



A rainbow
can only
exist where there
is light.

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

getting to the point that they are simply tired of this issue being thrust upon them by the UCC leadership as though it is the most pressing issue facing the church. There are issues which affect a lot more people within our churches for which the UCC national office could provide some valuable leadership. Was I the head of our church (not very likely) we would declare a several years moratorium on talking much about LGBTQ issues. Clearly those who align with those initials deserve fair treatment in all of the ways that it could be construed, and the church has a role in that, but beyond that specific social justice issue I would like to see us back up (not back down) and talk about problems with a greater scope.

There are probably very few 'perfect' families or persons within UCC congregations which/who have not been affected by the pernicious effects of addiction to drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, eating, hoarding (greed), the consequences of inappropriate relationships, distressed marriages (with bewildered children), the abuse of power (violence in the home, abuse and oppression) and untreated mental problems. The root causes of many of these issues are people feeling constrained, lonely and/or isolated, depressed, threatened, fearful, powerless or alienated. Our inherent tendency to be self-absorbed compels us to wrest control of our lives away from the care of Jesus and set up on our own, trying to run our own show and making choices that we think might make us feel just a little bit better right this minute, anytime we feel uncomfortable, afraid, threatened or off balance.

There is no practical limit to the amount of light available except that which we impose on ourselves as stubborn humans. God will continue pouring the light of his Spirit into us to the extent that we are open to receiving it. One of the concerns I have about the recent increased emphasis on LGBTQ issues within the UCC national leadership is that as a social justice crusade it is inefficient, in my opinion. During the past 50 years of talking about this issue the debates seem to become increasingly more strident on both sides as contrasted with converging toward any real consensus. I doubt this will change much during the next 50 years. Many people in the congregations in the Midwest are

Because of our own tendencies to close ourselves off from the light of the Spirit mentioned in this slide (I assume this is the light that is implied) we limit our willingness to trust Jesus to do what he has promised he will do in our lives if we invite him to take the helm. Our principle focus needs to be on the reality of Jesus, not on the latest popular cause. Causes are good to care about and have been the business of the church forever. However, we should step back and look at the motivation for working on peace and justice issues.

Sustained work in this area is not based on us believing we should do the `right thing. Sustained work is based on our understanding that we are created in the image of God who loves people, helps people and cares for people. We were designed with the same spiritual nature and when we make Jesus the central focus of our lives we begin to recognize that nothing other than loving people, helping people and caring for people is going to make us happy and fulfilled. We also begin to appreciate that we lack both the ability and the motivation to sustain a life-long pursuit of the only things that will make us truly happy without trusting Jesus and asking him to enter into the management of our lives in a supernatural way. It is Jesus that enables us to care about the things that are actually in our ultimate best interests. This is how we were designed to be happy, but that fact stands in tension with our inherent natural state of being self-absorbed in ways that we will never fully recognize until that state begins to diminish and begins to be replaced with something more wholesome.

The denomination has the cart before the horse in claiming that the problem with acceptance of the LGBTQ issues are based on lack of light, in my opinion. Actually lack of light is the root cause of a whole host of aforementioned problems facing families and individuals. These problems affect many more of our congregants than the LGBTQ issues. This is one of the reasons I believe that the church focusing so much of its attention on this issue is an inefficient use of our mental and emotional energy. Asserting that these LGBTQ issues are the most important issues facing the church when many of us recognize that they are really not is a lot like trying to hold a cat on your lap so you can pet it when it wants to be elsewhere. It can be done but neither you nor the cat are going to find it very satisfying.

The better role for the denomination's leadership is recommending curriculums or resources for youth and adult education that teach us how to draw closer to Jesus and trust him more and experience the consequent desires to act in ways that are consistent with our spiritual design and to honor Him. When this happens we tend to start thinking of others at least as often as we think of ourselves, our relationships begin to come into alignment, we tend, in general, to be more successful in our varied pursuits and we begin reducing barriers to God pouring a never ending supply of light into our lives which cannot help but spill out onto and perhaps into everything around us. Then there will be adequate light for the issues most of us face and perhaps more light for some of the issues that have captured the attention of the leadership group in Cleveland.

The main thing, is to remember that the main thing (Jesus) is the main thing.