

Presbyterian Promise News

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Contents

- ◆ The Woman
- ◆ Essentials – Priorities?
- ◆ Peace Unity Purity
 - ◆ Marriage?
- ◆ ...Two Women...
- ◆ Brief Reflections
 - ◆ Jack Rogers
 - ◆ Calendar

The Woman Who Made Lemonade – A remembrance and invitation

Once upon a time I moved to San Francisco. I had been living in Los Angeles, attending both a Methodist Church near my home in Santa Monica and also a Bible study group comprised mostly of gay men across town at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church. A job drew me north.

I had had a long and complicated history with San Francisco, and I knew a lot about it. Even so, things were different when I decided to make this move north to take a new job. Since last spending time in the city, I'd accepted that God made me a gay man, for which I was thankful. I came out. These developments made everything new and unfamiliar in some profound way. And while I'd always gone to one church or another when I spent my summer months in San Francisco, all that had changed too, because now I wasn't sure where I could go and be me. I had no desire to play around with churches that made me lie. So, I sought advice about where I could go to church.

While still in LA, Chris Glaser suggested that I find Janie Spahr, who was now serving the Metropolitan Community Church, just off Castro Street. I remember wandering through that rambling old wooden building till I found her office. What tricks memory and nostalgia play. It can't be true, but my mind's eye has Rev. Janie Spahr seated like the woman in Whistler's portrait of his mother, except that where Whistler's image is austere, mine is full of warmth and comfort. When I visited her, Janie had recently been released from her position with the Oakland Council of Presbyterian Churches. When they learned that she was a lesbian, they had to do something. The 1978 San Diego GA was not far in our past, so they set her free. MCC embraced her and her ministry, and here I was, looking for a church, and a Presbyterian one at that.

In short, Janie recommended Seventh Ave. Presbyterian Church, a little church in the Inner Sunset neighborhood. She was sending me back into the church that had sent her away, but Glenda Hope was there and it might be OK. In fact, it turned out to be transformational. That's another

story.

Now, this was 1980, and things of great moment were stretching out before us, though little did we know. Maybe two years after we met at MCC, Janie asked me to meet her for lunch at The Patio, where we ate outdoors with a fellow I didn't know. I just knew that they'd told him he had AIDS. We all shivered in cold Castro sunlight, and Janie and I listened a lot. Of course, Janie and I must have known at some level that we were dining with a dying man. And that was only the beginning. In the following months and years, how many times did Janie accompany men with AIDS through their illnesses – how many times was she with them as they, in her words, passed over? Too many, I can tell you. It seemed as if the bad news would never end. Just staying around took some endurance, which Janie had.

As we have been told, crisis contains a brew of needs, dangers, and opportunities. Janie tends, I would say, to recognize needs and opportunities more than danger. In 1982, in the early days of an emerging AIDS crisis, with a gay community unwelcome in much of the church and uncertain about its direction, Janie founded Ministry of Light (now Spectrum) in Marin County. Ministry of Light created a home and a ministry for people like the man we'd eaten with in the Castro. It remains today, 25 years later, a unique resource, a safe, accepting community for persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning; everyone is welcome to participate without fear of prejudice or discrimination.

Let's put these two images together – Janie at MCC directing to Seventh Ave. Pres, and Janie at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tiburon entering an empty office and starting a new thing. People who are called seem to find it hard to help themselves – something very deep

Member Churches

- Crossroads Presbyterian Church
Waterford CT
- First Presbyterian Church
Hartford CT
- First Presbyterian Church
New Haven CT
- First Presbyterian Church
Stamford CT
- Providence Presbyterian Church
Providence RI
- Wilton Presbyterian Church
Wilton CT

moves them to do ministry. Their work of accompaniment, compassion, and support is essential to their being, at least to their well-being. But for Janie, I speculate, it is not enough. For all of us who have felt cared for by Janie, whether she directed us to a friendly church or urged us at a crucial moment to remember who we are, we must acknowledge that for Janie this is not enough. There must also be institutional support and organizational integrity for ministry to be complete, and this must be the reason that Janie never has given up working within the Presbyterian Church, why she keeps crying out for the denomination to remember who and what it is. In 1990, when the church said no again and would not permit the Downtown United Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York to call Janie, she left Ministry of Light to found That All May Freely Serve, whose organizational values and culture bring together compassionate personal support with the organizational tools for prophetic witness.

