



Central United Methodist Church

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Being Gay is a Gift from God CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

"Being gay is a gift from God."

This simple statement is intended to be a gift to those who have experienced hurt and discrimination because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. The Church seeks nothing less than the healing of the world, and Central United Methodist Church wants to offer words and acts of healing to those hurt and marginalized.

Also, declaring that being gay is a gift from God is a prophetic call to the Church to get out of the business of marginalizing gay and lesbian persons from the Church, and to welcome them as full members.

Who are we?

Central United Methodist Church (CUMC) is a community of people young and old, gay and straight, in committed relationships and single, from all sorts of faith backgrounds (from traditional churches to no church at all) who come together to live out our mission to do justice, practice kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Central is a founding member of the Reconciling Ministries Network, which is the United Methodist movement for gay equality in the denomination. CUMC has a fruitful history of over a quarter-century of connecting persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) and straight allies with the body of Christ.

What is the purpose of this campaign?

The purpose of this campaign is 1) to offer welcome to all persons who are gay; 2) to challenge the larger Church to fully accept persons who are gay into the life of the Church; and 3) to call on all people to bring all the gifts of who they are to God.

How did we get to this place?

Central has seen God speak over time to the Church in its life. In responding to God's growing revelation, we have been leaders in working for justice and reconciliation in overcoming racism and sexism. We see overcoming heterosexism as a natural extension of this work.

By welcoming and living in community with faithful Christians who happen to be gay, we have come to understand that being gay is part of who God made them to be, and by gay Christians bringing all that they are to God, the body of Christ has been strengthened. In fact, we would experience the body of Christ as incomplete without LGBT persons.

We recognize that the Church is divided over interpretation of Scripture related to homosexuality. However, we know that Jesus did not speak directly regarding homosexuality and that the Church, Scripture, and Jesus' life are much more united on outreaching love toward those hurting, justice for those marginalized and disenfranchised, and humility before God and one another when working out our life together. In this light, we see the marginalization of persons who are LGBT as unjustified.

We seek to reflect the diversity of God's creation. We see this demonstrated first in the Trinity itself, then in God's grace evident in the abundant variety of nature around us, and then in the creative and mysterious way that varieties of gifts are distributed among us as humans.

Given the overwhelming scientific evidence that people are born with their sexual orientation, that it is not a choice, we see that holding people morally responsible for matters in which they have no control is irrational and immoral. Discriminating against or condemning people who have a God-given personal characteristic, whether it be race, gender, or sexual orientation, undermines calls to personal and social responsibility, to those very matters which *do* require human choice. The sin is in denying who God created us to be - because it is in that denial that we feel shameful and not worthy of God's love, or anyone else's. We stand against this sin.

We live out our mission to do justice, practice kindness, and walk humbly with God, by welcoming all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, by actively listening to the experiences of faithful Christians who happen to be gay, and by working for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the life of the Church.

Both LGBT persons and straight allies, when we live in accordance with how God has created us, experience reconciliation to God and each other; and we want this for all people.

How are we getting this message out?

We are taking the message that being gay is a gift from God to the community through:

- mass media such as billboards and news outlets;
- mini-media such as flyers, posters, bumper stickers, t-shirts, and buttons;
- creating opportunities for face-to-face-conversations such as presence at community events and a speakers' bureau
- worship experiences around the theme, "Being gay is a gift from God," and around the larger theme, "Being you is a gift from God;"
- a Bible study on "Clobber Passages: What the Bible says (and doesn't say) about being gay."
- providing easily-accessible resources to those wanting to learn more about Christ-like responses to homosexuality.

The campaign launch date is April 25, 2011, and most campaign events and activities will be concentrated over the ensuing several months.

For more details, see www.CentralToledo.org.

How can you help?

You can help out by displaying and/or distributing campaign materials; participating in, promoting, or organizing campaign events and activities; having conversations with others about this campaign and the issues it lifts up; and/or contributing to the costs of the electronic billboard which costs approximately \$50 per day (online donating available).

at Central United Methodist Church, we believe

Being Gay is a Gift from God

CentralToledo.org 419-241-PRAY