

tions and Jewish communities, it is significant to note that the Universal Fellowship is committed to eradicating sexism in its theology, structure and language, as well as in its relationships between women and men.

The ministry of MCC is a shared ministry — of lay and clergy, women and men, Third World and White, Lesbian and Gay and heterosexual."

At first, social awareness and activism of this scope can be startling. Lighting a candle in prayer and support of all those persons affected by AIDS and another for all those who are affected by oppression is one thing. Churches are in the business of praying, after all. Hearing a message from the pulpit which addresses both social and spiritual issues is another matter. Being called to act upon our beliefs is yet another. Those persons who want to sit in a pew visiting God between the hours of ten and noon on a Sunday can have a difficult time in worship services. MCC offers a far greater message than prayer and praise. We are called to act on our beliefs and we are called to go one step further — to live what we say is true.

But, in effect, that is what Jesus called us to do when he told us that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Sovereign, our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourself. Loving God, loving ourselves and loving each other is the essence of the teaching Jesus brought us. The theme of loving God, self and each other runs throughout all he said. In the living of his mortal life, Jesus demonstrated how to live lovingly with self, with God, and with the world. He showed us how to live that love — right now — in real and meaningful ways.

Jesus spoke of loving *your* god — not *the* God, not a God — but a personal God ceases to be an entity off somewhere who may or may not care, whose power is in the future. A personal God is a current, living God — *our* God — with whom we can live in partnership each moment of our lives.

When we believe God is distant, cold, impersonal and judgemental, when we seek God above ourselves, we experience ourself as largely separate from God. When we seek God within ourselves and across from ourselves, we know that we can reach God now. We no longer have to wait until we all get to heaven. When we become willing to recognize the presence of God in ourselves and in our neighbors and all around us, we become willing to realize that God is in all situations and always with us. We begin to know that we do everything as children of God. We understand that whether or not we have always recognized that fact, God has never ceased to recognize us as God's children — no matter where we've been or what we've done. Our living is always with God. We are inseparable.

At the point of this realization, we begin to cease to make the artificial separations which have told us that God is there and then but not here and now. We begin to abandon the notions that this is sacred (of God) and that is secular (separate from God). All of living becomes sacred, and all living becomes a sacrament.

We begin to make choices about whether we act in love to enhance life or whether we act in ways which give us a sense of separation from God, self and others.

Is it life-enhancing to honor the richness and diversity of God's creation? Then Les-

bian and Gay Pride celebrations are sacred, by our expanded definition.

Are civil rights a way of treating God's creation with respect and love? Then civil rights for all are an act of love, as surely as more traditional worship is an act of love.

Is all of our living with God? Then our ministry involves all aspects of our living, and the soul is inseparable.

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