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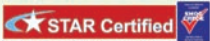
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EDITOR'S NOTE



Keeping faith

BY FOON RHEE / foongr@newsreview.com

The Table, a church in East Sacramento, displays banners welcoming the LGBTQ community and promoting Black Lives Matter.

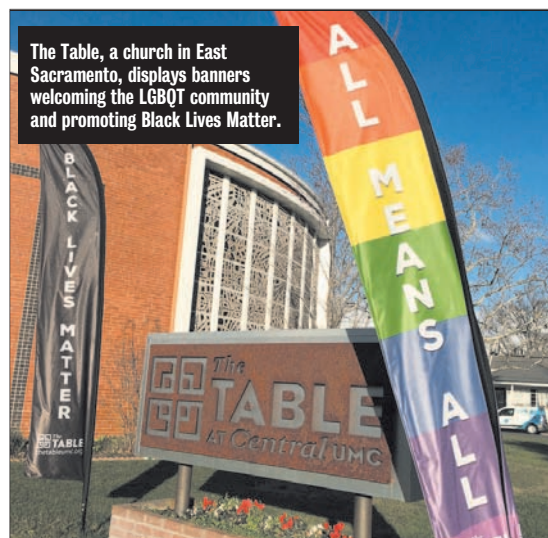


PHOTO BY FOON RHEE

I'm glad that my local church is choosing tolerance and diversity over an awfully narrow and antiquated view of the gospel.

Unfortunately, that didn't happen a few years back. When I first arrived in Sacramento in 2010, I most often went to Fremont Presbyterian Church. But in October 2011, the congregation voted to leave the national denomination, which had decided to allow the ordination of openly gay clergy.

After I left Fremont, I attended a storefront church in Midtown until I found The Table at Central United Methodist Church a couple of years ago.

Like many believers, my faith journey has had many twists and turns, stops and starts. When I first came to America in fourth grade, my parents sent me to a church around the corner. I still have the Bible presented by the Sunday school class at Sunset Hills Christian Church in Raleigh, N.C.

After falling away from organized religion from middle school through college and early adulthood, I returned to the fold in my mid-30s as I sought more meaning in my life. At Davidson United Methodist Church in North Carolina, I worked with its Habitat for Humanity chapter.

Though my construction skills were limited to some hammering and painting, I

led a house project—raising the money, organizing volunteers and

showing up every Saturday morning for nearly a year. That's my proudest accomplishment—not anything in journalism.

Nowadays, I don't show up at Sunday services as often as I should. But when I do, it's valuable time for reflection—of how far I am from the more patient, more generous, more forgiving person I want to be.

And once in a while, there are moments of discernment. Last fall, I was sitting in the pews when I decided to seek this job as a way to become more committed to this community.

It's not the first time I've felt called. As with so much else in my life, I thank God for that. □

Faith is personal and religion is local, or at least it should be.

I'm reminded of that with the soul-searching that I and other United Methodists must do now.

The co-pastor at the church I go to in East Sacramento reassured the congregation that no matter what the national denomination did, we would still be open to all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Two days later, on February 26, delegates from around the world at a special session in St. Louis of the United Methodist Church voted 438-384 to keep and strengthen a ban on same-sex marriages and openly gay ministers.

How does that keep with the United Methodist motto: "Open hearts, open minds, open doors?" And when mainline denominations are losing members in droves, why would you tell anyone in our diverse nation that they are not welcome?

With the vote, some more progressive congregations may split from the national United Methodist Church, the nation's second largest Protestant denomination with 7 million members. The decision is opposed by the bishop of the California-Nevada conference, which includes nearly 80,000 members in more than 370 congregations.

When churches are losing members in droves, why would you tell anyone in our diverse nation that they are not welcome?

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