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Inside This Issue

Do Justice, Right Now!	2
The Time is Always Ripe	2
Plan Your More Light Sunday Event for June 11	3
Important Resource Available	3
...We're Confronted with the Fierce Urgency of Now	4
Santa Fe Board Meeting	4
A No Boundaries Gospel	5
News Briefs	5
Erin Swenson Receives David Sindt Award	6
University Presbyterian Church Receives Inclusive Church Award ..	6
MLP Events at the 217th General Assembly	7
Dreaming of an Equal Place for All Right Now!	7
Rite Now	7

**For up to the minute news
visit us at**

More Light Sunday is June 11th!

More Light Sunday, our annual day of action to support LGBT equality, is coming on June 11, just four days before the start of General Assembly. Can you commit to help your church plan an activity that will take a stand for LGBT justice and equality? Get involved at:
www.mlp.org/morelightsunday/

A Call To Justice – RIGHT NOW

The Board of More Light Presbyterians unanimously approved this “Call to Justice – Right Now” statement. This More Light Update explores its implications. In the period up to and during General Assembly in June, we invite you to join our reflection, our action and our prayer. It’s not too late to sign on: go to www.mlp.org, read the “Right Now petition” article on our home page, and click on “Call to Justice – Right Now.”

Justice knows no season.

“The time is always ripe to do right.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham City Jail

The time is RIGHT NOW for disciples of Jesus Christ to stand up for those denied full participation in our church - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sisters and brothers whom God has called to ministry.

Recommendations that would maintain the church’s discriminatory policy on ordination say once again to “wait,” “be patient,” “the time is not right.”

“There is such a thing as being too late...we are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

The time is right now to move beyond our fears:
fear of the unknown
fear of denominational schism
fear of those who are different.

Jesus proclaimed a bold faith, challenging disciples to “Fear not!”
It is time to do right, now, and to trust God’s inclusive love.

“God is love... There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” - 1 John 4:16,18

The peace, unity and purity that the church seeks cannot and will not come at the price of denying justice and equality. Our scriptures and our prophets teach us that our dream of community requires an equal place at the table for all God’s children.

“I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream to make room at the table of brother- and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people.” - Coretta Scott King

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls for
Peace with justice
Unity with equality
Purity with wholeness.

The time is

R I G H T N O W !

Do Justice, Right Now!

By Kim Smith King, MLP Co-Moderator



From time to time I have been known to dither. How about you? Have you ever found yourself debating which

decision is best, worrying over which course of action to take, creating an inner dialogue about which way is right and which path is wrong, and just when you should make the move?

I am pleased to tell you that your MLP Board didn't dither for one second when it came time to decide – we knew what was right and what does the Lord require of us – to do justice. Justice is a non-negotiable to God.

And so it is for us. We are fully committed to working for a just, fully inclusive, welcoming and affirming church for all God's beloved children, gay and straight, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.

We know that there is much debate about how to proceed toward that day. Many in the church are suggesting that we should take the path of the Peace, Unity, and Purity Report. Others are saying we should acknowledge that factions in the church are simply going down different roads, and should part ways, split. We believe that the right path forward is to pass one or more of the 22 overtures calling for the deletion of G-6.0106b and the setting aside of all previous Authoritative Interpretations on this matter. Until that part of the Book of Order is deleted we will be a church

of judgment, not justice.

And what does the Lord require of us? Justice.

Justice is right, and the time is ripe. The Presbyterian Church (USA) should not delay, nor dither, nor debate who is in and who should be out. We cannot delay justice for the sake of "peace". For we know to the depths of our souls and to the marrow of our bones:

There can be no peace without justice,

There can be no unity without equality,

And there can be no purity without wholeness.

May the justice, equality, wholeness, and peace of our risen Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

*A call to
justice...
Right Now.*

*Justice knows
no season.*

*"The time is
always ripe to
do right."*

The Time is Always Ripe

By Bear Ride, MLP Co-Moderator

Right now your Board is working feverishly to bring More Light to our church and world. Why right now? Because the time is always ripe to do what's right. George Bernard Shaw, although not Presbyterian, might as well have been describing our More Light Board's single-hearted focus when he wrote: "Life is no brief candle... It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

The Board is ablaze with fabulous ways to be that constant nudge which will make our church a "true community of hospitality" for future generations (and RIGHT NOW!). On the back page of this Update you'll find our names and contact information. Drop us a note when you have "bright" ideas!

