

Presbyterian Promise News

Issue Number 33
November 2012

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Writing to Yourself:

Reflections on “The Letter Q”

*Maria LaSala, Co-Pastor
First Presbyterian Church of New Haven*

I am in Provincetown, the Cape’s outermost point in more ways than imagined. Provincetown is where the Pilgrims first landed back in 1620, signed the Mayflower Compact, and then realized that the land wasn’t hospitable for farming. They picked up and moved to Plymouth.

The Portuguese community arrived, with their fishing boats and strong women and men. They still make up a significant part of the Provincetown community, at work in the wee hours of the morning, then cleaning their boats at dusk. The Portuguese bakery on Commercial Street beckons visitors with its fried dough calling out to all who pass.

Then came the artists ... and the writers and the poets. And then came the gay community, even before it had a name.

That’s why I love this place. This diversity of people and of story. The ease with which these communities live together, making a way sometimes when there is no way.

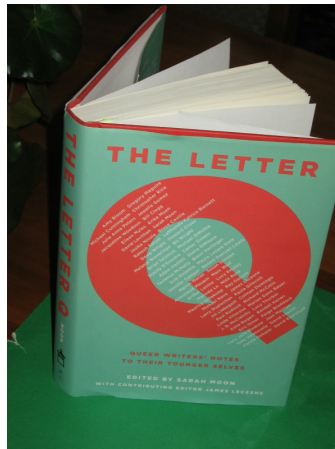
It’s a hot summer night and Bill Goettler and I head out to one of our favorite Provincetown spots. The Fine Arts Work Center on Pearl Street holds week long intensive writing and visual art classes all summer. My husband and partner Bill has taken many a workshop, there so we know this place well. As part of the Fine Arts Work Center’s program, the teaching faculty, well known writers and artists, offer talks each night. These are free and open to the public. We find ourselves there at least twice a week.

This night we expect to hear five writers – some of them well known to us – read from a book entitled, *The Q Letter: Queer Writer’s Notes to their Younger Selves*. [New York, 2012] The book contains letters from queer

writers, playwrights and artists, writing to their younger selves. Like the “It Gets Better,” movement, these letters offer words of hope to young queer women and men.

Sarah Moon, the editor of the book, introduces the evening. We hear her tell the packed auditorium that every person who was asked to contribute a letter quickly agreed. We learn that the actor James LeCesne offered his support to this project, as well as a letter. He is not there that night.

But Michael Cunningham is. And so is Amy Bloom. These are two of my favorite writers. Joining them on the stage are Melanie Braverman, a friend from Provincetown who is a poet; the children’s book author, Jacqueline Woodson, and Benoit Denizet-Lewis, once a writer for the *Boston Globe* and now a writer for the *New York Times Magazine*.



The stories are at once tragic and wonderful, beautiful, funny, and bitter sweet. All the writers reading that night are now successful. But they’ve lived through hard times, struggling to come to terms and be at peace with who they are. And they have come out (literally and figuratively) OK. The letters they write to their younger selves are full of hope.

Interestingly enough, only one of the letters refers to God, and that is a letter written by a young Jewish man to his young Jewish self. There are no references to the ways that religious institutions and their interpretations of scripture can both cause wounds and also heal the soul. It saddens me that none of the sixty-four contributors have a good thing to say about the church or synagogue’s positive role in their lives. We need to do better!

But, *The Letter Q* is a delightful read. Perhaps it is a time for an addition – *The Letter Q: Queer Writers’ Notes To Their Younger Selves About Faith*. I’d include myself in this edition because one definition of the word queer is “strange, odd.” Since I believe that the call from God is

both “wondrous and odd,” I guess that means that I am queer and that perhaps this notion of following a man whose life was to incarnate the wide welcome of God makes all of us just a bit queer.

