

2/26 Lay-Led Service

2-25-06 AM Draft

Announcements: Board member

Opening Words: Susan

Hymn: #1 “May Nothing Evil Cross This Door”

Story for All Ages: Different Points of View

Responsive Reading [580]: The Task of the Religious Community

Offering

Introduction: Stephanie

I'm Stephanie Aldrich, Chair of Channing's Welcoming Congregation Team. The Unitarian Universalist Association defines the Welcoming Congregation program as a method through which congregations become intentionally more **inclusive** toward bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people, who have historically been intentionally excluded from many religious communities.

Our team has heard many thoughtful questions and issues from you during the Welcoming Congregation process so far. After reflecting on these issues, we have decided we need to engage you, the congregation, more deeply in our efforts.

With this in mind, we have designed today's service as a series of conversations that reflect on the questions you have raised about this effort. We'll be addressing questions like:

- What does any of this have to do with religion?
- How can I explain what becoming a Welcoming Congregation means to my children?
- How might becoming a Welcoming Congregation affect me personally and how comfortable I feel at Channing?

In the course of these conversations, you'll see members of the task team take on different roles – sometimes posing the questions we've heard from the Congregation, and sometimes engaging with these questions, to help further our understanding of the issues involved.

Our intention is to open a dialogue, and to that end, we invite you to stay afterwards for a discussion that we'll hold here in the sanctuary immediately following the service. We invite you all to attend this session, and take advantage of this opportunity to discuss the meaning and importance of becoming a Welcoming Congregation.

Hymn: #18 “What Wondrous Love”

Dialogue: *How does my theology (each of our theologies) inform my position on CMC becoming a Welcoming Congregation?*

Players

Lauren [Questioner]

Rob

Stephanie

Tricia

Setting

In chairs, after church

Lauren: I'm not saying I don't support being welcoming to people of different sexual orientations, but I just don't see what any of this has to do with religion. Isn't this more about political correctness than religion?

Rob: You know, when the Welcoming Congregation task team first formed, Susan insisted we sit down together and discuss exactly how and why each of us grounded our support for the Welcoming Congregation process in our personal theology. And you know, it was a struggle at first, for all of us. Most of us started with the thought "it's just the right thing to do" – there's your political correctness – but exploring the "why" behind that statement helped each of us ground this work in our religious beliefs.

Stephanie: That's right. As I thought about Susan's question, I realized that what I value most about being part of the Channing community is the sense of having a spiritual "home" – a home that I need for myself – to help keep me aware of and focused on what's most important in life – and a home in which my children can learn the importance of having a spiritual life. I think anyone else who's looking for a spiritual home should have the opportunity to find it at Channing – regardless of what they look like or whom they love.

Tricia: For me, supporting this effort comes down to our very first Unitarian Universalist principle: a belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all persons. When we open our doors to new members and visitors, as we do every Sunday, that first principle means we need to see beyond gender or affectional orientation to the persons underneath – and treat all with dignity.

Rob: For me, it's tied to a belief that the ethics that derive from our religion make it important for us to stand up to discrimination. Most people agree that excluding people because of the color of their skin is wrong. Yet, many religions exclude people because of whom they love. That's just as wrong as racial discrimination. By becoming a welcoming congregation we can stand up to this discrimination and put one of our core religious beliefs into direct practice.

Stephanie: What you just said ties to something Susan was talking about a few weeks ago, when she defined "ethics" as "a system of thinking about right and wrong that grows out of" our religion. If Unitarian Universalism is based on principles like inherent worth and dignity, accepting each other, and encouraging spiritual growth, then it seems clear that we're called to do this work.

Rob: But what if someone doesn't want Channing to become a Welcoming Congregation? I guess it would be important for them to figure out how **that** position is grounded in their theology.

Stephanie: And if someone is indifferent to it, how is **that** grounded in their theology?

Lauren: Wow – I'm going to have to think about that. I guess I'm going to have to figure out where I really stand on these issues, and why.

Rob: There are no easy answers, are there?

[PAUSE—STAGE CHANGE]

II. How does my theology inform how I raise my children?

Players

Margot [Questioner—Parent]

Tricia

Rob

Stephanie

Pam [joins in later]

Setting

Coffee Hour

Props

Coffee cups

Margot: I hear that the Welcoming Congregation program is a church-wide process, and I'm wondering what kind of impact this is going to have on my child's religious education.

