



Love Prevails

revolution 3-D: disclose(t), divest, disrupt

April 2017

LOST IN THE LOCAL OPTION: AN OPEN LETTER

In April 2014, due to the efforts of Love Prevails, the Connectional Table began a process to formulate General Conference legislation that would call for the complete removal of all discriminatory language against LGBTQI people in *The Book of Discipline*. That attempt, however, was internally thwarted and The Connectional Table came to General Conference 2016 with a proposal called the Third Way. Now widely referred to as “The Local Option”, this approach enshrines the geographical discrimination of Queer people in our polity and sets up the highly destructive scenario whereby our very being will be debated and voted on in annual conferences and in our congregations. Such objectification damages the hearts and souls of Queer United Methodists throughout the Connection.

Love Prevails has always opposed The Local Option because it is predicated on the notion that it is morally and theologically defensible to allow continued discrimination within certain geographic locations within our church; thus ecclesially sanctioning the spiritual abuse that accompanies this discrimination.

There are some “progressives” within our denomination who believe that The Local Option is a good and helpful step that with time will eventually and inevitably lead to full inclusion for LGBTQI people. Love Prevails strenuously objects to this kind of thinking. This matter is far too urgent. “More time” translates as more lives lost. We believe that creating pockets of injustice is an intolerable solution which lacks the full force of gospel integrity that will ultimately delay justice for all, rather than hasten it. We see The Local Option as a seductive temptation that will lead to self-satisfaction and complacency.

By now it is quite obvious that the Commission on The Way Forward is the very expensive method by which The Third Way, or The Local Option, will be repackaged. The processes by which The Commission seeks to “listen” to voices across the connection are nothing more than resilience-building sessions for General Conference delegates and annual conferences to desensitize themselves to regionally sanctioned discrimination, the United Methodist’s new normal.

It seems clear that our United Methodist bishops are now moving to more fully support a Local Option because of political, not theological, reasons. Their priority is not justice, but institutional preservation, peddled as “unity.” Their desire to avoid a split and “save the denomination” comes on someone’s back—this time at the expense of Queer United Methodists.

Love Prevails objects to institutional preservation over justice. When we object, *it is not only because* The Local Option will leave some Queer people dangerously vulnerable; *it is not only because* there will still be babies rocking in the cradles of anti-queer annual conferences who will grow to discover they are Queer and not want to relocate in order to find a church where they will be welcomed; *it is because* souls will be lost in The Local Option. Permissive and categorical discrimination kills the souls of LGBTQI people as well as the soul of the church. A church of Jesus Christ cannot survive or thrive with bigotry and intolerance in its heart – and the maintenance of such a church turns the proclamations of Belovedness made at our baptisms into propagandist lies.

Love Prevails is neither for a church split nor against it. We do not advocate for it, but we also do not oppose the possibility. We persistently maintain that the *only way forward* is to remove all of the discriminatory language from *The Book of Discipline*. While full inclusion and justice will not happen immediately upon the removal of the language, there is no possibility for imagining real, comprehensive, intersectional justice or any notion of unity without first removing discriminatory language.

Laci Lee Adams
Laura Ralston

Mary Anne Balmer
Dr. Mary Lou Taylor

Rev. Amy DeLong
Rev. Dr. Julie Todd

Rev. Will Green
Brenda White

Sue Laurie
Rev. Wesley White