Your Letter

Rev. LaSala has, in a sense, issued a challenge to us to write letters of counsel, understanding, and encouragement to our young, confused and fragile selves. Or maybe we were overconfident, know-it-all, and not-so-sensitive with lots of room to grow in faith and tolerance. Presbyterian Promise News would love to print such letters in the next newsletter. What would you like to say to your younger self about faith, sexuality, and the unfolding mysteries of living in a community of faith? If you would like to engage in this exercise in reflection and love, please send your letter to dick.hasbany@yahoo.com If you have questions, give Dick a call at (203) 208-0578.

The “T” –

Beginning a Journey of Discovery

When we use “LGBT” to refer to lesbians, /gay men, bisexuals, and transgender persons, we almost always refer primarily to lesbians and gay men. Bisexuals and transgender persons are given lip service but are usually shortchanged or ignored. This is unfortunate. The social and personal issues facing them are at least as complex as those facing lesbians and gay men. Their welcome in the church is as ambiguous and ambivalent as it is for gays and lesbians. It is time for Presbyterian Promise try to provide some information and insight into what it is like to be a transgender person in our faith community and beyond. In this issue of Presbyterian Promise News we learn about some of the stressful daily dilemmas and institutional inequalities faced by transgender persons, and then hear the story of courage and commitment of one transgender person who chose to live honestly in his beloved church. We will follow up these two articles with a consideration in the next newsletter of how we can begin to help the churches in this Presbytery develop a greater sensitivity to transgender persons and issues and commit to a more welcoming and safer space in our churches.

A Prologue: Bodies and the Body of Christ

Rev. Aaron Miller

We gather together lifting our hands in praise.
Passing the peace of Christ, we shake hands and sometimes embrace,
Our hands clasp in prayer.
Served and serving, our hands bring hope to one another in his Holy Name

God incarnate ... then and now
ALL made in the image of God.

As members of the body, we witness to a faith that surpasses human understanding

Bodies matter. They matter to God who creates them and calls them “Very Good.”

They matter to relationships within and outside the church.

And, it is through the body that we minister, witness, praise, worship, serve, heal, and love.

Transgender bodies matter, too, being spiritually embodied and yearning to be whole,

Seeking the face of God in self and in others,

Longing to feel welcome and belong in the church and to the body of Christ,

To fully love self, others, and God ... and be loved fully as well.

We are different – yet not so different.

Like you, we are more than bodies – spirit-filled and spirit-led.

Like you, we are discerning God’s will and plan for our lives.

Like you we are Children of God.

Like you, we are an ongoing creation who is loved deeply and unconditionally by God

Won’t you make room for us through the doors and at the table?

Where we share the body in remembrance of the One who poured out His life for us?

Christ is waiting there ... for us all.

A Day in the Life – Living Transgender

Rev. Aaron Miller

It is important to understand the day-to-day issues faced by transgender persons and to have a grasp of basic terminology to ensure there is a shared language when discussing trans issues and what is at stake. Historically, transgender people have experienced blatant discrimination and have been harmed (even murdered) for who we are. Laws do not provide full protection and sadly churches do not always provide a sanctuary for everyone. What is at stake is the ability to stay in real connection

with these children of God and the very real need to save lives and souls.

Progress has been made, yet there is clearly much work left to do. Transgender persons cannot change residence, make certain choices, serve in the military, or work freely. Protection against discrimination in the workplace, housing market, obtaining credit, or selecting the appropriate restroom does not exist in 34 states. A transgender person can be fired (or not hired), evicted (or denied housing/rental), be refused credit, and arrested for using the 'perceived' wrong restroom in these states. Connecticut is one progressive and equality-oriented state that has legally passed such protection, effective October 1, 2011.

The transgender person's decision to transition (with new standards of care, this decision is no longer in the hands of care providers) can cause serious emotional and financial distress. It is common that the decision to transition can cause spouse, family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to end or distance relationships with transgender persons. This can cause feelings of isolation and a deep, even profound, sense of loss. Currently, gender-confirming surgery is not covered by medical insurance; therefore, all cost associated with surgical treatment is 'out of pocket.' For many, this puts access to appropriate and necessary treatment and the possibility of wholeness and wellness out of reach. A sense of hopelessness and despair can result which can manifest in acts of cutting and self-harming.