Tricia: I know that the RE Committee is already working on next year's program. At the parents' meeting in January, I found out that next year's curriculum will be on Unitarian Universalist identity. This presents us with an opportunity to integrate Welcoming Congregation work into what's being done in RE.

Rob: There may be some additional opportunities outside the regular Sunday School classes, like I heard the Welcoming Congregation Team would like to bring in a youth panel to share their experiences with **our** youth.

Stephanie: Yes, and when parents expressed questions and concerns, and wanted more details about this idea, we responded by sending an e-mail to all parents of middle schoolers explaining why we thought the panel would be a good idea – and sharing stories about how our own middle-schoolers were already exposed to gay and lesbian issues at school. We then followed up with phone calls to individual parents, to be sure there was good communication around this issue, and we got a lot of support.

Tricia: I think most of the work in RE would be a matter of using examples that show diversity-- making sure lessons don't assume that the whole world is heterosexual. And when we talk about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, we shouldn't assume we're talking about "them" as opposed to "us." If you look at the statistics, 5-10% of the population is gay. With about 60 children in RE, that means it's possible that 4 or 5 children in our church could be gay.

Stephanie: You know, that just shows how important it is that we be active in affirming kids for who they are. So, teachers could take care to avoid gender stereotyping. In group activities, they could avoid segregating students into boy and girl groups. And just like the kids might read a book with pictures of a biracial family, so they might hear an example with a family that has 2 dads.

Rob: Yeah, and if the teens are talking about relationships, the teachers wouldn't just assume that all the kids are straight. They wouldn't just give boy/girl examples. Say they're talking about how awkward it can be to ask someone out. The teacher could say, "It's hard enough to ask someone out when you're straight. It's probably even tougher if you're gay. What if it turns out that the person you're interested in is straight? Or what if they're the only gay person you know but they don't like you?"

Margot: Speaking of RE Teachers—I'm not sure how I'd feel if my child's RE teacher was openly gay. Or what if the teacher was transgender?

Rob: What kind of reservations do you have about that?

Margot: Well...I think it would be distracting to the kids. Plus, I don't know if I'm really ready to talk to them about these issues. I'm not even totally sure how I feel about some of this. I'm kind of ashamed to say this, but I guess maybe I'm still not totally sure my kids would be safe. Even though I don't really believe a lot of the stereotypes, it's amazing how deep-rooted these fears can be.

Rob: Well, as far as our children's safety is concerned, I know that all of the teachers sign an ethics policy and agree to a background check. The teacher orientation and handbook also include guidelines for keeping our children safe. So the same standards would apply to any teacher, whatever their orientation. I know the RE committee's goal is to have more than one adult in every classroom. I also know that this is a difficult thing to accomplish because there aren't enough volunteers to staff the classrooms, each week. However, either Cheryl or an RE committee member monitors the hallway during RE time and checks in to see what's going on in the classrooms.

Margot: But there's still the distraction aspect for my kids. Plus the fact that I don't know if I'm ready to expose them to these ideas yet.

[Pam joins in, listening]

Tricia: Well, I know I wonder how much exposure my kids have already had. Do I assume that they aren't going to know anything about it unless I bring it up or unless Channing has a transgender RE Teacher? And what kinds of ideas are they developing on their own? And I'm not sure how to explain to my children what becoming a Welcoming Congregation means.

Pam: Actually, as I was preparing for this service, Aaron came downstairs and started reading what I was working on, so we ended up having this very conversation. Afterwards, I asked him if we could share that conversation in the service, and he agreed to reenact it with me. This is how it went:

[STAGE CHANGE]

Players

Aaron

Pam

Setting

TRAPEZOID TABLE

Pam on one end working on laptop, books on side

Props

Laptop w/ WC disc

Hymnal

Purple workbook

[Aaron standing--looks over Pam's shoulder at computer screen]

Aaron: You're writing about technology?

Pam: That's theology--"-ology" means studying something.

[Aaron sits down at other end of table, facing Pam.]

Aaron: Like technology means studying, like, radios and computers.

Pam: And theology means studying about God and religion. I'm writing about becoming a Welcoming Congregation

Aaron: What's that?

Pam: Well, one of the jobs of a church is to make sure people feel welcome when they come. It's especially important as a Unitarian Universalist Church. Do you remember in RE when you talked about the UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST principles?

