

2018-19 Report to The Presbytery of Southern New England

Gay and lesbian advocates began fighting for LGBT inclusion in our denomination over forty years ago. Today Presbyterian Promise and PSNE friends continue to work to assure that LGBTQ+ persons hear God's good news and feel truly welcome in our churches. The full emergence of trans and queer persons has surfaced issues we were unaware of when the movement began. Many of the emerging situations create devastation in families; some current political attitudes and policies are alarming. We need to remain vigilant and active so that God's queer children will not feel abandoned or oppressed again.

Here is a summary of Presbyterian Promise's activity during the past year:

- We worked more closely than ever with local churches for regional Pride events in Fairfield County, Providence, and Hartford. At our table we provide worthwhile resources, supportive, welcoming conversation, and invitation to our churches.
- We tabled again at the March 2019 True Colors Conference for LGBTQ+ youth. Our display this year highlighted stories of queer seminarians at Union Theological Seminary who stayed in the faith honoring their calls. Our library/resource display is very popular at True Colors and Pride events. This year we provided scholarships for one youth and a PSNE pastor to attend the Conference.
- The ministry of presence and education to the Presbytery of Southern New England continues in our displays and dialogue with sisters and brothers at presbytery meetings.
- We increased our use of electronic communication this year. We are pleased that our announcements appear in the Presbytery's communications, such as *Getting Connected*.
- We meet individually with pastors as they begin new ministries in PSNE.
- We partner with others to sponsor educational events. Partnering helps support the local initiatives of welcoming churches and allows us to share costs. We used a loose network of affirming Hartford churches to publicize the screening of *A Self-Made Man* at our 2018 annual meeting, and worked with Providence Presbyterian Church to co-sponsor a May screening of *Out of Order*.
- We were delighted to welcome Rev. Michael Piazza to our 2019 annual meeting to reflect on the equality movement's past and future in our churches.
- We provided a complimentary copy of *Outside the Lines* by Mihee Kim-Kort to each of our supporting churches. *Outside the Lines* is a valuable new book reflecting personally, theologically, and pastorally on how queerness can open us to new ways of living out our faith. We hope it will make its way into the libraries of PSNE churches.

Presbyterian Promise continues to discern how we can effectively respond to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, PSNE, and the PC(USA). We seek to be in continual, attentive relationship with PSNE churches and hope to be more diligent at asking about the needs of congregations in relation to the LGBTQ+ community. In our annual letter to supportive congregations, we suggested arranging visits and conversation. We love to worship with folks during their Sunday services.

Dick Hasbany and Keith Rhoden, Co-moderators