



That All May Freely Serve
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“Merry Christmas!” In the wake of election results, in the midst of Standing Rock, in this Advent of all that is to come, “Merry Christmas!” Emmanuel!

We know what has always been true, that the presence of God in our lives reflects Joy that is deeper and greater than any disturbance or tragedy, no matter how hard it is to bear. And, we know that to travel this world together calls us to care for one another. May this Season of Christmas be a Season of Caring and, if we can be of any help, just call on us. We are good listeners and always welcome your calls, emails or contact on social media. We are here to help.

So, “Merry Christmas!” – not in *spite* of it all – but *because* of it all and the God-given love we have to share.

To start, let me say that *I know this letter is a bit long*. It’s been a long year! However, we write to you only once a year at this time. So, as your time permits, I hope you will read this through, a bit at a time, all at once – maybe more than once! Also, all the links that are referred to in this letter will be posted on our web page at www.tamfs.org, so you don’t have to copy them, unless you want to! Also, this letter will be posted on our site with live links embedded. So, on with our review...

All-Volunteer Goal Met!

In the last four years of our work, *That All May Freely Serve* has reconnected and expanded the great witness among us from coast-to-coast. Our early goal to grow a network of “chaplains” and “helpers” around the country – ready and willing to support and stand by each other – has exceeded all expectations. As never before, we have the ability to move quickly into contact with the thousands of folks among us, assisting each other in reaching out in all sorts of ways. This vision brings us closer together in such ways thought to be impossible not long ago!

As a result of this and other efforts, as of December 1, 2016, *That All May Freely Serve* is a 100% volunteer organization. Over the last four years, we have intentionally functioned with a decreasing dependence on financial support for salaries and stipends, reaching this milestone in organizing our ministry that now directs all resources to our work and related expenses, such as travel. It means that 100% of all contributions bear no salary burdens. We are very pleased to announce this redesign in our funding model that we believe serves all in the best of ways!

The Rev. Dr. Jane Adams Spahr, Lesbian Evangelist Emerita & Ed Saphar, Liaison and Guide

I want to offer a special thanks to Janie and to Ed! Over the last four years, both of these friends of ours have been a steady presence and guide to us, sharing their experience, strength and hope in ways that have helped us serve with a focus on the Gospel and a purpose for all we do.

Ed has been our liaison with The Downtown Church in Rochester, New York, along with always being available for the guidance that I continue to appreciate greatly. I could not have done this work without Ed's support. It's that simple.

Janie. Janie's legendary generosity and energy have lifted me up more than once over these last four years! Her time and travel on behalf of *That All May Freely Serve* have encouraged and pastored to countless scores of others in ways that describe ministry, kindness and a firm hold on Justice and Love. What a leader! What a friend!

And, because of the generosity of our givers and grantors for the last two years, we have been able place Janie on a stipend of \$750/month, also paying her expenses as she traveled around the country on behalf of us all. Janie's stipend was the only salary-related expenditure for the last nine months of 2016, with my stipend phased out completely, as of March 31st of this year, when it reached \$3,000.

We are grateful to Janie and will continue to support Janie's travel expenses on behalf of *That All May Freely Serve*, as we go forward and as we are able.

The Jane Adams Spahr Reconciling Initiative: Passing it on!

Janie and I will continue to travel and be available as we are able, while recognizing the importance of passing on whatever help we may in supporting those who will carry this work into the future. It is why the creation of the "Jane Spahr Reconciliation Initiative (JSRI) – An Outreach to the Presbyterian Church" is such exciting news!

Founded by San Francisco Theological Seminary with the vision and help of many good friends, especially Bear Ride, Janie, Scott Clark, and Floyd Thompkins this joining together of leadership from other progressive groups within the PC(USA) creates a new ministry for outreach across the country. It parallels and strengthens the broad networking/connectivity and messaging that is still needed in this ongoing work of Justice/Love, taking us forward in challenging and important ways:

"The Spahr Reconciliation program hopes to help the denomination live into its promise of inclusion by opening up opportunities for congregations to experience the many ways the LGBTQ Presbyterians are called to serve the church, and to recognize even more deeply the full dignity and humanity of all families." – www.innovation.sfts.edu/spahr-reconciliation/

That All May Freely Serve is committed to supporting this initiative. We are pleased to be a member of the steering committee, joining with others in this maturing process for the movement and the ways in which we can work together for greater witness and impact. We would be pleased with your support of this initiative, should you choose to do so, even if it meant that we might not be on your giving list this year! We believe in this initiative to that degree and see its potential for changing our way of mutual witness and collaboration in the work of Justice/Love. We believe this to be a very good thing.

