

the Seminarian

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE SEMINARIAN

The Gala Post-Thanksgiving Edition of the Seminarian was the most exciting to date. I loved the poetry, especially Disconnected Phone by Debbie Derby, and I found the two letters moving. Although I did not always agree with the writers' viewpoints, I could empathize with their pain.

Inclusive language is an issue that just will not go away. If we, as ministers, continue to use sexist language, we offend those who are sensitive to it and drive them out of our churches. On the other hand, if we force inclusive language down (and out of) the throats of our congregations, we turn off those who are inspired by traditions, especially traditional language. What shall we do? Take a vote? I am not convinced that the will of the majority is always the will of God. Certainly a part of ministry is sensitivity to others' needs. We simply cannot decide that those with whom we do not agree do not matter.

In like manner, we are confronted with the problem of Gay Christians. The Christian church has traditionally (but not always) condemned homosexuality as sinful. Are we to ignore this? The interpretation of scripture as condemning homosexuality is also very popular, but there are other interpretations. But above and beyond our own personal opinions about whether or not it is a sin to be gay, is the problem of what to do with the gay people in our churches. It is a sure bet that every single person here who will pastor a congregation will have gays in that congregation. Depending on your denominational dogma, the size of your congregation, the location of your church, or any number of other factors, the percentage of gay people in your church might range anywhere from 2% to 25% (and in extreme cases like my church, 95%). How will you minister to these people? Most, if not all, of them never chose to be gay, they just discovered it one day. A good many of them spent months or years agonizing over their sexuality and fervently praying for God to change it. Very many still agonize and pray for God to change them. How will we as ministers respond to that pain? Will we just dump another load of guilt on them and tell them that if they had enough faith, God would have changed them? Some ministers do just that.

Neither medical science, psychological science, nor theological science have come up with a way to make a gay person straight. Faith healers don't do it, witch doctors can't do it, indeed, nobody but God can change a person's sexual orientation. And apparently God doesn't want to, because there is yet to be a recorded, documented successful case. Follow up studies of all those who claim "conversion" invariably show that before too long they are once again thinking, feeling, and acting homosexually (except for those who commit suicide first). As ministers we are irresponsible if we overlook these facts.

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TO THE EDITOR
(cont. from Page 1)

If we continue to condemn homosexuality, the best gospel hope we can offer to gay people is, "Well, no one has managed it yet, but I'm sure if you pray hard enough, God will change your sexual orientation." I personally believe the gospel should offer more hope than that.

It is true that we cannot willy-nilly go tossing out traditions. Traditions serve us well in the realization of our faith. It is when they stop serving us and we start serving them that they need to be reexamined. Such reexamination is terribly painful because it threatens our very identity. But for that reason especially, it is absolutely necessary.

Arthur C. Runyan, II

IT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE

During the chapel service on Friday, November 14th, I became stirred up and angered when a prayer was offered up from one of the worshipers in which the word "sexist" was used. The entire point of the well-planned service was then lost for me with this prayer. My first reaction was, why? Since I had not noticed the sexist language in the hymn Rise Up O Men of God, I could not fathom the need for this reminder. I wondered, too, how many other people were disturbed as well.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend chapel this semester but I have heard that people have been leaving the service in protest over the use of non-inclusive language. That has bothered me. I can understand a little about the need to protest sexist language and I admire the determination of those who are attempting to change tradition when they feel so strongly. But, neither the pulpit nor the worship service should be used as a battleground. There are ways in which the would-be protesters can be heard short of ruining the spirit

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CHOICE cont.

of a service and drawing attention away from God. Why is it necessary to admonish the worship leader? What has happened to freedom of choice? How can any of us tell the rest of us how to express our relationship with God?

The use of inclusive language, in my opinion, is a matter of choice, and to badger people through prayer and walk-outs creates more anger and less willingness to support the cause. Good judgment in attempts to persuade is wisdom.

Henrietta Andrews

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE UCDEW

From November 9th to 12th I attended the United Church Board for World Missions annual meeting as the student representative from LTS. Eleven other students were there from the other UCC affiliate seminaries throughout the country. We presently comprise the 'Council of Theological Students', whose responsibility is to aid the Board in communicating its work to seminary students and to suggest ideas which may aid in promoting the importance of the church's foreign mission to seminary students.

Through the efforts of the senior members of the CTS, we presented a proposal to the Board for its consideration. This proposal attempts to achieve better communication between the UCDEW and the seminaries, in order to facilitate appearances of people working in the missions field at the various seminaries when their travels during their furloughs stateside take them into proximity of one of the schools. Along with 6 other concerns of the students, this proposal was adopted. Anyone interested in a further explanation of the proposal, please see me. I hope to conduct a community hour on the UCDEW this spring.

Bruce E. Dalious

DEAR EDITOR

I write this in response to Michael Weiser's letter, "Feedback". The Seminarian, I realize, is being used as a battlefield, but everyone should have the right to speak up. Weiser touches on three issues, but I touch on just one.