Aaron: Yeah, but I don't really remember what they are. *[Turn page]*

Pam: Let's read some of them together

[Turn to hymnal AARON reads 1st 3.]

Pam: So we believe that all people are valuable and deserve respect. We believe people should be treated fairly and kindly. And we believe in accepting people even when we're different and helping each other to grow. When we talk about being a Welcoming Congregation, it means we make sure we do what we can so that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people feel like they belong. Do you know what any of those things mean?

Aaron: No.

Pam: Have you ever heard any of those words, like gay?

Aaron: No. Not really.

Pam: Did you ever hear the word gay at school?

Aaron: No.

Pam: Well, you know how sometimes people have boyfriends and girlfriends? Gay is when a boy likes other boys as a boyfriend. Or when a girl likes another girl in that way.

Aaron: Oh.

Pam: And some people think that's bad or wrong, and some churches even tell people that being gay is evil or a sin.

Aaron: Do you think being gay is bad?

Pam: No, I don't believe that. What do you think?

Aaron: I don't think it's bad.

Pam: So it's important to let people know that we don't think they are bad if they're gay and that they are welcome at our church. So our church is having lots of discussions and information about how to do this.

Aaron: Actually I did hear you say the word gay at one of your meetings, and I saw it on some magazines. *[Turn page]*

Pam: You mean this book? *[Purple book]*

Aaron: Yeah. And once I heard the word gay in school.

Pam: Oh, yeah?

Aaron: Yeah. One time on the bus a boy tried to kiss me. And some other kids said it was gay.

Pam: What did you do?

Aaron: I put my arms up like this [*arms crossed over face*].

Pam: Anything else?

Aaron: I said it was disgusting.

Pam: How do you think that made him feel?

Aaron: Well, he was just pretending and doing it to be funny.

Pam: If someone really were gay, how do you think that would make them feel?

Aaron: Bad.

Pam: I know you didn't mean to hurt anyone's feelings. You didn't do anything wrong. I just want you to think about the things you say and how it will make people feel. Right now you're young and you aren't really thinking about either girlfriends or boyfriends. But the things you say now can have an impact. Think about your buddies that you're growing up with now. Imagine that you're still friends in high school and one of your buddies discovers that he actually is gay. If, growing up, everyone laughed about being gay and called it disgusting, how do you think he would feel?

Aaron: Bad.

Pam: Do you think he would want to let you know that about him, or would he want to keep it secret?

Aaron: Keep it secret.

Pam: Imagine if you had to keep something important about yourself secret. [*pause*]

Aaron: Mom, if I'm in like high school, and I want to go like, say, bowling with Mark, would that be like a date?

Pam: No, you'll have buddies in high school and college that you hang out with one-on-one. And you might also have friends who are girls who are just buddies and not your girlfriend. Like you and your best friend Mia, when you grow up, might discover that you don't really love each other in a way to get married, but you might still be great buddies. If you and Mark are out bowling, just the two of you, in high school, and some other guys from your school come over and call you gay, what could you say?

Aaron: I could say, this is not a date. We're just friends, and we're not gay.

Pam: And maybe you could even say, "And besides, even if we were gay there wouldn't be anything wrong with that."

Aaron: Yeah.

Pam: You know, if you only make a point of saying you're not gay, that may come across as supporting the idea that being gay is bad. There is a good chance that in high school one of your friends will be gay, and it will be important to let them know you accept them as they are. When I was in high school, I had a friend who was gay. He told me about it because he trusted me, but he was so afraid of what other people would think that he pretended that he wasn't gay. I wish he could have felt more comfortable about who he is. *[pause]* I'm really glad we had this conversation, Aaron. I think it would be great if we could share it at church. Would you be interested in reading it with me if I have it typed up?

Aaron: Okay! *[pause]* Hey, Mom, can we leave out the part about the boy pretending to try to kiss me? I'm kind of embarrassed about that, I don't know if I want to talk about it at church. *[Turn page]*

Pam: Yeah. Imagine if someone really is gay, and they feel embarrassed like that about who they are. If we can start to talk about it and get comfortable with it, we can help people be comfortable talking about who they are.

Aaron: What if people laugh at me?

Pam: Yeah. You know, being brave means that you do something even though you might feel awkward or embarrassed. If you weren't nervous talking about it, you wouldn't need to be brave.

