



Dear Friends,

Homophobia is not just fear of a gay person. It is this overarching, irrational fear that accepting gay people will somehow lead to societal collapse. Seriously, fundamentalists talk about homosexuality in apocalyptic terms. Remember Rev. Jerry Falwell famously saying that Hurricane Katrina which devastated New Orleans was God's wrath because Ellen DeGeneres is from there? God apparently punished poor black people because society accepted the "sin" of a rich white woman. It's crazy.

Homosexuality is just not that big a deal.

But for some Christians, there is something about homosexuality that transcends two people being in love and triggers irrational fear. If you think about it, homosexuality does not affect anyone else, just those two people. Who cares who holds hands with whom? Who cares who falls in love with whom? Who cares what consenting adults do in their bedroom? How does any of this affect you? Why is this anyone's business? This is particularly irrational, coming from many of the same people who trumpet individual freedom.

They say it is about "Biblical marriage," but it is not. You would have to unload the whole "Yeah, but" truck to get from the polygamy of Genesis 30 to one man and one woman. Who recommends killing brides who are not virgins? (Deuteronomy 22) Who inherits a wife with a field, like livestock? (Ruth 4) Who still believes that wives are supposed to be submissive to their husbands? (Ephesians 5) Who

believes women cannot file for divorce? (1 Corinthians 7) Who believes a man cannot file for divorce unless the wife commits adultery? (Matthew 5) Who believes you cannot marry foreigners? (Ezra 9) Biblical marriage is not for the faint of heart.

They say it is about accepting immorality, but it is not. According to Mark 7, it is the things that come out of a person that defile them, including adultery, fornication, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. In fact, for many of those who condemn homosexuality, this list of vices is acceptable for the person they want to lead their "Christian Nation." It seems immorality is declared on a sliding scale.

Jesus says the greatest of all these commandments is to love God and love one another. (Matthew 22) Jesus calls hypocrites those who neglect: the "weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith." (Matthew 23) Jesus also says, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged...why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7) Jesus is consistently pulling us away from black-and-white, self-righteous, legalistic religion.

But here we are in 2024. An entire anti-gay denomination has formed out of the irrational fear that accepting homosexuality will destroy the church. Twenty-five percent of the United Methodist Churches in the US have disaffiliated because they fear that homosexuality presents an existential threat to them. Think about the power of this fear. It has broken generations of church connections and ministry.

So why is homosexuality so powerful? It is not. It is the phobia that has all the power. A phobia, by definition, is an irrational fear. And fear is the opposite of faith. The Bible tells us hundreds of times, "Be not afraid." Maybe God knows that fear is the greatest weakness in humans. Fear leads to racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, genocide, you name it; fear is at the root of all the worst impulses in humans.

Now that General Conference has said "No" to the fear of LGBTQ persons, many individuals and churches will be talking again about what to do. A friend once reminded me, that you cannot reason someone out of a position that they did not reason themselves into. Perhaps the most powerful words we can say to those

who fear a homosexual apocalypse in their local church are simply: Be not afraid. Be not afraid. Be not afraid. Until we address the fear, love and compassion and acceptance will remain out of reach.

In the name of Jesus: Be not afraid.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Mark Holland
Executive Director, Mainstream UMC

www.MainstreamUMC.com

- Please support Mainstream UMC: www.MainstreamUMC.com/Donate
- Please forward this email to 5 friends and encourage them to sign up: www.MainstreamUMC.com/Sign-Up
- Like us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/MainstreamUMC

If the web links above do not work, please copy and paste them directly into your browser. If you cannot see the header and footer, please download pictures.

Mainstream UMC is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization.