

More Light

A Quarterly Publication of
MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS

*Celebrating 30 years of contributions to the ongoing
reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
1974-2004*

Update

**Volume 25, Number 1
Winter 2005**

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**For up to the minute news
visit us at
www.mlp.org**

Deadline for the Spring issue is March 1

Don't be caught unaware **Could This Be Your Last Update?**

Check your mailing label on the last page. The first line will tell you when your MLP membership expires. If it says, "Membership expired, please renew" you need to send in your membership NOW to insure that you will continue to receive the *More Light Update*.

More Light Sunday June 5

Mark your calendars now for the second annual More Light Sunday, a day when MLP supporters across the country come together for local actions to support the movement for LGBT equality within the PCUSA. You don't have to be at a More Light church to participate in More Light Sunday—everyone is welcome.

Plans are in the works to provide some special educational materials for local churches to use as

part of More Light Sunday, and to provide ways that you can reach beyond your local church membership and invite members of your presbytery to enter the conversation about LGBT equality.

If you'd like to have your church offer some More Light-related content as part of More Light Sunday, talk to your adult education committee right away and tell them to save a one-hour spot for LGBT educational

content on June 5, then e-mail us at morelightsunday@mlp.org so that you get on our postal mailing list to receive More Light Sunday print and video resources. MLP will release a new 30-minute video with a study guide specifically for use during this year's More Light Sunday.

For more information about More Light Sunday, visit www.mlp.org/morelightsunday.

Take Part in Pride Month!

Many U.S. cities observe Pride day, week, or month during June in commemoration of the Stonewall Rebellion, when the LGBT community fought back

"Pride is faith in the idea that God had when God made us." -Isak Dinesen (née Karen Blixen), "Out of Africa"

police invading their space at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village. Religious groups are welcome to participate, usually free of charge, and it's a great way of letting the LGBT community know its members would be welcome in your

church. It also helps your church members feel like they are doing something to show their support and their pride in LGBT family

or church members. An individual, congregation, or MLP chapter could contact the local Pride organization and invite participation from all

welcoming churches in the area, coordinating a contingent carrying signs or banners bearing the names of churches that would be happy to see any along the parade route in church. And/or you may want to take an ad out together in the Pride booklet that often accompanies the event.



Louisville Seminary More Light chapter in Kentuckiana Gay Pride Parade, June 18, 2004.

and collectively bringing the walls down so that persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities may know and experience themselves as children of God.

*Articles
Needed*

The Conscience of Our Generation

When President Jimmy Carter honored Martin Luther King Jr. with a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977, he said of him, "Martin Luther King Jr. was the conscience of his generation." Carter went on to say: "A Southerner, a black man, he gazed on the great wall of segregation and saw that the power of love could bring it down."

In the midst of political, cultural and ecclesiastical polarization, and even segregation, in our day, as I travel our church as your field organizer and educator, I am grateful to be inspired by persons, families, and communities of conscience and witness all across the Presbyterian Church (USA). They are—you are—individually and collectively bringing the walls down so that persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities may know and experience themselves as children of God.

It really is this simple. Why is this welcome so difficult for others to extend? Some of the answers we know: some of us are not yet comfortable in our own skin; some of us do not trust God enough to extend the



gospel to all; some of us have been conditioned by homophobia and heterosexism so thoroughly that we bring that bias to our beliefs about family, church, and society; some of us have been taught wrongly about the Bible and we persist in misusing it; some of us are seduced by status and our own self-righteousness, smug in our own morality; some of us deny the urgency of this situation; and some of us just fear change in general.

So, I am deeply grateful when I meet persons, families, and communities of conscience and witness. One such community that I visited this month is A Community of the Servant-Savior Presbyterian Church in

Houston, Texas. This is a More Light Church, committed to every peace and justice cause imaginable as illustrated during their prayer concerns on Sunday morning and by their local ministries and outreach. Susan Quinn Bryan is the pastor, and her genuine love and care for all persons is obvious. She draws everyone in, and no one is a stranger.