Janie is about to retire. We are all a little in wonder at the idea. But TAMFS will go on, and one hopes that we might try to be as generous with our lives now as Janie has been with hers – that we might carry on the work with the same passion she’s shown, and with the same attention to each other that she has shown each of us.

Perhaps at the end here I should explain the title of this little remembrance, just in case it’s not clear. When someone hands you a lemon, one option is to make lemonade with it. You will have to have the strength to do a lot of squeezing, and you will need to turn your head occasionally and see God standing just off to the left with all the sugar you are going to need.

Janie’s year long national retirement tour will conclude with a visit to Southern New England, August 3-5. She will be preaching on Sunday, August 5, at First Presbyterian Church in Stamford. All are welcome. The Presbyterian Promise Board is busy making plans for our time with her – it will be a time of remembrance and fun and inspiration for our continuing work. More details will be forthcoming early this summer, but this is your first official invitation to be with us for this joyous time. There might even be lemonade.

Dick Hasbany

Essentials?

The issues which challenge and divide our denomination are fully expressed here in our presbytery. What do we believe and how does that lead us to act? What’s important and how do we determine that? Who can we trust? These two articles offer two progressive perspectives on where we find ourselves.

Priorities, Again

In Matthew 25, Jesus is asked “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” The answer makes it very clear what matters to Jesus: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Denominational structure and ordination policies are not in this list.

Again, at our May 5th meeting, this presbytery will be discussing and debating our perennial hot button issues – ordination standards, the essentials of the faith and the 2006 Authoritative Interpretation. The Presbyterian Church of Old Greenwich, along with five other sessions, have been questioning how PSNE handles these issues. In at least one form, their proposal would establish a very long list of essentials, something General Assemblies have repeatedly rejected because these lists necessarily constrain the freedom of conscience and are arbitrary and unworkable.

I suppose having this debate is okay, though I wonder if we have built the foundations needed to grow in mutual trust and love. We might well better spend the time getting to know each other and discovering how our faith guides our lives. But that’s not the tragedy.

The tragedy is what is not on our agenda. We will not be asking after those on the margins, the under-loved, those we see as not like us, the least members of Jesus’ family. They will, again, be pushed to the side by this debate about what we are to call essential. We will not be strategizing together to minister more faithfully with them, or encouraged to see ourselves as also living on the margins. We will not be building programs or designing ministries to be meaningfully present with the stranger in our community. I hope at least we will be praying about this and for ourselves.

This will be an important meeting in this presbytery’s life. Come prepared, having read the commissioner’s materials that will soon be on the PSNE web site. Encourage your church to send its full compliment of commissioners, and encourage them to arrive well informed. Come prepared to challenge us to remember Jesus and to keep the faith.

Ralph Jones

Peace Unity Purity:

Where Are We? (Lenten Reflections)

Lent is that time when Christians are called to reflect upon the meaning of God’s incredible gift to us – the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord.

As I look at my own calendar and note the events that have taken place within our Presbytery during this recently past Lenten period, I see signs of unrest, but I also see signs of hope.

On February 22nd, a small group of clergy and laity who call themselves “The PUP group” met to study scripture together. While theologically diverse, we have met for three years, during which time we have grown to love each other, to respect our diversity, and to share our experience of God’s love for us.

Plowshares Institute planned and executed a training session on February 24th for folks in our Presbytery who wish to facilitate a group study of Jack Rogers’ book, *Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality*. People from Hartford: First who participated in the training session conducted a study group there in March, and Stamford: First will start a class on April 23rd. Jack Rogers himself was a guest in our Presbytery and has given personal witness to his journey from “being a silent spectator to actively working for change.”

Presbytery Council has worked together to create a document, “Discerning the Way,” to help those churches who are struggling with their identity with the PC(USA). This document will be presented to the Presbytery for approval at the May Annual meeting. The document presents a process for open, supportive discernment steps to mutually seek God’s will. It is couched in a principle of our Presbyterian belief: “The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church ...is one for building up the body of Christ, not destroying it ...so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.”

I undertook officer training once again seeking to be installed on the Session of Stamford: First. During the examination, I found myself making the following Statement:

Even before it was added to the *Book of Order* in 1997, I have believed that G-6.0106b has silenced and hurt members of the church. It has been used exclusively to ban from ordination persons who are non-heterosexual and living lives in faithful committed relationships. I believe that this section of the Book of Order relies on the same kind of misinterpretation of Scripture that led in the past to racial segregation of the church and limitations on the inclusion of women. That misinterpretation arises when a text is lifted from its setting of time and culture and interpreted for today’s time and culture without benefit of the lens of Jesus Christ. I am aware that in my life I fall short of God’s perfection and of the new creation that I am called to be by my baptism and my faith. I give thanks that Christ has provided the church - this family of faith that helps me on my journey of faith to grow into the full stature of Christ.

