

### **Myth 5: We Can Accept Compromise...**

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My purpose in writing this series of essays has been to share with you my personal and critical process in thinking through, again, the need for deleting G-6.0106b from the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). I do not write on behalf of any progressive group. I recognize each of the organizations, supporting some positions more than others. Still, I persist in reiterating the need and responsibility we have for all progressive groups to be one family for justice as the Church of Jesus Christ – especially at this General Assembly. I hope this and [my other pieces](#) over the last three months have been helpful in your reflections and processes, as well.

As a gay man and an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament, I know first-hand the struggle to navigate our system weighted heavily against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Community (LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup>). As an openly gay candidate who refused to abide by G-6.0106b and was, nonetheless, ordained, I understand and accept the consequences of such moral decisions. I have been witness to the power of a presbytery refusing to accept unjust standards against others and me. I have been touched by the courage of a community to call me and initiate my ordination, saying to others who they were in the process. I have been part of what takes place when we step out of the way of the Spirit and join together – differences and all -- to practice our faith in worship, prayer, voice, and action. I have watched differences fade once they were rejected as obstacles to justice. I have seen more love and more light emerge. And, I know there is much more to do.

Aside from the difficulty we have had in joining together as one progressive group, what is it that makes anything other than the deletion of G-6.0106b a just recommendation to the committees and the plenary? Why not one galvanized presence? Aren't we the best ones to offer such a call to action? I wonder even more what makes some groups willing to propose recommendations that involve more processes and litigation rather than simply eliminate the dividing line? I wonder how any of us can survive more violence against LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> folks as an acceptable expense on the way to one day becoming truly inclusive.

I have always believed that if we could just find the singular strand that has been the coiled bondage around justice – that once removed -- Justice (the Holy Spirit) would flow freely and with real winds for change.

So what holds us back from coming together as one? Why continue to dodge the Spirit?

I've asked and attempted to address this before. Even now, I keep trying to hone in on the causative factor that separates us in our positions and degrees of (im)patience for change.

I've come to the conclusion that the real cause of the challenge to full inclusion is such anathema to the idea of being Christian that we refuse to or simply cannot see it. It is at the root of our church, systematic and pervasive. It is more than homophobia or gender bias. It is a sickening, programmatic, and institutionally endorsed disdain and fear of folks who are LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup>. It is so deeply ingrained in the institution of the PC(USA) that we accept G-6.0106b in our Book of Order and resist constitutional change with alternatives or dismissals. The fear and disdain toward the LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> community are so matter-of-fact a part of the order of church business that they have become very nearly indiscernible from the institution, itself. If we are seeking reasons for the flight of many from religion and the irrelevancy of the church in the lives of the masses, I would start here as the primary source of the exodus. Folks outside the church often see our own bigotry more clearly than we do.

To be a church and to have laws on the books used to exclude LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> folk as fully integrated families and members, refusing them equal access to the benefit and servanthood of membership and leadership within the church – says much that is unfaithful about us, I think.

It is a disease of fear that surrounds us. A sickness perpetuated by the institution. And whatever hope we have for changing this illness hinges on what we do in the next two weeks about G-6.0106b.

I've tried this, always with the same results. Try naming a reason for considering the prospect of keeping G-6.0106b in the Book of Order that isn't fear-based in one way or another. If you think you find one, please send it to me: [Email](#).

I have come to an assessment that the reason we have alternative proposals and overtures to offer this assembly is, in part, to address the different levels of fear. Are we trying to find an acceptable level of fear? Are we afraid of the consequences of embracing the Holy Spirit and placing everything at risk as a sign of our faith and trust? Are we committed to such a degree for those we have been called to set free?

We simply cannot be limited by fear.

Yet, we are, I think. We chart slower more involved paths: propose scrupling, differently worded amendments, test court cases, additional language to assuage the fear – alternatives so we don't scare anyone away. We become a chorus of different voices with a tune no one can follow well; the same strategy, by the way, which is often used by some to undermine progress.

We know that the only real neutralizer to fear is Love (God).

- ◇ Not “We love you but hate your sin.”
- ◇ Not, “We love you, just give us more time to trust you.”
- ◇ Not, “We love you, so if you can find a way to make it through these hoops that no one else needs to get through, then we will ordain you.”
- ◇ And certainly not, “We love you, and so does God,” for love that excludes can never be equated with the Love of God.

The courage of Love is the answer. That’s the best I can do. We are really engaged in an epic struggle between love and fear. Every tenet of our faith calls us not to worry and trust in God. Still, many resist.

Simply, the human and spiritual price is too high for this church to accept fear, unwittingly or otherwise demanding that our LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> sisters and brothers live their lives in suffering, seated patiently at the table as a sign of faithfulness to God.

That’s not the table Jesus set. That’s the table Jesus overturned!

The choices: Fear (Sickness) or Love (Justice). Will this be the assembly that re-energizes the course of Love or builds up the walls of fear?

For me, anything other than the deletion of G-6.0106b is a step toward ensuring Fear’s dominance in the PC(USA). It is a sad day, indeed, every day that G-6.0106b is in our Book of Order.

How am I so sure? Well, it always comes down to this for me:

If we are able to look our LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> sisters and brothers in the eyes, and from deep in our hearts say to them, “Just wait a while longer” or “G-6.0106b should remain because...” then we, too, have been dulled by fear. We have forgotten the price of being LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> in this church. For me, once that memory is gone, anything goes.

So, once again, I pray for an act of the Spirit to bring all the progressive groups together at the General Assembly and with one voice call simply and clearly for the deletion of G-6.0106b, along with related guidance and interpretations that group people who are LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> into the category of: “To be feared.”

I believe that the most important work in the history of the progressive movement for LGBT/Q<sup>2</sup> folk and this church will begin following a vote to change the constitution. We will need to organize and travel to every presbytery and church that will have us to show how we are ministers of Love and Hope and Healing. Let us finish this, so we can begin being mission to all.

Please, accept no compromise or other name for fear – even for the smallest of whites. God bless you all in these and the times ahead.