General Assembly: The Disappointment and the Promise

The JSRI emerged following difficult times at our 222nd General Assembly in Portland, Oregon in June. The terrible *Pulse* attack had just taken place. Shortly after, GA222 fought back an overture for healing the wounds of many years of harms done to the LGBTQ community, precluding us from being part of the national voice of healing in the aftermath of *Pulse*. It was a moment of prophetic witness and evangelism lost.

The “Healing Overture” called for the PCUSA, as an institution, to acknowledge the harms it had done to the Queer community over the last forty years of our struggle. Included in the overture was a call for an apology and affirmation of working together in the future to assure that all knew of our exceptional legislative progress and growing welcome. Of the three national progressive groups – *The Covenant Network of Presbyterians*, *More Light Presbyterians*, and *That All May Freely Serve* – only *That All May Freely Serve* supported the overture it had authored, which was initially passed by The Presbytery of New York City and concurred with by the Presbyteries of Genesee Valley, Chicago and Hudson River. *The Covenant Network of Presbyterians* opposed the overture and worked successfully for a substitute motion “of regret” that eventually passed.

It was a disappointment for many of us who had prayed and hoped for a united and active prophetic voice in moving us beyond the weight of decades of mistreatments that continue to obscure our progress and welcome. Still, a conversation was begun and there will be more work on this to come. Hopefully, our voice and intentions were heard in a way that helps add to the progress that is ahead, but it was a tough experience, especially at a time of shock and grieving for those lost in the *Pulse* attack, for whom we continue to pray.

Yet, the joy of being able to do this work, even when it turns out differently than we expect lives on. And, at the General Assembly it was lifted up just by being in the presence of so many good friends, including Sonnie Swenson-Forbes, Janie Spahr, Cleve Evans, Kyle Walker, Ted Coppock, Jim Nedelka, Helene Loper, Bob Brashear, Peggy Howland, Susan De George, Kathy Dean and many, many more. I hope you will visit our gallery at www.ga222.photos to “visit” with many of your friends who gathered at GA.

Saying Farewell to Carol Seaton

One of our dearest of friends at this GA was *Rock Star and Prophet* Carol Seaton, who left us in November following setbacks from a series of strokes. We have been blessed, led and influenced by Carol’s spirit and her love of others throughout the many years of her work with *That All May Freely Serve* and the church. We hold Carol’s wife Mickie Williams in our hearts and prayers – still finding it hard to believe that Carol now leads and loves us from a different place. We are fortunate to have video interviews we conducted with Carol at our *Rock Stars & Prophets: Generations of Justice and Love* gathering in April of 2015. You can view those interviews on our website at www.tamfs.org. We miss you, Carol...

Building an Ecumenical Archival Resource of Progressive Movements

That All May Freely Serve is serving as the Presbyterian (USA) representative on a newly formed group led by Mark Bowman of the LGBT/Religious Archives Network (LGBT/RAN) out of Chicago. The focus is to create an archival resource of the history of progressive movements across denominations. Along with the PC(USA), those who are engaged in this massive commitment to recording this her/history are: LGBT/RAN, The Metropolitan Community Church, Dignity, Open & Affirming: United Church of Christ, Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), Welcoming and

Affirming Baptists, Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion – Pacific School of Religion, Integrity, and Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM). More denominations are being added as this is written. Convened in the late summer of 2016, we are in the planning stages for our first conference in the New Year. The Carpenter Foundation has recently approved a grant to help us in embracing this important effort. It is an exciting time and we are pleased to be part of the group. More to come... See more about LGBT/RAN at www.lgbtran.org.

Ordinations & Installations: Lisa Larges, Susan Thomas, Dwain Lee and Ray Bagnuolo

That All May Freely Serve's beginnings were to make sure that all who were called would be able to serve. These last ten years have produced stunning legislative results from decades of enormous effort and sacrifice. While at the moment in the PC(USA) there are fewer than fifteen installed pastors who were out when called – this is slowly changing, as congregations and their PNC's become more open to the gifts of our candidates who identify as Queer. And three of our gifted and open candidates have been called to serve in just the last few months!

