



That All May Freely Serve  
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Pictures: [www.tamfspics.org](http://www.tamfspics.org)

December 2014

Dear Friends,

All of us at That All May Freely Serve wish you a Merry Christmas and Holiday Season! This mission that you support with your prayers, presence and resources continues to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Deep and heartfelt is our gratitude for you and our many friends who walk this Emmaus Road with us.

It is remarkable to write to you during this Advent-time in the life of the denomination. Decades of charges against our community and the endless associated trials have all but dissolved in the Presbyterian Church (USA), being replaced by a growing congregational welcome of our sisters and brothers who identify Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Non-Gender Conforming and Otherwise (LGTBTQ). We are changing the church and the world.

We are in a time of *kairos* – the “right and opportune time” for us to witness the presence of God in our midst in stunning ways. It is true: When the process of ratification to change to the definition of marriage in our constitution is approved by a majority of the presbyteries in the months ahead (Amendment 14F), *virtually all of the discriminatory polity and language that has been used to divide us will have been removed from an otherwise Christian and affirming constitution.*

This prophetic witness to the world by a mainline Protestant denomination, the PC(USA), has only just begun. The spiritual repercussions of this new era of Justice and Love in the opening of the PC(USA) to all – is life-giving and a tribute to you and the too many who have sacrificed too long to bring us to this point in God’s plan. It is a new beginning in a new time of reconciliation and healing; a ministry we continue to embrace.

## Community of the All – So That All May Serve

That All May Freely Serve's core ministry is one of prayer, presence and advocacy, making sure that *any time, any one, anywhere reaches out for help we are physically there through our Community of the All.*

Our "Community of the All" – our national grass roots network - is growing; we have more folks every day who know this journey and are available to help should others in their congregations, neighborhoods and communities reach out. We are increasingly able to be quickly present with others across the country. We all know that loneliness, especially in the midst of struggle, can become the worst of all conditions and outcomes. We will not ignore this and thank you for your help.

Together, we can be there for others in whatever ways are needed, using our knowledge of the resources within the denomination, as well as our own local communities. We listen, meet the person where they are, and always make sure they know that God loves them and that they are not alone. From there...the rest follows.

## Conversations for Transitional Times



l. to r.: Sonny Swenston-Forbes, Alex McNeill, Nicole Howard Lock, Paul Detterman, Nathan Sobers, Jerry Andrews, Lois Andrews, Robin White, Randy Bush, Jessica Tate, Christopher Edmonston, Mark Brewer, Brian Ellison and Moi (behind the camera!)

Change is work. That All May Freely Serve has continued full collaboration with all our Progressive Partners, and we have been part of expanding conversations with our Conservative Evangelical friends and their leadership. Along with Covenant Network of Presbyterians, More Light Presbyterians, NEXT Church, Parity (formerly Presbyterian Welcome), and The Fellowship – we are founding members of a group originally convened by former Moderator Neal Presa early in his term.

In October 2014, our group met for the fourth time. After three days together, we issued our second joint document, assuring presbytery and synod leadership that they were in our prayers during these transitional times and upcoming votes. We extended our willingness to be available to share our experience in finding sacred ground in our midst, even as we struggled.

## 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, Detroit, Michigan



We were “all-in” at the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Detroit, MI sharing a booth with That All May Freely Serve – Michigan, engaging in hundreds of amazing and moving conversations with folks from all around the country. We talked about our lives, our denomination, and the struggle for equality and safety for all.

We witnessed and testified before committees, with many of us serving as commissioners. We stood together with the denomination as the stunning decisions of the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly were announced. Yes! Our pastors have the authority to marry us. Yes! We will send the change for the definition of marriage in our constitution to the presbyteries for ratification. Yes! Yes! Yes!

It was an assembly unlike any other; an assembly that has now set the work of reconciliation and healing before us all.

### Chronicling!

You can keep track of all this and more on our website and social media sites, as well as in pictures and video! Just go to [www.tamfspics.org](http://www.tamfspics.org). Media are updated regularly and can be downloaded without restrictions (in most cases). Have pictures you’d like to add to the gallery? Email or call us. We’d love to include your photos and stories

### Reversals: Benton v. Hudson River

In 1999, The Rev. Marc Benton originated charges against the leadership of South Presbyterian Church in Dobbs Ferry, NY and the Presbytery of Hudson River for conducting Holy Unions that were considered to be marriages. The charges were another example of the assault against our community that seemed to be never-ending for so many years.

After rulings by the Synod of the Northeast and an appeal to the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC), “Benton v. Hudson River” was the outcome. This decision was used in judicial and disciplinary charges, trials and other rulings against many of our friends, including Revs. Dr. Janie Spahr, Jean Southard, and Dr. Janet Edwards.

Earlier this year, Rev. Benton contacted Retired Stated Clerk Harriet Sandmeier, expressing his desire to address the Presbytery of Hudson River and apologize for the harm he had done. He wished to make clear his repentance following years of bible study, as well as his support for marriage equality. Along with others, including the Leadership of the Presbytery of Hudson River and Rev. Dr. Mark Achtemeier, we helped Rev. Benton achieve his desire to address the Presbytery of Hudson River on September 9, 2014. You can read the press release and Rev. Benton's statement to the Presbytery on our website at [www.tamfs.org](http://www.tamfs.org). Click on the blog entitled: "Repentance and forgiveness...a beginning" from September 16, 2014.