If you cannot yet identify yourself or your church in terms of living out of conscience and serving as such a witness, then I invite you to take some time for reflection and discernment. I would be delighted to consult with you and your church or campus ministry. Periodically check www.mlp.org for opportunities to stretch yourself and your church, ways to lead and serve in your presbytery.

King was "the conscience of his generation." What can be said, and will be said, of us, of our churches, and of the Presbyterian Church (USA)? That's up to us.

Michael J. Adee, M.Div., Ph.D., National Field Organizer, may be contacted directly at michaeladee@aol.com.

The More Light Update seeks brief news stories on More Light congregations, chapters, personalities, and activities. News stories begin with a sentence highlighting what the story is about, such as "Elder Commissioner bites Stated Clerk," then offers details of who, when, where, what, why. Please be economical with language, 100-350 words for news stories; commentaries up to 450 words. Include writer identification and contact information. E-mail to MoreLightEditor@aol.com or mail to Chris Glaser, 991 Berne St. SE, Atlanta, GA 30316. Questions? Phone Chris at 404/622-4222. **We are also seeking photos and graphics**, which may be mailed to Chris at the above address or e-mailed to our designer, the Rev. Erin Swenson at erin@erinswen.com. Please identify the persons and event depicted.

PLEASE NOTE NEW DEADLINES for quarterly issues: Spring, March 1; Summer, June 1; Fall, September 1; Winter, December 1. Thank you!

Victory 2006 Campaign Begins

New MLP chapters, new MLP partner groups established

Since MLP's formal announcement of the Victory 2006 campaign in September last year, MLP board and staff have been hard at work building up the grassroots foundations of the campaign. Today, just a few months after our announcement, we're pleased to announce the creation of two new More Light chapters, as well as the creation of a More Light Victory 2006 Partnership Program with three chapters committed to participate and more in the wings.

Our first new More Light chapter is MLP Cascades, based in Beaverton, Oregon and co-chaired by Chris Jackson and Michael Sandmeyer. This group has been active for some time, but only recently formalized its chapter status. Chris describes some of their recent activity:

"We've made ourselves present at every Presbytery meeting since June of 2003, displaying MLP materials and engaging people in discussion. The banner was up and the brochures were out, and people stopped to ask, 'What's this all about?' We've committed to be a presence at Presbytery meetings, and make ourselves available as resources for any congregation willing to engage in discussions about inclusivity. I've also purchased MLP's Project Hearts & Minds DVDs so that we can offer more congregational resources."

Our second new chapter is MLP Big Sky, based in Billings, Montana and active within Yellowstone Presbytery, which geographically is one of the largest presbyteries in the denomination. The chapter is newly formed and will hold its kickoff meeting in late January, so by the time you read this they'll be well under way. Chapter co-chair Tony Stark noted that "We're enthused and excited to move forward with More Light, and we have a strong group with a lot of support. We all feel it's time to do what we can, given the forthcoming General Assembly in 2006." MLP is working closely with the Big Sky chapter to help them hit the ground running.

If you'd like to form an MLP chapter in your area, you can go to our web site at www.mlp.org/chapters where

you'll find answers to your questions as well as an online chapter creation web form.

Paralleling the emphasis on chapter creation, MLP has also rolled out the Victory 2006 Partnership Program, an initiative for select More Light local groups which brings More Light committees, chapters, and other local MLP groups into a stronger working relationship with the MLP board of directors and with each other. The

National MLP Leadership Conference: May 20-22 in Kansas City

A special activist and leadership training event, the National MLP Leadership Conference will be held Friday, May 20 through Sunday, May 22 in Kansas City, Missouri. This 3-day event will be different from traditional MLP conferences, as there will be a heavier focus on nuts-and-bolts skill development and training for MLP grassroots leaders and activists. The conference program leaders will be Eunice and Dick Poethig, longtime MLP supporters and skilled justice workers. Save the date and check the website for registration details.

Partnership Program helps local groups become more effective by bringing together people, ideas, opportunities, and access to resources. It also provides a way for More Light supporters to organize and coordinate major education and advocacy events in many presbyteries at the same time.

