

NEWS

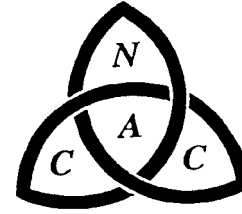
BRIEFS

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Suddenly it Feels Like Fall – While quite a few of us have been off doing neat things like lying sleepily in the bottom of a canoe, getting too much sun, learning how to water ski, etc., several big trucks have been roaring down the road towards us. Consider:

A Supremely Important Opportunity

The most recent General Council has authorized the development of a new, “timely and contextual statement of faith . . . [for] circulation throughout the whole church”. The process is timed to conclude at the 39th General Council, in 2006.

Some congregations (including several from the NACC) have already asked to be included in the process, and now the General Council Office has asked for the widest possible involvement.

We are therefore asking ALL our congregations to become part of this initiative. (And if any congregation feels reluctant because it feels short of expertise in this area, be assured that the NACC intends to provide “user friendly” help to all our members – and to anyone else interested.)

General Council’s Theology and Faith Committee is now ready to forward the first of two workbook

guides to anyone who applies, so Sessions (Boards, Councils) are most emphatically urged to take this opportunity to get involved. – It is hard to overstate how important the new statement will be to the health of the United Church. It is clearly intended to be the church’s primary operational reference in the new century, and this is our opportunity to help make it a brilliant contemporary statement of what Christians hold dear, and not the fudge (or disaster) it might be.

As soon as possible, please contact:

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Bill C-145

Introduced by well-known MP Svend Robinson, this bill has now gone through two readings and is to go to Parliament for the decisive vote sometime this Fall. Its intent is to add "sexual orientation" to the hate propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code. (A similar change in law will be argued in the Swedish Rikstag in the next few months.)

Why is this a concern? Because the change would make it possible to argue that the Bible – which takes a clear position on homosexuality (as well as adultery, fornication, bestiality, etc.) - contains hate propaganda and should be censored.

Far fetched? Perhaps, but columnist Rory Leishman (*London Free Press*) thinks otherwise, citing the case of Sylvia MacEachern, the editor of a Catholic journal, who in 1997 was investigated by police as a hate crime suspect. The reason? – she had publicly stated her support of her denomination's belief that homosexual acts are disordered and depraved. The case was eventually dropped because at that time sexual orientation was not part of Canada's hate propaganda law. That would not be the case should Bill C-145 pass, of course.

If all this concerns you, please write to the Minister of Justice, sending a copy of the letter to your local MP. A draft letter has been sent to your congregation for your reference. Please feel free to ask for it.

"God Language"

A correspondent recently wrote in with a major concern about how the General Council's thinking on "inclusive language" has affected how we speak to God in congregational worship. Her particular concern is that in many places some of the most powerful (and Scripturally authentic) names for God just aren't used any more.

God language is a big and somewhat contentious topic in the UCC, but in her email the correspondent states the problem concisely: "In many congregations, though God may not be called "Mother", he is never referred to as LORD or FATHER. When a congregation does not use these vital terms for God, he becomes vague and distant. We cannot have the full blessing of God when we refuse to name him as Father and Lord. We are refusing the revelation of God which Jesus gave to us." [E.g., Jesus very clearly tells us to think about God and speak to him as our Father – for instance in the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9 and Luke 11:12), or at John 4:23, 14:6, etc. Jesus also tells us that God misses us so desperately precisely because his relationship to us is that of a Father: e.g., see the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11). -- Ed.]

As our correspondent goes on to point out, no matter what the higher courts of the church say, "The Session [Board, Council] has oversight of worship and liturgy in the congregation [Basis of Union, 5.6.1 and 5.10.1(5)]. Sessions should adopt a policy on inclusive language for God and insist their minister follow that policy." [Amen. –Ed.]

If doing so presents any sort of problem to you, please contact your regional officers or, if necessary, us.