



Contact

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Letters to the Editor

Sanctifying Gay Marriages

I may be in the minority, but I am seeing Unity ministries and AUCI veering toward political stances and advocacy of a communal decision on a number of societal issues. This is not the Unity that I have grown to cherish. Charles Fillmore stressed the importance of individual responsibility and the power of discernment in order to express God's will in our actions, yet we seem to be leaning now to collective decisions, imposed by majority thought.

Witness the article on the appropriateness of the cross. That symbol has many meanings; why can't we just accept that and allow each congregation to choose its own symbols? It can remind some of the death of Jesus. It can also remind others of the eternal life and overcoming of Jesus, particularly where it is portrayed as "empty." It is not easy to create a recognizable symbol of an "empty tomb" which might be more appropriate as representing the Resurrection. The fish and dove may have drawbacks, too. Even Unity wings might conjure up negative images if the full history of Chaldean and Egyptian concepts were known.

Then comes Jim Gaither's Perspective piece. While I respect his view of what he feels led to do or not do in a ministerial role, why does AUCI need to take any position? He gives it away in the last sentence in the second paragraph, where he says it would be to effect political action. If anything that is found in nature is "natural," then I suppose you can make a case for polygamy, "open" marriage, and even child marriage. Jesus did not implicitly or explicitly condemn these arrangements, but I'll bet he observed them in his day.

But Jim would impose his view that "the fundamental nature of marriage as an ideal is a committed, loving, and sexually exclusive relationship between two people." While not universal to all religions, I agree that this version is fairly commonly accepted as a Christian ideal but some can argue from their belief system that it should be drawn more restrictively or more loosely. I believe it has come about more by tradition than by anything biblically attributed to Jesus, and currently that tradition is under pressure to change. How can the total of AUCI make a claim to know definitively that some relationships are in the spirit of inclusion and others are to be excluded? Again, why should this not be left to individuals to discern and act on in their own sphere, if they so choose?

What is next on this horizon? Will AUCI take a stand on whether we should banish SUVs from the church parking lot? Will it endorse a candidate as being "most like Unity?" Will it mandate offering sanctuary to illegal aliens? What are we saying about doctrine and dogma these days? It seems some have just transferred them to politics rather than theology.

Roger Lachele, LUT

Have something to say about what you have read in *Contact*? Send your comments to dom@unity.org.

Thank you for publishing Rev. James Gaither's, "Sanctifying Gay Marriages" in the Oct./Nov. 2007 issue of Contact. My partner and I have been in a committed, monogamous relationship for two years, and attend Unity because of its inclusiveness. We have recently been discussing marriage with our minister. We know that "what is good about marriage for heterosexuals is also good for homosexuals," even if our state and federal governments do not.

The arguments that Rev. Gaither makes for why gay marriage should be officially sanctioned based upon the teachings of Jesus Christ are compelling and are far more sound than the traditional moral arguments against gay marriage. My partner is currently enrolled in college sociology course where the topic of gay marriage arose as a discussion topic; recently, he was bombarded with class mates narrow Christian theology against the proposal. (For a study of the inconsistency with which Christianity has treated homosexuality, and gay marriage in particular, one would do well to read John Boswell's texts, Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality, and Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe.) The same arguments against sanctioning gay marriage abound in legislative bodies and appellate courts around the United States. Many states, including Florida, have either already enacted state constitutional bans on gay marriage, or are considering doing so in 2008.

As Unity seeks to grow by sharing its theology of connectedness and inclusiveness, and by reaching out more to our communities, can there be any basis for failing to officially recognize gay marriages which is not hypocritical? Our church currently has several other lesbian and gay couples who attend and bring their children, but who are reluctant to acknowledge their relationships due to fear of rejection. I know many gays who have been condemned or excommunicated by other denominations. How much can we Unitics aid in shifting the consciousness in our communities if the AUC, which does not cater primarily to gays, officially recognizes gay marriage

instead of merely allowing individual ministers to decide whether to perform ceremonies? If we mean what we teach about inclusiveness, we should demonstrate it. There may come a day when having official recognition of our marriages by a religious organization persuades our government to legally honor our commitments, thereby raising our national consciousness to that already achieved by much of the industrialized world. If you want Unity in the Community, step forth and act!

Zac Addison, JD

Vice President, Board of Trustees,
Unity Church of Jacksonville

I am writing in response to your article, "Sanctifying Gay Marriages."

I believe homosexuals should not be given a spiritual marriage but a civil union giving them the same rights as married couples in inheritance, spousal rights for medical conditions and any other civil benefits.

Jesus demonstrated how we should think and act. He dwelt on the positive which tells us that is that is what He stands for. Any other behavior is against the teaching of Jesus because it is negative.

Paul telling the slaves to submit to their masters saved them from more beatings. Wives being submissive to their husbands was the culture of that time, but he also told the men to be submissive to Jesus Christ and to love and care for their wives as Jesus loved them. Paul also taught that it was better for spiritual growth to be celibate like him, but if a person could not control their physical nature, it was better to marry than to burn in hell.