The Partnership Program is open to established More Light groups in swing presbyteries, and will emphasize activities which offer education and outreach to people who aren't yet full supporters of equality for LGBT people. Partner More Light groups will have periodic group conference calls hosted by the MLP board and staff, have access to specific and timely support and advice, and will contribute to some of the nationally-coordinated educational events organized by MLP throughout 2005.

Groundwork for the Victory 2006 Partnership Program began in December 2005, and as of this writing five local More Light groups have confirmed their participation,

with more coming soon. Confirmed partner groups include:

+ In the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee: MLP Middle Tennessee, where chapter co-chair Trice Gibbons notes that "the objectives [of the Partnership Program] fall right in line with what we are trying to accomplish as a chapter."

+ In the Presbytery of Cincinnati: More Light Presbyterians at Mt. Auburn, based at Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.

+ In the Presbytery of Eastern Oklahoma: the Outreach and Ministry Committee of College Hill Presbyterian Church in Tulsa. This group holds primary responsibility for More Light activities at College Hill Presbyterian and is co-chaired by Tim Gilleen, one of our Coming Out for More Light house party participants from fall 2004.

+ More Light Presbyterians of New Castle Presbytery, based in Wilmington, Delaware and chaired by Hanover Presbyterian elder Alice Davis. This local More Light

group was formed in 1999 and is looking forward to opportunities to reach out for presbytery education in 2005 and beyond.

+ In the Presbytery of de Cristo, the Luminarias de Cristo More Light chapter, co-chaired by Robert Moore of St. Mark's and MLP board member Mike Smith.

If you're a leader of a local More Light group that would like to plan educational events which reach out to Presbyterians who aren't yet full supporters of LGBT equality within the PCUSA, your group might be able to participate in the Partnership Program. E-mail us at atvictory@mlp.org or call our field organizer's hotline at 505-820-7082, mention that you're interested in the Partnership Program, and we'll be in touch.

Welcome to all of our new chapters and Partnership Program local groups! Together, we're making the light shine brighter for 2005 and beyond.

Bruce Hahne, MLP Board Member

Welcome to all of our new chapters and Partnership Program local groups! Together, we're making the light shine brighter for 2005 and beyond.

Transgender Day of Remembrance



The Louisville, KY Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil was held at Caldwell Chapel, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in November each year, an event memorializing the lives of those people who have been killed in the previous year due to hatred and violence toward transgender people. Events are held across the country, and each one is unique. Some are held on the street like a demonstration, others claim the steps of state capitol buildings or other historic buildings, looking much like political rallies, and many are held in churches of all flavors, as transgender folk and supporters gather to remember the dead.

Perhaps the most unusual

location this past year was the vigil held in the Caldwell Chapel at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The vigil capped off an entire week of transgender-related community events with films, panel discussions, and speakers, including me. The LPTS More Light Chapter coordinated the efforts of a number of local Louisville organizations, such as the Fairness Campaign, the Louisville Youth Group, the Center for Women and Families, and Common Ground.

Of those known to us, there were 21 lives lost this year in

the United States due to ignorance and hatred. We in the transgender community ask everyone to be sensitive to hate crimes of all kinds, for every human life is precious in God's sight.

For more information on transgender issues go to <http://www.mlp.org/staticpages/index.php?page=transgender>

To download a helpful new resource, "Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools, go to GSAnetwork.org

Erin Swenson,
MLP Co-moderator

TAMFS Director Janie Spahr Charged for Performing a Legal Same-Gender Marriage

An e-mail from an officer of the conservative Presbyterians for Renewal has launched an official inquiry into an action of the Rev. Dr. Jane Adams Spahr by Redwoods Presbytery, of which she is minister-member. Spahr confirmed that she participated in a same-gender marriage last year for two of her That All May Freely Serve board members in the Canadian province of Ontario, where it is legal.

Because Presbyterians in the U.S. officially still limit marriage to opposite genders, a thirteen-year-old "authoritative interpretation" states that "it would not be proper for a minister...to perform a same-sex union ceremony that the minister determines to be the same as a marriage ceremony." What such a statement might mean in the present context of the state itself determining a

same-gender ceremony to be the same as an opposite-gender marriage remains to be seen. Will the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) recognize the right of Canadian provinces (or, for that matter, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) to regulate marriage? Historically, Protestants were the first to urge nations to regulate marriage as part of the Reformation.

