



A Measure of *Grace*

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A Bit of This and That *By Mary Heathman*

I simply had too much I wanted to include this month and crowded myself out of this newsletter! Enjoy the variety, but don't get used to it, I'll be back in full voice next month!

Featured this month:

1. An update and a response to Gloria's article in last month's newsletter—I thought you would like to read about resolution and a different perspective.
2. An AgapePress news piece about what's happening in the United Methodist's camp. You may remember that our UM brothers and sisters have been in conflict about the issue of homosexuality since the early seventies. Their conclusion and current call for action is of great interest.
3. A testimony from a woman whose entire life from conception has been formed and affected by her mother's same-sex marriage.

It is my prayer that these bits and pieces of the hearts and minds of a few of our fellow believers might inform and inspire you.

Blessings,
Mary Heathman



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WGA

where grace abounds

Why this sperm bank child opposes same sex marriage

by Bronagh Cassidy



I am a woman. I was raised by my mom and her "wife," Pat, from birth until Pat died of cancer when I was 12. My mom has been straight since Pat's death. Pat and my mom were married by Rev. Troy Perry before I was born. Perry also baptized me as a baby. Rev. Perry founded the famous gay Metropolitan Community Church.

My mom was artificially inseminated at home with the sperm of two gay men. Neither of them were ever really a part of my life. One of them passed away several years ago from AIDS and the other one, still gay, does not keep in contact with me. The last time I saw him was ten years ago and I recently tried to reconnect with him, but he hasn't made an effort to reciprocate.

I always struggled as a child that to accept my parents' lifestyle was to deny God and to accept God was to deny my parents. I still struggle with that today because Pat died before I had a chance to know and understand her as an adult. My mom doesn't want to talk about the past with me, so I still don't fully understand. I do know that my mom had a very painful and abusive childhood and that she just "fell in love" with Pat, who was the first person to show her compassion. My mom has told me that several times she

wanted to get out of the lesbian lifestyle but just couldn't leave Pat.

Then after Pat's death, my mom cut off all contact with the gay community. I used to wish that Pat wasn't around so my mom and I could have a normal life. Then when she died I felt responsible and guilty for having wished her away.

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I'm now 28, have been married for ten years and have two children, 4 and 8. I recently started looking for other people like me and that's when I came across a man who had done studies of the research on children of gay parents and he had found that all the research was flawed for a positive outcome. I e-mailed him and let him know that I wanted a way to be counted for.

I think I'm a lone voice because children who have parents who are currently in the lifestyle would not speak out. I know I wouldn't have. It was okay for me to question my parents, but if anyone else said anything negative about them I would get defensive. I've read points of view from children of gay parents who went through the same struggles as I have, but they have come to a different

(Continued on page 6)

In the October 2004 issue of *A Measure of Grace*, I wrote an article titled “It’s Not Fair.” Someone sent the woman I called Jennifer a copy of the newsletter, a newsletter I did not expect her to see, ever. Jennifer came to me after reading my article and told me she intended to apologize publicly for what she had done. I assured her that that wasn’t necessary. We had already talked and my heart was clear. She did, however, make that public apology (which I accepted publicly) and I must admit that her gesture touched me and brought a measure of healing I hadn’t experienced before.

Jennifer told me privately that it was only after reading what I wrote in October that she fully understood why I was offended at her request that we boycott a particular manufacturer to protest their support of gay marriage. The part that got through to her was where I said, “I have known of people who are asked to leave their church because of their struggle with homosexual attractions while at the same time the church sponsors divorce recovery classes.” (*Note: it’s not the boycott that bothered me, but the double standard that often operates among us: many areas of sin are simply swept under the carpet while the sin*

of homosexuality gets the brunt of our attention.)

I could tell that now Jennifer really does understand, and my heart was eased.

And what Jennifer said in her open apology caused at least one other woman in the meeting to have greater clarity on the issue, and she also apologized to me for her lack of understanding. Yes, I am often angry because the church sometimes fails to offer sufficient grace. I am also totally committed to the church because the church offers a measure of grace.



Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



Lifting Weights

We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling short-changed. Quite the contrary—we can't roundup enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit! Romans 5:3-5 (The Message)

I made what feels like a dramatic shift in my thinking recently. For the past few decades, my prayers in times of stress, distress and calamity have been for relief. “God please make this be over, please make it go away.” Because many of the things I have struggled with have been consistently present in my life throughout that entire time, I have begun to wonder about God’s plan for them in the formation of my character and future. I’ve seen that He can change circumstances, hearts, relationships, habits, etc . . . so the fact that He isn't changing these things makes me wonder.

Not long ago, I found myself praying “God, you are obviously not taking these struggles away from me, so give me strength to deal with them. Bring on as much as I need to build what you want to build in me.” My mental image shifted

from a beleaguered peasant staggering under a heavy load, to one of a weight-lifter—patiently, consistently adding more weights to build more muscle. I want to have a spiritual six-pack. I want to be spiritually buff and lean and ready for the adventures ahead.

I think of Joseph spending years in pits, slavery & prisons. When God revealed the greatest adventure He had in store for Joseph, Joseph was spiritually fit and ready. He obviously hadn’t wasted his time complaining and building bitterness—he had pressed in to all of the weight that God loaded on. He had allowed patience to temper the steel of virtue in him.

That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. Rom. 8:18-21 (The Message)



Pro-Homosexual United Methodists Urged to Exit Denomination Graciously

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By Jim Brown and Jody Brown
October 18, 2004

(AgapePress) - Pro-homosexual members of the United Methodist Church (UMC) are being asked to make a "gracious exit" from the denomination.

The United Methodist Action Committee of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) is calling for the "peaceful departure" of Methodist clergy who cannot abide by the church's standards on marriage and sex. Same-sex unions and the ordination of clergy sexually active outside of traditional marriage are officially barred by the denomination.

In a statement approved earlier this month, the Committee observes that the 11-million-member UMC "has made its decision on the issues of marriage and homosexuality. We recommend allowing a gracious exit for those who cannot or will not accept the essential beliefs on which the UMC is founded. The UMC should adopt a fair plan to permit their voluntary, peaceful departure, taking with them their local church property (if the congregation votes to leave) and pension rights."

The statement continues: "Let us cease dead-end dialogue on whether to change the United Methodist Church stand on homosexuality. Instead, we must increase United Methodist ministries for persons struggling with all kinds of sexual sin, including homosexual behavior -- offering healing and transformation through

Jesus Christ."

Mark Tooley, director of the IRD UMC Action Committee, says his group issued the statement following talk among conservatives about a possible amicable separation.

"Too often that's been interpreted to mean that the denomination would just be split 50-50 or 60-40 when, in fact, I think much more appropriately a gracious exit would entail a minority of clergy, primarily on the West Coast and the upper Midwest and Northeast who are involved in pro-homosexuality causes," he says.

Tooley explains that the issue of homosexuality has been the primary issue dividing the denomination for the past 30 years. "We have no illusions that once again at the next General Conference in 2008 we will be vigorously fighting over the issue of homosexuality," the IRD official concedes, "but I think there are some signs of fatigue on the other side and perhaps some awareness that demographically time is not on their side."

Delegates to the UMC's 2004 General Conference strongly reaffirmed the denomination's official teaching is that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." The Conference took similar stands prohibiting same-sex unions and ordination of clergy who are sexually active outside of heterosexual marriage.

(Continued on page 7)

(Sperm Bank Child... *continued from page 2*)

conclusion - that it's society that needs to change; the very laws of nature need to change.

Although I was brought up in a home where we believed in God and Christ, I didn't become a Christian until a couple of years ago. My baptism as an adult gave some healing because I felt I needed to undo the one done by Rev. Perry, who is an openly gay activist.

So I'm here to get help and to give it if possible because no child should ever have to question their existence. I find that insemination kids question being here because their parent rejects the opposite sex.

In fact, I didn't find out the details of my conception until after Pat died. I had been trying to reach one of my dads and my mom wound up telling me he might not even be my father. When I was younger, I used to try to piece together how I was conceived because my parents didn't go into detail. If my mom was in love with Pat and "my two dads" were in love with each other, was it gross for them to make me? So I felt that I was unnatural.