Comments by Jesus concerning eunuchs were that some were born eunuchs, some were made eunuchs by man (castration) and some were eunuchs by means of spiritual growth. (Spiritual growth lifts the physical body above the need for sexual activity.) Jesus taught unconditional love for ourselves so we could love others as we love ourselves. I John 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the body, and the covetousness of the eyes, and the pride of material things, does not come from the Father, but of the world." Let's don't mix the lusts of man with any spiritual teaching.

It seems to me from my experiences that Unity will let almost anyone become a minister without any requirement for spiritual understanding and growth. There are some Unity ministers out in the field that do not know enough about the Bible to make an accurate quote, they do not teach or preach from the Bible and most guests speakers have no connection with Unity or the Bible.

I believe that homosexuals in this lifetime did not choose to be homosexuals. This came from a previous life experience. Unity would serve them better by offering past-life regression to find the real cause of their homosexuality rather than accepting it as an act of God. God only gave us one law: the law of cause and effect. Then He gave us free will to create our own lives.

Respectfully,

Rev. Norman L Conaway

Bible teacher for over 60 years.

I so agree with Jim Gaither's article in the October/November Contact Magazine on Sanctifying Gay Marriages.

It would be heartening indeed to see the Association of Unity Churches International officially accept gay marriages as spiritually sanctified relationships.

We do need to have the moral courage to take a stand for our friends and members of the Unity family who are oppressed merely for being part of a biological minority.

Barbara Jung

I wholeheartedly support Jim Gaither's proposal in the Oct/Nov 2007 Contact magazine. Please forward this to anyone else working on this idea. I plan to have my board read the article so that I can gauge their support. I believe it will be 100 %.

Unity's lack of leadership during the day's of civil rights is a hurtful story in our history. This would give our AUC a story of courageous leadership and integrity.

I copied Jim Gaither's church on this as I do not have his e-mail address. I also copied Mary Newman as she is chairing the social action team.

Thanks for all you do,

Barbara Clevenger

Minister, Church of Today West

Thank you so much for the articles by James Gaither on sanctifying gay marriage. As a Unity truth student, I totally support his position. If we are to truly practice the principles of Unity, gay people should have all the honor, respect and privileges given to everyone else in our society, because in truth we are all one - and our teachings are about love, acceptance, tolerance, ~~understanding and accepting of all (just as Jesus taught)~~. Who says the sanctity of marriage is only for a man and woman....that thinking is just hypocritical. I pray that our Unity movement will take a positive stand on this issue, and sanctifying marriage for all people - not just the majority. I would be very proud of our Unity organization if it took such a bold and courageous stand.

Sincerely, **Sharon Mesker**

October/November Issue

Just received and read the Contact. I do wonder how people would react to Unity School having a retreat that, "Honored the White Experience in Religion? Did anyone protest their having a retreat for Blacks or Hispanics? Gaither, conveniently forgot to mention Matthew 15:21, though it turns out well in the end I doubt most ministers could get away with that today. Anyway, the articles made me think for once and that's not such a bad thing.

Pete Rhea, Unity minister

I just finished reading my October edition of "Contact" magazine, themed Inclusiveness and Diversity and aah it is right on time. Your last two issues were interesting readings and were very thought provoking. Your October issue reminded me of a session I had in one of classes last winter about what we valued in a church setting. We were given a list of over 50 core values, inclusiveness and diversity were among them. We each had to choose five or so values from the list, I chose inclusiveness and diversity as two of my five. I was very surprised when only two of us from the group of six or seven I was in (both minorities) chose to include inclusive and diversity as core values we wanted to see in a church setting. I challenged the group members as to why they did not think inclusiveness and diversity were not important. I learned that some didn't know the difference between the two. Getting nowhere with them, at the end of our discussion I said I could not lead or be a part of any congregation that did not embrace both. Each three groups had to compile their individual lists into a group list and report back to the entire class which core values best represented their group. Not only was inclusiveness and diversity not important in the group I was in but the other two groups as well. I felt awkward and out of place, after all I am a minority. It angered me at first, which soon turned to dismay and hurt. I thought, how can Unity stand for oneness and Truth students not hold diversity and inclusiveness as core values. I am sure it was not meant to be hurtful

but it just made me realize where some people's consciousness really is. Thank you for bringing this subject to the forefront of our consciousness, it needed to be brought to the attention of every Unity minister and Unity follower regardless of their ethnicity. It is time, it is time!

Zelda Mcrae

I wanted to tell you I appreciated your take on diversity in Contact. I'm not sure why we can't just think of people as people. It seems that by trying to shout from the rooftops that we are everything to everyone, we are becoming nothing to nobody, a great way to maintain our minority movement status. It could be my imagination, but it seems that Unity has a good aim, but it's often pointed at its own foot.

Doug Botorff

Symbology of the Cross

(August/September 2007)

It may be too late to respond but after reading the Letters to the Editor felt led to do so.

Over the years I have seen subtle changes in the Unity teachings. Churches are trying to conform to what the congregations want instead of simply giving the message as given to us by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. I was taught-as I am sure most of you were-that the cross signifies the crossing out of the ego. I wear one every day to remind me of this. I will not wear one with a figure symbolizing agony, but proudly display my continued quest for spirit-for it is written. "He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30

I have taught the true meaning of the cross for many years and pray others will continue to teach the Truth as it was given to us by the founders of our movement.

Joanne M. Dator, Unity minister