

A Cry From The Pews

Marital infidelity among the clergy is always bad and sad news across the church. All of the church suffers when we read or hear about "the preacher who ran off with someone in the church." All clergy suffer when this happens. This is not a completely new phenomenon - - it just seems to have reached a new level in recent years. Some would even say an epidemic level.

I know that we in the pews sometimes lay heavy expectations on those who come among us to lead us as our pastors. Those expectations should be no more and no less those that we would place upon ourselves. We laity sometimes tend to put our clergy on pedestals only to find that those pedestals are made of fragile clay.

We thought we had finally "done it" a few years ago when our General Conference listed this among the expectations of our clergy - - "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness." Those were supposed to be the seven last words on the subject.

It is indeed sad to learn that oftentimes this clergy marital infidelity has been a part of the pattern of this person and "everyone knows about it".

Surely the Order of Elder and Order of Deacon will find a way to put this on their agenda to attempt to find a way to put a stop to passing from church to church persons with a known record of marital infidelity. The perception is that these people are often moved from place to place hoping that a new situation will correct the behavior. Rather than confront the situation head-on we fear legal action or other complainant reprisal. The era of "who has the best lawyer" has bound us up to where we seem willing to just hopelessly stand by.

This plea from the pews is to those with the authority of credentialing, appointment or reappointment. Please do not destroy any more churches for the sake of trying correct a pattern of marital infidelity of those within the appointment system.

There is a great debate going on within our church over the issue of homosexual behavior. Some even seem to be willing to break up our church over this issue. From my perspective it is not homosexual behavior that is our problem - - it is heterosexual misbehavior.

Even though our "designated sins" within the church come and go - - sin has no season. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It is through the precious blood of Jesus Christ that we can and do find forgiveness of our sins and find salvation for our souls.

Our sins, forgiven as they are, still leave a wake that ripples out behind us, like the wake of a boat. Those ripples touch people and lives we never hear about. They are just lost in the wake of our sins - - often hurt beyond repair.

Who will calm the water that is stirred up within the church caused by the wake of the sin of marital infidelity among the clergy of the United Methodist Church?

Who can respond to this cry from the pews?

Is there no balm in Gilead?