

“I Love to Tell The Stories”

A Dramatic Presentation of the Stories of Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and
Transgender People and their Allies

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by the Just Peace Ministry of the Metropolitan Boston Association and the
Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

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An Introduction to the Just Peace Players

The Just Peace Players is a liturgical drama troupe committed to sharing our many visions of peace and justice in innovative ways. The troupe was formed in the early 1990's when five ordained ministers in the Metropolitan Boston Association of the United Church of Christ came together to do bible study. They were inspired to try drama as a way to share God's liberating word with their congregations.

These five gifted women began to create liturgical dramas on critical social justice issues for use in churches and at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ. With the help of a talented lay musician, the Just Peace Players was born. After several years the original Players moved on to other ministries.

Their dream lives on in the current Just Peace Players. Every Player is a minister who volunteers his or her time. We are pursuing God's call teaching at a seminary, designing fiber arts, attending seminary, working at a blood bank, working for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administering professional offices, ministering in churches, with the homeless, and as hospital chaplains. New members join the group as the Spirit moves them, and from time to time members leave to pursue other ministries. Most of us are not trained actors. We are fortunate to have several musicians in the group. We welcome everyone who will make the time and energy commitments necessary to be in the Players.

We write collaboratively after a time of prayer, reflection, bible study and group discussion. We have a passion for social justice and peace, and a deep commitment to challenge people to work daily to create an inclusive, justice-centered world. In addition to our plays we create bible studies with a focus on liturgical drama and other drama-centered peace and justice resources. We hope our resources enable people to discover new ways to reflect on God's call to live as loving, inclusive, justice-seeking people in our battered, divided world.

We have been performing across New England at churches, conferences and national events for over a decade. In 2000 we were given the Haystack Award by the Massachusetts Conference, UCC for outstanding contributions to peace and justice. We received a Genesis Fund Grant from the national UCC in 2003 and traveled to China, meeting with Christians, leading discussions and performing at seminaries and universities in Beijing, Xian, Shanghai and Nanjing. In 2006 we received a grant from the Central Congregational Legacy Fund and traveled to Beijing, Harbin, Qingdao, Shanghai, and Wuhan. We trust our ministry enables people to encounter God's word in new ways, encouraging and calling us to do justice wherever we find ourselves.

An Introduction to liturgical drama

Throughout history the arts have called and invited us to perceive our lives and world in new ways. Drama has been used since the dawn of time to share our deepest longings and joys, dreams and nightmares, awe and wonder with the sacred and with our communities. Storytellers, dancers, mimes, actors, singers, musicians, painters, sculptors, and so many others have told and retold the stories of faith in wonderful, creative ways.

During the Middle Ages traveling drama troupes performed biblical stories and miracle plays to outdoor congregations. Their legacy remains in the passion plays that are performed around the world today recall the events leading up to the crucifixion. While the Just Peace Players walk in ancient footsteps, our plays are designed to bring contemporary social justice issues alive. We place these critical concerns in dialogue with biblical ideas and themes to encourage congregations to move into a deeper understanding our faith and God's call to do justice in our world.

We hope that our contemporary liturgical dramas:

- A. Offer opportunities for spiritual growth and transformation.
- B. Enable people to encounter Biblical stories in new ways.
- C. Connect contemporary social justice issues and faith and spirituality.
- D. Invite, motivate and challenge people to live out their faith in the world.

We trust you will discover that preparing and performing is a truly sacred experience.

Producing the Play

“I Love to Tell the Stories” is a wonderful play and can be used in many ways. It contains all of the components of a Sunday morning worship service, and has a break for the pastoral prayer and offering. It runs about 50 minutes, and is suitable for older children, youth and adults. We suggest that you decide whom you will invite to the performance based on the needs and interests of your congregation. The play can also be performed as an afternoon or evening event, and may be part of a potluck supper or dessert.

We strongly suggest that the actors remain after the performance for a conversation with the congregation. Sharing about the contents of the play and experiencing it (as an actor or a viewer) gives everyone a chance to discuss scenes that have moved them deeply and scenes that have troubled them. You may want to designate a facilitator for the conversation, and then ask performers to jump in with their own ideas and feelings. Be prepared! Everyone will have different ideas and experiences and all are valid.

We provide literature table with information related to the major themes in the play and appropriate denominational resources as well as a book table with samples of books related to the topics of the play. We encourage you to provide similar resources.

