



April 2013
Volume 17 Issue 4

A Measure of Grace

A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Gay Marriage: In the News

by Roger Jones

Over the past few weeks, it seems like the news has been inundated with gay rights issues. On March 21st, Governor Hickenlooper signed the law that would allow for civil unions in Colorado. On March 26th and 27th, the U.S. Supreme Court began hearing testimonies and discussing the legality of California's Proposition 8 (which states that California will only recognize a marriage between a man and a woman). They also began the process of discussing the legality of the Defense of Marriage Act (which restricts federal marriage benefits and required inter-state marriage recognition to only opposite-sex marriages). They should rule on these issues sometime in the summer. I don't know about you, but it seemed like everywhere I turned, I was seeing something else about gay rights and/or gay marriage.

(Continued on page 2)



Where Grace Abounds
P.O. Box 18871
Denver, Colorado 80218

Office: 303-863-7757
Fax: 303-863-7769

Email:
info@wheregraceabounds.org
Website:
www.wheregraceabounds.org



(Gay Marriage continued from page 1)

For those of you on Facebook, you may have been surprised to see how many people changed their profile pictures to the red equality sign last week. The Human Rights Campaign, a gay activist group, started the movement, encouraging Facebook users to change their profile pictures in support of marriage equality. It is estimated that about 2.7 million Facebook users participated. I was a little surprised myself by how many of my Facebook friends made the switch, and I still see it popping up on a few who have decided to leave it.

And on the other side of the issue, I saw many people on Facebook changing their profile pictures to “pro traditional family” symbols and icons. There wasn’t as much uniformity here. Some were scripture references about marriage, and others were pictures of a man and a woman holding hands. Just a few weeks before gay marriage was the big topic, I witnessed a similar battle going on about gun rights.

I find myself weary of all the sound bites. It seems like everyone is shouting, “I am right, and you are wrong!” all the time and no one actually listens to each other any-

more, except to find the point they disagree with. The rift grows wider and wider between differing viewpoints. I find myself praying for God’s intervention.

Where Grace Abounds has always tried to be a third voice in our culture, a safe place where people can come and question. We do hold a “position” about what we believe God’s intent for our sexuality is... that is it to be expressed in the context of a marriage between one man and one woman. Yet we also recognize that this is not always easily lived out, and that a variety of factors, including cultural influences, make this standard difficult. A sexually permissive culture where pornography, adultery, and sex outside of marriage have become normalized can cause those

***Where Grace
Abounds has
always tried to be
a third voice in
our culture, a safe
place where
people can come
and question.***

with a conservative view of sexual expression to be all the more conflicted as they “swim upstream.”

Will you pray with us for our country and those who are so deeply affected by the current battle around gay marriage?

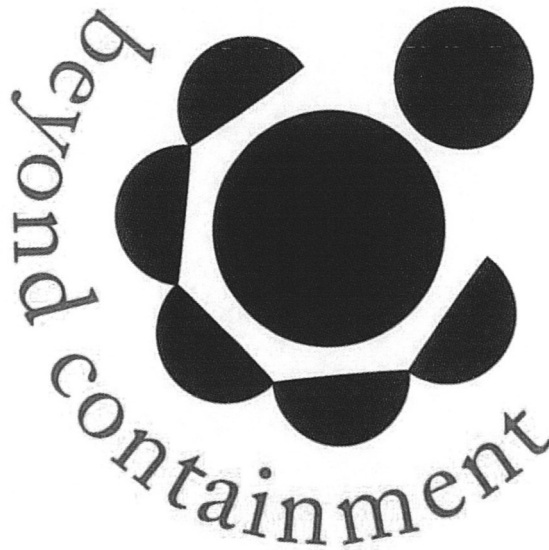
Circles of Support and Accountability

An Update from Mary Heathman

Where Grace Abounds has a new program: Beyond Containment (BC). We have written about our family and friends support already. Another facet of the program will be Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) which are community-based initiatives that first began operating in Canada and are now being put in place in a growing number of locations around the United States. Each Circle involves a group of trained volunteers sup-

porting one Core Member. The Core Member is the person who is returning to the community after serving a prison sentence for a sexual offense. The group supports and holds the Core Member accountable.

Stay tuned for more about this program. . . for more information in the meantime, call Mary Heathman at 303-863-7757, or email her at mary@wheregraceabounds.org.



"Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God."

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks



Wabi Sabi Grace

I have recently come across a new concept in the jewelry design world that I wander in - it is called wabi sabi.

According to Wikipedia, wabi sabi is “a characteristic feature of traditional Japanese beauty.” While our Western definition of beauty usually involves symmetry, completeness and perfection, this Japanese wabi sabi recognizes beauty in asymmetry, irregularity and impermanence. For instance, instead of grinding down and chiseling a mineral or gemstone to perfect symmetry (like the diamond in an engagement ring), wabi sabi would be exemplified by letting the naturally occurring shape of the stone determine the shape of the setting for a piece of jewelry.

Perhaps because, as a person, I am feeling asymmetrical, irregular and impermanent myself these days, this concept struck a deep cord with me. I am aware that I have accumulated narrow definitions of what a beautiful body looks like, sterile concepts of what a “Christian” woman does and doesn’t do or think, impersonal maps of impersonal highways that my children “should” grow and travel on. But God’s grace looks very different

to me: it varies in its shape, it surprises the world with outbursts and innovations, it pioneers new paths and perilous adventures. It looks more like wabi sabi to me.