Lisa Larges was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in South Minneapolis, Minnesota. What an amazing day and witness following more than two decades of Lisa's ministry of justice and persistence, as her call was constantly challenged and delayed in church courts. Lisa, who served as *That All May Freely Serve's* exceptional Minister Director following Janie's retirement, was surrounded by family and hundreds of friends from across the country who were not going to miss this day! More than a few tears of joy were shed and you can view all the pictures of Lisa's ordination at www.lisaordination.com, as well as watch the full video of her service of ordination on our website at www.tamfs.org!

By the way, Senior Pastor Kara Root, the Lake Nokomis Session and its congregation *created* the position of Associate Pastor so that Lisa could be called, ordained and installed to serve them. *All* it took was faith, courage and the willingness to make a bold and prophetic statement: "Now, is the time!" We are so grateful to all the folks at Lake Nokomis – almost as grateful as we know they are for Lisa! ☺

While Lisa will continue her work at the Minnesota State Department for the Visually Impaired, a fund has been established to help support Lisa's ministry at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church. If you are so inclined, you are invited to share in Lisa's ministry by making a gift at www.lakenokimisp.org. Navigate to News & Events and then to Lisa Larges' Ordination!

By the way, if you direct your financial gift to Lisa this year, we say, "Thank you!" as much as if it were given to TAMFS!

And there was more good news and joy in October!

Susan Thomas, our faithful friend and long-term leader in the church and *That All May Freely Serve* was called, ordained and installed as pastor at Trinity Congregational Church in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Surrounded by family, friends and a vibrant and enthusiastic congregation, Susan literally danced her way to her ordination. Janie gave the sermon, Janice Van Derbur and Linda Noyes traveled from Houston to be there and with all present witnessed a celebration in the life of the church and beginning of another path for all to follow. Pictures of Susan's celebration can be viewed at www.susanethomas.com. (You can see her dance there, too!)

Dwain Lee, our good friend and minister who is openly gay, was called and installed to serve as the Pastor of Springdale Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The PNC sent this letter to the members of the church following its decision to call Dwain, summarizing all we could say and more:

“Our decision to extend the call to Rev. Dwain Lee to serve as our Pastor was not one of intellect, nor one of emotion, but rather was a decision arising out of prayer, which we all agree was answered by God. During our lengthy process of search and discernment over a period of nine months, during which we reviewed nearly 100 Pastor Information Forms and conducted numerous telephone and personal interviews, it became clear to us that God was leading us in the direction of a change that we had not anticipated. Ultimately, the call to Rev. Dwain Lee came from God as a result of our tenacious discernment, and we acknowledged that we were commissioned to be messengers of the decision to which we were led by the Holy Spirit.” –

www.springdalechurch.org/candidate.html

Please take a few moments when you are able to read the full text of this powerful statement and learn more about Dwain. We extend to Dwain and the congregation of Springdale Presbyterian Church our blessings and thanks!

Ray Bagnuolo (Yes, that’s me!) I am pleased to let you know that my 65th birthday arrived on November 6th and less than a month later I received a call to serve as installed pastor of Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ in Sayville, New York! This wonderful congregation was the first “Open and Affirming” congregation in the UCC. They have continued as a strong witness for Black Lives Matter, Gun Control, Green Movement – embracing the Gospel of Justice and Love with all their hearts and energy. I will be offering my candidating sermon in January and, if the way be clear, begin serving as a pastor on a part-time basis. You just never know how God will call you! I am so grateful and humbled for this invitation, and I am happy to be able to remain in the area, continuing the work of *That All May Freely Serve* in the other part of part-time! ☺ www.sayvilleucc.org

Into the 2020’s: That All May Freely Serve – Following the Call

Presence & Pastoral Care:

Moving into the next five years, we have a glimpse of what our ministry will be. There is a good chance that in five years when we look back, we will realize how little we knew of what was going to be demanded of us. Whatever it may be, as we have before, we will stand with the Gospel and one another and all those who seek Justice and Love.