As you begin to plan for the performance you will need to gather a committed group of people who are interested in helping with the play. You can have as many performers as you choose. We encourage you to include everyone who is interested and will make a commitment to attend rehearsals and learn their lines. We do not encourage you to hold auditions. A part of the joy of each production is to experience people with so many different gifts and talents working together to share God’s word.

We work collaboratively as we block the play, because we perform in so many different venues that it is impossible to say what will work in each place. You will have to adapt the play to your performance space. Simple stage directions are included and should be used as appropriate. We have a coordinator who keeps things moving, and serves as the informal director of the play.

Appropriate musical accompaniment is very important. Consider asking your church musician to play for you. It will be necessary to have this person attend some of the rehearsals. Hymn sources are cited in the play. You will also need bulletins for the congregation.

Costumes and props have been kept simple. Feel free to make additions and substitutions to match your interpretation of the play. You may wish to edit some skits slightly to make the conversation germane to your context. If you remove significant portions of the script please note this in the bulletin, so that the congregation is aware that the original work of the Just Peace Players has been changed.

It may feel risky to raise produce this play, and once in a while someone is upset that we are discussing issues “that we don’t usually talk about in church.” Needless to say that’s why we want to discuss them. We have come to believe that we aren’t truly prophetic if we don’t occasionally make someone mad. Overall the response has been very positive, and people frequently thank us for raising such important issues in church. We trust your will experience this too.

Remember, have fun! This is sacred work and God is laughing, crying, praying and singing with you. Many blessings as you engage in this historic and prophetic ministry.

Casting Requirements

5 actors is the minimum number for this play.

Costumes

Costumes need to be minimal so that they can be easily put on and removed over clothing that is worn through out the play. When preformed by the Just Peace Players, black pants and shoes were worn with similar but different colored tops.

“I Love to tell the Story”

(An original play by the Just Peace Players written in 2003 and updated in 2007.)

Opening Remarks

Narrator We are a people of stories; remember Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph? Through their stories, psalms and prayers David and Jonathan come alive. Naomi and Ruth struggle to survive, Esther dances and Mary Magdalene meets the risen Christ. Stories carry our history and direct our future. Every story resonates with our own...and our own stories are as powerful as the ancient ones.

Join us now as we share the true stories of gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual people and those who stand in solidarity with us. These are the real stories of people of faith seeking to understand what it means to be called and loved by God, Christians in our world today. (pause)

Join us as we sing our opening hymn, Help Us Accept Each Other!

HELP US ACCEPT EACH OTHER All Sing (The New Century Hymnal)

Help us ac-cept each oth-er as Christ accepted us;
Teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be pre-sent, God among us, and bring us to be-lieve
We are our-selves ac-cept-ed and meant to love and live.

Let your ac-cep-tance change us, so that we may be moved
In liv-ing sit-u-a-tions to do the truth in love;
To practice your acceptance un-til we know by heart
The ta-ble of for-give-ness and laugh-ter's heal-ing art.

God, for to-day's en-coun-ters with all who are in need,
Who hun-ger for ac-cep-tance, for righ-teous-ness and bread,
Bring us new eyes for see-ing, new hands for holding on;
Re-new us with your Spirit; God! Free us, make us one.

First Church Everywhere **1 character**

Offstage---Ring, ring

Good Morning, First Church Everywhere, UCC... the friendly church on the green for 300 years. How can I help you?

Are we what? Open and Affirming, well, I don't know about that...is it a new program? We've been here for 300 years and we usually do whatever we've done before.

Open and Affirming is a UCC program...where churches welcome ...Who?

Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans...Oh, of course everyone is welcome here. Gay people too...

No, I don't think we have any members that are gay, but just because I haven't seen any gay or lesbian couples doesn't mean there aren't any. Some people are discreet.

How do I know they'd be welcome here if they did come? Well, we're friendly people. That's how I know.

Commitment ceremonies...you mean gay weddings like I've read about in the paper...here? Well... our church hall is large and our sanctuary is tastefully decorated... Everyone adores the colonial décor...but we haven't had anything like that here in 300 years!

Of course I'm sure you'd be welcome to have your ceremony here, but the deacons would have to vote on it...No, they usually don't vote to approve weddings, the pastor makes those decisions, but this is something well, you know, different...

Oh... gosh I'm sorry, I guess that didn't sound very welcoming. Jesus loves everyone... but we're still working on it at our church.

Oh dear, you'd better call back and talk to the pastor...She'll return from her sabbatical in a couple of months. Have a nice day!!!

