

# OPEN FORUM

Thank you for dedicating July/August issue of *Circuit Rider* for the awareness of HIV and AIDS. A sermon, "How Would Jesus Respond to Persons Living with HIV and Aids?" was not only a superior quality sermon but full of practical Wesleyan wisdom and theology. Before, during, and after Jesus' presence in our world, there have always been people who were discarded from the society as if they were of no value to humans or even to God. The challenge presented by Rev. M.Kent Millard is of enormous significance to the present day United Methodists. If we love God and claim to be the disciples of Jesus Christ then no fear and pre-judgment which we foster can save us from the judgment of God. We are definitely called to change our thinking and get into action to do good to those who moan and groan in pain at our doorsteps. Yes, the world may be a mess but we are called not to give in to the Evil one or the practice of it in any way or form. The very first thing we can do is to recognize God's image in all human beings, including the ones who suffer from this dreaded disease and are now banished from our minds and our society. They indeed live in our own neighborhoods and in our world. Thank you for uplifting the Christ in people who suffer.

**George E. David**  
Rockford, IL

I read May/June issue and found the diversity of opinions hard to believe. We are truly all over the map on the issue of who Jesus is and what that means (our Christology). I read the letters to the editor in the July/August issue and my fears were confirmed. I cannot tell by these articles and letters how many United Methodists have bought into the heresy of universalism but it seems to be plenty. As an evangelical, conservative pastor, I wonder sometimes why I am still

in this denomination and then I read the Articles of Religion and other doctrinal standards that we affirm and I know that I am united with these beliefs. If we are not united by our beliefs; then what unites us? Why are we not all Roman Catholic? Why are we not all Baptist? Are we United Methodist or Diversified Methodist?

No one with reasonable intelligence can read article VI and XX of our Articles of Religion and think that we are universalists in our doctrine. You cannot believe what we say that we believe and think that people in other religions are safe and secure. Some people will say that we don't believe the old way any more and I say, "says who?" In his sermon "The Way To The Kingdom," John Wesley talked about orthodoxy and right opinions not being the way and rightly pointed us to the only way, "Christ in our hearts." In this sermon he talked about "unconverted Jews" and I think that he took for granted that we would see the need to convert them. He also talked about the fact that we can adhere to all the right creeds and have all the right doctrines and "have no more religion than a Jew, Moslem, or Pagan." I am not saying that right doctrine saves us

but I will say that wrong doctrine can lose us. I wonder what Mr. Wesley would think if he read your magazine and the other official publications from the church that he founded?

**Allan T. Murphy**  
Lynch Station, Va.

Although the Cavin-Dillon, Marbury, and Miles articles proved to be more the exception, the May/June focus on John 14:6 showed how much a pre-Holocaust mindset pervades the church. To continue to rip this text out of the history from which it came contributes to the harm Christians do, even if unwittingly, in Jesus' name. Since John 14:6 comes from outsiders, asking what they think might have been helpful. Among those outside the church, John 14:6 probably repels more than it attracts. In order to know, *CR* should have included at least one non-Christian perspective on this verse.

**Scott Endress**  
Houston, TX

The articles on John 14.6 in the May/June issue of *Circuit Rider* were interesting and thought-provoking. However, they seemed to deal almost exclusively with Jesus' claim to be "the way" but did not explore the more difficult issue of the "the truth" and largely ignored the substance of "the life."

The problem the western church faces today is not so much how we are to interpret Jesus' claim to be the way, but rather what he meant when he said he was the truth and the life. Until we wrestle deeply

## Survey of Favorite and Least Favorite Hymns

You are invited to participate in an online survey by identifying your **ten favorite** hymns. You may choose any ten selections in any combination from *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989) and/or *The Faith We Sing* (2000). The survey consists of the alphabetical listing of both books' contents and a check box for each title. You simply click on your ten selections. You will then be asked to select up to **ten** selections of your **LEAST** favorite hymns and songs, or titles that you wish had not been included. You will be asked to respond to five demographic questions that will help us in analyzing the survey. Your participation and responses are confidential and anonymous. This information will be used to help plan for future resources in congregational singing and in identifying changes and trends in musical style. Please encourage your friends, your children, Sunday School classes, students, professors, choir members, church staff — any United Methodist — to participate. It is our hope to have as wide a participation as possible.

To take the survey, go to [www.gbod.org/favoritehymns.html](http://www.gbod.org/favoritehymns.html).

and seriously with these questions and their meaning in our pluralistic and diverse world, we are not in a position to answer effectively what the church's witness to Jesus as the way should be. The content of Christian faith — the witness of Christians — is largely unintelligible to a world beyond our doors, *primarily because* the message of Christianity is unintelligible within the church. This is especially true of those beyond our doors in asymmetric cultures with distinctly different intellectual training, including Christians in those cultures. Our inability to articulate a thoughtful account of Christian belief and our near-wholesale embrace of pluralism and diversity are incomprehensible beyond our shores. The only way to overcome this divide is through the academic transition to secular education beyond our borders, over and against indigenous intellectual and cultural values, especially in regard to truth. Such a suggestion presents an immediate conundrum for those seriously committed to the ideas of pluralism and diversity. Do we teach other peoples to think like us, or do we avoid the imperialistic implication of imposing western values, for surely, nothing is quite so western as the secular

rejection of religious truth?

We clergy are trained to grow churches, but we have not been taught the intellectual substance of Christian belief; nor do we think it necessary to know, because we are educated to be comfortable with the idea that religious belief is nothing more than faith and opinion. If it were truth, we would have to deal with the difficulty of competing and mutually exclusive religious claims, an inconceivable suggestion within our intellectual realm, so Christians and Christian churches are thought to be best served by simply avoiding an issue we cannot possibly resolve.

But are we? The biblical personality who reflects our intellectual milieu is Pontius Pilate when he first posed the question: *what is truth?*

**Elizabeth Moreau**

Houston, TX.

I've particularly benefitted from Circuit Rider this year. Well done.

**Lisa Marchal**

South Indiana Conference

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