The road to healing continues to be a long and difficult one, but footsteps can be heard on this Emmaus trail; we are grateful for these recent turns of events in moving us forward.

### Seminaries, Ordinations, Marriage

In the last 12 months, we have met with seminarians and leaders at Whitworth Seminary, Spokane, WA; San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Rafael, CA; Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, and Austin Theological Seminary in Austin, TX.

Over the last year we have spoken in many churches and gatherings, including Old Stone Church in Cleveland, Ohio during Gay Games 9 at the request of Rev. Dr. Mark Giuliano, Senior Pastor. Be sure to visit this gracious, creative and welcoming congregation when in Cleveland. [www.oldstonechurch.org](http://www.oldstonechurch.org).

In November, we served with Janie on Rev. Babs Miller's commission and participated in her ordination at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX. The day before, we attended the ordination of The Rev. Layton Williams at Central Presbyterian Church, also in Austin. Layton currently serves as Pastoral Resident at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago. There's something going on in Austin!



And, we gratefully continue to celebrate with our friends as they have married. This summer nearly all of Chicago gathered to witness the wedding of Gail Russell and Gerri Mead at Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church! The wedding was performed by The Revs. Beth Buckingham-Brown and Dr. Janie Adams Spahr all with the authority of the Presbyterian Church (USA)! Yes!



### Remembering Pam Byers

Sadly, in the midst of our progress, we have remembered those who have gone on to their Great Reward after tireless and selfless service to our denomination and this movement. We remember Pam Byers, especially honoring her remarkable contributions to the Covenant Network of Presbyterians. We have never forgotten that the changes we welcome today are possible because of saints like Pam and others who always believed and always persevered. We love and honor them with all our hearts by upholding their presence and work in our lives. (Pam at the 221<sup>st</sup> GA in June, Detroit, MI)

### That All May Freely Serve welcomed by the Presbytery of Genesee Valley

The work of folks like Pam and others has made it possible for the Progressive Movement in our denomination to play important missional roles. Earlier this year, That All May Freely Serve was validated as a specialized ministry of Presbytery of Genesee Valley, without objection. We are grateful to this presbytery and its Leadership for witnessing the Gospel in the radical hospitality it demands for all. We are grateful to all those who continue to prepare the way for a truly inclusive world.

*Have car...* We have traveled the county, again, being present with many hundreds of folk in worship, conferences, and those deeply quiet and sacred conversations that suspend time and space when the language of the heart: Love – is shared.

I am always reminded of what I have always known to be true: That All May Freely Serve has long been part of a *national virtual congregation, in which we serve*. This has been true since the Downtown United Presbyterian Church started That All May Freely Serve by calling Janie in 1993. Since then, this mission has grown through the leadership, care and enduring witness of Lisa Larges, board members, and countless volunteers. Today, we continue in this tradition.

The tradition, prophecy and more were on view on Friday night, October 24<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at The Downtown Church, Rochester, NY. On that occasion, Rev. Dr. Janie Spahr delivered the *Charge to the Congregation* following the installation of Rev. Dr. Pat Youngdahl as pastor of The Downtown United Presbyterian Church. This was the same call Janie had been denied years before. A denial that burst open with the congregation's creation of That All May Freely Serve. All leading to this evening of celebration for Pat and the congregation that resounded in "Yes!"



We continue with your prayers and support

Friends, we cherish your prayers and your voice in this work, so please let us know how we might be helpful to you, your congregations and others who may wish to hear from us.

We are working on plans for gatherings in 2015 that will bring us together to celebrate our lives and seek discerning guidance and visions for the road ahead. We are also close to rolling-out our smart phone and mobile device app that we expect to become an important resource in building and sustaining our outreach and grass roots communications in a spirit of sharing and collaboration. More to come...

And with all our love, we thank you for your continued prayers, the difference you make every day in the lives of others, and the many ways in which you support us.

As we move closer to transitioning That All May Freely Serve into a fully volunteer organization, we are able to use more than 80% of all financial gifts to support our outreach. Mine is the only paid position, for which I receive \$15,600, the maximum allowed under Social Security. Fortunately, my retirement from teaching provides me with health care and insurance – so your donations really go a very long way!

If you would like to send a financial gift, please [www.tamfs.org](http://www.tamfs.org) and click on the donation tab. If you have already sent your gift, thank you!

That said, if this is a time when a donation is not possible, we understand and invite you to send a note, a prayer, a picture or the gentle touch of your spirit, however you might wish to do so. Rose petals are always welcome! ☺

We are *congregation* and *community* - and grateful for the many blessings and gifts God has bestowed on us all... especially you!

Peace,

Rev. Ray Bagnuolo  
That All May Freely Serve



***Merry Christmas!***

All these pictures and more at [www.tamfspics.org](http://www.tamfspics.org)