Meanwhile, here's how we've



organized ourselves to get the work done (not surprisingly, by committees. We are, after all, Presbyterian...):

As always, our leadership works in a collegial style – thus, Kim Smith-King and Bear Ride share equally the joys of co-moderating the Board;

Conferences, Retreats & Events works without ceasing to organize our regional conferences, General Assembly logistics and special events;

The *Communications Committee (CommComm)* oversees the More Light Update, media contacts, our website, the on-line MLPNews and our Speaker's Bureau (whew!);

Church and Community Nurture & Resources develops our More Light educational resources, manages our resource lending library, oversees the Chapter development and (thankfully) tends to pastoral care issues within our More Light community;

Financial Development and Membership makes it all possible by fund-raising, stewardship, grant-writing, database management, new member outreach (and, as we say "all other related activities!");

Human Resources and Board Development takes the responsibility for personnel, nominations, volunteer recruitment and recognition, board development and orientation;

Legislative and Judicial Affairs (LAJA) tackles grassroots organizing, judicial support, legislative strategy, General Assembly actions, and the work of justice (RIGHT NOW!).

This is our work, and this is how your faithful disciples on the Board do it (when? NOW!) (right?). How grateful we are to all who are named on the back of this Update, and even more – to you, the Cloud of Witnesses who partner with us in our work to transform our church into a community of grace and welcome.

More Light Presbyterians is nothing if not predictable. Our mission, goal and strategy have remained consistent over the decades: we trust the wildly inclusive love of God to triumph over fear and timidity, and we bank our hope in this faith alone. Thomas Merton (another non-Presbyterian...) summed our attitude up well: "To hope is to risk frustration. Therefore, make up your mind to risk frustration. Do not be one of those who, rather than risk...never attempts anything."

The next More Light Update is scheduled for publication in August, 2006. If you have ideas for articles or original content, please send them to editor@mlp.org. The deadline for submission is July 1st, 2006.

Help Make History: Plan Your More Light Sunday Event for June 11 - and Write Now

By Bruce Hanhe, MLP Development Committee

More Light Sunday—the annual day when More Light supporters across the country come together for local actions to support the movement for LGBT equality within the PCUSA and to support More Light Presbyterians—is coming up fast, and you’re invited to participate. This year More Light Sunday is on June 11, just four days before the start of General Assembly in Birmingham. And this year, MLP is pulling out all the stops to give everyone an opportunity to participate and make our voices heard by the Assembly’s commissioners. In addition to our usual call to churches to participate, we’re also coordinating “Right Now” house parties and giving all our supporters the opportunity to request “Write Now” postcards that MLP will deliver at General Assembly.

Church participation is the backbone of More Light Sunday. Churches around the country sign up to recognize More Light Sunday and affirm their commitment to LGBT equality as part of their Sunday worship and educational activities. In 2005, 36 churches participated in More Light Sunday, triple the number from the previous year. Churches have a lot of flexibility in celebrating More Light Sunday—and you don’t have to be a More Light church to participate! To assist celebrations, MLP offers special resources to churches: our well-received worship

bulletin inserts picturing our colorful “More Light baby”; a special interview DVD with a set of discussion questions; and as a first this year, “Write Now” postcards. Church members can sign cards supporting removal of G-6.0106b and calling for a church that fully welcomes and supports our LGBT brothers and sisters and their families, and return them to MLP for delivery to General Assembly commissioners (the return address is on the cards). More information about More Light Sunday participation is at www.mlp.org/morelightsunday/.