Aaron: Well, then it's like a challenge! I like that. I can do that.

Pam: That's great, because if you can get comfortable talking about it, that can help a lot of people. Grownups need to know that even in 3rd grade or younger, kids have probably heard the word gay and could use some more information about it. And even we adults sometimes need to be brave to talk about stuff like this. *[hug]*

Anthem: "Lean on Me"

[4. I think my children are too young to be exposed to these issues.]

Players

Tricia [Questioner—same role?]

Margot [Role change—herself]

[Later—child: paper-folding game]

Stephanie

Rob [Questioner—same role?]

Pam

Lauren [Later—child: paper-folding game]

Setting

Coffee Hour

Props

Coffee cups

Role change gear (hat, jacket)

Tricia: In spite of what we were just talking about, I **still** feel like my children are too young to be exposed to these issues.

Margot: How will you respond, then, if your child hears something at school or on the bus, and comes to you with questions?

Tricia: I have no idea!

Stephanie: I've read that when talking to kids about issues that are potentially charged or delicate, it really helps to find out what they know before you start giving information. Ask them "Where have you heard that? What do you know about it?" Then you can correct or clarify information. You can also get a sense of the level they are at with it and what kinds of information would be appropriate.

Margot: And you might be surprised at how exposed they already are. I teach middle school, and whenever we read old literature with the word "gay," there's always lots of snickering. Obviously these kids have another definition in mind than the original "merry or bright," and it's something they think is funny. Since they already have their own ideas about what the word means, I think it shows that it needs to be addressed.

Stephanie: You know, my daughter is in **middle school**, and she's already witnessed two friends being called lesbians just because they were holding hands with each other. Another girl Zoe was standing with pointed at the two friends and commented, "That's **disgusting!** That so **lesbian!**" Since I have 2 sisters who are gay, Zoe and I have talked about how lots of people still think that being gay is bad, and that hearing negative comments about something you can't change about yourself can be very hurtful, especially to young people. Because of this, Zoe was able to stand up to this girl and tell her that the girls were **not** lesbians, and even if they were, there was nothing wrong with that. She even asked her how she would feel if she had an aunt who was gay – would she think her aunt was disgusting? If this kind of thing is happening at Zoe's middle school, you can bet it's happening at others.

Margot: You know, kids today are growing up faster than we ever did. By 7th grade, some kids are becoming aware of sexual feelings and even exploring their sexuality. For middle-schoolers, I think sexuality and attraction are becoming real issues.

Stephanie: Some kids at this age may even already be aware of being gay. I want to give my children a message of acceptance early on, so they will be comfortable talking to me about their lives.

Tricia: Maybe there's even a little fear that by talking about it I'm encouraging it. Even though I don't really think it works that way, I don't want to tempt fate. I'm not saying that I'd be upset if my child were gay, I just don't want to push toward a certain way of thinking by talking about it too much. Another part of me is worried that if I bring up gay issues too much, he will start to get paranoid that I think he's gay, whether he is or not.

Stephanie: You know, I think it's important that we address our own fears and concerns. From the workshops I've attended, it seems like that's a lot of what the Welcoming Congregation process is about—looking at our own fears and biases and just getting comfortable talking about these topics. And whatever your personal beliefs are, that can help you pass them on to your children.

Tricia: I do want to be sure to pass on my values so my kids aren't just getting everything they know from their peers and the media.

Rob: But what about younger kids? What can I really say that's appropriate for them?

Pam: You know, at first I thought, "Maybe I can talk to my kids about this without using the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender." But then I realized that these terms are so charged with negative connotations that it's really important for my kids to hear them discussed comfortably.

Stephanie: My 9-year-old says his friends use the word gay as a general putdown for anything, as in "Those shoes are so gay." Or when the kids outgrew Rescue Heroes toys, I heard one of the boys say, "Rescue Heroes are so gay." Even though what they're talking about has nothing to do with homosexuality, I don't like how at this young age the word already has such a negative connotation. I really want to nip that in the bud.

Rob: My second-grader rides the bus, and I know he must be hearing some of these things from the bigger kids. I guess when I think about it, I would rather have my child hear about these things from me than just from other kids at school. But I don't have any idea how to talk to a seven-year-old about homosexuality.