In response to the charge, Janie Spahr, TAMFS evangelist and former national co-moderator of a predecessor organization of More Light Presbyterians, told Evan Silverstein of the Presbyterian News Service, "If this helps people see LGBT people as persons, that we do make commitments, that we do have dreams, then I'm grateful. If this gives our denomination an opportunity to be in conversation about healthy marriage or healthy relationships and what they might look like, then I'm grateful."

ELCA Task Force Endorses Status Quo

A fourteen-member task force of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has recommended that differences on same gender marriage and ordination of gays and lesbians in the denomination not be resolved by legislative action, but addressed through pastoral care and continued dialogue. However, earlier legislative actions that fail to honor same-gender marriages and refuse ordination to non-celibate homosexual people would still be valid. The only change appears to be that Lutherans would be encouraged to respect those with opposing views and resist utilizing church discipline against those who honor same-gender covenants and call gay or lesbian pastors. How such a policy would be enforced was not clear. After consultations in regional synod assemblies from April through June, the ELCA 2005 Churchwide Assembly will consider the recommendations when it convenes August 8-14 in Orlando, Florida.

"If this gives our denomination an opportunity to be in conversation about healthy marriage or healthy relationships and what they might look like, then I'm grateful."

Rev. Janie Spahr

MLP Leaders Represent Us at Gatherings

National Field Organizer Michael Adee represented More Light Presbyterians at the **National Ecumenical Welcoming Church Program Leaders' Summit**, January 4-7, in Houston, Texas. This is the association that gave rise to the Witness Our Welcome gatherings in 2000 and 2003, as well as joint reference books "Shaping Sanctuary," a worship resource, and "Claiming the Promise," a Bible study, and once cooperatively published the now defunct "Open Hands" magazine. The gathering included training from a representative of the Gill Foundation (which provides grants to LGBT causes), discussion of national trends, sharing of resources and models, and a presentation by the Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR).

MLP Board member Mike Smith and Sylvia Thorson-Smith offered a workshop on reproductive rights at the national gathering of **Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association** partnering with the denomination's **Office of Women's Advocacy** in Tucson, January 13-16. MLP Board member Chuck Booker-Hirsch, pastor of a More Light church, **Northside Presbyterian of Ann Arbor**, was there working with **Presbyterians for Addiction Action**. Michael Adee joined others at the biennial and helped lead a special gathering, "Remembering Martin Luther King Jr. and Celebrating More Light," on the MLK holiday January 17, sponsored by the **Luminarias de Cristo MLP**

Chapter, hosted in Mike and Sylvia's home.

Earlier, in November, Adee and MLP Co-Moderator Erin Swenson attended the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change National Conference** in St. Louis. Both staffed an MLP resource table and participated in an "Organizing With and Among Communities of Faith Institute," part of the event. Adee taught a workshop, "Stepping Up to the Plate: Anyone Can Address Religious Arguments Against Equality & Justice for All." They also participated in a special Sunday "Service for Wholeness and Healing" at one of our newest More Light congregations, **The First Presbyterian Church of St. Louis**.

Presbyterians Celebrate Ordination of Women

Prior to 1906, women could not be deacons in any branch of the Presbyterian church. Before 1930, Presbyterian women could not be ordained as elders. Previous to 1955, they could not be ordained as ministers. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) plans to celebrate the fact that it finally changed its mind on the ordination of self-affirming, practicing women. 2006 will mark the 100th anniversary of the ordination of women as deacons and the 50th anniversary of women as ministers. This year, 2005, will mark the 75th anniversary of women as ruling elders. Congratulations not only to Presbyterian women, but to the Presbyterian Church for finally getting it right!