THE ONA COMMITTEE 3 characters

Sue: [agitated] I'm just fuming. I was just TRYING to have a friendly conversation with Dottie. Somehow we came around to the subject of the ONA committee, and I made the mistake of telling her that the three of us had been talking about joining it. [Pam and Paul glance at each other, Sue doesn't notice.] She says that's not her "cup of tea" and goes on to say 'Love the sinner, hate the sin.'"

Pam: Not that old line... You've got to be kidding!

Sue: No, I'm not, and believe me it gets worse. She went through her bible thumping routine quoting chapter and verse, where she believes the bible says homosexuality is a sin. Heck, even I know the word homosexual isn't in the bible and I'm only in bible pre-school.

Paul: Sounds like Dottie pushed your bible button!

Sue: She sure did! I'm glad I had this little chat with her. I'm definitely joining the ONA committee. I need to know what to say when the Dottie's of the world start quoting the bible to me. What about you guys, have you decided?

Pam:[Looking sheepishly] Well, I don't know. I've just taken on an extra load at work...

Sue: Pam, the meetings are only an hour and a half long. You can't spare 1 and ½ hours once a month?

Pam: Hey! Ahhh, no that's not what I'm saying.

Sue: Well then what ARE you saying? [Pause]. Maybe the better question is what AREN'T you saying.

Pam: Ahhh I'm too embarrassed to say. You guys'll think I'm awful. [Swallowing hard] Well, you know how I really want to be in a relationship with a man?

Paul: Mm, I VAGUELY remember you mentioning it, like every other day!

Pam: Okay, okay. Well there's this really nice guy that's been coming to worship for about a month. I found out he's single. And, well what would he think if I joined this committee?

Sue: That you cared about this faith community?

Pam: Maybe. But what if he thinks I'm a lesbian? He'll never ask me out!!!

Sue:[Chuckling] Pam, if he jumps to that conclusion without checking it out directly with you, is he REALLY the kind of guy you'd want to date?

Pam: I guess you're right. He would be a lug head if he did that.
[Reluctantly] Okay, you can count on me

Sue: Now, what about you, Paul?

Paul: Well, I'd love to join, but I have my PTO meetings on the same night that the ONA meeting is scheduled.

Sue: Isn't that the same meeting you blew off last month because you HAD to see the 2 hour Survivor special on TV?

Paul:[Looking down at his feet. Mumbles] Mmm ahhh ya.

Sue: Hmmm. [Looking back and forth at Paul and Pam]. Okay, we got to Pam's REAL reason for dragging her feet. What's yours?

Paul: Well ... You'll REALLY think this is strange but....I'm scared.

Sue: Scared? Scared of what?

Paul: I know it sounds ridiculous, but what if one of them hits on me? You know asks ME out?

Sue:One of them? Who, them?

Paul: One of the gay men in our church. I'm assuming some of them will join the committee. And,... I've been really keeping my distance from them.

Sue:[Laughing] This is beautiful. You [motioning to Pam] are afraid to join because some guy WON'T ask you out, and you're [motioning to Paul] afraid to join because some guy might ask you out! This must be the work of the Great Cosmic Comic in the sky! [Turning to Paul]. Paul, what do you do or say when a woman asks you out and you're not interested?

Paul: Well I just say, "No thank you." Oh, You mean I should handle it the same way if a man was to ask me out. (looks sheepish)

Sue: That's right! [Looking at Paul and Pam]. Well have we all decided now? No more excuses about joining the ONA committee?

Pam: Nope. No more excuses.

Paul: I'm all set.

All: [to the audience] What about you? What's your excuse?

The Beatitudes Matthew 5: 1-11 3 actors

Narrator: *When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.*

1: Humble and quiet, if they want to be members of our church they have to be humble and quiet. We don't want them flaunting their sexuality here.

2: I just want a place were I am loved and accepted for myself.

N:*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

1:Of course AIDS is a gay disease, if homosexuals had been celibate nobody would have ever gotten sick in the first place.

2:So many gifted people dead from AIDS, brothers, fathers, sisters, mothers, friends, lovers. I feel empty inside when I remember how many I've lost... and this disease continues to spread around the world.

N:*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

1:My uncle lived with his friend for 51 years. We never knew what they did when they were at home alone and we never asked.

2:All I want to do is to sit with my arm around my partner in church. Is that too much to ask?

N:*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

1:Of course everyone is welcome at the communion table, but sometimes I wonder if it's safe for everyone to drink out of the common cup!

2:Sharing the bread and the cup, knowing that Jesus loves me, is the reason I need a church.

