

First Congregational
United Church of Christ



1126 SW PARK AVENUE
503-228-7219

Celebrate
Christmas Eve
With Us

5:30 p.m. Family Service
Children are invited to play actors
in a retelling of the Christmas Story.

10:00 p.m. Concert

10:30 p.m. Candlelight Service
A traditional evening service of carols,
anthems, scripture and sermon.
Rev. Dr. Patricia Ross preaching.

We are an Open & Affirming church
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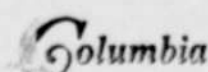


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Have You Hugged
a Fundy Today?

The French philosopher Pascal once mused that no one commits evil more cheerfully than one convinced he is going good. Such is the case with diehard religious fundamentalists who rant against us in the name of love. Convinced we are caught up in a "lifestyle" proscribed by God, they righteously oppose us at every turn. No force on earth is sufficient to persuade them it is homophobia rather than love of truth that motivates them.

When demonized, it is tempting to return the favor. Indeed, the hurt is etched so indelibly in our souls that the mere mention of a name such as Pat Robertson is sufficient to raise our ire as well as our blood pressure. Immediately we think of a hateful, narrow minded bigot incapable of any kindness. Yet, undoubtedly many who know him personally see him in an entirely different light. He claims to cherish many of the same virtues we uphold but superimposes them on a very different worldview than ours.

In the 'Lord's Prayer' Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." This sounds like pious nonsense but it is the most radical of Jesus' teachings. He was not suggesting we do so for the sake of some future reward. He knew that in the very depths of our hearts we can know no peace until we have forgiven those who have wronged us. We do not forgive others for their sake. We forgive them to free ourselves from their toxic hate.

Forgiving those who dehumanize us does not mean ignoring the injustice of their actions. In fact, we can forgive them and stand firmly against them while responding, not in anger, which only harms us, but in love which has the power to transform even our enemies. The civil rights struggle waged by Dr. Martin Luther King movingly demonstrated the efficacy of opposing hate with love.

It is not easy to forgive. It demands a power beyond our own ability and there is no possibility we can forgive until we recognize it is in our own best interest. Then, we can go before God and humbly pray for the grace to do so. It may seem silly to think of hugging fundamentalists (they most likely wouldn't want it anyway) but, if gays in growing numbers actively engaged them in a spirit of love, it would make their efforts to condemn us much tougher. It might even open some of their hearts to accept us as God created us.

A Message from the Anawim Community

A Community of Gay Men Seeking to Follow Jesus
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