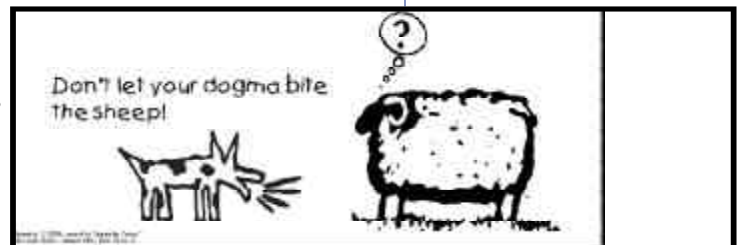
NBC and CBS Reject Gay-Positive United Church of Christ Commercials

Over the holidays, NBC and CBS refused to air a 30-second commercial created by the United Church of Christ that shows bouncers refusing entrance to a church to a variety of people, including a gay couple. "Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we," appears in print on screen, while a voiceover declares, "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

CBS cited President Bush's decision to pursue an anti-gay marriage amendment to the U. S. Constitution as reason to refuse an ad that deals with an issue that "touches on and/or takes a position on one side of a current controversial issue of public importance." The network did not explain why this criterion was not applied during the recent election cycle.

NBC, a network that carries "Will and Grace" and owns Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," simply stated the ads were "too controversial," and critics say the viewer is left to wonder if gay exploitation is okay so long as religion is left out. TBS, TNT, Fox, Black Entertainment Television, ABC Family and other cable channels accepted the commercials. UCC church officials have reported that since the controversy, the commercials have been "flying off the shelves," according to Kevin Eckstrom of the Religion News Service.

NBC... simply stated the ads were "too controversial"



Chris Glaser's Summer 2004 "Spirituality Corner" about dogs and dogma served as inspiration for this cartoon which appeared in the Fall 2004 issue of "Advent," the newsletter of Lutherans Concerned in the San Francisco Bay Area, according to editor Judy Streets.

A Challenge to the Ordination Ban

G-6.0106b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

-Book of Order, PC(USA)



Peter Oddleifson

The Book of Order reminds us that because the Confessions describe the basic principles of our Reformed faith (G-2.0500) “a more exacting amendment process is required to change the Confessions of the church than is required to change the Constitution in matters of government, worship, or discipline.” (G-2.0200). A proposed amendment must be approved by the General Assembly, two thirds of the presbyteries, and approved by the following G.A. (G-18.0200).

The Confessions are dynamic, evolving documents which have been reformed over the years as the church develops new understandings and insights into spiritual truth. “No one type of Confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable” (9.03).

For example, the Larger Catechism assumes a rigid class system in which there are “superiors” and “inferiors” and class-based sins (7.237 – 7.239). Confessional support for inequality has been eliminated by recent Confessions which stress the equality of all persons. “Congregations, individuals or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate or patronize their fellowmen, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess” (9.44).

The Confessions originally allowed divorce only in cases of adultery or desertion (6.131). They now provide broader reasons for divorce (6.137 – 6.139). Historically women could not be ordained (3.22; 5.191). We now ordain women, and A Brief Statement of Faith, adopted in 1983, proclaims that the church “calls women and men to all ministries of the Church” (Line 64).

The evolution of the Confessions has not been a capitulation to changing cultural norms. It has been driven by an increasing recognition that Christianity regards all persons as equal and requires that we live together as an inclusive community (10.3). Indeed, when the dominant culture rejected Christian values, as in Nazi Germany, the Church stood against the culture and published the 1934 Declaration of Barmen.

How should we interpret G-6.0106 b? The list of sins in the earlier Confessions is very long; the Larger Catechism alone describes 153 sins, many of which are dated. Interpreted literally, a law which bars ordination based on any of these sins would make most church members ineligible to become ministers, elders, or deacons. Such a law would be blatantly

inconsistent with the Confessions, because it violates the overarching principle proclaimed in the recent Confessions—namely the equality of all people—and reinstates lists of sins and categories of “second class citizens” which have long since been superseded by more recent confessions. The church has moved away from rigid categorical thinking and lists of sins and now values and judges all persons as individuals.

The Confessions themselves warn us: “All synods and councils since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both” (6.175). Proponents of G-6.0106b argue that they never intended to apply this law so broadly, that G-6.0106 b is directed against persons in an intimate relationship outside of male-female marriage. They interpreted scripture to mean that homosexual practice is sin, then attempted to impose their widely disputed interpretation on the whole church, as if it were essential, asserting in the 1996 G.A. committee report in its support, “Our constitution declares...that officers adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity...”