On Sunday, April 1st, I met with the Confirmation/Commissioning class of Stamford: First,

sharing in the Statements of Faith of these young folks – I was humbled, knowing that at their age, I could not have made such well-thought statements.

So, during this Eastertide I remembered that every member of every church in our Presbytery has had to make the public statement, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior!” Having made that statement, Jesus Christ has given to us the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as the gift of his Church. Imperfect though the church is, I see God working in our midst.

Meg Nosenzo

Two Articles: Is it time to rethink Marriage?

Presbyterian clergy in our presbytery who minister to and with LGBT members are in a uniquely difficult position. Those in Massachusetts live in a state that recognizes same sex marriage, but are prohibited by our constitution from solemnizing such marriages. I can easily imagine Rhode Island clergy being asked by their members to perform these services in Massachusetts since the Rhode Island Attorney General has said that Rhode Island will recognize same sex marriages performed in other states. Already Connecticut recognizes civil unions, and hopefully will enact legislation permitting same sex marriage during this legislative session. How do we meet the needs and legitimate aspirations of our LGBT members to have their relationships, their marriages, blessed and recognized by the Church?

As a side note, I have been asked why we need to have same sex marriage in Connecticut since we already have civil unions which confer all the rights that marriages confer on opposite sex couples. My answer is that withholding the name marriage withholds the dignity and equality that is due to LGBT persons as children of God. Those who think that LGBT people should be satisfied with such second class status need to ask themselves: should we have told Rosa Parks she should be willing to sit in the back of the bus? After all, the back of the bus goes the same place the front does.

It is past time for the Presbyterian Church to rethink its position on marriage. The present definition of marriage as a civil contract between a woman and a man is not worthy of its position in *The Book of Order*. Marriage is more than a civil contract; we perform marriages in the Church not just to justify our witnessing a civil contract. We perform marriages to recognize God’s blessings on those couples whom God has brought together by divine providence, and who make a commitment to one another before God and their families and the Christian commu-

nity. We should be permitted – no we should be encouraged – to bless these relationships and to recognize them as legitimate marriages whether or not the law gives them that status in a particular state.

At the last General Assembly, the Church Orders committee considered three overtures seeking to reaffirm marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman, but no overtures to reconsider this definition. Is it not time to rethink this characterization? Is it not time to help the Church understand that there are many definitions and examples of marriage and loving relationships in the scripture, not a single pattern of family values?

As our constitution stands now we exclude LGBT people from ordination because they have sex outside of marriage, but we will not recognize the legitimacy of their relationships by allowing them to enter into marriages. How fair is that?

Am I a voice in the dark, or are there other people who feel the same way? Are there churches who would be willing to petition the presbytery to overture the GA to either change the constitution in regard to marriage, or to have a study group to reexamine our position? (I would personally favor the first alternative, but it would mean someone would need to do the research to find all the places where *The Book of Order* and *The Directory for Worship* would need to be revised.)

Rev. Terry Davis

Presiding at the Marriage of Two Women: Contrary to the Presbyterian Church Constitution or Not?

The Rev. Dr. Janet Edwards, Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA), a minister-member and former moderator of the Pittsburgh Presbytery and a member of More Light Presbyterians National Board of Directors, faces a second round of judicial charges for presiding at the wedding ceremony for Nancy McConn and Brenda Cole. The Pittsburgh Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission dismissed the first charges in November, 2006.

For more than thirty years, there has been no agreement on the place of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (“LGBT”) people in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After the June 28, 2005 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Celebrations announcement included that I had officiated at the wedding of Nancy McConn and Brenda Cole, I was not surprised when colleagues in Pittsburgh Presbytery initiated a disciplinary proceeding to determine whether my action was an offense against the Constitution of the PC(USA) or was part of the on-going process of discerning God’s will concerning the place of God’s LGBT children in the church. The complaint was later dropped for techni-

cal reasons, but I am certain that I was, by presiding at this ceremony, fulfilling the promises I made in my answers to the constitutional questions posed to me upon my ordination to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament on September 25, 1977.

