

Walking humbly

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Just as loving mercy is a means to doing justice, so is walking humbly with God. Yet in the sexuality debates raging in the mainline church, humility is seldom easy to find. Both sides cling to the fiction that they harbor gospel truth.

In 2001 I was appointed to the Presbyterian Church (USA) national task force charged with helping the denomination find a new way forward out of three decades of ecclesiastical warfare. This group, comprised of 20 individuals chosen for their theological diversity, was given five years to do its work. I was the only openly gay person around the table.

We came to a startling and unanimous conclusion: the conflicted camps each hold views that are biblical and faithful, even though they reach diametrically opposite conclusions. We confessed that we live in an age of paradox and ambiguity in regard to issues of ordination and same-gender relationships, and that we need to make room in our polity for these views to co-exist. Interestingly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reached the same conclusion three years later.

It took lots of time, energy, commitment and courage for the members of our task force to leave the self-assuredness of our well-honed positions and acknowledge a measure of faithfulness in the views of those with whom we disagree. Such humility is a rare commodity these days, particularly when it comes to hot-button issues like sex.

Walking humbly can be a means to justice. By acknowledging that our views are a *partial* expression of gospel truth--as are the views of those who disagree with us--we make room for the other in our midst. That was my experience with 19 diverse

Presbyterians. Now I long for the whole church to discover this as well.