Healthcare is a particular area of concern. Many transgender patients have experienced discrimination in this setting, including outright refusal to be treated by medical staff. Often medical names and sex designations are kept even after physical and legal transition to ensure healthcare coverage will be provided (i.e. hysterectomies are not covered for males, prostate exams not covered for females). This can create a sense of split or dual personas, forced to present as alternating identities to gain medical treatment.

Legal documentation that does not 'match' the person's physical presentation, as is common during and after physical or social transition, can cause issues at airports and with passports, along with carrying the potential to be denied the right to vote.

The repeal of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' (DADT) addresses sexual orientation and, as such, does not apply to transgender persons, unless lesbian or gay (based on sex designation, not gender). In fact, transgender persons may be considered medically unfit to serve based on Gender Identity Dysphoria (the medical term used to treat this condition) or if there has been genital surgery.

Terminology – Some Helpful Definitions

SEX = male and female and refers to biological differences; chromosomes, internal and external sex organs. This is **PHYSICAL**.

GENDER IDENTITY = The gender that a person knows themselves to be—how a person feels on the inside, which may or may not be consistent with how the person appears to others on the outside. Gender is an internal compass or knowing and it is **NOT PHYSICAL**.

GENDER EXPRESSION = the self-expression, performance, actions, behaviors, and dress of an individual as they relate to gender roles in a society (this may differ based on factors such as: ethnicity, race, culture, community, religion, state, country) and is often perceived as **"masculine" or "feminine."**

TRANSGENDER = is an umbrella term for people who do not fit into the strict binary gender categories of male/female, such as: transsexuals, cross-dressers, and those considered intersex (having ambiguous physical sexual characteristics and organs). Note: transvestites (now referred to as cross-dressers) and hermaphrodites (now intersex) are considered objectionable terms.

TRANSEXUALS = people whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth. Such persons may or may not opt to transition via medical treatment or socially through gender expression and may/may not live full time in the gender expression consistent with their identity.

Note: it is appropriate to consider this a medical condition and not view it as psychological or pathological; although it may become so if left untreated.

TRANSITION = the experience of shifting from living as a woman to living as a man or from living as a man to living as a woman. This may or may not include: hormone therapy, gender-confirming surgery or the legal changing of name and sex.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION = refers to whom one is sexually, emotionally, or romantically attracted. Transgender persons can be of any sexual orientation and this is a completely separate matter.

Transgender military personnel can be court martialed for cross-dressing. They have a duty to report any “change in medical status” – including taking hormones or having surgery and this may lead to discharge. Further and more spiritually troubling, transgender servicepersons may not want to speak openly with military chaplains as this is not bound by confidentiality. Such military personnel are encouraged to go outside the military for such spiritual or pastoral care.

Transgender Day of Remembrance is held globally each November 20 to memorialize those who have been murdered for being transgender. Though many go unreported and many remain unsolved, these murders are heinous in nature and reflect a suspension of human morality. **Educating and raising society’s legal, civil, moral, and ethical standards for transgender persons is necessary and clearly an imperative.**

Beyond human and civil rights violations and outright sanctioned discrimination at state and federal levels, the known suicide attempt rate among transgender persons is 41% as compared with 1.6% of the general population. [National Center for Transgender Equality: Injustice at every turn: A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (February 2011), visit website for more information and resources www.transequality.org] I believe there are many more transgender persons who consider suicide a solution to the pain of living against societal ‘norms,’ being shunned by loved ones, targeted with bullying and violence, and potentially having less opportunity to live a full and productive life. The hoped-for reward may be great ... but, the risk is great as well.

It is to the marginalized Christ’s love and compassion flowed through his ministry ... and the church is called to do likewise. Will we respond.

