

Dear ONA Committee

Thanks for doing such a good job at attempting to educate the congregation on Open and Affirming. I sense that those we are trying to reach are resisting being educated. And I wonder when it will be time to put a face on those the congregation would be accepting and affirming. When the congregation is thinking about gays as "them" and "they" it's easier to dismiss gays as a concept rather than members of the congregation that they know. Will it be as easy to say to the known "out" members of the congregation, "sorry Chris, sorry Bob and Michael, it's nice that you come and pray here, pledge your money and your time here, but no, you're not welcome here." "We don't accept your relationships or your families as those we embrace, we merely put up with you." "We won't allow it if you should ask Donna or Jonathan to bless your relationship in the sanctuary, take it outside, you're not really one of us."

Is it time to point out that when Jesus gave his commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, that each of us should ask ourselves - "did Jesus mean to love my straight neighbor, but I don't have to love my gay neighbor and though I have the right to stand before God and ask my minister to bless my committed relationship in my church, I have every right to deny my gay neighbor the Christian privilege to do the same. "

I don't want the congregation to depersonalize this issue, by politicizing it. This is about people they know. Bob and Michael especially, have given so much to this church. Are they to be marginalized by people that aren't even interested in showing their faces and by others that show up with seemingly only a mission to stop "marriage " in the church?

I'm really angry about this, I am hurt by this. This is my beloved church family, my friends, who are telling me I am less human, less Christian and less deserving than they are. Is that what they mean to say? Is that what they mean for me to think? The opposite of open and affirming is "you're not welcome here" and if they think it means anything else to the people in this congregation who are gay, or our friends and loved ones who support us, they are mistaken.

Yours in Christian faith,  
Chris Palazzolo