Pam: You know, I think when we hear the term "homosexual," we automatically go to the syllable "sex"—We think that if we talk about gays and lesbians, we're going to start talking about the mechanics of it, and we don't think that's appropriate for our kids who haven't even shown interest in holding hands or kissing. But a gay relationship is more than just sex, same as a straight relationship. I can talk about attraction, about liking someone, or about love—some men love other men in the kind of way daddy loves mommy. Even though my 8-year-old doesn't seem to have developed romantic feelings himself, he sees our relationship and other couples around him and can kind of relate to the idea. And even though he isn't there yet, some of his friends are already talking about having boyfriends or girlfriends, so I can talk about how two girls might feel that way about each other.

[Margot & Lauren silently play paper- folding fortune-teller game on the side.]

Stephanie: One day, my son brought home this game—one of those paper-folding games that’s supposed to be a fortune-teller about who you like. The first step of the game was to pick boy or girl, so I said, what if a boy picks a boy, or what if a girl picks a girl? He said that would be funny. I asked, “Why?” Then I said, “Did you know sometimes a boy might like other boys in that way?” That was a great opportunity to lead into a discussion.

Pam: Oh, yeah, those teachable moments are great. One day after the kids heard the Story for All Ages, King & King, my preschooler told her older brother that she wanted to marry her friend Sophie. He told her, “You can’t marry a girl.” She put her hands on her hips indignantly and said, “Humph! If they **change** the **law**!” I said some people would like to be able to do that... Kids are great at coming up with their own conversation starters, if we just listen and prepare ourselves to talk about it.

Tricia: I think even little kids have some basic idea about marriage or romance. But I can also just talk about families; such as some families have two mommies. In our preschool there actually is a girl who has two mommies, so it was a great opportunity to talk about that. It was important for me to talk naturally and comfortably about it, like “Two mommies! You know, there are all kinds of families. Some families have a grandma and grandpa and kids, some have a mommy who’s white and a daddy who’s black, and some have two moms.”

Rob: It’s really great that you’re so comfortable talking about it. Sometimes I’m not sure how I feel about it myself. I mean, I **want** to be accepting, but I know I’ve still got a lot of baggage from the way I was raised and what society seems to dictate.

Pam: There’s a saying my Tae Kwon Do instructor uses, “Fake It Till You Make It.” I think that can apply here, too. If I start acting like I’m comfortable and just put myself out there even when I feel nervous, I find that I actually start feeling more comfortable talking about it.

Stephanie: That's great. Another thing that can work is to just be honest with my kids about how I feel. Like I could say, "Well when I was a kid everyone was taught that this was bad, but I don't really believe that. Sometimes, though, I don't know how to talk about it in a good way." Or I could just say, "I don't know why, but I'm kind of nervous talking about this. But I'm going to do it anyway because it's really important."

Rob: I guess I could try a combination of honesty and bravery. That could apply both with my kids and with other adults. Like if I met a transgender person, I could say, "I really want to be able to talk with you comfortably, but I'm terrified that I'm going to say something stupid and insensitive."

[PAUSE—STAGE CHANGE]

III. How might becoming a Welcoming Congregation affect me personally?

Players

Lauren [Questioner]

Stephanie

Margot

Setting

Walking in a group down the aisle as they talk

Lauren: I'd like to be "welcoming," but I'm not sure I know how to behave around bisexual, gay or transgender people. What if I say or do something they think is offensive?

Stephanie: Why do you think you'd behave any differently?

Lauren: Well, I guess it's just that the whole thing makes me a little uncomfortable, and I'm afraid that my discomfort might come across in the wrong way. I'm also not sure where I **stand** on some of these issues, particularly transgender issues.

Stephanie: I hear you. This can be hard stuff. I know I have the easiest time with being welcoming to gay and lesbian people, because I've got two sisters who are gay, and I've had a lot of gay male friends over the years. I'm less comfortable with bisexual and transgender issues, because I've never known any openly bisexual or transgender people. That discomfort tells me that I've got some work to do in this area.

Margot: Another way to figure out where you stand on these issues, is to learn more about them – like through the workshops the Welcoming Congregation team has offered. I learned a lot in the bisexuality workshop that Tricia and Rob led in December. Also, your ***Order of Service today includes a recommended reading list*** for people who want to go that route. And you can always ask me or other members of the Welcoming Congregation team if you have any questions.

[STAGE CHANGE]

[2. What is at stake for a member who opposes gay marriage or becoming a WELCOMING CONGREGATION?]

