

Reaction to Kent Ministerial Dissolution

Several weeks ago we read the Record Courier article (Gay Issue Splits Kent Clergy Unit) and have thought a lot about the implications of the ministerial association dissolution for those of us in the Kent community. We are sorry that the organization felt a need to dissolve and to "...form new partnerships to benefit the Community after much prayer and the passage of time."

We had hoped for more from our religious leaders. While there are ongoing battles around the world over which religion has the corner on the truth, many of us hope that a spirit of inclusion, acceptance and love might be the prevailing message in a country founded on the principle of religious freedom and demonstrating to the world that we are a melting pot of ideas, beliefs and peoples. Over time, groups who marginalize others have, historically, become marginalized themselves (Think of the Ku Klux Klan, exclusionary membership in some private clubs and other insults to human equality).

Excluding faiths, other than Christian, from a ministerial organization which purports to promote community values even sounds exclusionary to us. We pray for religions which: preach acceptance not judgmentalness; tolerance not intolerance; inclusion not exclusion; and, respect for the beliefs of others that are not hurtful to their fellow human being.

Using Bible verses to defend one's actions would seem more fitting if the passages called upon were not so selective. The very chapters of our Bible that find homosexuality "detestable" (Leviticus 18:22), or in some versions "an abomination," also finds eating shell fish "an abomination" (Lev 11:10). Leviticus also finds tattoos (Lev 19:28) and clipping "...the sides of your head or clip(ping) the edges of your beard (Lev 19:27) unacceptable." There is also an admonition against planting "...your field with two kinds seed," (Lev 19:19) or wives wearing "...clothing woven of two kinds of material." (Lev 19:19).

These same passages state that possession of slaves is acceptable if they are "...purchased from a neighboring nation." (Lev 25:44) Also, "Whoever does any work on it (the Sabbath) must be put to death (Exodus 35:2). We won't even get into selling children into slavery for their transgressions! These are hardly the verses which we want to be the model for us, or our family's behavior. How can some religious leaders promote some of these verses while forgetting, or explaining away the others?

Bigotry has been removed from most religions, but not all churches. During the last election, we received messages (ostensibly from some religious groups) spreading fear about President Obama's color and his family containing Muslim members, or that he might be hiding his "true" Muslim beliefs. Should Christians worry that Jesus came from Jewish heritage and thus His message is suspect?

The often-asked question, “What Would Jesus Do?” rings in our ears every time we see a group excluding (judging) others, whether it is for racial, ethnic, gender or sexual orientation. Whatever happened to the ideas of God is Love, The Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments?

Our prayer is we can all work together to make our community and our country and our world a better place to live. Because someone is different from us need not be a reason to fear or exclude them...we all can become better people by rejecting judgementalness and embracing love. We believe it is what all great religious leaders in history really envisioned for man- and woman-kind.

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