

Dancing with ourselves?

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March 10, 2012

It's been a few months since the Presbyterian Church (USA) overturned its ban against those who are in same-gender relationships to serve as deacons, elders, and ministers in our church. Now, there are a lot of things we are slogging through as a denomination. How many churches will leave? How can we ordain LGBTQ men and women, but not bless a same-gender marriage?

It is a time of transition for progressives, especially for those of us who have been working, hoping and praying for the moment when gays and lesbians can serve openly. With the exodus of conservative congregations along with the generational shift (overwhelmingly, people in younger generations do not see same-gender relationships as a problem), we will probably not be going back.

I do not, in any way, want to minimize the struggle that many of us have been in to make sure that we have LGBTQ leaders in our church. But at this important time, I do hope that we can turn our focus outward.

Our progressive voice has been startling absent in the last weeks. I'm saddened at how the debate around contraception has been framed as religion vs. women. When we see the panel of gathered experts, the men of religion, many don't even know the difference between contraception and abortion. My heart aches. What about all of the women of faith who care about both? What about the men who do not want rights taken away from women? Why aren't progressive churches all over this issue?

Is it because we have spent too much time dancing with ourselves? I worry that in the last decade, progressives spent overwhelming resources to try and influence certain issues *within* the church, while we have lost our voice *outside* of the church.

Do we spend more time, in closed rooms trying to articulate to other church professionals why we are right, than we have with speaking to the media and articulating to the larger world why we believe in the inclusive love of God?

Do we spend money to try to influence our national denominational assemblies, while we ignore the public square?

Do we spend more time worrying about churches leaving the denomination than we do thinking about how we will plant new ones?

Do we spend our influence teaching one another how to listen to each other and how to make peace within our bodies, while we ignore the protests and longings of a new generation?

Can we begin to move our focus outward now? Can we speak against the injustices toward women? Can we seek justice in our immigration legislation? Can we think creatively about poverty and homelessness? I know many people have been doing this all along... but can we have a renewed focus?