

Tas Unity

In 1993, a group of people from Pilgrim Uniting Church decided that there was a need for a support group for gay and lesbian people and their families. They called the group **Tas Unity**. They formed the group out of their concern for the spiritual welfare of families living in a society that had little acceptance for gay and lesbian people. It was a brave move on their part since at the time there was little acceptance of gay and lesbian people in the community, much less in the Christian communities. Indeed the Uniting Church was at the beginning of a long and painful journey to acceptance of those whose sexual orientation is different from the dominant heterosexual orientation.

The Uniting Church is a long way into this journey of inclusion but still short of complete acceptance. And across denominations, there remain a number of people who claim that homosexuality is not an orientation that people are born to, but rather a way of life that people sinfully choose. These people choose to use Scripture as their warrant to exclude. They can point to any number of Scripture verses that in their opinion pointedly condemn homosexual practises. I don't intend to have a proof text argument here, but suffice it to say that for Jesus, sexual orientation seemed a non-issue. Everything he said and did indicate to me that issues of inclusion and love were far more important to Jesus.

But the reason I'm writing this **As I See It**, today is that **Tas Unity** of late has been trying to get its message of inclusion out to a wider group of people. Despite a much healthier acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people in the community, there are pockets of Christians who can make life unbearable for them. One small example is the disappearance of a number of pamphlets put out in our walkway that disappear almost as soon as

they are put up. Since the contact number offered in the pamphlet has not been contacted I can only assume that that is someone who does not approve of support of GLBTI people.

This would not surprise me. In every congregation I have served I have been approached by people who are gay or lesbian who have horror stories to tell of how "good Christian people" have sought to cure them of their affliction! Universally their stories tell of a struggle to live out their spirituality in communities that reject them as being sinful. Many have contemplated suicide such is their despair.

Tas Unity seeks to help such people and their families, to show a God that loves and accepts all creation.

But of even greater concern for me are those clerics who actively peddle the lie that there is "a powerful homosexual lobby" actively campaigning to make our young people accept what they term homosexual lifestyles. Such a lobby they claim is behind the move for acceptance of same sex marriage, which they claim will lead to the destruction of the nuclear family. **As I See It**, infidelity is a greater threat!

So as followers of Christ, my prayer is that the Pilgrim community will continue to be an inclusive place where GLBTI people will feel welcomed and safe.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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