Weiser says that non-sexist language is against a 2,000 year old tradition. Well, there is a fact which shocks me when I realize it, that the Bible is written by man, so it, like man, is not perfect. (If you realized that I said "man wrote the Bible" it is because, as far as I know, men did write it, not women) So that tradition, which is mostly based on the Bible, is not necessarily correct.

I also think that "Beth Wordbeck and friends" are not trying to create a "mother-god", but a God that is neither he nor she. God is a verb, not a noun. God is not a human or a thing, but the spirit of love and joy. When we worship God, we worship the happiness and joy of living and rejoicing. There is suffering, but we must rejoice in it, too. For the hope and spirit that is there with us and rejoicing and happiness when it is over.

David Tillotson.

NORA'S SPEWS

Okay, stop the clock. I mean it. Whichever one of you out there who has been speeding the darn thing up, cut it out! You've already made this semester fly past, the least you can do is slow the pace some so that I may try to climb aboard. But no. On and on time rushes crowding every minute into a second and making each hour a blur. A frenzy. Christmas is coming the goose is getting fat, but how does he or she have the time to eat? Where does it all go? The time. I know that someday I'll have more than I can handle, so how about it. How about a small loan? On the other hand, forget it. I can't afford 18% interest.

D. Mason

I cringe at the thought
of that black, black day
When there's not care for the person
But only what I say
that my words are more important
than my intent
That my struggle is not felt
but left ... unbent
unshared
all alone.

BECAUSE
ISSUES or TRADITIONS
are more important
Than the person in our midst.

I cry inside
At the pain I bring
to another whose pain I see
At the struggle that all persons
feel
as they search out
their own humanity.

I wonder if I'm not fading away
Lost in the masses with nothing to
say
The mockery of words,
Is it all we've got
To express that deepest
innermost thought?

Words become callous and thoughtless
and cruel
When spewed forth as if urchins
gobbling up their gruel.

But WE are the people who walk
in darkness
Who have seen a great light.
O God - please guide us
And set us aright

Overcome our shadows,
our darkness,
our night.

Resurrect our beings,
our struggles,
our plight.

Nora Smith

IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

I am genuinely aware, Mike, that your letter comes out of your own sense of oppression. Being in pain indeed, means there is room for healing growth, redemption and liberation. I celebrate your speaking out, for when you and I are in touch with our pain, we can experience the depths of God, and the Holy Spirit moves in our lives. You are important, your ministry is important. There will be many in your church someday aware of the nuclear threat, oppression because of differences, and oppressed because they are blacks, women, Chicanos, gays, or straight white males. Whatever makes a person different and stand on the outside and not be included is oppressive. Will your church support the oppression or work to bring the Kingdom of God where all are one in Christ Jesus, where all are one in love?

Gail Mogel Tillotson

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to respond to a portion of the article entitled Feedback in the latest issue of the Seminarian. That article implied that one cannot be a Christian and be a homosexual. I must beg to differ. I am a Christian and my Christianity is based on a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. As a Christian I attempt to live my life in accordance with Christ's precepts to the best of my ability and knowledge. I am also a homosexual. I do not find the two to be incompatible. The focus of my life is Jesus Christ and I feel that no one has the right to call into question that relationship because of my sexual preference. As for my lifestyle, I find it sinful only insofar as it alienates me from God, self and/or neighbor. Far from being alienating, my sexuality currently is one of the major empowering forces in my life. Therefore I celebrate being a gay Christian.

Kit Sabas

A GAY CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY IN
ADVENT

Yes, Santa Clause there is a Virginia, and yes, members of the church there are Christians who are gay.

This time of the season for those in touch with the traditions of the church's liturgical year know that Advent is a preparation, a time of self examination. A preparation for the coming of Christ.

For myself, as a Christian who is gay, this preparation is filled with anticipation. I experience Advent as a time to remember the historical coming of Jesus the Christ and how that event speaks to me as a total, whole human being, including my sexuality. I sense the present coming of Christ in my daily life as I struggle to discover my existence within this Christ.- to love those who persecute me and to reach those who are afraid of the person I am. I also look toward the future coming of Christ with expectation. Here is my hope. I know, presently, within our sin that the struggle remains within my identity as a Gay Christian within the church.

Above all I experience a strong call to the Christian community during this Advent season. I speak for all caring, believing gay brothers and sisters when I ask, "Are you the Christ, or must I look to another?"

Barry Lace

EDITORIAL

I am very pleased with the caliber of articles which I have been receiving for publication. I would like to, however, encourage you the members of the community to begin to submit articles on more than just the two topics centered on in this week's issue. Deadline for all articles is Monday afternoon. I applaud everyone's efforts at venting their feelings here.

Don Mason

PROCLAMATION

I have seen the Resurrected Christ.

And She is radiant and glowing.

