



ROAD WORK

-WEEKLY NEWSLETTER-

**OLD ORCHARD BEACH UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH**

December 7, 2008

Volume 1, Issue 7

Church Should Lead Way for Gay Marriage

By Rev. Bill Gregory (Appeared in Portland Press Herald)

Gay marriage is ethical and the Christian Church should be leading the way to making it legal. Ethics is about drawing lines. One side is acceptable behavior, and the other side isn't.

But ethical living is also about remembering that the world as we see it isn't all the world. We all suffer from ethical near-sightedness. As William Sloane Coffin said, Jesus' gospel is about "having limited certainties and unlimited sympathies."

The issue of gay marriage is about where the ethical line is drawn. That we are debating gay marriage is progress.

The argument today isn't so much about the worth of people who find themselves gay, lesbian, transgendered or bisexual. As the Board of Deacons in a UCC church I served concluded after spending a year considering the request of a gay member for ordination, "Sexual orientation is not a moral issue. How we treat one another is." We ordained him.

A brief digression here – some churches don't yet believe in

ordaining women let alone gays. "The disciples were all men" is often given as the reason. The first disciples were also all Jewish. The line moves.

The line regarding the ethics of gay marriage moved for me 20 years ago. I had agreed to officiate at a partnering service for two men in my church. In the "pre-partnering" counseling it came out that they wanted to call it a marriage. I had to admit that the concept didn't come easily to me. I had married hundreds of couples, but they had all been mixed gender weddings.

"Why do you want to call it marriage?" I asked.

"Because we want to use the word society uses to describe the deepest, most faithful lifelong commitment two people can make," they answered. "We love each other that much."

This is not the slippery slope of immorality. It is just the opposite, another step on the upward climb toward a just society. I support secular weddings of same gender couples, but that isn't my main

point here. I'm arguing that churches should be leading the way, which they, by-and-large aren't, for gay marriage.

People married in the church make their promises and ask for God's help in keeping them, promises, of faithfulness through the ups and downs, joys and sorrows of life and relationship. The church should be supporting, encouraging, rooting for the people who want to keep these promises in committed relationships.

I agree with those deacons who approved the ordination of a gay member: Sexual orientation isn't a moral issue.

That being so, we in the churches should be ready and willing to guide couples of all sexual orientations into the ethical vows and promises of holy marriage.

One final point, championing gay marriage in the church doesn't weaken heterosexual marriage. It focuses on and affirms the ethic and spirit of sacred marriage for all who enter into it and in the process honors and affirms the worth of all marriages.

This Week:

Sunday:

~Breakfast—9:30 AM
~Worship & Sunday School—10 AM

Monday:

~Food Pantry—9 AM

Tuesday:

~Prayer Service—6 PM

Wednesday:

~Food Pantry—9 AM

Saturday:

~Gab 'n Grow—1 PM

Sunday:

~Breakfast—9:30 AM
~Worship & Sunday School—10 AM
~ Trustees Meeting—11:30

VERSE OF THE WEEK

"How blessed are those who love you! They will rejoice in your peace. Blessed are those who grieved over all your afflictions; for they will rejoice for you upon seeing all your glory, and they will be made glad for ever."

Tobit 13:14 (RVS)

Ask Not What Your Church Can Do For You...

Okay, I may not be John F. Kennedy and this may not have the same sentiment as his famous speech, but there is some work that needs to be done around the church. Several items have gone without much attention and I am hoping that we might be able to find a couple of people to help out.

• We need someone with access to a truck to remove the items from the back of the church. They can be taken to the Transfer Station.

- We are looking for someone that might be able to organize the "winterizing" of the sanctuary.
- We would like to have the ability to project words, video, pictures, etc. An LCD projector will cost us around \$3000. Anyone want to help raise the funds?
- General cleaning and discarding of items in the closets off from the hall needs to be done.

- It would be nice to get someone to act as our Building Coordinator in terms of acting as a liaison between the church and the people that use our facilities.
- Other ideas?

There is a lot that needs to be done and not much in the way of resources to do them. But the thing that we need most is energetic and committed people with ideas on how to help. Could that be you?

**OLD ORCHARD BEACH
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Along the road less traveled...

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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Christmas Challenge for Jesus' Followers

How does a follower of Jesus celebrate the birth of Christ amidst the onslaught of a cultural Christmas?

This time of year offers the greatest challenge for followers of Jesus to remain or become more faithful. As our culture kicks into Christmas high gear, Jesus followers are challenged to step back and slow it down.

Over the years an unease with Christmas has grown in me. As our society places greater and greater emphasis on buying, giving gifts and getting gifts, we've moved farther away from anything to do with the birth of Jesus. The pressure to support the economy, purchase more, do more seemingly escalates each year.

So this year I am trying to approach the cultural Christmas as an outside observer. My primary observation is that we approach Santa as a god. Listen to the language used around Santa. It is religious language. In November, Macy's Department Store took out a two page advertisement in the Boston Globe exhorting us to "believe" in Santa. Stories and movies about Santa hinge on people believing. Belief is even encouraged by adults. Santa has taken on mythical and mystical characteristics.

In a culture that centers around consumer-

ism Santa is a perfect god. What do you do with Santa? You ask for gifts. What does Santa do for us? Santa brings us things. If you do not believe Santa is a god, try saying that Santa is not real in church. Then step back and prepare for the backlash.

I do not begrudge our culture its holiday. I think there are many good things about it. But I do not wish to confuse the cultural celebration with the birth of Jesus.

I invite you to step back from Santa and our cultural Christmas. Ask yourself what is a suitable way to celebrate and remember the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior. Feel free to share your ideas. Find those who will join you.

Perhaps the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will help:

*Who will celebrate Christmas correctly?
Whoever finally lays down
all power, all honor,
all reputation, all vanity,
all arrogance, all individualism
beside the manger.*

Grace & peace,
Special from (DS) Rev. Mike Davis

Upcoming Events

Throughout December—Postage Free Christmas—Don't forget to check your "mailbox" each week to see if you have any Christmas cards.

December 7—2nd Sunday of Advent.
The Sunday of JOY.

December 7—Celebration by the Sea—This annual event sponsored by the OOB Chamber of Commerce is a community celebration complete with music, food, and a tree lighting ceremony. There will be more details to come.

Monday, December 8 at 7 PM—BRASS Meeting at JJ's Two—Can we be a 3-Season Town? Help start planning for 2009.

December 14—3rd Sunday of Advent.
The Sunday of HOPE.

December 14—Trustees Meeting directly after worship.

Friday, December 19 at 7:30 PM—The Love Came Down at Christmastime Tour—See Jars of Clay, Leeland, Sixpence None the Richer, and Sara Groves at The Coliseum in Lewiston.



December 21—4th Sunday of Advent.
The Sunday of PEACE.

Wednesday, December 24 at 7PM—Christmas Eve Service—Join us for a special time of worship and warmth as we look celebrate the birth of our Lord.

December 28—Christmas Sunday.

January 4, 2009—Epiphany Sunday.

January 2009—Citizen Police Academy—The OOB PD is accepting applications now for the second installment of this popular program.