Rev. Aaron Miller received his Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School and is ordained clergy in the Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC). In addition to serving as the Interim Pastor at MCC Hartford, Aaron is also a chaplain at Yale New Haven Hospital, a member of Connecticut Clergy for Full Equality, a founder and leadership team member of the True Color’s Spiritual Institute. Aaron facilitates training around Gender Identity and Gender Expression in/outside the faith communities.



Ace’s Story: A Person Affirmed by Church

Ace Ricker

I am twenty-three years old and have been in the same church since I was just a baby. My journey from being baptized to my involvement now, (Superintendent

of Sunday school/Christian Education, Chairman and part of the church head council) has been a long and challenging one. If you saw me walk into my church today, you would see a warm smile of comfort, feelings of safety and acceptance across my face. Growing up I didn’t know there would be the safety that I have today. Why? Growing up, you wouldn’t see me as Ace Ricker, but as Amy, with long hair, and maybe wearing a dress if my mom really wanted me to wear one for special occasions. I grew up being born/viewed as a female. Everywhere I went I had to conceal who I truly was.

I first knew that I identified as male at age 11, but I had to hide who I was from the world, especially my church. I grew up being put down for the clothes I wore and being more “tomboy” than girls my age. I didn’t feel I could be as open and outgoing as I wished. I started really getting involved with my church at a young age, becoming a youth deacon and working at several different events. Sadly, unknown to many, I was facing battles within myself – could I be truthfully who I was and still be accepted by those in the church?

Yes, there were amazing times when I worked side by side with other members of my church, feeling camaraderie. But all the while I was feeling that I wasn’t being true to myself and was masking who I was. I felt a sense of emptiness/loneliness that I was not really a part of the church and just a piece that might be thrown out at the end of day if they knew.... I could only be open about surface things, like how my day was going and anything new happening in my life. I found myself in conflict, pulled back and forth in my mind, wondering whether, if I was honest about identifying as male, I would be welcomed the same way I had always been. Or, would I lose what I had come to know as a family, those I had come to care for and love so much through the years in my church. Would I need to take a lonely walk out those church doors – never to be accepted again.

After becoming a member of the church, I started distancing myself and stopped attending for almost a year. I began to make changes in my life to feel comfortable being who I am proud today to say I am. I was anxious about how people would react when they saw me with short hair, and in men’s clothing. Would I lose friends that I held so dear in my heart for so long just because I was expressing who I have always been? As month after month went by, I found myself missing my church family. Yet, I risked losing them forever the next time I stepped through those doors as Ace, my true self.

I started going back to my church after nearly a year, with shorter hair and men’s clothing, (I rarely wore many feminine things but you could clearly see a change). I still got warm smiles and the welcome I had received before,

but I knew I would need to tell my committee and council about the physical transition I had started that included testosterone. I did not want to just walk into church one day sporting a five-o-clock shadow. I started testosterone at the end of 2011 and told my committee and council a few months beforehand. That day will be forever instilled in my mind. We were having our annual Tuesday council meeting, discussing events for the coming holiday season and I remember the entire time shaking with nervousness and anxiety. At the end of the meeting they asked if anyone had anything they wanted to address before we closed the meeting, I choked on my words "I do, if I can."

Everyone turned and faced me at the table, making me feel even more nervous. I clenched my hands together under the table, trying to get the courage to say what I needed to say. "I have grown up in this church and happy to join fellow members as my church family every week, but there is something I need you all to know about changes happening in my life." I paused taking a big gulp over the knot that had been building in my throat. "I will be starting testosterone as I identify as male."

Those next few seconds of silence seemed like a lifetime before someone spoke. I tried to choke back tears. Then one of the members spoke. "You will always be part of this church family and we are proud of you for having the courage to tell us this. I think I can speak for the others in saying that we care and accept you for who you are." Soon one by one around the table others started to speak, saying they were happy for me and glad that I could be comfortable sharing this with them. By this time, tears were running down my face with joy and relief. It felt like the weight of the world was taken off my shoulders. Chains from the secret I had carried were dropped to the ground never to be picked up again.