Biblical and Theological Understanding

Scripture: The only passage in Scripture dedicated to rules for human marriage is “You shall not commit adultery” in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14). Fidelity is the central feature in marriage, which reflects the relationships of God with the chosen people of Israel, God with the Christian church, and God with all creation. Clearly, marriage between two men or two women can have all the qualities of marriage envisioned in Scripture, mirroring God’s relationship with us: fidelity, love, progeny, family, creativity, community, delight, companionship, mutual aid, etc.

The Book of Confessions: The *Book of Confessions* is a compendium of Christian exposition of Scripture meant to guide us in our relationship with God and with our neighbor. The only specific reference to homosexuality in this book is found in The Heidelberg Catechism, which also interprets the commandment against adultery as a rule to “live chaste and disciplined lives, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.” Chastity is clearly possible in holy wedlock between two men or two women.

Conclusion: I have engaged in serious, prayerful exploration of Scripture and the Confessions in order to reach my position on same-gender marriage. While my conclusion may not agree with others in the PC(USA), it deserves the mutual forbearance to be accorded when persons of character and principle differ. My position of conscience contributes to the process of discernment necessary to discover God’s will over time on this non-essential matter with respect to which there is no agreement.

Church Polity

What Is Essential and Non-essential to Reformed Faith and Polity: That God is sovereign over all is essential to Reformed faith; “reformed, always reforming” is essential to Reformed governance. The act of worship in marriage is not an essential of Reformed faith and polity: it is not a Sacrament. Historically, the Presbyterian tradition has recognized the place of the civil magistrate in the administration of marriage and there are now an increasing number of states which certify marriage of two men or two women. To humbly accept that God can bless the wedding of two women is to accept that God is sovereign over all. To preside at the wedding of two women is a living out of the commitment to being reformed, always reforming.

The Book of Order: In the *Directory for Worship* of the

Book of Order, the section on marriage does include the prepositional phrase “between a man and a woman.” However, the related noun phrases (“a gift God has given,” “a civil contract,” “a covenant,” “a lifelong commitment”) are more important than the prepositional, qualifying phrases, especially when we know that there are same-gender couples whose relationships reflect precisely these principal attributes of marriage. With regard to the general approach to Christian worship, the relevant section is this: “In ordering worship the church is to seek openness to the creativity of the Holy Spirit, who guides the church toward worship which is orderly yet spontaneous, consistent with God’s Word and open to the newness of God’s future.” Same-gender marriage, a new thing in our time, can be an inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The principles of the *Form of Government* are especially helpful in situations in which there continues after many years to be no agreement. It is exactly for such controversies that Reformed historical principles were written, viz.: “That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior’s rule, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’” We cannot know whether such marriages are “true” or not until we give them a chance to reveal their goodness.

Judicial Precedents: Understanding of the General Assembly Authoritative Interpretation of 1991 and the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission ruling in Benton (2000) must be instructed by two recent decisions. First, Van Kuiken (2004) was acquitted by the Synod of the Covenant PJC because “would not be sanctioned” and “would not be proper” do not suggest mandatory compliance. “Shall” and “is to be/are to be” were available and were not used. Second, the presbytery PJC in Spahr (2006) determined that the paragraph on marriage in the *Directory for Worship* is definitional, not directive. These judicial rulings offer exactly the space necessary in a time of disagreement for the Holy Spirit to blow where the Spirit wills so that the Truth may be tested according to its tendency to promote holiness.

Conclusion: When the church cannot agree on the place of LGBT people among us, the best way for a minister of Word and Sacrament to further the peace, unity and purity of the church is to engage in ministry which explores a non-essential, in this case marriage, by means of applying essentials of Reformed faith and polity and the principles of worship and governance found in the *Book of Order* as interpreted by the church. The *Book of Order* recognizes that, where there are “truths and forms with respect to which men [people] of good characters and principles may differ,” the practice should be the exercise of mutual forbearance. Thus, the response which this book calls for in the absence of agreement is a process of discernment and searching for God’s will rather than judicial proceed-

ings to punish those who disagree.

Serving and Caring, Showing the Love of Jesus

Specific Provisions Adhered to: At the time she engaged in this act of pastoral care, I was a member-at-large of Pittsburgh Presbytery due to “family responsibilities . . . presbytery recognizes as important.” (G-11.0405b). Through the work of the Taskforce on Ministry with Sexual Minorities of the presbytery, I had become “responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice” (G-6.0202b) within the GLBT community in Pittsburgh. Also, Nancy McConn is a life long member of the Dallas Presbyterian Church, Tridelpia, WV, and her way of life reflects all the responsibilities of ministry listed in Membership as Ministry (G-5.0102). Her request for the pastoral service of officiating at her wedding with Brenda Cole was a faithful effort to live “responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,” (G-5.0102h) and to work “in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.” (G-5.0102g). As I attest to the Committee on Ministry each year concerning my ministry in general, this pastoral service to Nancy McConn and Brenda Cole conformed to all of the Criteria for Ministry of Continuing Members listed in G-11.0403.

