

## Myth 4: It's about "the Middle"

Ray Bagnuolo, Minister of the Word and Sacrament  
Gay Member of the LGBT Community

©2008 Permission Granted for All Reprints

For more information visit: [www.ga218.org](http://www.ga218.org) or [www.raybagnuolo.net](http://www.raybagnuolo.net)  
Comment on Blog at [www.bagnuolo.blogspot.com](http://www.bagnuolo.blogspot.com)

---

Consider this: The last openly gay candidate that was examined, cleared to seek a call, called, and ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament was in late 2005. Since then, according to Research Services at PC(USA), an estimated 850-900 individuals have been ordained to serve as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Progress?

**To the point:** we often hear discussions about the success of constitutional change in our church relying on a favorable shift of "the middle," those yet to decide or be vocal about their decision regarding ordination standards. The premise is that if enough of those "uncommitted" could find reason to support the removal of G-6.0106b, we would be able to make it happen. "Once we had the middle behind us, we'd be all set."

All this sounds logical, plausible, and very practical, doesn't it? And, in fact it is, with one exception. It hinges the success of eliminating the oppression and violence toward LGBT folk on persuading a "great mass of people" that such injustices are wrong. We already know exclusion is wrong. We already know marginalization of LGBT folk is wrong. We already know the terrible mire of weariness, resistance, and the imbalance of power that threatens the LGBT community and its supporters at every turn, as we seek justice. We know, too, the diversions that distract us from the real objective – God's radical and generous equity. And so, we call forth and support individuals and organizations: to lead us through the myths and obstacles. These are the progressive organizations. Their work is critical, timely, and sacred, in every sense of the word. And, reaching out to others is a major part of their work.

Truly, I am committed to broad and comprehensive pastoral, educational, and personal efforts in helping others to know their sisters and brothers who are LGBT. I understand the changes that occur when we have the chance to touch and be touched by the hearts and minds of people we first encounter as different. I am dedicated to the goal that we embrace our shared baptism, without limitations on gender or sexual identity, and we find ways to work together as equal members of the Body of Christ. This is our work. These efforts, just as importantly, are foundational in the healing ministry that will need to follow the deletion of G-6.0106b. However, it is not the "middle's" job to decide our course; it is our job to lead and inform. We cannot subjugate our calls to the political or geographical formation and opinions of groups.

Aligning our efforts to the potential support of this broad and undefined segment of the population is the same as suggesting that we just wait a while. There it is again. "Slow down. Wait a while. Give folks a chance to catch up on the issue and become comfortable with this idea."

First, we are not issues, ideas, or objectified notions with which to become comfortable. We are living, breathing creations of God being discriminated against and diminished by a church that calls itself the Church of Jesus Christ. If that doesn't give us pause then none of this is much going to matter.

Second, we are called to lead. We have to be out ahead of others who are not yet ready and show them what has to be done and ask for their support, not wait for them to say they are "ready." The ultimate decisions are out of our control, anyway. The choices people make will be between themselves and the Holy Spirit. Our job is to inform and teach others why G-6.0106b has to be removed, instead of continuing to seek interpretations and rulings of authoritative interpretations that allow it to be scrupled. It just doesn't make sense to do anything other than delete G-6.0106b, especially if you are a member of the community being oppressed in the life and polity of the PC(USA).

Really, who is the beneficiary of G-6.0106b remaining in the Book of Order, as an essential tenet or not? Why even offer an option to addressing it, other than removing it if we believe as we say we do that it needs to go? What could be the reasons? It's not time? The middle is not ready? It will split the church or unsettle our unity?

Consider this: the last openly gay candidate that was examined, cleared to seek a call, called, and ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament was in late 2005. Since then, according to Research Services at PC(USA), an estimated 850-900 individuals have been ordained to serve as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Progress?

One cannot help but make the leap that those opposing the ordination of LGBT individuals are feeling satisfied with such results, results guaranteed to be pretty much the same until G-6.0106b is removed. Even if the GAPJC's decision on scrupling were reversed, every LGBT candidate would be asked to go through another level of examination, another challenge, another test - keeping the welcoming of called sisters and brothers who are LGBT to a trickle not much better than now. Equity? Justice? Love?

We are better than this, and once more I repeat the call for the leaders of the progressive groups to step forward together, set aside any differences, and do what needs to be done together to delete G-6.0106b at this General Assembly. Our divisiveness works to the advantage of those who would like nothing to change. I love those who oppose us, but I think we have helped them enough. Tell those you know, "It's time."