She walks among us everywhere. She can be found living among the poor; with people of color, with gays and lesbians, with women, with the handicapped; in prisons, in hospitals, on park benches, in public restrooms. She is one with all who know Christ Jesus--young and old, her brothers and her sisters.

She visits the homes of capitalists and communists. She's been at parties with members of the status quo and with revolutionaries. She drinks with people of all religions and no religion. And when she sits down to eat, she does not worry about the reputation of those she's eating with; and somehow she always has something to say.

She moves with the confidence of one who knows that her hour has come. She feels the strong contractions of labor as another child dies of hunger; as another woman is beaten and raped; as another soldier picks up another gun; as another youth picks up another needle; as persecution and alienation, as pain and suffering go on and on.

She is strong and she is passionate in her labor. And those of us who are called into the ministry of midwifery know that it is time for us to be alert: for she has opened wide enough that we can see the head. And it looks like freedom. It looks like dignity. It looks like love...and justice...and peace. And we know that soon the time will be ready for her to use her power and push.

At that push, every motion of our world will stop; and all attention will be focused upon her. And all will know that she is here. And the kingdom, the life, will be fully born.

Then every particle of the veil of darkness which brought in sin, surrounding creation with a film of idolatry and injustice, hatred and

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PROCLAMATION cont.

oppression, brokenness and separation, will come forth. And each particle of that darkness will take its rightful place in the order of creation--as a barren, powerless, disposable mass of waste--the afterbirth.

Listen to the pulse of time. Hear the breath of labor. Prepare yourself. For her labor has been long; and the moment of delivery is at hand.

Patti Carque

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE COMMITTEE
PRESENTS A
JOURNEY

OF
FEMALENESS - MALENESS
WITH
ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS
AND
ST. TERESA OF AVILA

DATE: January 24 and 28, 1981
TIME: 9:30 - 3:30
PLACE: Hafer Center
COST: free
WHO: Singles, Couples

Conducted by: Barry Lace
Patti Carque
Registration: Name, address,
telephone number to Beth
Hordbeck by Jan. 20, 1981

Child care provided: Inquire of
Beth Hordbeck.

A JOURNEY OF FEMALENESS-MALENESS

We live in a time of great questioning of the past and its traditions. We live in the present and wonder what we will discover here for the future. We all care about the church. Many issues, some with tension, are being thought about, explored and discussed. We see in the church issues which raise a lot of feelings: women in the church, inclusive language, gays in the church, power and authority, liberation theology, changing marriage or partner roles.

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FRANK A. PASQUONE STUDY

In the Bible there is poetry which doesn't square up with what we know factually about life, but it does give insight into living.

In Psalm 145, the poet, in speaking about God, writes, "You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing." It might be difficult to find many people in our day who say that all their desires have been fulfilled. Many times changed that much since this psalm was written?

Suppose a miracle occurred tonight so that everyone in America woke tomorrow and found he was in possession of everything he had longed for. Would tomorrow be such a day of thanksgiving as has never been known before? I suspect that by night-fall most people would be busy thinking about things they had failed to want earlier.

Obviously the man who wrote this psalm did not go around taking a Harris poll about who had everything he wanted. He was simply speaking for himself. He must have been a man who felt so well pleased with everything in his world that it seemed to him that others must feel the same.

Jesus presented this message in another way, "Do not be worried about the food and drink you need to stay alive, or about clothes. Look how the wild flowers grow... but I tell you that not even Solomon, as rich as he was, had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers."

Maybe it isn't possible in 1980 to simplify our lives in any such manner. We live in a time of vast material abundance compounded by severe social competition in which we struggle to out-class and to out-do other people. We live in a world in which advertising is entirely in control of our wants and desires... the world of advertising not only sells the product, they also sell us on our need for

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PASQUONE STUDY cont.

the product. And if we do not have a need, they will create one very quickly.

What about that poet long ago? Did he lead a storied and flat life with nothing to work for and no goals to achieve? He was probably supremely happy because he had learned to do things that he thought would please God. His life was dominated by a passion for the eternal... "Great is the Lord and highly to be praised. And His greatness is unlimited."

In the midst of our abundant possessions, our material and fashionably way of life, our social competition... let us pause this season to give thanks for the things that are not of this world and celebrate a real Thanksgiving every day... feeling grateful for what we do have.

William Benstermacher

WILLIAM BENSTERMACHER cont.

This journey attempts to address that corner stone of ourselves which has created us from the past and has much to do with where we will go in the future. This endeavor is an attempt to explore with two historical personages their journey in maleness and femaleness and relate that experience to our present day struggle with who we are as males and females.

This small retreat will acquaint persons with the pilgrimage of St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila. It will provide the opportunity to explore who we are as males and females. It will create an awareness of our similarities and differences. Through insights of John and Theresa we will be led to an integration of our own maleness and femaleness.

This journey will take place without cost, on January 24 and 25, 1981. This retreat is open to singles, pairs and others. Child care will be provided if needed.