Players

Rob [Questioner—Role Change]

Pam

Stephanie

Setting

Walking in a group down the aisle from the other direction as they talk

Props

Role change gear (hat, jacket)

Rob: You know what I'm **really** afraid to say out loud? Will I still be welcome at Channing if I don't support becoming a Welcoming Congregation?

Pam: I'm not sure what you mean.

Rob: Well, if the Congregation votes to become a Welcoming Congregation, but I'm still not sure it's the right thing to do, will I be made to feel wrong, and even ostracized by those who vote in favor? I mean, what if I think marriage should be between a man and a woman and everyone else seems to think gay marriage is okay? Will that make me wrong in the eyes of other members? –

Pam: Well, if you've got questions or concerns, you're not alone. While a lot of members have voiced their support for the Welcoming Congregation process, a number of others have raised concerns or simply haven't been engaged at all. As long as members have serious questions about becoming a Welcoming Congregation, we won't be bringing this to a vote.

Stephanie: You know, when we first started this process, the Welcoming Congregation team was really keen to move it through as quickly as possible. I guess we just *assumed* Channing was *already* welcoming, because it's such a liberal church community. However, if we truly want to **be** a Welcoming Congregation, then we need to do the work together that gets us there.

[PAUSE—STAGE CHANGE]

[3. What if we are so welcoming that our congregational demographics shift so that the majority is gay? Then will I still feel welcome? Will I feel uncomfortable?]

Players

Margot [*Role Change--Questioner*]
Tricia

Setting

Walking in a group down the aisle from the other direction as they talk
Props: Role change gear (hat, jacket)

Margot: What if we attract so many gay members that the church becomes mostly gay – then I’d be a minority. Will I still feel welcome? Will I feel uncomfortable?

Tricia: Why do you think you’d feel unwelcome or uncomfortable?

Margot: Well, I don’t know, really. I just think I might be.

Tricia: You know, I’m learning that when I hear something that makes me uncomfortable, it’s usually a signal that I have some spiritual work to do. It’s as if I’m suddenly faced with the realization that I’m going to have to take some action or – God forbid – **change**– in order to be the kind of person I want to be.

Margot: I hear what you’re saying, but learning how to be comfortable with something like this is a lot different than deciding not to shop at Wal-Mart anymore.

Tricia: No question about it. It’s much harder. It’s what makes this effort part of our “walking together in the spirit of mutual love.”

Margot: Well, okay, but what if the Welcoming Congregation effort ends up turning Channing into some kind of gay activist organization? I heard that happened in some Unitarian Universalist churches a few years ago.

Tricia: I don’t think that will happen. At heart, we are a Unitarian Universalist church; we’re not a gay activist organization. People come here in search of a religious community, not a political action community. [*Pause*] Those who **are** interested in pursuing these issues further, could participate in Interweave—it’s an affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association that’s working to end oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity. [*PAUSE—STAGE CHANGE*]

[4. Conclusion: Walking Together in the Spirit of Mutual Love]

Players

Rob

Pam

Lauren [Role Change]

Setting

Walking in a group down the aisle from the other direction as they talk

Props: Role change gear (hat, jacket)

Rob: You know, it's been great talking about this, but I feel like I'm left having more questions than answers.

Pam: I know what you mean. The deeper we get into this, the more things come up that I realize I haven't thought of. And I'm often not sure how I feel about them. It kind of leaves me with my head spinning.

Rob: Yeah, even though I think it's a good thing, it leaves me uncomfortable, even a little anxious, and I feel like I need to get it all sorted out.

Lauren: I don't really think that the point of religion is to keep us comfortable. In fact, I once heard that the purpose of religion is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

Pam: That's really what this is all about isn't it? Challenging ourselves beyond our comfort level so we can grapple with what it means for us and how we live.

Rob: Well, I definitely feel challenged!

Lauren: We've been talking a lot recently about "**walking together in the spirit of mutual love.**" We need to think about what that really means in this case, and figure out, once we do form our opinions, how those positions are grounded in our theologies.

Pam: I think that when it comes to the Welcoming Congregation process, it means that while we may be coming from different points of view, we can take the journey together, challenge ourselves--and each other, and learn how to question, search, and even disagree -- and to do so with love and respect.

Hymn: "One More Step"

Benediction: Susan