



Faith United Methodist Church Celebrates 10 Years as a Reconciling Congregation

In honor of Faith United Methodist's ten-year anniversary as a Reconciling Congregation, the Outreach Committee arranged for a display of liturgical stoles from the Shower of Stoles collection to be displayed in the Commons and Sanctuary from November 14-21, 2021. Faith is located in St. Anthony, MN.

Shower of Stoles was started in 1995, by a Presbyterian minister who chose to leave the ministry rather than be defrocked due to her sexual orientation. She wanted to have a display of stoles from others who were affected by their denominations' rules about sexual orientation and ministry, at the presbytery meeting on the day she set aside her ordination. She asked LGBT friends and colleagues to send a stole; in a short time, she received over eighty stoles. Since then, the collection has grown to over a thousand stoles and other sacred items representing the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people of faith. These persons have served in thirty-two denominations and faith traditions, in six countries on three continents. Each stole contains the story of a LGBTQ person who is active in the life and leadership of their faith community: minister, elder, deacon, teacher, missionary, musician, administrator, or active layperson. The collection is maintained by The Institute for Welcoming Resources.

This collection celebrates the gifts of LGBTQ persons who serve God in countless ways, while also lifting those who have been excluded from service because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The collection bears witness to the huge loss of leadership that the church has brought upon itself because of its own unjust policies. The vast majority of the stoles have been sent in by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people themselves. Some have been sent by family or friends to honor a LGBTQ loved one. Over three-quarters of the stoles donated specifically by clergy and other full-time church professionals are done so anonymously.

These stoles present a beautiful and troubling display. Each stole has a story or dedication on it. 15 of the 40 stoles displayed at Faith had a United Methodist connection, including the lesbian couple whose UM pastor wouldn't baptize their infant son, to UMs who became clergy in another denomination so that they could bring their full selves to their ministry and clergy who remained in the closet in order to fulfill their calling.

For more information about the Shower of Stoles website. <http://www.welcomingresources.org/sosp.htm>