This year on More Light Sunday weekend, MLP is also coordinating two of our popular house parties: gatherings in homes which feature a group conference call with all present joining together to speak with MLP national staff and board members. You’re welcome to hold a house party for MLP at any time of the year. However, if you wish to join in on these special conference calls, you’ll want to organize your party for Saturday June 10 starting at about 4 PM Pacific time or Sunday June 11 starting at 2 PM Pacific time. House parties are easy, fun, and a great way to support MLP by giving your friends an opportunity to build community, to learn more about MLP, and to strengthen our movement. To help you get started, MLP will provide training, resources and support for

all house party hosts.

We’re also making our “Write Now” postcards available to individuals. You can request a set of 5 postcards (see addresses below) to share with friends and return to MLP. Each postcard allows you or a friend to write a brief message to General Assembly commissioners and return it to us. MLP will collect the statements and make them available publicly at General Assembly.

It’s easy to sign up for any of these More Light Sunday activities. The fastest and preferred way is online: go to the More Light Sunday information and our signup page at www.mlp.org/morelightsunday/. You can also contact this year’s More Light Sunday coordinator, MLP board member Bruce Hanhe, directly at 408-732-1698 or via email at hahne@io.com.

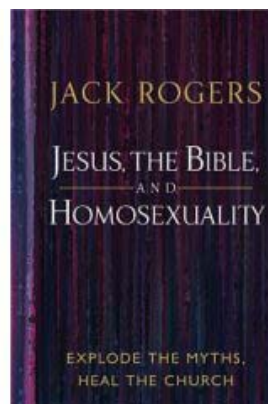
With General Assembly only once every two years, it’s important for all supporters of LGBT equality within the Presbyterian Church to get involved, get active, and make our voices heard. By taking advantage of the resources and scheduled opportunities that MLP has brought together for June 10 and 11, it’s easy for you to help build a church for all God’s people. Join us today and sign up for More Light Sunday!

*The time is
Right Now for
disciples of Jesus
Christ to stand
up for those
denied full
participation in
our Church –
Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, and
Transgender
sisters and
brothers whom
God has called
to ministry.*

Important New Resource Now Available

In a powerful new book, evangelical theologian and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Jack Rogers argues unequivocally for equal rights in church and society for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. [Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church](#) (Westminster John Knox Press) describes Rogers’ own change of mind and heart on the issue; charts the church’s well-documented history of using biblical passages to oppress marginalized groups; argues for a Christ-centered reading of Scripture; debunks often-repeated stereotypes about gays and lesbians; and concludes with ideas for how the church can heal itself and move forward again

MLP Co-Moderator Bear Ride writes: “Thank heavens for Rogers’ articulate, intelligent and compellingly Gospel-driven contribution to the discussion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people of faith in the life of the church! Professor Rogers takes into careful consideration his own social context and moves beyond — a rare thing — reminding the church that we are risking our own souls should we delay the careful consideration of the Gospel message of grace. As a member of the Christian LGBT community of faith, I gladly recommend this book to those struggling to accept the fact that God loves us all.”



Recommendations that would maintain the Church's discriminatory policy on ordination say once again "to wait," "to be patient," "the time is not yet right" —

"There's such a thing as being too late..."

...We're Confronted with the Fierce Urgency of Now

By Michael D. Smith and Bear Ride, Legislative and Judicial Affairs

Indeed! The 217th General Assembly meeting in Birmingham, Alabama is the time and place to act. Dr. King wrote his famous *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* in response to several well-motivated white clergy who urged him to slow down, because the time was not right. It's time to heed Dr. King's words and move with a sense of fierce urgency. More Light Presbyterians urges GA to delete G-6.0106b and related Authoritative Interpretations RIGHT NOW!

MLP commends the 22 presbyteries that have sent "delete B" overtures, and we are committed to working with them for a victory at GA to remove our denomination's discriminatory policy. The work will not be easy, in light of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church's recommendation that GA send no ordination amendments to the presbyteries. Most of the 22 presbyteries acted *after* the Task Force made its recommendation, and we agree with them that the time for more waiting is over.