I want to cultivate a taste for this wabi sabi grace-full beauty in myself and the world around me. I just want to dance in the skin God has given me. Rather than shaping and grinding and stuffing myself into superimposed boxes, I want to shape my life around the unique quirks that God has planted in me (odd humor, a proclivity for spontaneous dancing in public, a desire to have deep and soulful conversations with just about everyone I meet, to celebrate nature with the abandon & wonder of a true nature-nerd, to have a story for any topic that comes up, to dress too youthfully for my age, . . .). I don’t think it’s just my biology that is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139) – it’s all of me.

One afternoon walk around the zoo or the aquarium or the botanic gardens reminds me that God has proclaimed his unfathomably diverse creation “good”! And I am one of them. God, grant me the eyes to see your wabi sabi beauty around me and within me.

WGA Summer Picnic

Join us as we celebrate all that God has done through
Where Grace Abounds since 1986.

***We will be welcoming our new staff members,
Steve & Jill Huston!***

Date: Saturday, May 25, 2013 from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
Location: Alamo Placita Park, 300 Emerson St.; Denver CO 80218*

We will be having a picnic potluck. Please bring your
favorite dish to share according to the list below.

If your *last* name begins with:

A-G Please bring an Appetizer

H-L Please bring a Side Dish

M-S Please bring a Salad

T-Z Please bring a Dessert

Fried chicken, potato salad, and beverages will be provided.
Lunch will be served beginning at noon.

There will be an opportunity to make a donation
to Where Grace Abounds.

Please **RSVP** by May 22nd to
Nancy at 303-863-7757 or nancy@wheregraceabounds.org.

- Please bring a blanket or chair to sit on
- There is a playground area for the kids!
- No alcoholic beverages or glass allowed in the park

*In the event of inclement weather, celebration will be held at the
WGA Offices at 1532 Emerson Street.

If the Supreme Court Legalizes Same Sex Marriage, What Next?



The following appeared in the April 2013 edition of Christianity Today, along with some other viewpoints on the issue of gay marriage. This section was written by Elodie Ballantine Emig, a long-time friend and volunteer at WGA. I encourage you to read the full article at: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/april/next-marriage-trend.html.

Humbly Be Truthful

Elodie Ballantine Emig, instructor of Greek at Denver Seminary, serves on the advisory board of Where Grace Abounds, a ministry to people with relational struggles, and the adjunct staff of New Song Church.

If we have placed our trust in the God who does not change, we need not fear shifts in culture or law. In the beginning, God ordained marriage to be a lifelong, loving covenant between one man and one woman. We need to tell this truth with conviction, regardless of politics. If we are secure in God's love, people who reject

what we believe pose no real threat to us. We are set free to love those who oppose us and to listen to their stories. It should be Christian business as usual.

Telling the truth is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Pastors must ask God for the wisdom to respond truthfully to gay marriage in general and compassionately to gay couples in particular. Some people need to hear right up front that homosexual behavior is sinful. Others need to hear that no sin is too big for God to forgive. Still others need the assurance that Father God wants only the best for his children before sin is ever mentioned. We must choose to love the ones God puts in our path and trust the Holy Spirit along the way.

My only formulae are that God must be allowed to dictate which of these approaches we employ and that he always has a new plan A. No plan A will skirt the issue that we are all sinners in need of a savior. We are on a level playing field with gays and lesbians who, in my experience, can detect con-

(Continued on page 7)

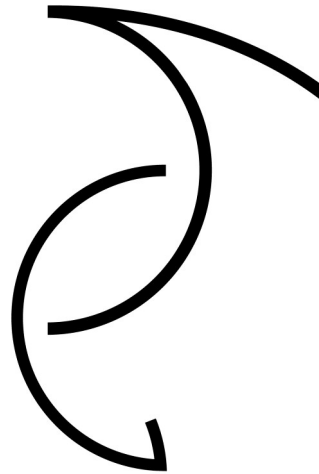
(Same Sex Marriage continued from page 6)

descension and hypocrisy a mile away.

Repentance needs to begin with the household of God. The evangelical church has a massive pornography problem and unacceptably high adultery and divorce rates. Church leaders should humbly acknowledge this reality. With God's help, pastors and leaders can create winsome communities that repent of corporate sin and so establish a climate in which it is safe to wrestle with individual sins. We can begin by telling the truth about our own stories and promoting small groups in which others may do the same.

The Supreme Court cannot dictate what marriages pastors perform, but it might offer us unprecedented opportunities to minister to a population in desperate need of hearing Christians speak the truth in love. I could not in good conscience perform gay marriages. But I would be honored to spend time in dialogue with gay couples. As a fallen race, we have exchanged the truth of God for the lie that we can worship whatever we like and express our sexuality however we like. Paul in Romans points us back to Genesis 1 to determine what we were made for.

Jesus told the truth, the hardcore, "you're a rotten sinner" truth, in love. So must we. To use C. S. Lewis's metaphor, we were created for a holiday at the sea, but we settle for mud puddles. People are unlikely to abandon their puddles unless they are given a clear and compelling idea of the alternative. Effective pastors point to the joy-giving sea.





March In Review

March 10th: Roger Jones spoke at Celebration Community Church

March 16th: WGA Activity - Game Night

Thursday Night Group

March 7th: 28 people

March 14th: 34 people

March 21st: 32 people

March 28th: 30 people

Orientation meeting: 3 new people

April And Beyond

April 6th: Family & Friends Gathering

April 7th: WGA will be presenting to the youth at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church

April 12th: Monthly Family & Friends of Sex Offenders meeting

May 4th: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry

May 16th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

May 25th: Memorial Weekend Picnic—stay tuned for more information!

WGA Staff

Roger Jones
Executive Director

Scott Kingry
Program Director

Mary Heathman
Founding Director

Steve Huston
Chaplain/Church Liaison

Jill Huston
Family & Friends Coordinator

A Measure of Grace
is edited by
Elodie Ballantine Emig

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.

Printed in the USA
Copyright 2013