

Remarks at the Raising of the Pride Flag

The Rev. Randall Day, Priest and Rector

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

St. Mark's-in-the-Valley, Los Olivos

Churches are different.

And at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley, we see one humanity in the world God so loves.

There is not a norm for humanity formed by the old patriarchy with sidecars for women, the queer community, people of color and so on. No, the one humanity is including everybody **sharing mutually** in all aspects of life, including community and social life, organizations, government, public service, business, education and so on. **Everyone has access** to creating, participating, leading.

A new day is coming. And at the same time, the new day is here.

There is a better world – it exists – and we are also moving into it on a better way.

Now we may cheer, but some are frightened.

Still, **fear cannot take us down old destructive paths.**

Let's be clear since this Pride flag hangs in front of a church:

The Bible is an ancient text that knows a lot about love, human nature, and experiences people have had with God – but it knows almost nothing about human sexuality.

Of more than 31,000 verses in the Bible, six or seven verses are used against the Queer community, and all of those address issues *other than* sexual orientation or gender identity, dealing instead with such things as sexual violence and idolatry that apply equally to straight people.

And, more importantly, God's revelation of Godself on earth is **not limited to the Bible** but began with the Big Bang more than 13 million years ago and continues to this moment, even this event right now in which God is speaking through all of you gathering and what this all means. What the Bible says to everyone and to LGBTQ+ people is "love one another as I have loved you," "love your neighbor as yourself," and "Do to others what

you would have them do to you." **It just speaks love to everyone.**

So don't ask the Bible to do what it can't do. And since one of the great themes of the Bible is love, **it should never be used against anyone.** That's never it's purpose.

It's not that hard.

And it's not new – thinking people of faith have known all of this for a very long time.

Fundamentalist churches that continue to misinterpret the Bible as condemning of people who are LGBTQ+ do so knowingly misleading their congregations. To paper over the inevitable contradiction, the passive aggressive phrase "Hate the sin and love the sinner" became the *spiritual bypass to actually loving*. It is never a "sin" for anyone to be who they are – who God created them to be. So the phrase is not actually passive aggressive – but **just plain aggressive** and has justified all manner of violence against the Queer community. **That phrase, very likely, has brought us here today.**

Let's hear no more of "Hate the sin and love the sinner."

As an alternative, and to make it all easy to remember, the celebrated academic, author, and social activist, bell hooks, who had a deep spiritual practice – some see her as a mystic and prophet – summed it up this way: **"Love is as love does."**

In *Do I Stay Christian?*, author and teacher Brian McLaren writes: "*The only way I can stay Christian is to do so as part of a creative movement forging a new kind of Christianity...*" How might that new kind of Christianity appear in our experience and community – and especially at St. Mark's? I hope we have begun.

St. Mark's aims to be a "Love is as love does" church. **Let's be a "Love is as love does" whole SYV and Santa Barbara County community.**