Energy, Intelligence, Imagination and Love: The Form of Government recognizes that there are a variety of forms for ministry, including the “primarily prophetic.” Today the Church is called to an awesome “new openness,” both “to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity.” It may be prophetic to claim that sexual orientation and gender identification fall under the diversity of “conditions” in human experience, rather than among the sins condemned by Scripture and tradition. And it may be prophetic to expand the institutional form of the marriage ritual to include marriage vows between two women. Such prophetic ministry complies with the large promise “to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love,” which was my intention.

Conclusion: The most basic purpose of the Church, its members and its ministers is “to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ.” Facing trial and death, Jesus said, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men [humankind] to myself” (John 12:32). We cannot embrace all and still develop rules to set apart those whom we might not want to be part of all. To engage in the ministry of Jesus we must be witnesses to the unqualified love of Jesus for all and bring the blessings of the church to those

who seek them.

Summary

I have been in the minority of the PC(USA) on the question of the nature of LGBT people since it was raised in 1978. While the historical principles of the church admit that the majority shall govern by necessity, the Preliminary Principles do not look to the majority, nor even to interpretation of Scripture, for God's truth to be revealed. We cannot know the fruits, their tendency toward holiness, of our LGBT brothers and sisters in the church as long as we resist knowing them as fully themselves. But now we know Nancy McConn and Brenda Cole, two women whom God has blessed in marriage. We can see clearly their contribution to the church and to the world, their tendency toward holiness.

Thank God, then, that the *Constitution* of the PC(USA) nowhere prohibits marriage of two men or two women. Simply put, what is not prohibited is allowed, so that the Spirit may blow where it will to do a new thing in God's chosen time and place. God, give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear Your Truth. Amen.

Rev. Janet McCune Edwards

Two Brief Reflections

Jack Rogers, the evangelical Presbyterian educator and former moderator of the General Assembly, made a one-day visit to Southern New England on March 15. The visit included lunch with presbyters in Old Saybrook and a public talk on his book, Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality, at First Presbyterian Church in New Haven. The book and Jack Rogers' personal testimony have been the source of great joy and, for some, great consternation. Below are two reflections.

Lunch with Jack Rogers

It was a small group that met at the Presbytery office on a gray Thursday in Lent. We gathered there to share lunch with each other and with Jack Rogers.

Our time together was brief. There was little in the way of a set agenda. It was a moment of privilege, an hour and a half carved out of busy schedules to listen to a man who has witnessed conflict in the church through thirty-four General Assemblies, who has seen the church from many different angles – a man whose love for the church is expressed and lived out in his desire for the healing of conflict, not the struggle of sister against sister or brother against brother.

Most of us who sat around the table started out with pens in hand and paper in front of us, eager to chronicle the event, and ready to record whatever we could – facts,

figures, references, wise words and memorable phrases. I soon gave up and put down my pen, not because there were no words of wisdom or wonderful insights – far from it. There was something about the moment that called us simply to be in the moment, to share this time with each other and with this scholar and church leader whose words and witness have had an impact on us all.

There were some in the room who had met Dr. Rogers, others who knew him well, and still others, like me, who had never met him. He talked easily and articulately to us about his experiences within our denomination and within the Christian church. He spoke of our oneness in Christ, not only with other Presbyterians, but with believers everywhere. He reminded us that, despite splits and schisms, the church has survived conflict and controversy in the past, and cautioned us that once current disputes are behind us, there will be new disagreements to face.

In a time when too many of our ecclesiastical relationships are characterized by frustration and mistrust, Dr. Rogers spoke that day with conviction and with gentleness. He did not defend a position; he demonstrated compassion and love for all who struggle to do what they believe is right – for all whom Christ holds dear.

It was an encounter with a group of colleagues and friends, with a gracious and generous man, and with the Holy Spirit. How does one take notes on that?

Rev. Anne Fuhrmeister

Jack Rogers in New Haven

Jack Rogers has spoken (again). Over 14,000 copies of his latest book, *Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* have been sold in its first year of publication. That's a whole lot more than his many other books have typically sold, he told us, which is certainly an indication of something – hopefully not just astute titling. But who's buying it and who's reading it, and what impact is it having? Myths don't die easily, minds aren't changed overnight and the church can be as resistant to – as it is capable of bringing – healing.