Today I feel wholeness in my church. I am greeted with "Morning Ace, how are you" and a smile lights up my face, knowing that I am truly and completely accepted and welcomed in my church. I can be who I am and not hide anymore. Acceptance has allowed me to become a stronger and happier person spiritually and now I pass on that acceptance to others so they, too, won't feel alone.

Ace Ricker's church involvement includes working with Habitat for Humanity. His studies focus on Large Business Management, Human Health/Behaviors, and he serves as president of the U.N.I.T.Y (Gay straight Alliance) club..



To learn more about this year's International Transgender Day of Remembrance—a day dedicated to honoring trans people who have lost their lives to acts of violence over the past year, go to Standing on the Side of Love's web site:

<http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/blog/honor-the-transgender-day-of-remembrance-2/>

This year the Day of Remembrance will feature an online vigil.

Making Love Just

Ralph Jones

The times they are a changin'... again. The Presbyterian Church has also surely changed. LGBT and Questioning people may now be ordained and installed. We have a new *Form of Government*. Synods are in flux. The Synod of the Northeast is working on the second major restructuring in less than ten years. Here in Southern New England, our Presbyter is urging new visions of how we minister together. Economic realities and other forces are driving a reorganization and reduction of staffing. There are at least four of our thirty-three churches actively seeking dismissal from this denomination.

Our movement is itself in transition. Both More Light Presbyterians and That All May Freely Serve, affiliates of Presbyterian Promise, have new, transitional leadership. There are new leaders at the Covenant Network. Having "won," as our Executive Dana Lindsley said at our last annual meeting, if indeed we have, we must rethink both our priorities and our efforts.

This may mean seeking fresh understanding of what the battle has been about. In those rare moments when social transformation is rapid we need to be clear about what we are seeking. When the social, ethical and religious tectonic plates begin to move, change is sudden, few can retain their footing and the outcome may not resemble expectations.

In *Making Love Just: Sexual Ethics for Perplexing Times* (2012), Marvin Ellison reviews some of his familiar themes. Bringing them into a coherent whole, he challenges all of us at some or many points. He begins, "... a project in slow-down ethics, asking us to sit with perplexing, even discomfoting questions, listen to fresh and sometimes challenging perspectives ... [as] ... a necessary antidote, on the one hand, to fear of conflict, and, on the other, to making snap judgments or indulging in what might be called 'moral quickies.'" [p. 3]

There's an important caution here. Urgent as is revision of our Presbyterian *Directory for Worship's* language about marriage, we face that revision from a

new place. As Patrick Evans, interim MLP director, asks, "now that LGBTQ people are 'legal,' what does it mean to be in the denominational center?" Perhaps it means recognizing that the traditional institution of marriage is broken and has been for a long time. More is required than just allowing more people to get married. While divorce rate statistics are pretty elusive, they seem to range around 45% or higher. There are broad pressures and issues that need review.

Perhaps it is time to improve not just who may get married but the very nature of marriage itself. Ellison notes:

Catholic theologian Daniel Maguire speaks of a regrettable turn in the history of the church, beginning with the Constantinian establishment, toward "pelvic theology" and an obsession with sexual control. In the third and fourth centuries CE, as the church shifted from prophetic to establishment status, ... the church hierarchy asserted power by controlling the sexual behavior of believers....

This dominant imperial approach to Christian sexual morals is shaped by three assumptions. First, moral truth is located in the past, in a tradition defined by patriarchal authority. Second, theological discourse about sexuality proceeds in a highly abstract, ahistorical, and largely deductive manner. Third, there is a deep suspicion of "advocates" speaking out of their particular moral struggles. [p. 5]

Sometimes the best way to address a problem is to see that it is bigger. Consider that Allen Wheelis has elaborated a theoretical understanding of the difference between institutional process and instrumental process. These two processes, roughly the creation of myths and the use of tools, produce our culture and Wheelis is concerned with the power of our culture to shape us.

