



Dear North Members and Friends:

“Because of you we are being killed all day long and accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Psalm 44:22). The words of the psalmist keep echoing through my mind as I sort out the mix of emotions all of us feel about the massacre in Orlando. We are sad because so many innocent lives have been lost to yet another tragedy. We are angry because this tragedy was an act of hatred against our Latino and LGBTQ brothers and sisters. And we are afraid that the source of this hatred continues to abide in our nation and world.

Like the psalmist, we have been faithful to our calling to practice radical hospitality: “All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten God.” But days like these make us wonder whether we are making a difference and whether God is paying attention. With the psalmist we pray: “Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not cast us off forever” (Psalm 44:22-23).

Our frustrations and doubts are compounded by being United Methodists. Our denomination’s legalistic uniformity and intolerance hampers our witness to the LGBTQ community. Unintentionally, it contributes to the hatred of LGBTQ persons in society by fostering silence and fear in the church. The sufferings of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are ignored and minimized by vague platitudes and hypocritical stances.

Our witness at North will continue to be the integrity of love. Love overcomes hatred and casts out fear. Love speaks out against injustice and prejudice in the church and in society. Love embraces the stranger and refuses to stereotype our Muslim neighbors. Love protects communities with sensible gun control measures. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, gives voice to this witness of love in [her recent statement](#).

Most of all, love rejoices and dances and sings because love comes from the everlasting, never-failing God we meet in Jesus Christ. When Paul reassured the Romans that love is stronger than hate, he quoted Psalm 44: 22 to acknowledge their pain and said that Christ is the answer to the psalmist’s question: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword....No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:35, 37).

And this love encompasses all people as Carrie Newcomer taught us in her [song](#): “And the arms of God will gather in each sparrow that falls but makes no separation just fiercely loves us all.”

We can keep on loving because our love springs from the love of Christ which never fails. His life, death and resurrection prove that God’s love is stronger than the forces of death. “For I am convinced that neither death....nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37-39).

Let us keep on keeping on. Let us keep embracing and speaking out and celebrating because in our loving we bear witness to the unconquerable love of Jesus Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren".

Pastor Darren  
June 14, 2016