Published just over a year ago, perhaps it's too soon to judge any major effect this book may have on the church, the Presbyterian Church (USA) in particular, and its ongoing debates on LGBT folk and their places in it.

As for the evening of March 15, I suppose my expectations were too high. Although I had only begun reading the book, it had been highly recommended and came with an impressive assortment of comments on the back cover. Perhaps the most telling comment by Dr. Rogers was in response to a question about where he'd been speaking about the book. Although generous friends had enabled him to travel fairly extensively in the past year (no, you

"Most miracles are accompanied by a great deal of hard work." Archbishop Desmond Tutu

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didn't miss an appearance on Larry King or Oprah) there have been only two invitations to address relatively conservative/critical audiences. The great majority of events have been friendly receptions and, if similar to our gathering in New Haven, rather like "preaching to the choir". (Not that I didn't appreciate – greatly – the congregation's true hospitality.)

Perhaps this is why I'm not more enthusiastic: I've heard this before. As good as the book is – and it's excellent – as genuine and engaging its author – I've heard the message already: all the arguments, social and scientific, theological and spiritual, in more books, articles, sermons and testimonies than I can name anymore. And as the years – decades actually – accumulate, it begs the question, "how long?" How much longer, how many more books written and read, before the church more fully reflects the love of God?

But I can't blame Jack Rogers for the shortcomings of the church. He is, after all, only human and he candidly admits in the book, when asked to be part of a task force in his congregation to study the issue of homosexuality, he initially said no. Holding no personal interest for him, and the potential for trouble, he would rather have taken the easier path of avoidance. For the fact that he did not, and went on to research and write this book, I am grateful. As a well-known theologian, teacher, author and General Assembly Moderator, Dr. Rogers brings his impressive reputation to this subject. He has also been willing to make the substantial sacrifice not only of the time to produce and speak about the book and homosexuality, but to sacrifice relationships with those who have been unable to countenance his change of mind. As the history lessons of the book remind us, it has ever been those in the majority – traditionally white, privileged males – who have had to recognize and relinquish their exclusive hold on power in order to extend justice and the true peace of Christ to others.

How long? What's next is ever before us. What will we do – with this new book and its study guide, and all our myriad gifts and resources – to further our chosen work of reconciliation?

Dan Blackford

Calendar

April 23 – (continuing 4/30, 5/7, 5/14): Book Study of Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*. First Presbyterian Church, 1101 Bedford St, Stamford, CT. The study will be led by Meg Nosenzo. The series will consider the following questions: Is the full inclusion of persons who are GLBT a defining issue of church and society in these times? What does the Bible say about homosexuality and what doesn't the Bible say? Can the Church be healed? How? Time: Mondays, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the FPC Lounge. To learn more, please e-mail Meg Nosenzo at nosenzo@sbcglobal.net.

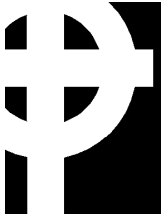
May 5 – Presbytery of Southern New England, called meeting, Cumberland, RI, Calvin Presbyterian Church.

June 9 – Board Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island. Providence Presbyterian Church, 500 Hope St.

June 16 – Providence Pride Festival. Dan Blackford will be coordinating our welcoming presence there. We will need volunteers. To learn more and to volunteer, please contact Dan at provpresri@netzero.net.

August 3-5 – Janie Spahr's Southern New England Retirement Celebration and Visit

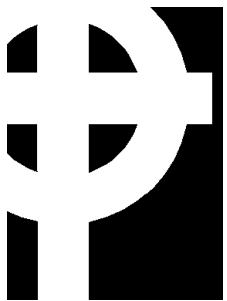
August 5 – Sunday, Rev. Spahr preaches at First Presbyterian Church, Stamford, 1101 Bedford St, Stamford. Other events during the weekend will be announced early in the summer.



Presbyterian Promise News

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Proclaiming God's promise of justice and love in Jesus Christ
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Presbytery of Southern New England
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(203) 762-5514

...working to extend the hospitality of Christ to all God's children....

<http://PresbyPromise.home.att.net>

Affiliations
That All May Freely Serve
More Light Presbyterians

Our ministry is one of reconciliation – introducing GLBT people and families to welcoming congregations even as we educate churches about what it means to be truly welcoming.