

*Remarks of Ralph Williams
at Foundry UMC
on Sunday, May 27, 2007*



The 2007 Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference

Working through Baltimore Washington Reconciling United Methodists (B-WARM), a LGBT advocacy group, many of us labored hard to bring a petition to the Annual Conference to change the Discipline, the rulebook of the UMC, to delete the statement "Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." We are convinced that this statement is not a reflection of the teaching of Christ; that it is in the Discipline as a result of social prejudice.

Over the past year, we worked with a number of churches in the Annual Conference and 11 churches including Foundry co-sponsored the petition. In the weeks and days preceding Annual Conference, we prepared background materials, created mailing labels, and printed and mailed supporting materials to all clergy and lay members of the Annual Conference. During the Annual Conference we caucused and arranged for a number of individuals to speak on the floor in support of the petition. The Annual Conference voted on this petition on Friday night and defeated it by a vote of 440 to 353.

In the Conference Ballroom, I was standing at a microphone ready to speak, but after just a few minutes the Annual Conference voted to cut off debate. The question was called and the vote taken. Most of us who had prepared to speak had no opportunity to do so.

You would think that we would leave the meeting room in gloom that Friday evening but it turned out to be the high point of the Annual Conference for many of us.

As we met in the hallway outside the Ballroom, cell phones in hand and seeking out each other and again in the hotel pub, we realized that something important and indeed miraculous had happened. We had triumphed over our fears and the morass that leads to inaction and had taken a stand. As a result we were changed. Gone were the fears, and uncertainties that clouded our visions of being full and whole children of God. We were with each other supporting each other, laughing and congratulating each other. In the doing not in the winning was our victory. We had become a community of love and support and purpose and we realized that this Annual Conference would never be the same.

When you overcome fear and make a stand, change happens within you. And, with this change in you and in me, the world can no longer be the same.