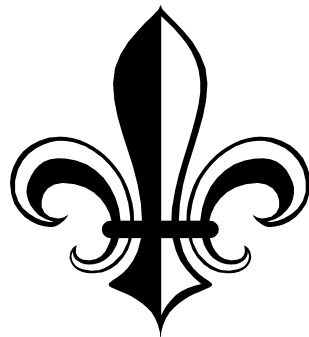
The main issue that I dealt with was that God couldn't have put me here. My main point in trying to reach other children of gay parents was to let them know that they are meant to be here - that God puts everyone here on purpose. No child should ever have to question their existence or debate their parents sexuality.

I find myself split down the middle sometimes. Sometimes I feel like I'm supposed to stand up and defend it - because that's what the child in me wants to

do to validate my existence. The other part of me knows that it takes more than love to make a family. Biology plays a big part also. Every time I have to fill out info for medical history I'm reminded that I don't know half of who I am.

My mom was in a same-sex "marriage" for about 16 years. What I want to point out is that it's so much harder for someone to overcome the gay lifestyle when they are in love. I think they still might be together today if Pat hadn't died. My mom has told me that at times she had felt she needed to get away from it, but that it was so hard because Pat would cry and they were so dependent on each other. That's why I think it is very important that we fight same-sex marriage being legalized. It will encourage people to stay in those relationships even if they come to a point where they feel they want and/or need to change.

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(A copy of this opinion can be found at www.pfox.org)





On the Other Hand

By April

I am responding to the articles entitled "It's Not Fair" by Gloria and "Underneath Anger is Pain" by Mary Heathman, in the October 2004 issue of "A Measure of Grace." I have supported Where Grace Abounds for the last 14 years because I believe they follow Christ's example in extending God's love and grace to people who struggle with sexual sin, especially homosexual sin, and to their family and friends as well.

WGA's motto is *100% Truth and 100% Grace*. We, as the church, also need to follow Christ's example of extending God's love and grace to everyone. We need to speak the **truth** in love and grace. **So, I felt compelled to add some additional comments in order to balance the truth and grace of these articles.**

The truth is that some large corporations in our country financially support public

policy that violates Christian values. I have no doubt that, as Gloria stated in her article, their companies also support gay marriage. I personally have bought many products from these businesses, and since I have discovered their position, I do feel God calling me to withdraw support from businesses that are openly promoting a sinful lifestyle. I think Christians should know this information, and be given the opportunity to boycott if they choose to do so. I hope that WGA is not saying that by participating in political actions according to my conscience that I am doing something wrong.

Director's Note: Certainly not! A commitment to truth and grace dictates a strong stand, all of us must take those stands according to the Holy Spirit's leading. There are faithful Christians active in social action; that's a good thing. ✦

(United Methodists... continued from page 5)

Tooley also notes parts of the UMC that support homosexuality are experiencing the fastest declines in membership. According to an IRD press release, United Methodism has been declining in the United States for four decades, especially in the more liberal regions. At the same time, it was growing slightly in the U.S. South and "growing strongly" outside the U.S.

The liberal Methodist caucus group "Church Within a Church" met in Chi-

cago over the weekend and discussed the possibility of a formal separation within United Methodism. In a statement adopted in September 2002, that group accuses the UMC of a "sin of exclusion" that "manifests itself as white privilege, male privilege, heterosexual privilege, economic privilege and other privileges through imperialism, domination, arrogance and violence."

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OCTOBER

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Thursday Night Group

September 7th - 58 people

September 14th - 49 people

September 21st - 53 people

September 28th - 38 people

Orientation meeting - 10 new people

Discipleship Counseling and Mentoring

The WGA staff provided about 15 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week last month.

September 22nd - November 3rd (Wednesdays) - WGA taught a six week series at Christian Reformed Church.

October 8th - WGA taught a seminar called "Redeemed Sexuality: What does it look like? How do we get there?" in Colorado Springs.

October 10th - Mary spoke during the main service at First Denver friends Church.

NOVEMBER & BEYOND

November 3rd - 6 week class at Christian Reformed Church ends.

November 6th - Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 7:00 - 9:00 am at the WGA offices.

November 13th - Speaking at a youth conference in Estes Park.

November 14th - Presentation to a youth group at a local church.

February 10th - 12th - Participating in the Christian Ministries Convention.

January - Survivors of Abuse Group and Commitment Group begin. Both last for six months.

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Purpose Statement

Where Grace Abounds exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship, and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships.



A Measure of Grace
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