

Small Talk – June 18 2021
By Michael Small

I like a good story and am a great fan of the Indiana Jones movies. They are just plain fun. I note with some enthusiasm that there will be an Indiana Jones 5 movie released July 29, 2022 starring Harrison Ford in the lead role. Ford has said that no-one else can play Indiana Jones apart from him: "When I'm gone, he's gone. It's easy. Get it in [your head]." One of the more interesting scenes occurring in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* comes near the end. They have finally found the location of the Holy Grail, the cup that Christ drank from at the last supper, guarded by the Grail Knight. But there are many cups to choose from. The knight advises "You must choose. But choose wisely. For as the true Grail will bring you life, the false Grail will take it from you." The nemesis "chooses poorly" and dies. Jones chooses wisely and lives.

May I say to all of you on this 18th day of June – choose wisely. Yesterday the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the city of Philadelphia may not bar a Catholic agency that refused to work with same-sex couples from screening potential for foster parents. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. wrote that the Catholic agency, "seeks only an accommodation that will allow it to continue serving the children of Philadelphia ***in a manner consistent with its religious beliefs; it does not seek to impose those beliefs on anyone else.***"¹ I would argue that "religious beliefs" should not exclude, but be expansive – welcoming all who would be appropriate!

Again, I say, "Choose wisely". As a member of the United Church of Christ I aspire to follow in the ways of Jesus and seek to fulfill a simple but challenging theme – ***No Matter who you are – or where you are on life's journey – You are welcome here!*** I also adhere to the three great loves articulated by of the UCC – ***"Love of Neighbor. Love of Children. Love of Creation."***

So it is that we are called to be rooted in love – for neighbor, for children, and for creation. Nowhere in this theology, or my reading of scripture, or in the policies and traditions of the UCC do I find merit, warrant, or justification for not inviting and welcoming all humans, or earthlings. No matter who one is, period! Jesus welcomed and gathered with those who were undesirable and defiled of his time and culture – those who were shunned and rejected.

I would argue that no one is less than being a person who is uniquely created, bearing gifts a plenty, and possessing the indwelling of the most holy spirit of the divine. No one, NO ONE, is excluded from this creative process. Whether you are a person who is old, rich, poor, single, married, child, youth, educated or not, or a person of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, intersexual, transgender, queer, male, female – you are no less than equal, divinely gifted, loved, and accepted by those who are a part of the United Church of Christ – at ***our best!*** No one can say to you that because of your beliefs, traditions, nationalities, religion, or creed, sexual orientation, that you are less than – for you are WHOLLY (holy) made to be who you are created to be . . . and more!

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/17/us/supreme-court-gay-rights-foster-care.html>

Because we are human, we are not always at our best – but inclusion and expansion is what we must strive for. Growing up in the 1950's, as a white male, mostly sheltered and protected, and of privilege I knew few people of color and I knew no one who fell into the GLBTQAI+ population. I have had to learn, grow, expand, open my eyes, and look through lens of love to learn, understand, accept, and love many different kinds of people. It's not always easy, but openness has to be the norm for we who seek to follow in the ways of Christ.

Whenever our faith and beliefs cause us to exclude another, question and challenge them to open their hearts to the wonder and beauty of this creation we all are called to live in. Be rooted in love!

Happy Juneteenth!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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