MLP also opposes the Task Force's proposed Authoritative Interpretation on G-6.0108 as even a partial solution to the ordination issue. We agree with the intent and importance of the "Freedom of Conscience"

section, G-6.0108, and the necessity of determining what is essential to Reformed faith and polity. The problem is with the Task Force's application of it. Historically it was applied to articles of the Westminster standards, and ministers could dissent from or "declare a scruple" concerning their belief about a particular doctrine or standard. Then the governing body determined whether the scrupled article was or was not an essential tenet. The issue for an LGBT Presbyterian is not what she *believes* about a standard of faith or polity; it is about who she *is*. Declaring a scruple regarding beliefs in nonessential matters is one thing; asking an LGBT candidate to declare that he, in his very being, is a nonessential scruple is quite another. What the Task Force suggests is nothing less than reducing *Presbyterians*, our lives and our loving, to scruples, nonessentials, insignificance. All to become "approved" for ordination!

Other overtures of interest and importance include a wonderfully creative effort on the part of the Presbytery of Cincinnati, 06-39, "On Amending the 1978 Policy Statement of the UPCUSA and the 1979 Position Paper of the PCUS by Deleting Certain Statements." The overture asks GA to delete from these two

landmark policies all the statements regarding homosexuality that are derogatory and discriminating. They "constitute a massive inhospitality" and are a... "longstanding insult to our gay and lesbian members," according to the overture's rationale. The Presbytery of Cincinnati points out that their overture does not delete the part of the policy statements that have been declared definitive guidance and subsequently, authoritative interpretation. Thus their overture does not remove an existing "AI" or approve a new one. MLP wholeheartedly agrees with the overture that the time to rid our church of these unjust and injurious policy statements is RIGHT NOW.

Marriage is the topic of three overtures, which MLP opposes - these seek disapproval of any form of "holy unions," and the strengthening of the position that marriage is restricted to one man and one woman. One, 06-10, from the Presbytery of Mississippi, calls for the amendment of the Directory for Worship.

These and many other important issues compose the legislative docket of the 217th General Assembly. MLP is working hard to make Birmingham the JUSTICE RIGHT NOW Assembly.

Santa Fe Board Meeting

Your National MLP Board gathered in Santa Fe February 17th - 20th to welcome new members, say goodbye to departing members, and to organize and rededicate ourselves to the important work that lies before us. Along the way we worshipped God, prayed, sang, and had a great time!

Front Row: Vikki Dearing, Bear Ride, Kim Smith King, Madeline Jervis, Travis Stevens, Ralph Carter, Mike Smith, Heather Reichgott. **Back Row:** Michael Adee, Bruce Hahne, Jack Cover, Janet Edwards, Katherine Randolph (assistant), Kenny Davis (outgoing), Brian Spolarich



MLP National Board Members - Feb. 2006 Santa Fe Meeting

A No Boundaries Gospel – Participating in the Holy

By Michael Adee, MLP National Field Organizer

In speaking on welcoming and affirming decisions about LGBT persons, he said that "the Gospel is at stake." The statement came from a clergy panel member following a student presentation during BGLASS Week at Princeton Seminary [BLGLASS, while not an acronym, is the student LGBT and supporters network]. I was the guest educator teaching sexual ethics from a faith perspective for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Maybe not coincidentally, this pastor's comment echoed the title of my sermon preached two days later in historic Miller Chapel, "A No Boundaries Gospel."

Inspired by Micah 6:6-8, Mark 12:28-31 and my own faith journey, I offered to the Princeton Seminary community the ethical challenge that we are not to hold a possessive cast on the Gospel. It is not ours to contain, it is ours to share. It is our task to set the Gospel free to do its "life-giving and life-saving" work, so that all persons may know the radically inclusive love of God and experience themselves as children of

God. I spoke about the barriers we in the Church sadly often place that prevent persons from hearing and experiencing the Gospel and the love of God.

Alice Walker's Shug Avery to Celie in *The Color Purple* expresses it so clearly: "Celie, tell the truth, have you ever found God in church? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for God to show up. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God." And, then Shug's stunning conclusion, "It is fatal to love a God who does not love you."

