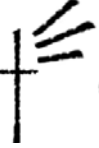


More Light  on...

Spirituality

God – creator, parent, lover of us all – “is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). At the same time, God is, in God’s infinite wisdom and freedom, beyond all our understanding.

“Before [we] were formed in [our] mothers’ wombs, God knew [us]” (Jeremiah 1:5). Before we were born, God was deeply and intimately in relationship with us. And, out of God’s personal knowledge of us, we were created -- created in God’s image... created good, like all of creation...and, created to reflect the wide diversity of God.

Our embodiment in the world is directly related to this connection with God. Spirituality is our search to reconnect with this intimate pre-birth relationship. This intimacy has been described as the opportunity “to let [one’s] guard and defense down, to share one’s deepest and strongest feelings...to become vulnerable” (McNeill, p. 98). Ultimately, we seek this intimacy in relationship with God and one another.

This awareness of God’s presence and activity in our lives can and does happen within religious communities, as well as outside traditional communities. Yet, a critical aspect of spiritual growth and development is the establishment and nurturing of intimate and personal relationships with others.

Spirituality and LGBT Experience

Spiritually, LGBT persons are in need of (1) a sense of self-worth and value, (2) places and people that will honor, recognize, and welcome them as children of God, and, (3) places where

and people with whom they can be open, vulnerable, and intimate.

When talking about spirituality, especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, we must come to recognize that God created all of us -- body, mind, and spirit. Spirituality can only be talked about in relation to sexuality and embodiment. Many LGBT persons have indicated that “coming out” to themselves (not necessarily to others), or coming to understand their sexuality and embodiment, has had a significant impact on their relationship with God.

“Coming out” helps LGBT people to understand a part of themselves that has previously been unknown and hidden, and with a greater self-understanding, LGBT persons are able to engage fully and intimately with God. This same self-understanding is also important in building relationships in communities of support and resistance. Through these intimate relationships, just as in relationship with God,

LGBT persons experience the life-giving power of relationships of mutuality and support.

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Points of Impasse

It has been said that spiritual growth happens at the points of “impasse, where [LGBT persons] have difficulty with self-worth and self-image” (Empereur, p. 49). In these times, not only do people have little self-worth but they also experience alienation, isolation, and abandonment.

LGBT persons have experienced these impasses brought on by personally coming to terms with one’s own identity, followed, many

times, by marginalization and suffering caused by unwelcoming and inhospitable reactions by church and society. Examples of these "impasses" include: coping with the shaking of heterosexist and patriarchal worldviews that don't fit for LGBT persons; being abandoned by family, friends, church, and society; and being forced to hide relationships because of fear of losing employment, ordination, children, housing, etc.

If one is not able to find support for spiritual wrestling and growth, then that person becomes trapped by the impasse. When churches, such

as the PC(USA), deny full membership to LGBT persons, many feel that they cannot engage intimately in faith communities and, therefore, cannot engage fully in a spiritual journey. Homophobia and heterosexism stifle the spiritual growth of LGBT persons.

More Light Presbyterians' primary mission is to work for the full participation of LGBT people of faith in the life, ministry and witness of the PC(USA). We are firmly convinced that LGBT persons are equally made in the image of God, that they are an integral part of God's good creation, and that they are created for lives of love, joy, and intimacy in sexual relations, just as heterosexual persons are created. Whatever ethical standards the church lifts up regarding human sexuality should be the same for all persons. This is foundational to our own spiritual understanding of God, the Holy One, as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Jesus: Embodied Spirituality

Jesus' life and ministry is a witness to true embodied spirituality. Indeed, he was and is God incarnate -- God embodied. His intimate relationships with God and other people model the intimacy that we strive for in seeking that pre-birth relationship with God.

In his relationships with God and others, Jesus imitated God's compassion in confronting

injustice, enabled the liberation of the oppressed, awakened the lost to God's direct and immediate accessibility, and affirmed every person as a child of God. He did this by breaking down all barriers that were raised to keep certain persons outside God's beloved community. For Jesus, all are called and all are chosen to be part of the Beloved Community of Faith.

Jesus' life and ministry is a witness to true embodied spirituality. Indeed, he was and is God incarnate – God embodied.

As Jesus' ministry shows us, embodied spirituality helps us to integrate and connect who we are with how we live our lives. It is the responsibility of faithful believers to create open communities where all people, particularly LGBT

people, can develop intimate relationships in which to wrestle with these spiritual impasses, on the way to more full communion with God and one another.

Surely, the Holy Spirit is active within the lives of LGBT people – through life-giving breath and presence... through comfort and peace in the midst of the "impasse"... and through joining and developing communities of resistance and support.

It is the Spirit of God which sustains us on the journey out of isolation and despair and into relationship and hope.

References

Empereur, J. L. *Spiritual Direction and the Gay Person*. New York: Continuum, 1998.

McNeill, J. J. *Freedom, Glorious Freedom*. Cambridge: Beacon Press, 1996.

For more information, visit:
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