

Transgender returns to Stonewall: reflections on my visit to Presbyterian Welcome

What a privilege to travel to New York City for a celebration of Pride! A weekend of meeting welcoming folks to talk about transgender issues in NYC churches came to a conclusion for me in Sunday's Pride march as our Presbyterian Welcome contingent passed the Stonewall Inn, the place where our modern version of this historic dialogue began. One version of that fateful June weekend in 1969 portrays the Stonewall bar's patrons, ejected by the police, milling about outside and becoming enraged as drag queens were ushered into waiting paddy wagons, arrested for violating the city's anti-cross-dressing ordinance. As a transgender person, I revel in the imagery of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and friends demonstrating their rage at the unjust treatment of their transgender brothers and sisters.

History has changed the story, which may never be known completely, and that is perhaps a good thing. As I returned to the city (I had last been there in 1970, just one year after history was made) I embraced the vision of Presbyterian Welcome coming home to my version of Stonewall—a reunion with the “T” we so casually add to “GLB.”

And so we came together, Central Presbyterian Church hosting a meeting for pastors, First Presbyterian holding two workshops on trans issues in the church, and Rutgers including TG in adult education and worship. What wonderful visionary churches!

My thanks go to all who participated in these events, and especially to Todd Bagwell and the steering committee, who made this weekend possible. And, of course, to Cliff Fraser, who helped me envision how all this could come about. And my heartfelt thanks go to Presbyterian Welcome for embracing this transgender child of God!

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