The instrumental process designates those activities dominated by an attitude which, if put in words, would be somewhat as follows: "Let us first examine the facts, and draw only such conclusions as the facts warrant. If no conclusion is warranted but some conclusion is necessary—since life does not wait on certainty—then let us hold the conclusion tentative and revise it as new evidence is gathered."

The institutional process designates all those activities which are dominated by the quest for certainty. ... Solomon put it succinctly: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Religion conveys the essence, but the institutional process is of greater scope. Religion was a relatively late development in the institutional process, as scientific method was a relatively late development in the instrumental process. Far older are animism and the alleged omnipotence of thought, which is magic. With these go rites, taboos, mores, and ceremonial compulsions. All of these belong to the institutional process and are part of a continuum which includes kingship, status, and the coercive power systems of such modern institutions as private property and the sovereign state. The authority of the institutional process is arbitrary; the final appeal is to force.

The instrumental process is bound to reality. Facts are facts, it seems to say.

The institutional process is bound to human desire and fear. Wishing will make it so, it seems to say. ... Honor and prestige accrue to the institutional process; for the security it creates, though illusory, is unlimited. [Allen Wheelis, *The Quest for Identity*, 1958, pp. 72-75]

Yes, 1958 is the copyright. In this short space, Wheelis has laid out the basis for many of the struggles of our denomination and of the several forms of liberation theology (he develops these ideas in the remainder of the book, though this is not his central theme). The relevance to our particular struggle today is twofold. First, we can hold fast the perspective that we are part of a process that has been shaping human history almost from the beginning, and second, we can gain insight into the powerful attraction of the illusory security we struggle with.

As change is the essence of the instrumental process, so standing pat is the essence of the institutional process. Institutions change only under duress, only under the impact, direct or remote, of the instrumental process. [Wheelis, p. 80]

The instrumental impetus to change and the institutional insistence on rooted permanence constitute the dialectic of civilization. [Wheelis, p. 81-2]

Change in social character is to be related to change in the conditions of life; and change in the conditions of life is to be traced to the instrumental process.

The immediate causes of the characterological change are to be found in the secondary effects of technological change: the loss of the eternal verities and the fixed order, the weakening of traditions and institutions, the shifting values, the altered patterns of personal relationships.

Yet the belief that social character was formerly fixed and stable contains at least two elements of truth. The first of these is that character is now changing faster than it did in the past, a difference in rate that is easily mistaken for a difference in state. The second is that, during most of human history, change in the character of a people has proceeded so slowly as to be imperceptible during its occurrence. [Wheelis, pp. 83-84]

Perhaps it is time for even more of the church to start listening carefully to "those speaking out of their particular moral struggles" as Ellison puts it. Harm is being done by silence.

Making a compelling case that harm is being done and that the appropriate response is sexual justice requires us to "change the subject" in two distinctive ways. First, we need to change *what* is being talked about by shifting the topic of conversation away from the misplaced preoccupation with homosexuality and sexual difference and focusing instead on race, gender, sexual, and economic oppression and the pervasive patterns of sexualized violence in the society. Second, we need to change the *who* the subject is that is speaking and listened to. What is shaking the foundations is a global power shift as women and LBGT persons of all colors and classes claim the right to be the subjects of their own lives and participants in the renewal of their spiritual traditions. Morally speaking, constructive critique and alternating visions

emerge only as persons are no longer silenced or positioned as objects of other people's discourse (as if aliens or merely abstractions)... When the participants at the table change, so does the conversation. [Ellison, pp. 8-9]

Through much of the book, Ellison tries to listen to the voices and questions of the new participants at the table.

