



458 Lincoln Place 2B
Brooklyn, NY 11238

September 12, 2010

Dear Bishop Park, District Superintendents,
and leaders of the New York Annual Conference:

There were many highlights of the 2010 session of the New York Annual Conference, and clearly much creative effort and hard work went into the many facets of the conference, including of course the festival of ministries and worship service on Saturday, with so many of our members getting a taste of the diversity and vitality of our annual conference.

In the midst of all the celebrations and business of annual conference, however, there was a strange silence. Nowhere was there acknowledgment of the existence, let alone the just grievances, of gay and lesbian United Methodists. The silence from the entire annual conference, excepting those times when there were legislative proposals that required debate about GLBT issues, is profoundly disappointing to those of us who have understood ourselves to be an annual conference with a long and proud history of acceptance and affirmation of all persons. Are our GLBT members to be acknowledged only as an issue, a problem, a subject of debate?

Why is it that the New York Annual Conference stands so solidly for justice and equality for GLBT persons as stated in decades of our annual conference policy positions, yet in our public assembly no mention is made of this prophetic history, no symbols of this inclusive history are present, and, what is even more disturbing, absent is any pastoral affirmation of GLBT persons.

Prior to the 2010 session of the annual conference we wrote to Bishop Park inviting him to, “think with us about how this sacred gathering can be a place where equality and the full inclusion of all persons is as openly proclaimed as it is boldly stated in decades of New York Annual Conference policy positions.” We also asked whether he would: “... *as Bishop to our diverse body, find a way at this Annual Conference session to reach out to the GLBT members of your flock.*”

There were indeed hurtful and demeaning attacks on the character and integrity of gay and lesbian United Methodists at this annual conference. Some GLBT persons left the annual conference session this year feeling deeply wounded and disturbed by those attacks. Are we not bound by conscience and by our deepest connections in Christ to put ourselves in the place of those who endure such attacks, knowing that in addition such hurtful attacks they must endure the official language of exclusion and judgment addressed to them by the general church? How can we be silent? And yet we are silent.

Silence has been the historic enemy of progress for GLBT people. Silence reinforces stereotypes. Silence reinforces shame. Silence leaves ignorance and prejudice unexamined and unchallenged. Silence is unhealthy for the body of Christ. Silence for us is intolerable. It is not an option.

We renew our challenge to the leadership of this annual conference to break its silence, to embrace publicly and to represent the positions taken by the annual conference in opposition to the UMC's discrimination against LGBT people, to make clear in every way and in every venue available to us that we want GLBT persons to stay in the United Methodist Church, that we treasure our GLBT sisters and brothers in Christ and are committed to their full and equal participation the life of the church, and that we would be impoverished as the body of Christ were we to drive away the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to them.

Yours in Christ,

The MIND Steering Committee

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