Ordination has never been guaranteed for everyone. The church insists on high standards. The standards set forth in G-6.0106 (a) provide that candidates for ordination should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship and love of Jesus Christ. “Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the Church and in the world.”

The constitutional history of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been marked by consistent efforts to honor 1) the requirement that we adhere to the essential and necessary articles of Reformed faith and polity, and 2) our freedom of conscience to express differing opinions. Our tradition calls for balance between order and liberty (G-6.0108).

G-6.0106 b, standing alone and interpreted literally, is inconsistent with this historical tradition, ignoring key elements of our constitutional and theological heritage. It creates absolute, categorical exclusions and disregards the facts of a particular case. It excludes entire categories of people regardless of their character and qualifications; it forever bars from ordination ALL people in an intimate partnership outside of marriage regardless of the strength and quality

of their chaste, committed relationship. It attempts to make this bar absolute, as if it were an essential tenet, which it is not. It ignores freedom of conscience, one of the Historic Principles of Church Order (G-1.0301 (1) (a)). It undermines the authority and responsibility of ordaining bodies to examine, ordain and welcome those persons whom they deem qualified for ordained office in our church. It contradicts the mandatory inclusivity provisions in the Book of Order (G-3.0401; G-4.0403; G-5.0103 and G-5.0202). Finally, it is in conflict with the recent Confessions which now celebrate inclusiveness and the equality of all people.

We must analyze and apply G-6.0106b in the light of all the provisions in our Constitution. This analysis and interpretation leads us to the following affirmations:

- ✍ We affirm the essentials of Reformed faith and polity as expressed in the Book of Confessions.
- ✍ We affirm our ordination vows, including our commitment to be “continually guided by our Confessions” as they have evolved.
- ✍ We affirm our freedom of conscience which is honored in our Historic Principles of Church Order and in G-6.0108 of the Book of Order.
- ✍ We affirm the inclusive language in the Book of Order.
- ✍ We affirm the rights and responsibilities of sessions and presbyteries to ordain, including the right to ordain persons based on their character and qualifications as individuals.
- ✍ We affirm the “manner of life” standard, and we affirm fidelity and chastity as guides for our faith and practice, believing that we are all called to lead chaste and disciplined lives, whether in marriage or in single life (4.108 and 4.109 of the Confessions).
- ✍ We commit ourselves not to exclude anyone categorically in considering those called to ordained service, but rather to consider the lives and behaviors of individual candidates as determined by the ordaining body.

Peter Oddleifson, *judicial analyst for the More Light Update*

Spirituality Corner

Remembering Our Baptisms



This is taken from a talk to a combined Atlanta gathering of More Light Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve, and Ormewood Park Presbyterian Church (the only More Light Church in the city), January 9, 2005. The theme of the Sunday evening worship was "Baptism in Christ: Celebrating the Promise," and included a rite of Renewal of Baptism. The Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson was chief organizer, consulting with all of the participants leading the service: Rev. Dr. Margaret Aymer, C. J. Clark, Chris Glaser, Ed Pucko, Mardee Rightmyer, Melanie Sovine, and Susan Thomas. Sixty-five people attended the service, followed by a reception hosted by Molly Kent. The event was intended to renew and restore a cohesive welcoming group in the area.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that one must be born anew, spiritually. He himself had chosen baptism at the hands of John and, coming out of the water, heard God declaring, "You are my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." That realization empowered Jesus to withstand the temptations that followed, and to fulfill his mission proclaiming in word and deed the unbreaking commonwealth of God.

Reared as a Baptist, I can remember my own baptism in a way that most Presbyterians, who were baptized as infants, cannot. For me it was a choice of belonging: to Jesus, to God, and to my family forever. Before immersion, I was asked if I believed in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Confused by the elaborate Trinitarian formula, I remained silent, being very shy. I failed my first theological exam! But the minister explained to the congregation, now nervously giggling, that we had talked and he was convinced of my genuineness. So he baptized me, much to my relief.