N:*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.*

1:My brother's boy is artsy, you know, and he is always welcome to spend the holidays at our house! We would never ask him about his lifestyle, and he doesn't want to tell us either.

2:I try to be patient, to teach people who want to learn about “gay and lesbian issues,” and I am growing very tired.

N:*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

1:I've always been a churchgoer, and you know what the bible says about those things.

2:I want a church where I can worship God, love my neighbor, be challenged to grow spiritually and encouraged to do God's work in the world. Surely that isn't too much to ask.

N:*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

1:I don't like to argue or disagree with people, especially when I'm right.

2:I'm learning that if I don't stand up for myself and our community we will continue to be discriminated against.

N:*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the realm of heaven.*

1:I guess we'll find out who's right on judgment day!

2:There has to be a way to bring God's realm to earth today! Heaven is a long way off. I don't think God wants us to wait till we die to be loved and included.

N:*Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

2:It doesn't feel like a blessing to me. How can it hurt so much simply to be who God created me to be?

I Just Don't Know {a monologue delivered by a woman doing a repetitive domestic task - and talking to the audience - in confidence }

My daughter just stomped out of here mad -- calling me a bigot because I have trouble accepting the lifestyle of some of her friends, her gay friends. She says I'm not a real Christian.

I just don't know.....I'm trying to be a good Christian. I've gone to the meetings at church, and I admit those young people who came to talk with us -- that gay man and that lesbian -- they were so nice, so dedicated, so "normal". I just felt terrible for their pain. I mean I began to think maybe we had made a mistake all these years - thinking homosexuality is wrong.

I don't know. I don't know. I KNOW - I keep saying that (Pause)

But then -- last night, on the news, they had pictures from the gay pride parade -- men wearing dresses, kissing each other, woman in leather and chains on motorcycles -- it's so confusing - that doesn't seem Christian either. I know, my daughter says the news people always focus on the most outrageous ones. I know I wouldn't want to be judged by the behavior of some heterosexuals. But, I just don't know.

I want to do the right thing, I want our church to do the right thing, but I told her - my daughter - about the Bible - Leviticus where it says it's an abomination if a man lies with another man - I mean we have to take the Bible seriously, don't we? But she says - then why do we eat shellfish and why aren't we stoning adulterers? She says we only take the Bible seriously when it reinforces what we already think. She has a point - in how many other areas of my life do I use the Bible to make decisions - not many, I'm ashamed to say. (Pause)

(Sigh) I just don't know. (Pause) Well, I guess there is one thing I do know, though. I need to keep going to those meetings.

Bi...Bi...Bi...! 3 actors

Actors stand with their backs to the audience holding phones. They turn to the audience one at a time when speaking turn back around after speaking.

1: Hello...Oh Hi, how are you? News...Oh, I'm always interested in news about the church. You heard something about the pastor...do tell! She's what...bicentennial, well I'm sure she is preparing for the bicentennial, after all our church will be 200 year old next year, and there's a lot to do...Oh, you said bi-sexual...How do you know she had sex with two people? Have you been looking in the parsonage windows again...Oh, it doesn't mean that...well what does it mean?...You're not sure either but someone told you and you wanted to tell me...well, I better call my daughter in San Francisco and see if she can tell us. (Turns back around as the next person turns around!)

2: Bi-lateral...of course she is. Most of us who favor peace and justice believe in bi-lateral agreements. Bi-sexual...Yes, I know what it means thank you very much miss know it all, but I wonder what it means for our

church. What will our neighbors think? Of course it doesn't matter to me, I love every body...Hey does that mean I'm bi-sexual too?
(Turns back around as the next person turns around!)

3: Bicuspid? Oh dear, you mean the pastor has to go to the dentist? Why I had a root canal last year and it was...what...bi-sexual...I thought her partner was that lovely man who lives in the parsonage. He is, but in one of the ONA meetings she said was attracted to women too and had been in a lesbian relationship that ended before she met him? Well isn't love grand! I think that was very courageous of her to say that at the meeting! Good grief no, I don't think it's anything to worry about! She's just sharing her story with us like we asked everyone to do! We should give her a lot of credit for trusting us. I wonder how we can offer her some support? Try to relax and have a nice day. God loves everyone and you should too.

All: There's no telling what you will learn at an ONA meeting!

Hopes and Fears 3 characters

Piano plays the hopes and fears line from "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

[Actors 1 and 2 move into place as the group hums with the piano.]

1:O God, help me and help our church to get through this ONA process.

