

Dear One,

This year an overture is coming before our General Assembly in Portland, Oregon. This overture invites the church to acknowledge the harm done to so many of us, our families, and friends.

To help us in our efforts, could I ask you to take a few moments to share your struggle with the PC(USA)? It would be so helpful to hear your story and I know how much it would mean for people at GA to read it. We will share your narratives at That All May Freely Serve's booth, with the GA Social Justice committee, with More Light Presbyterians, with Covenant Network of Presbyterians, with Presbyterian Voices for Justice and with so many of our friends and allies as well as with commissioners.

Because of the hard work and sacrifices of so many of us in this struggle for a fully welcoming and inclusive church, the PC(USA) has changed and has constitutionally approved ordination and marriage equality. However, policy is one thing; practice is another. Educate, educate, educate! We still have a huge task in changing attitudes and dispelling myths and impacting the ongoing mistreatment of our community.

Overture 050, now Item 11-05, will be deliberated by the Social Justice Committee in June at the General Assembly. It calls for the "*Admission of, and Apology for, Harms done to the LGBTQ/Q Members of the PC(USA), Family and Friends,*" which was authored by That All May Freely Serve and first passed by the Session of South Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY and then by The Presbytery of New York City. The overture has received concurrences from the Presbyteries of Genesee Valley, Chicago, and New York. This important step for an institutional acknowledgement of the harm it has done will hopefully help to initiate reconciliation and healing in the church, our community and beyond.

Ray Bagnuolo, Chaplain and Minister Director of That All May Freely Serve, would love to hear from all of us about our journeys during these times. These stories will be used to create a booklet for the General Assembly, hoping to help others understand the harms that have been done. Harms which need to be acknowledged if we are ever to become a truly welcoming church. If you send Ray a picture with your story - it will be included in the booklet, as well.

I know that some of us are no longer part of the PC(USA). I also know that to revisit your struggle may be painful. However, I also know how meaningful it would be to hear from you. So, if you can...

We are asking that you share about your time in the PC(USA), reflecting on the pain caused by the church and the harms it did to you and others in this work for justice/love. Further, could you comment on how you believe (or not) that the proposed step for the church to admit the harms it has done to our community and friends will move us toward reconciliation and healing?

We are asking for your response by May 15th to give us time to put this together. Please be sure to let us know if you wish us to use your name or if you would prefer to remain anonymous in your comments.

Please send your picture and story to Ray Bagnuolo at TAMFS.org with a cc: to me at jane@spahr.com. You can also call Ray at 914-217-4173 if you have further questions.

It would be important if you could send this email on to others who too would want their story told or refer them to our website at www.tamfs.org where this letter is posted, along with more information about the overture. We will be in Portland from June 17th to June 25th. If you are in the area please stop by and visit us at Booth 255 in the convention center.

With love and gratitude,

Janie Spahr, Lesbian Evangelist Emerita
That All May Freely Serve

www.tamfs.org www.facebook.com/TAMFS @tamfs 914-417-2173
Overture link: www.pc-biz.org/#/search/6335