But later, when I discovered my homosexual feelings, I doubted the efficacy of my baptism. I prayed to God over and over, "converting" again and again, thinking that my baptism didn't "take," and that's why I was gay.

Charles Williams, who hung out with fellow Christian writers J. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers, disliked the word "disillusioned." We sometimes say, when we fall out of love, whether with a person or an institution, that we are "disillusioned." Williams thought the word implied that our first vision of the beloved was an illusion, rather than perhaps the

truer vision of the other as a sacred gift of God. In the case of my baptism, I felt disillusioned, yet my baptism was never an illusion, for it signified a deeper reality: that I belonged to God and to my spiritual family, the church, forever.

Because the church for the most part has told LGBT Christians that our belonging to God is an illusion, many of us have become disillusioned. But our belonging to God and the church is the deeper reality. With Jesus, we must hear God saying, "You are my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased."

We must remember not only our individual baptisms, but the baptisms of all Presbyterians, including those who oppose us. If the Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church is to be successful, we must remember one another's baptisms. We must look for the child of sacred worth welcomed by God in baptism in every Presbyterian.

Last year, reading a brief biography of one of our chief opponents, I was deeply moved, and realized that he wasn't a "bad guy," but one who was deeply disillusioned with the Presbyterian church. I wrote to him, and he cordially responded with a handwritten reply. Recently I received a form letter above his signature from the organization he represents, a letter filled with venom, and all I could think as I read it was, "This isn't you!" I think that sometimes, in our opposition of one another, we become something other than we are.

Alongside one another's baptisms, we must also remember the church's baptisms of the Holy

Spirit: first, giving the apostles the ability to communicate God's gospel of love to every stranger visiting Jerusalem during Pentecost, and second, giving the Gentiles the gifts of the Spirit, so that the early church was compelled to give Gentiles the baptism of water. When I served on the Presbyterian task force that produced "The Church and Homosexuality" report of 1978, this baptism of the Holy Spirit on Gentiles served as our Biblical model for embracing the gifts of lesbian and gay people in the church.

Ephesians spoke of Gentile and Jewish Christians empowered to overcome their "dividing wall of hostility" in Christ. It speaks to us, in our own divisions, of one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God of all, urging us "to lead a life worthy of [our] calling..., with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let's make it so.

Chris Glaser, More Light Update Editor

New Legal Resource in Print and on the Web

More Light Presbyterians Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), with answers to common and not-so-common questions about Presbyterian law as it relates to LGBT people is now available at mlp.org or by writing our national office (see masthead on page 8).

We must look for the child of sacred worth welcomed by God in baptism in every Presbyterian.

More Light Presbyterians

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More Light Update

A Quarterly Publication of
More Light Presbyterians
Volume 25, Number 1
Winter, 2005

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JOIN US IN MINISTRY...

Individual and corporate membership in More Light Presbyterians is open to any member, congregation, or governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that supports our mission to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church.

We invite you to join or renew your membership at this time, or make a contribution, using the enclosed envelope. Returning the form will be understood as your affirmation of MLP's mission. Individual membership is \$50 per year, or whatever a member can afford.

If you are not already participating in a local or regional MLP chapter or congregation and wish more information on how to connect with MLP or organize in your area, please contact our National Field Organizer through his contact information on the left.

The MLP Board would like to receive your input. Our board is structured by committees: Communications, Development, Membership, Nurture, Education,



Conferences, Human Resources, and Legislative Affairs. We welcome the service of non-board members on these committees. Contact the committee chair (below) to get involved with the work of More Light Presbyterians.

Membership: Bruce Hahne (hahne@io.com)

Communications: Marco Grimaldo (mgrimaldo@earthlink.net)

Development: Rob Cummings (robcum@wononline.net)

Educational Resources/Programming: Heather Reichgott (heather.reichgott@gmail.com)

Strategy: Bear Ride (bears@usc.edu) and Mike Smith (mikedsmith@earthlink.net)

Conferences: Vikki Dearing (dearbunt@aol.com)

Nurture: Open (erin@erinswen.com)

Human Resources: Erin (erin@erinswen.com)

Please join us in our prayers for an inclusive church!