I'm sure it's only about a small group of people and I don't think we have any gay people in our church now. Hopefully it will be over soon and the issue will go away.

2:God, help my church with this ONA study process. This is the church where I grew up. I'm not sure they would welcome me if they knew I was gay.

Music refrain "the hopes and fears..."

1: Dear God, I'm afraid that our church will turn into one of those flag waving, rainbow banner places. Why can't we just stay like we've always been? What would happen if gays and lesbians were integrated into the full life of the church?

Voice 2:Dear God, I've taught in the Church School for 12 years. I hope this ONA decision passes so that my partner can feel welcome at church and sing in the choir. We want to bring our daughter here with us too. Most of all, we want to feel safe and loved in our church.

Music refrain “the hopes and fears...”

Voice 1: O God, this is something that churches in the city should be dealing with. Why does it have to come to our town?

Voice 2: O God, you teach about a loving and caring community in Jesus Christ. I really want to love my neighbors, even those that treat me with scorn. Isn't this what Jesus would want us to do?

Music refrain “the hopes and fears of all our years are met in thee tonight”

[Group moves into the arc]

Narrator: Loving and all welcoming God, we pray that the ONA process will help us all move beyond our stereotypes and accept each other as your children. Help us realize that we are all uniquely gifted and have wonderful things to share with a church community in which we can celebrate our lives and loves in the spirit of Christ's love.

Cast sings “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

ALL: Come, O Christ, quickly come.

Narrator: Join us as we sing “I Love to Tell the Story.”

“I Love to Tell the Story” (tune in The New Century Hymnal)

I love to tell the story of how, from heav'n above our gentle Savior Jesus
Was sent to show God's love, To ev-'ry sacred creature for some have never
heard, the message of inclusion from God's own holy word. I love to tell the
story; 'Twill be my theme in glory To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his
love.

I love to tell the story, Of how Christ touched the life of every man and
woman in all their joy and strife, For Jesus honors difference, he welcomes
you and me, He offers to each person God's love eternally. I love to tell the
story; 'Twill be my theme in glory To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his
love.

Denise's Story Transgender Monologue

My name is Denise but I wish it was Donald. All my life I have felt like I was trapped in the wrong body. When my parents wanted me to wear dresses and patent leather shoes I wanted to wear jeans and hiking boots.

When the girls at school jumped rope and played Barbie's I wanted to play football or go fishing.

My parents let me be a tomboy, but I could never tell them I wanted to be a real boy. They never would have understood.

I felt betrayed by my body. I wept and raged inside. I wondered what was the matter with me... Was I the only person who felt this way? It was just too weird.

At times I wanted to die because it hurt so much, not knowing who I was, and not being able to share my pain with anyone. I wanted to kill myself and I wanted to live... mostly I just wanted to be happy like everyone else.

Thank God I saw the pink triangle safe zone sign on our new pastor's door. She put it up the first day she moved in. I finally screwed up my courage and talked to her... well, mostly I cried, especially when she told me what transgender is.

Now I know that I am not alone. There are lots of people like me, and it's OK. God loves me.

My struggle isn't over, but at least I understand what's going on. I'm not alone and I have choices. Thank you God and Pastor Smith.

Come to Me 5 characters (Flying W)

1: Tommy died in 1991, years before the new anti-viral drugs that might have prolonged his life were discovered. A vigorous surfer and avid mountain climber, he weighed 68 pounds when he passed away in his mother's arms. He no longer knew his mom or brother couldn't recognize a friend or recall his cat's name. His mom scattered his ashes in the Pacific Ocean and along the trail up Mt. Washington without the benefit of clergy. The pastor at her former church had told her homosexuals were going to hell.

1: Jesus says: *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*

2: My son David is a successful architect who lives on a different coast. When folks at church ask why he doesn't come home for the holidays I tell

them he's too busy and it's easier for me to go there...I'm afraid to say that his life partner is a man and that they have a child. I don't think people here would understand, and I don't want my son and his family to be where they aren't wanted. Only a few of my closest friends at church know that I am a grandmother. (father). I'm tired of the silence and fear.

2 Jesus says: Voice 1 & 2: *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*

3: Jennifer and Juliet lived together for 45 years. They had separate lives at church...one was in the choir, the other ushered... one cooked for the potluck, the other cleaned up...one was on the Board of Finance, the other taught Sunday School. Imagine the congregation's surprise when they came out at the Millennium Gay Pride Parade and held hands on the Common! Now, when they have time to sit together, some people feel uncomfortable. Thank goodness their friends are helping their church start an ONA process. 45 years of separation and silence has to end.

3: Jesus says: 1, 2, & 3: *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*

4: Terrified and alone at 22, Curtis shared his HIV status with the campus minister. He was shocked when that man told him to beg God for forgiveness of his sins and pray for healing. He also told Curtis not to drink from the chalice or to dip his bread in during communion. After all, some of the virus might be on his hands. A decade later, as Curtis lay dying, he still wondered why God was punishing him and if he was going to heaven or hell. His funeral was held in the church where he wasn't welcome while he was alive.

4: Jesus says: 1, 2, 3, & 4: *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*

5: Sandy and Nancy lived together as friends for 10 years. Their strict religious upbringing caused them to deny the love and passion they felt for each other. When they finally came out they had to leave their jobs and move out of town. After three years in Boston, they joined an Open and Affirming church. Their marriage, the baptism of their daughters, and their acceptance as a family has enabled them to celebrate and claim their love. They are finally free to be themselves.

5: Jesus says: All voices: *Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*

No Middle Ground 1 character

There's no middle ground in the struggle for justice.
There's no Romulan neutral zone in this galactic quest for equality.
There's no DMZ with its illusion of safety.

If you aren't with us, your silence places you against us.
Silence lets the cries of the ignorant,
the bigots, the hate filled, wound and deafen us.
Your unwillingness to act as you take the time to "Decide"
let's those who are committed to acting against us do hurtful, harmful,
horrible things.

You have the privilege to wait and wonder,
to ponder and pontificate,
but don't fool yourselves.

We are fighting for our lives.
There is no middle ground.

Your silence,
Means death for me.

[Cast immediately rises from their seats and begins singing. They motion to congregation to join in.]

"We Are A Gentle Angry People" All sing

We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives
(repeat)

We are gay and straight together, and we are fighting, fighting for our lives
(repeat)

We are a justice seeking people, and we are working, working for our lives
(repeat)

We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives (repeat)

(Actors for the litany of stories moves into the congregation during the final verse and stand quietly in place.)

Debbie's Marriage one character

[Lots of excitement]

I am so excited. I have found a love so right and real. I'm getting married.
I've never felt so happy or so sure about anything in my life. It's hard not to blurt it out to everyone I meet. We are getting married right here in

Massachusetts.

Now comes the planning. Who will we invite? What do we want for rings? What will we wear? Where will we have the ceremony and who will perform it? Wow, there's so much to do!

[Questioning] (Does a lot of wondering about the church issue)

Should the guest list include everyone we know or only those family and friends who know? Should our rings match? I wear a dress and you wear pants? Should we both wear dresses? Should we get married at church? Can we get married at church? Would our minister perform the ceremony? Oh I hope so but I don't know...

[A little annoyed but becomes very happy]

It took a vote of the deacons but they finally told us yes at church and our ministry will perform ceremony! Now I can make a legal commitment to this woman I love! What a relief after being told for so long that our commitment was less valuable than the commitments other people make! What a joy to be married in this church we have loved and called home for so many years.

Litany of Stories 4 characters

1: I've known I was gay since I was fifteen, and I knew was called to ministry since I was ten. In the 1920's I knew I could never tell my story if I wanted to tell God's story.

2: I survived a suicide attempt in high school. My doctor told me that only God and the army could cure my homosexuality. In 1944, I helped open the gates at Dachau. I wept when I met a few survivors wearing pink triangles. Having seen the worst that people could do to each other, I decided to teach and preach about the hope that God offers us.

3: I've known God wanted me to be a minister since I danced with the sacred butterflies in the fields on our farm. When I realized I was a lesbian, I hid it from my friends and let go of my dream. In 1950 I knew that gay and lesbian people weren't welcome in the church.

4: I spent years recovering from my very conservative Christian upbringing. The tapes about going to hell for being gay almost stopped playing when I was welcomed in a UCC church and heard Jesus story in a new way. But would they still welcome me if they knew my story? Dear God I needed a community where I can feel your love surrounding me.

refrain: "I love to tell the story..."

1:Decided to be ordained and tell God's story. I would lie about mine for the next fifty years.

2:I answered God's call to work for a new world, and went to seminary. Life in the closet wasn't so bad...till I fell in love and we couldn't risk being seen together.

3:I wanted us all to dance with joy. I was finally ordained in the sixties. Women ministers were still new in many churches! We joined the struggle for Civil Rights for all of God's people.