Kathleen Norris' commentary in *The Cloister Walk* on the "great commandment text" from the Gospel of Mark makes the case for a "No Boundaries" Gospel, by offering insight into Jesus' most important teaching and ethic. Norris writes, "The great commandment, to love God with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself, seemed more subtle than ever. I began to see the three elements as a kind of

trinity, always in motion, and the three loves as interdependent. It would be impossible to love God without loving others; impossible to love others unless one were grounded in a healthy self-respect; and maybe impossible to truly love at all without participating in the holy."

I am deeply grateful for all of you who are working faithfully to remove the barriers against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and our families, by creating safe places in local churches, on college and seminary campuses, and by challenging discrimination in church and society. May a "No Boundaries" Gospel flow in and through all of us and be free to do its life-giving, life-saving, grace-filled work into all the world.

With hope and grace,

Michael



The time is right now to move beyond our fears:

Fear of the unknown,

Fear of

denominational

schism,

Fear of those

who are

different.

News Briefs

Congratulations to the **Middle Tennessee More Light Presbyterians Chapter** in Nashville for being selected as the **Outstanding MLP Chapter for 2006** by the National MLP Board. Trice Gibbons and Stacy Rector lead this extraordinary chapter that had seven local churches sponsoring the Nashville MLP Conference.

We are most grateful to **Chris Glaser** for serving as our Editor of the More Light Update, and we rejoice with him in his call and ordination to ministry within the MCC.

Good News! **Oaklands Presbyterian Church** of Laurel, MD is our newest More Light Church. Chartered in 1966 and pastored by the Rev. Paul Anderson, Oaklands is in its 40th year of ministry and mission. It now stands as a "community of witness" that the Gospel is "Good News" for all God's people, not just some. To read more, please check Oaklands' website, <http://home.att.net/~oaklands-pres/> or our website, www.mlp.org. Congratulations to our

good friends at Oakland Presbyterian Church!

Susan Craig has been called by the National MLP Board to serve as the new Editor of the More Light Update. "We are delighted to have Susan serve MLP and the movement in this capacity," offered Kim Smith King, Co-Moderator. "Susan serves as our national Liaison on Bisexuality, offering workshops and educational materials on bisexuality, in addition to serving as the pastor of United University Church at USC in LA (a more light congregation). Her leadership within MLP, service as a campus chaplain at Princeton, Baldwin-Wallace, and leadership in the national church with Women's Ministries combine to make Susan a remarkable choice to serve as our new More Light Update Editor," said



Michael Adee, National Field Organizer. Susan lives with her partner, Bear Ride, in Pasadena.

The **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force** has announced that the **Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR)** has merged with and will become a program of the Task Force. As part of the Task Force, the IWR program will continue to organize the "Witness Our Welcome (WOW)" conference as the national convening of welcoming people of faith, and will also continue the outreach work of the Shower of Stoles project. "We are confident our becoming part of the Task Force will help us grow this critical movement and take us to a new level of participation and effectiveness," said Rebecca Voelkel, executive officer of the IWR. "Those of us in the welcoming church movement see it as our job to proudly claim the witness and language of our faith traditions. [...] Unfortunately for those of us who are Christian, some of that language has been hijacked by the radical right and used to attack and abuse LGBT folk. We are determined to change that."

University Presbyterian Church Receives Inclusive Church Award

By Travis Stevens, MLP Communications



More Light Presbyterians is pleased to announce that University Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa, Alabama will be honored with our More Light Inclusive Church Award at the Annual MLP Celebration Reception and Dinner on Thursday, June 15, 2006 in

Birmingham as part of the 217th General Assembly. University Presbyterian Church (UPC) will be sending a delegation to the event to celebrate with MLP, and to share their story with those in attendance.

Located adjacent to the University of Alabama campus, UPC has a significant and active group of university students, an LGBT ministry, and a congregation drawing from both of these groups, as well as the larger community of Tuscaloosa. Several members of the church are also involved with the West Alabama AIDS Outreach.

UPC has a longstanding commitment to social justice. The church began as

Westminster Chapel, a center for Presbyterian college students attending the University of Alabama, in 1952. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, Westminster Chapel opened its doors to African American students from Stillman College at a time when area churches were routinely turning them away. In 1966, a group of students and community members who were committed to the principles of inclusiveness founded UPC.

