena, California 91001