

COMMENTARY

Rev. Dr. S. Willard Crossan III on the future of Groome Church

August 31, 2021

Following its exit from United Methodism, expressing dissatisfaction with the denomination's stance denying the LGBTQ community's full participation in all aspects of church life, Groome Church is rebranding itself as a progressive congregation with strong ties to traditional Christian theology. At the root of Christian doctrine are both the worship of the divine author of history, and adherence to the moral imperatives dictated by the same divine authority. The fundamental role of the church has always been to come to know the nature of God, and subsequently implement God's will for creation in a meaningful and compassionate manner.

It is the long-held belief of the Christian faith that the very essence of God is love. Everything the institutional church does must reflect the ideals of compassion, respect, acceptance and openness of mind that are the rudimentary components of love. In order to achieve this goal, Groome Church is embracing everyone, welcoming all who wish to attend, and exhibiting a profound respect for diversity and self-expression.

While Groome is clearly a Christian house of worship, we celebrate common values, the remarkably diverse nature of God's people, and wish to set an example of religious tolerance in our community. After all, if the God in whom we believe is capable of creating the universe without any physical labor, rather by pure thought or simple speech, it is more than remotely possible that the same God can reveal itself in innumerable social and historical contexts. Groome Church seeks to share in the value of other great religious traditions and provide an environment in which mutual respect and appreciation for all meaningful moral points of view have value.

Everyone in some fashion is a unique being - a creation of God - and yet we all face the same realities of life, share like ambitions, hopes and dreams. Why not create a sanctuary amidst this sometimes troubling world, where people can come to know and appreciate each other, and promote a form of human synergy? This is our attempt to make Christ's admonition to: "Love one another; by this others will know that you are my disciples," a reality.

Separation from United Methodism is the congregation's initiative to focus on welcome, acceptance, and the value of diversity, while practicing active engagement in the community. We seek to provide many creative ways in which people can express their spirituality and desire to serve this locale in charity, artistic expression, and critical thought. Groome has not abandoned the fundamental tenets of its founder, John Wesley. Methodism was born as a Christian social justice movement - the leading proponent of social reform in its day. The abolition of slavery, prison reform, freedom of speech, expression and assembly, as well as the right to privacy, were among the urgent concerns of the denomination's founder. Likewise, providing shelter, food, clothing, education and healthcare were principal missions of the founding church. None of these have changed. Groome seeks to enrich the greater Lewes area with both its progressive outlook and programs. We are looking forward to our future, and hope the community will both welcome and participate in our efforts to bring the word of God to an authentic, viable, creative, and meaningful reality throughout the Lewes community.

Rev. Dr. Willard Crossan, a native of Wilmington, came to Groome in July 2014. Prior to Groome he served as pastor in Cecil County as well as to churches in Delmar, Cambridge, and Chestertown. A graduate of both the Divinity and Law schools of Vanderbilt University, he was conferred a Th.D. in ethics and religion from St. Andrew's University, Scotland. Pastor Crossan entered the ministry from Grace United Methodist Church in Wilmington.

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