



## For now the winter is past

I read with interest the article in the March 12 issue, “Pastor faces complaint for performing gay marriages.” The *Book of Discipline* is very clear that United Methodist ministers are not permitted to perform same-sex marriages. The fact that the couples had a marriage license doesn’t make the marriage acceptable in the United Methodist Church. If ministers aren’t going to abide by the *Book of Discipline*, they should leave the United Methodist Church.

**Joe Rorex**  
St. Marks UMC  
Maryville District

I am outraged and saddened that we as United Methodists are upholding the blasphemy of God’s word and instruction. In the March 12 issue, page 6, was a picture that slapped the face of all Christians (true Christians). Karen Oliveto (I will not show respect for her title for she no longer should be deemed “reverend”) looked on with a “proud” look of satisfaction as she took part in the blasphemous, so-called union of two females. Her words made me gravely ill when she said “... the miracle of God moving in our midst in San Francisco and creating a new world.” Something is moving in San Francisco and in her, but I’m positive it is not God.

**Joy Shrader**  
Oakland UMC  
Morristown District

I was very disappointed in the March 12 article, “Pastor faces complaint for performing gay marriages.” The article was written by a free-lance writer and appeared to me as one-sided in its lack of defense of the United Methodist Church position on this subject. The issue of same-sex marriages by the church is very divisive. Discussion of difficult issues should not be avoided. When articles on such issues are printed in a United Methodist publication such as *The Call*, they should be representative of the church.

**Dwight Patterson**  
Trinity UMC  
Knoxville District

**Editor’s note:** The article was prepared and released by United Methodist News Service. ■

For complete text of these and other letters to the editor, go to [www.holston.org/thecall](http://www.holston.org/thecall) and click on “C-Mail.”

After this gray and icy winter, we’re ready and eager, even hungry for springtime. Then, when it comes, spring’s rich quality explodes around us. Like turning on bright lights in a dark room, the scents of spring bombard us. Not only the scents of flowering trees and the first blossoms, but also scents of the earth itself. It’s that rich loamy smell of living dirt. The earth is waking up.

Spring is an exuberant season. After the quiet and rest of winter, spring’s wildness feels like that first splash of cold seawater or the cool light of a new, new moon. It’s a shock to the senses, a change of direction. Spring’s wildness is a fresh morning light after a long winter’s night.

It’s also Lent.

Lent. Season of contemplation, fasting, almsgiving, prayer. Season of interiority and inner change. Lent. The long season of withdrawal from a world that would and did kill its savior. So, how do we experience this wild springtime exuberance at the same time as the gathering darkness of intrigue closes around the Christ? The contrast is surely a bit of

a challenge.

It seems to me that this paradox shines a bright light on life as it is. Just as there are sparkling fires in winter. Just as there are brilliant bonfires of dead and dying leaves in fall. Just as there are snows in the spring. Just as there are a few yellow leaves in July. The dichotomy of vibrant resurgence and soulful reflection can happen every day that the sun

*“. . . for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”*

—Song of Solomon 2:10-12

comes up. This paradox of the shock and glory of spring coupled with the sorrow of Lent is life at its most real. The total package immediately in front of our eyes. And hearts.

After all, Lent means spring in ancient languages. Lent also means

slow. So, one way to work with the paradox of spring’s power and Lent’s surrender might be to consider a slow spring.

A slow spring. The first tip of a crocus leaf that leisurely becomes a stem. The hint of something soft in the air in place of that damp cold. The slow unfolding of a jonquil. Nothing hurried. Nothing racing by so that we don’t see. Such a slow spring that we see the sweet new leaves unfurl.

A slow spring could mean that we find a rhythm between the awakening earth and the inner world of love and discipleship. A slow spring could mean we meet the loveliness of this world with a sense of the timelessness of suffering and triumph. And that the enormity of spring is a sacrament of resurrection and new life.

Spring and Lent. Surely they encompass the outer and inner paths leading to the same place. They are seasons both of the year and of the heart. Seasons where we find our way into new life. ■

The Rev. Curran is a clergy member of the Western North Carolina Conference.

### General Conference

## Delegates want churches to participate in prayer vigil

**From Jean Henderson**  
Holston delegation leader

The Holston delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conferences is joining other delegations in “Saturating GC ‘04 in Prayer,” a model created by the Western Pennsylvania Conference. The goal for every Annual Conference: Cover General Conference in prayer by recruiting at least 40 churches to each organize a one-day prayer vigil for 40 days preceding General Conference. If more than 40 churches are recruited within the conference, the vigil can be extended through the 11 days of General Conference.

The delegation needs churches to help in this effort. To find ways to meet the goal, visit the GC Prayer Ministry Web site at [www.gcprayerministry.org](http://www.gcprayerministry.org). The Holston delegation’s immediate request is for church leaders to notify one of the following four coordinators that your congregation will participate.

Choose a day within the time frame listed for your area – or ask to be assigned a day:

● **March 18-27:** Knoxville, Morristown, and Oak Ridge Districts. Contact Lynn Hutton at [Lhutton111@aol.com](mailto:Lhutton111@aol.com) or (865) 690-8641.

● **March 28-April 6:** Chattanooga, Cleveland, and Maryville Districts. Contact Jean Henderson at [jhendersonj@aol.com](mailto:jhendersonj@aol.com) or (423) 472-6428.

● **April 7-16:** Abingdon, Johnson City, and Kingsport Districts. Contact Carol Wilson at [carol@wesley memorialumc.org](mailto:carol@wesley memorialumc.org) or phone (423) 282-6722.

● **April 17-26:** Big Stone Gap, Tazewell, and Wytheville Districts. Contact Daniel Taylor at [bsgdist@umc.holston.org](mailto:bsgdist@umc.holston.org) or phone (276) 523-3025. ■

### Exchange

GATE CITY, Va. – Hale’s Chapel UMC seeks two **pulpit chairs** for a pulpit with red carpet. Contact the Rev. Wayne Rader at [vaway@usit.net](mailto:vaway@usit.net), (276) 386-6393 or (423) 341-8639. **S**

POWELL, Tenn. – Powell UMC seeks a **director of children’s ministry**. The position involves children’s church, Wednesday evening program, nursery workers, VBS, etc. Must be willing to be flexible and a team player. Call (865) 938-2741 or send resume to: Children’s Ministry, 323 W. Emory Road, Powell, TN 37849. **L**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Christ UMC, a 2,800-member congregation in suburban Louisville, is seeking an experienced **youth minister**. Full-time position. Competitive salary and benefits. Send resume, including references, to: Youth Minister Search Committee, Christ UMC, 4614 Brownsboro Road, Louisville, KY 40207, or e-mail [youthsearch@ccumc.net](mailto:youthsearch@ccumc.net). Resumes must be received by April 30. **L**