UPC's decision to affiliate with More Light Presbyterians was a natural extension of their commitments to social justice for all persons. On February 17, 2000, Michael Adee, Jim Rigby, Mardee Rightmyer, Janie Spahr and Helene Loper came to the church on a Southern Road Trip soon after the brutal murder of Billy Jack Gaither in nearby Sylacauga, Alabama. The congregation was deeply moved by their stories and wanted to take action to affirm the contributions of LGBT persons of faith.

But several members of the session struggled with the decision. The church was in the throes of a capital campaign to build a student center, and members felt they would be less

likely to receive support because of their affiliation with MLP. Pastor Sandy Winters explains, "We were afraid it was going to have to be a choice [between student ministry and MLP affiliation]. We didn't want it to be a choice at all." Despite these concerns, the session voted overwhelmingly to affiliate as a More Light congregation in December of 2000.

Ten short days after the vote, the congregation received a letter from Presbyterian Women notifying them that UPC had been selected to receive the 2000 Birthday Offering of \$205,000. "It just seemed like a wonderful validation that we made the right choice. I want to say it seemed like God's blessing on our choice. We knew that with that money coming, we could build the student center," said Rev. Winters. In February of 2002, the building was dedicated, and has since become a thriving center for Presbyterian students from across the state.

More Light Presbyterians salutes University Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Please see our website, www.mlp.org, for a longer version of this article.

Jesus proclaimed a bold faith, challenging disciples to "Fear not!" It is time to do right, now, and to trust God's inclusive love.

Erin Swenson Receives David Sindt Award

By Brian W. Spolarich, MLP Communications

The MLP Board is pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2006 David Sindt Leadership Award will go to the Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson for her outstanding witness in the movement for LGBT equality within and beyond the PC(USA).

"We're so pleased to be able to honor Erin in this way," says Bear Ride, Co-Moderator of the MLP Board. "Erin's long presence among and ministry to us continues to be such a blessing. She's truly an inspirational leader in our movement."



Erin was ordained as Eric Karl Swenson in 1973 by the Presbytery of Atlanta, which was then a part of

the southern Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Twenty-three years later, after completing a gender transition from male to female, that ordination was sustained by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, PCUSA, making Erin the first known mainstream Protestant minister to transition from male to female while remaining in ordained office.

Erin continues to practice active ministry as parish associate at Ormewood Park Presbyterian Church in southeast Atlanta and as a pastoral psychotherapist at the Morningside Presbyterian Church in Atlanta's Midtown section. She recently completed a term of service as co-moderator of the board of More Light Presbyterians (and was the publisher of this newsletter), and as a chair of the Health Ministries Committee of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.

In 1999 Erin founded, along with Mr. Raja Qasim, the Southern Association for Gender Education, Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to educating institutions of higher learning, medical associations and practices, and faith groups about diversity in gender expression and the place of gender in modern life. She travels nationally presenting to conferences, churches, organizations, seminaries, and universities.

The David Sindt Leadership Award, given since 1999, recognizes individuals who best exemplify the pioneering efforts of David Bailey Sindt, the founder of our movement within the Presbyterian Church in 1974, when he held up a sign at the General Assembly which said, "Is anybody else out there gay?" A full list of past recipients of MLP awards is available at www.mlp.org/resources/award.html

MLP Events at the 217th General Assembly

By Vikki Dearing, MLP Conferences, Retreats, and Events

The table is open to all at the many MLP-sponsored events during this year's General Assembly, beginning with the **Annual MLP Celebration Reception and Dinner** on Thursday evening June 15. Greet old friends and make new ones! View once again the moving Shower of Stoles display. *Letters from a Birmingham Assembly* will be the theme as we celebrate 32 years of working for the full embrace of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in our Church and the world.

On Sunday morning we will worship together at the **National Welcoming Presbyterians' Worship Service**, sponsored jointly by More Light Presbyterians and That All May Freely Serve, to be held at 10 am at Pilgrim Congregational Church (3801 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL) — the busses will be waiting! Hear the inspired preaching of long-time movement leaders the Revs. Bear Ride and Don Stroud.