...by and large, faith communities have failed to grasp the scope and depth of the cultural crisis in sexuality. In this culture, the kind of sex scripted as normative is racist patriarchal sex. Eroticism is often about having someone under your control or feeling safe by being placed under another's power. Power as control is erotically charged. [Ellison, pp. 15-16]

To be candid, the impetus for reforming Christian sexual ethics has come not from inside the tradition, but from two outside sources: first, from the social and natural sciences with their fresh insights about human diversity and psycho-sexual development and, second, from social justice movements and the moral wisdom emerging especially from the feminist, LBGTQ, and anti-racist movements, but also the disability rights movement, the anti-violence movement among survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, and the ecological movement with its nondualistic framework and holistic appreciation of relational systems. [Ellison, p. 18]

Remarkably in parallel with Wheelis's model, Ellison finds us caught between the institutional, patriarchal, behavior enforcing, traditional framework and the personed, embodied lives that inform instrumental progressive understandings such as that in the 1991 Presbyterian study, "Keeping Body and Soul Together," which introduced us to "justice-love." These positions are not compatible and the attempt to reconcile them leaves people with unresolved tensions. Among the challenging questions and issues Ellison raises:

- Can the meaning of fidelity shift depending on circumstances?
- When is breaking a rule the right thing to do?
- What happens when we reconsider our definitions?
- Is Same-Sex Marriage a "Must" or a "Bust"?
- Why marriage equality is a mixed blessing.

The prevailing Christian code – celibacy for singles, sex only in marriage – is no longer adequate, if it ever was, for anyone, gay and non-gay alike.... First, this code is fear based, punitive, disrespectful of human personhood and aimed at control rather than empowerment of persons. Second, the Christian marriage ethic is not sufficiently discerning of the varieties of responsible sexuality ... Third, it is not sufficiently discriminating in naming ethical violations even within a marriage and has been far to silent about naming sexual coercion and domestic abuse. [Ellison, p. 70]

What is undermining family life for the vast majority in the United States and elsewhere is not same-sex love or same-sex partnerships, not even marriage equality, but rather advanced capitalism's erosion of social and economic security and the destruction of communities, as well as the earth, for the purpose of maximizing wealth for a few. [Ellison, p.73]

- What do we have to learn from, as well as teach, young people about sex?
- How far can we draw outside the lines and still be in the picture?

We will all be challenged at one or many points by Ellison's thinking. The book is worth reading. More to the point, the transformation of culture is a necessary endeavor for people of faith.

TAMFS New Help and Referral Line 1-877-TAMFS64

Rev. Ray Bagnuolo has announced that That All May Freely Serve now has a 24/7 help line intended "...to make sure that when anyone, anywhere who is LGBT/Q in the PC(USA) needs help — that there is always someone on the other end of the line: to be there; to listen; ready to help; and to make sure they know God loves them and they are not alone."

Rev. Bagnuolo will be joining us with more information about this important pastoral initiative and TAMFS's new direction at our Presbyterian Promise annual meeting at Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Hartford on January 13. Please mark your calendar and plan to be there.

Calendar

Christmas Celebration

The annual Presbyterian Promise Christmas Celebration will be December 9 at John Merz and Bill Starkowski's – 49 Musket Trail, Simsbury – 3 PM.



Appetizer or beverage welcome but not required. See you there. Contact Pat Wales at patwales@att.net

Annual Meeting

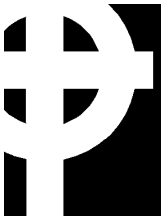
Sunday, January 13, 2013 at 3– 5 PM

Westminster Presbyterian Church

West Hartford CT

With Rev. Ray Bagnolo

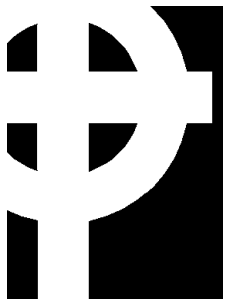
Contact Dick Hasbany at dick_hasbany@yahoo.com



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Proclaiming God's promise of justice and love in Jesus Christ
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Presbytery of Southern New England
Into a community of mutual support for the empowerment of
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons,
And for outreach, education and Christian evangelism.

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Affiliations
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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.