4:Took a risk and shared my story with my pastor. His love and acceptance enabled me to slowly tell my story to my church. A few people acted weird, but mostly I knew I was welcome and accepted

refrain: I love to tell the Story

1: The Stonewall riots happened in 1969. That was the beginning of the modern gay rights movement. I was afraid to preach about it.

2:Bill Johnson became the first openly gay man ordained in the UCC. That was in the seventies. I cracked open the closet door a bit.

3:I wanted to extend Civil Rights to everyone and found allies in the United Church of Christ.

4:With the love and support of my home church, I began to tell my story, to tell God's story, everywhere I went.

refrain: I love to tell the Story

1:When the Open and Affirming movement started I sent them lots of money and prayed for them, quietly.

2:I met Bill Johnson and he encouraged me to come out to my church. When I did they showered me love and support. I cried for a week.

3:The Open and Affirming Resolution was passed by the General Synod in 1985.

4:I brought that resolution back it to my conference and my church which voted to become Open and Affirming.

refrain: I love to tell the Story

1: Even as we tell these stories of hope we weep for all who must hide their lives or have their calls denied.

2: We weep for the people who live in the closet, broken and battered by fear, never being able to fully experience God's love in their lives.

3: We weep for the denominations and the nations and the states that still have laws denying us our civil rights, and force us to live in fear.

4: We weep, and pray, and work for justice so that everyone can tell their story someday.

As the music plays all on stage sing: "I love to tell the story, twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love."

Call Denied 3 characters

[Sign/voice Somewhere in Massachusetts]

1: Hey, I think that 300 year old church where I had the great interviews is going to call me! I'm preaching a call sermon there in a couple of weeks.

2: Are you...

1:Of course I'm out in my profile. They're not Open and Affirming, but we can handle that. We're a good match.

[Sign/voice Three Weeks Later]

2: How'd your sermon go?

1:The sermon was great! I felt the Spirit moving, and the people loved it.

2:So you're their new pastor?

1:No, I'm not.

2:What happened?

1:Believe it or not, people who were members of the church but hadn't been there for 20 years came just to vote against me. I didn't get a two-thirds majority, so that's it.

2: I can't believe people who didn't even know you voted against you.

1:That's how homophobia works! People are so afraid or prejudiced they wouldn't even give me a chance. They wouldn't to talk to me or attend the meetings we held, but they came out to vote. From now on I'm just going to apply to Open and Affirming churches.

2:But there are only 71 or so in Massachusetts, and less than 700 in the whole UCC! (Be sure to update these statistics for your area.)

1: Well maybe I'll have to leave ordained ministry and do something else...

2: But you have so many gifts for ministry.

1: As long as people can't get past my sexual orientation, I'll never be able to use my gifts! I wish people could just see me, for me.

2: That's what Jesus calls us to do. Why is it so hard for some people?

A New Head 2 characters

Shirley is wearing a paper mache head and is turned so that her back is facing the audience and the face on the head is looking at them.

SHIRLEY: Helen what has happened to your head! Should I call 911?

HELEN: No Shirley, I detached it myself. I've turned it around and now I'm going to re-attached it.

SHIRLEY: I didn't know you could do that. Why are you doing it?

HELEN: I am doing it for the church.

SHIRLEY: The Church?

HELEN: Yup! We're going through this ONA process, you know. I've been in this church all my life and I remember quite vividly learning that homosexuality was wrong. And now we're supposed to accept and support gay and lesbian people – not just at work but in the church. So instead of getting a stiff neck trying to stretch to this new way of thinking, I'm turning my head instead.

SHIRLEY: I'm still not sure I understand?

HELEN: I can't say I totally get it myself – Christ changing his mind like that, but if Rev. Feel Good says he did then – well

SHIRLEY: Helen, before you go any further, I think you might be a little confused. I don't think Rev. Feel Good said Christ changed his mind, although I admit sometimes I don't know WHAT he is saying, but I don't think he ever said that – and I hate to say this when you're turned around, but it's not really changing direction. It's getting a wider more inclusive perspective.

HELEN: You mean that learning one thing growing up and hearing something completely different now isn't change? If that isn't what is?

SHIRLEY: Well it might be a change in what you've believed, but Christ's mind didn't change. Our ancestors probably went through the same thing around slavery and racism. And what about women in leadership positions in the Church, that's recent.

HELEN: Yes – you're right there. It was just a matter of hearing what Christ had already said.

SHIRLEY: That's the point. Our ability to understand is what is changing. We do not have to re-write scripture just re-read it. Your eyes still work, don't they?

