

Myth 1: We Threaten the Unity of the Church  
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The PC(USA) will not split over the inclusion of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) persons in the community of called individuals serving as Elders, Deacons, or Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

Ever since the church's beginning, LGBT people have served the church in ordained and non-ordained status. Today, along with those who are open about their gender and sexual identity, there are thousands serving in quiet ways; thousands who have never identified themselves as LGBT. These are called individuals who understand, too well, the consequences were they to "come out." Clearly, their service has not caused the church to split. Quite the opposite, for decades these leaders have made the church a meaningful place for a great many seeking God. They have, in many ways, kept the church together.

We all recognize the importance of being open witnesses. We also acknowledge the important work of our LGBT community serving the church, without the freedom of fullness enjoyed by our heterosexual sisters and brothers. As a result, it is difficult to agree with those who suggest that our community is asking for protection or insulation in this struggle for justice. What is more reliable is the belief that our LGBT community depends on those who are able to insist publicly that this church change. What is clear is that this community depends on leaders to provide a voice for those unable to speak for themselves. Such a charge and call is not negotiable.

The presence or increase of LGBT people in ordained and leadership roles in this church is not a threat to its unity. What is a threat to the unity of this church is the misleading of its members. It is a misleading teaching that insists upon diminished status for the LGBT community, in order that the church remains "whole." This great error is at the core of the threat to the unity of God's church, not those of us who are LGBT. It is an error that has taken on a near-mythological status. And, there are other myths.

Another myth, for example, is that "...given enough time, we (LGBT people) will no longer be an 'issue' in the church. Given enough time, everyone will be used to the idea of our being around and there will no longer be any conflict. We will, in effect, 'blend in.'" As is often true, myths are accompanied by a moral, in this case in the form of a caveat: "If the attempt proceeds to move change along 'ahead of schedule' it will cause great harm to the church, culminating in certain schism." The potential danger of such thinking cannot be underestimated. Such a direction is built upon the foundation that marginalization, oppression, and exclusion – however temporary (going on forty years, now) – is a "livable condition" in order to achieve a greater good. And at the root of the problem lurks

G-6.0106b, AI, and the discriminatory language of marriage. The resistance to removing such impediments must be to keep LGBT folk from serving this church fully, regardless of all protests to the contrary. What other reasons could there be that justify a diminished status in God's church for any child of God?

Our LGBT community has been constitutionally relegated to a footnote in the history of PJC's, assemblies, and annotations in the Book of Order. On one hand the injustice is swept away with the promise of a better future, and on the other, juxtaposed with a demand for willingness to accept continued dehumanization as an reasonable sacrifice for order and a false grasp on unity.

All the while, the power for change is in our hands. We must come together as progressive partners and stem the illness that is consuming the soul of the church. Our LGBT community is not the cause of this sickness; instead, it is we who are called to bring a healing and unity to the PC(USA) that really means something.

I continue to call on all progressive advocacy groups to publicly join together to lead us in change of the PC(USA) and a new realized commitment to justice with a unified and strategic presence at GA218.