So into the future as we know it today, our work of providing a presence when needed and pastoral care when requested will continue to be the primary ministry of *That All May Freely Serve*. Each year, dozens of requests come to us for help in many different ways, and we do our best to be there when needed and direct resources to help. This is the quiet pastoral care that is not publicized and that will never be known outside the circle of those requesting care and those who provide it. This is our most important work to our Queer community, family and friends and those yet to know us.

Video Narratives & Blogs – Going Live! www.tamfs.org

We went live! streaming Lisa’s ordination at her request as it occurred. It was a fabulous success! It proved to us that this is something that we can do as part of our work and archiving videos of all kinds. More to come in developing this social media and connectivity effort, continuing to draw us together in all the ways we can.

Progressive Leaders & Standing Rock:

We regularly add to our video library of individuals in our movement and causes for justice that make us allies and surmount boundaries. Currently, we are collecting and publishing a series of video interviews on the Standing Rock Movement. Our first video with Rick Ufford-Chase, former Moderator of the PC(USA) has been posted online. Others will follow in the days ahead.

Sanctuary Movement:

This important protection on many levels will be a central focus for us in the months ahead. We are planning a series of interviews on Sanctuary from a wide range of dimensions. Specifically, we are requesting input from around the country about how communities of faith (and communities in general) are preparing themselves to provide sanctuary; we are expecting the demand to increase for sanctuary and sanctuary support throughout our community and others.

Telling Our Stories:

We always collect stories! We are growing this library by asking you to submit your narrative about life in this movement and your community, using your devices to record and send it in to our digital witness archive. Who we are and the ability to use technology to bring us closer together and offering powerful witness and resources for those who need to come to know us, both near and far – is a bold and prophetic view of what *all* is all about.

With Great Thanks and Gratitude...

There are many folks to thank, especially all of you who have kept us in your prayers, been there when guidance, participation or a listening ear was needed, as well as your magnificent generosity in supporting this work.

And there are those to whom special thanks is called for! That includes The Downtown Church in Rochester, New York and the Rev. Dr. Pat Youngdahl, Session and congregation who have provided so much assistance over the years. Along with administering our finances, these folks have honored us with funds from the Ginny Davidson Fund on an annual basis, designated to support justice ministries related to the LGBTQ community.

And Jim Rees! If there is someone whose dedication deserves to have his love and generosity lifted up – it is Jim! For as long as *That All May Freely Serve* has had a presence at The Downtown Church he and his wife Mary have been there for us. Jim continues to handle all our contributions, keeping records and sending out our letters of appreciation and year-end statements of giving for tax purposes. There is only one Jim Rees and we love him – and love Mary for sharing him with us! So grateful to you both...

Along with the folks mentioned, a special call out to the staff at The Downtown Church that oversees the administration of our finances, in particular Dave Mear and Teresa Ward. Thanks to you both and all the staff for your commitment in helping us in our ministry. You are very much appreciated.

Lastly, a sincere thanks to the Presbytery of Genesee Valley that embraces *That All May Freely Serve* as its own, sending us forth as a validated ministry within the PC(USA). On a personal note to the General Presbyter Amy Fowler and all the members of the Committee on Ministry, please know that your commitment to this justice outreach continues to change lives through the Gospel we share. This work with your support reaches far and wide and with it comes appreciation to you all from across the country and all those we serve. Thank you!

And to you, please accept this as an invitation to join us in any way you can. With the help of one another across this country, with the hearts we have to share, the spirit and resources that abound and all that is to come – we remain a steadfast and determined witness to initiating and implementing the changes needed in our LGBTQ community, this church and for all those we may touch.

As my friend and mentor John E. “Jack” Lynch always said, “We have only just begun – again!” Yes, we have, Jack. Yes we have.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support. Please contact me any time. Even just to say, “Hello!”

I love you and hearing from you!

Merry Christmas and Joy to the World – and Love, Love, Love –

Ray Bagnuolo, Chaplain
That All May Freely Serve

Online Note: “Heart & Soul” – In our mailings, we included a copy of “Heart & Soul” – our publication for GA222, which included stories by many of the folks you would know! If you would like a copy, please let me know and we will send one to you. Forward your mailing information to: ray@tamfs.org

Giving:

We welcome you gifts, either by going to <http://bit.ly/1m8jWAg> or by scanning the QR Code below.



Whichever you choose, if any, thank you
and thanks for keeping us in your prayers and caring for one another!