HELEN: Yes they do. In fact, I think I'm seeing more clearly now. Welcoming gay and lesbian folk is not new to Christ, but it's another step for us in seeing the world through his wider more inclusive eyes.

SHIRLEY: Yes!

So What If... 1 character

I hear the question coming...
It's bouncing back and forth
Churning inside someone
Waiting to burst forth

Quietly, sometimes with fear
Angry,
Puzzled
A little bit embarrassed
Almost but not quite ashamed
they ask it over and over again

“So if we go ONA, will we become a gay church?”

I suck in my gut, bite my tongue,
And answer in a polite, pleasant, gentle voice of reason
“Don't worry, most churches grow after they become ONA,

and there's always a good balance of gay and straight members!"

Hear what you need to feel happy and secure your sanctuary
so that you can feel ok to take the risk to welcome me!

Deep inside I ask myself "So, what if we became a gay church?"

I imagine

The sanctuary filled with couples who look a lot like me and my partner,
sitting side by side in safety.

Two women hold hands.

Two men embrace.

A new member celebrates her sex change operation during prayer time and
everyone applauds.

Children have two moms, two dads, two cats, two dogs, straight aunts and
uncles and no one thinks it strange.

O God what would it be like to be in the majority?

(Members of the cast call out these questions)

What would it be like if the church council had to vote to allow the pastor to
marry heterosexual people in our church?

What would it be like if everyone secretly wondered if the music director
was straight?

What would happen if heterosexuals started teaching Sunday school?

How could we explain their lifestyle to the children?

Would pledging decrease if we publicly welcomed straight people?

What would the neighbors think?

Oh goodness, I just saw a man and a woman holding hands in the back pew!

(Original voice returns) What would it feel like to be in the majority instead of the minority every Sunday morning? I weep when I imagine it. I weep because so many are afraid to imagine it. I believe the realm of God is a place where everyone is welcome and accepted, loved and fully known. A place where no one worries about who loves whom and how. A place where no one keeps count. Wouldn't it be nice if church was like that too?

BREAK HERE ON SUNDAY MORNING FOR THE PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE OFFERING.

WE FOUND IT! Two characters

One person is on stage maybe drinking from a mug as another person runs in-very excited!

1: We found it, we found it!

2: Found what??

1: A church where we're welcome... a church that wants us to join!!

2: Do they know you're gay? (a lesbian, trans, bi...)

1: Yes, they're an Open and Affirming church.

2: Oh, they take everyone because they're trying to fill their pews?

1: Gosh you're cynical! They've made a decision to share God's love with everyone and welcome gay, lesbian, transgender and bi-sexual folks! It's in their bulletin!

2: Don't believe everything you read! (but looks very curious)

1: Come on... Today they baptized the son of a lesbian couple and two men

announced their wedding! They have a rainbow banner and I saw literature for the parents of L/G/ B/ T teens near the coffee table! People at coffee hour welcomed us, and most of them were straight!

2. Sounds good...(hesitant)

1: I can't quite believe it! We were so hurt at the last church we went to...the people were nice, but their denomination wouldn't let us be ordained or be church leaders...we knew they really didn't want us.

2: Yeah...

1: I think this church is it! Thank you, God!

2: Hey, do you think my partner and I could go with you next week? (They freeze)

Narrator: What a difference this church would have made for...(Actors come forward naming characters from earlier skits: Denise, Tommy, David, Jennifer and Juliet, Curtis, Sandy and Nancy) and countless other L/G/ B/ T folks who have been unable to find a church home!

Narrator: Join us in our responsive reading which is found in your bulletin.

Responsive Reading

One Gracious God, as we open ourselves to you in prayer, help us open our lives to you in love.

All You call us to hear the stories of your people. Some stories challenge us, some inspire us, some scare us.

One Some move us to tears.

All Sometimes the most difficult journeys are those between people.

One Uniting God, we celebrate your gathering grace that helps us share without fear and listen without judgment.

All You invite us to expand our vision.

One You enable us to glimpse a world ruled by your love.

All Help us bring this world into being so that we may truly be one in the Spirit. Amen.

Narrator: Join us as we sing our closing song!

We are “One in the Spirit”

We are one in the Spirit; we are one with our God,
We are one in the Spirit; we are one with our God,
And we'll pray that all unity may one day be restored:
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes, they'll
Know We are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land:
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes, they'll
Know We are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other; we will work side by side,
We will work with each other; we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride:
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes, they'll
Know We are Christians by our love.

BENEDICTION