



Embracing Those Excluded on the Basis of Sexual Orientation

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Year C

OVERVIEW

Focus Text: Luke 4:21-30

Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.

Pastoral Reflection by Stan Kimer, Lay Leader, St. John's Metropolitan Community Church, Raleigh

The discussion within many of our churches has really intensified in regard to lesbian and gay people, especially as gay people in general and gay religious leaders specifically have become more visible. What are some of the possible responses churches today can make to the issue of homosexuality? Let me mention three common approaches taken by mainstream Christian congregations.

Personal Vignette by Rev. Mahan Siler, former pastor, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh

As a pastor in Raleigh, I was faced with a similar dilemma: will I "come out of the closet," declaring openly a welcome to GLBT persons who have felt unwelcome, if not condemned, by the church? My decision crystallized on August 12, 1987 at a public hearing on violence against lesbians and gay men.

Key Fact

A statewide poll in 2005 of 25,000 North Carolinians, conducted by the Common Sense Foundation, found that:

- 73 percent of respondents agreed that all North Carolinians should have equal rights under the law regardless of sexual orientation.
- 57 percent stated that it is not fair for an employer to discriminate against an employee based solely on his or her sexual orientation.
- 69 percent agreed that it is unfair for a landlord to deny housing to a tenant based solely on sexual orientation.

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