Celebrating our Faith – Awaiting our Welcome is the theme for the **Witness Event**, which will be held on Sunday evening just prior to the GA worship service on the 18th. Our signs and our presence will remind arriving worshippers that even as the denomination continues to exclude LGBT Presbyterians, God doesn't exclude us from the call to do God's work in the world.

Meet and greet at the **MLP Booth** in the Exhibit Hall. Check out the new LGBT/welcoming educational materials available through MLP. Special features of our booth this year will include a display of the Shower of Stoles Project and the "Telling Our Stories Project" from Pittsburgh, PA.

Find respite, pastoral care and fellowship with kindred spirits of all sexual orientations and gender identities at the **Hospitality Suite** hosted by MLP and TAMFS. Located

on the 4th floor of the Sheraton, you'll find a warm welcome awaiting you each evening starting at 5:30 p.m.

MLP and TAMFS will also host **Mini Workshops** in the Hospitality Suite. Topics include: Coming Out 101: Coming Out to Self, God and the Church; Telling Our Stories: "Reel" Life and Real Life LGBT Faith Stories; Same Sex Love and Marriage Equality: Bringing Body and Soul Together for Persons of All Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities.

We welcome your participation and your help at these events! For detailed information about the events and to volunteer to help, visit our website, www.mlp.org, or go to the Office of General Assembly website – www.pcusa.org/ga217/. Tickets to events are available from OGA until May 22 and afterward at On-site Registration opening June 14 in the Convention Center.

Dreaming of an Equal Place for All - Right Now!

A letter from our editor, Susan Craig

In Birmingham this June we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the office of word and sacrament. As a former Associate Director of Women's Ministries, I herald the coming of this day. To follow the time line on the denomination's website is to remember that the years have been long, and that progress has been uneven in our larger Presbyterian family.

Even as we mark fifty years from the

1956 approval of women's ordination in the Presbyterian church, we note that it wasn't until 1974 that the first African American woman was ordained to ministry, Katie Cannon; or 1979 for the first Hispanic woman, Rebecca Reyes; and 1987 the first Native American, Holly Haile Smith. Many churches received exemptions from ordaining women elders, and some still have none. "Women's ordination" is only gradually becoming truly inclusive of all women called to ministry.

And still in 2006, in almost all cases, we continue not to ordain bisexual, lesbian and transgender women – as well as our gay, bisexual and trans men. So *my* dream for our celebration of women in ministry this year is that as a denominational body we'll finally choose the path of justice-love and make an equal place at the table for *all* God's daughters and sons - Right Now!

Blessed Be!

Rite Now

A prayer for our common use in the days leading up to and during General Assembly

By Janet Edwards

Blessed are You, Dear One,

who teach our hearts to love ... our arms to embrace ... and our souls to forgive.

We so need and want Your Love and Justice to prevail for all, right now.

Keep us from harm as we seek to do Your loving Will.

Holy Spirit, shine through us! Jesus, be our Way! God of all, make us Your own!

Then it shall be so, as You will, and we shall bow in thanks.

Hear our prayer, now and in the important days to come.

We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

† † †

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- Coretta Scott King

*The Gospel of
Jesus Christ calls
for Peace with
Justice.*

*The time is
RIGHT NOW!*

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*For all ministers, elders,
deacons, members, friends, and
governing bodies of the
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More Light Update

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

If you sent in a renewal membership contribution earlier this year, you can safely ignore any 'membership expired' notice on this *Update's* mailing label. Otherwise, please send in your renewal now. Thanks for your tax-deductible donation of \$50, or whatever you can afford (which may be more as well as less!).

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; Financial Development and Membership; Church and Community Nurture & Resources; Conferences, Retreats, and Events; Human Resources and Board Development (HRBD), and Legislative and Judicial Affairs (LAJA). We welcome and covet the service of non-board members on these

committees. Contact the committee chair(s) (below) to get involved with the work of More Light Presbyterians.

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HRBD: Co-Moderators

Please join us in our prayers for an inclusive church!