



*Bishop Melvin G. Talbert*

September 18, 2014

Dear John,

Recently I had a conversation with my 16-year-old granddaughter. I felt like she needed to hear from her Papa about the stand I was making with others for LGBTQ inclusion in the church, and how some leaders were reacting in fear, seeking to put her Papa on trial. I attempted to ease into this sensitive topic, but she quickly interrupted me...

***Papa, the church isn't just talking about abstract people-  
they are talking about my friends!***

She was seeing persons of different sexual orientations and gender identities not as an issue to compromise over, but simply as friends, embodying the last words Jesus gave us in John 15:

***No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends...  
I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...  
I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.***

Young allies like my granddaughter will soon be choosing for themselves whether they will still call The UMC home. It is no longer just LGBTQ persons who are being kept from the full ministry of the church, but also my granddaughter who will go where her friends are welcomed and affirmed.

**This gets to why I am taking time to write you.**

John, it is because of your commitment to the ministry of Reconciling Ministries Network that people like my granddaughter and her friends will know they are loved. Giving to RMN, your act of Biblical Obedience, is saving the lives of our friends-there is no greater love!

This year, RMN's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, marks an unprecedented moment in history to help shape what the church will look like tomorrow. Change is happening-change 30 years in the making.

I hope you will consider joining me in Biblical Obedience by making a gift to RMN that will help us challenge the remaining vestiges of fear and discrimination. Your gift of love-love for our friends, will feed the souls of the oppressed with the fruit Jesus calls us to bear-fruit that will last. Fruit that is going to leave this church a different place for our children's children.

With Gratitude and Hope,

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert