

# Soulforce Alert

**Vigil, Protest, and Civil Disobedience at the Trial of Karen Dammann**

## **Dramatic Moment in Soulforce History**

**Jimmy Creech and Phil Lawson Confront Bishops at Trial Blockade**

BOTHELL, WASHINGTON. MARCH 17, 2004

With television cameras from every network rolling and reporters from every major news agency present, Jimmy Creech, our Soulforce Board Chairperson, and our distinguished Soulforce friend, the Rev. Phil Lawson, confronted United Methodist Bishops Galvan and Grove as they arrived to begin the trial of the Rev. Karen Dammann. Karen is a lesbian pastor who refused to remain silent about her loving, long term relationship with her partner, Meredith, and the son they are raising together.

More than 50 Soulforce volunteers became our Rapid Response team in Bothell, Washington, a suburb of Seattle, to protest Rev. Dammann's trial. In a nonviolent act of civil disobedience, they blocked the door to Bothell's United Methodist Church just long enough to explain to the Bishops that the trial itself was an act of spiritual violence, not just against Karen, but against all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.



At their General Conference in Pittsburgh, April 27-May 7, more than 1,000 UM delegates will make decisions for or against GLBT people that will affect us all. Soulforce MUST BE THERE. Please join us!

The nonviolent blockade ended when United Methodist officials called the police. Thirty-three Soulforce volunteers were arrested, handcuffed, loaded on a bus, taken to city hall, fined \$250 and released.

Three days later, a jury of her peers found Karen Dammann innocent of the charges against her. Their well-reasoned decision exposes the painful divisions in the UMC about homosexuals. And for their decision, they are bearing the fury of fundamentalist homophobia.



**DO JUSTICE WITH SOULFORCE AT THE UNITED METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE IN PITTSBURGH, MAY 5-9, 2004.**

*For the United Methodist Church (or any other faith community) to condemn two lesbian women (or two gay men) for celebrating the love they feel for each other, breaks the heart of God, demeans and dehumanizes millions of sexual and gender minorities, shames the Christian Church and drives our sisters and brothers forever from its doors.”*

—Mel White,  
Executive Director,  
Soulforce



### **WHY MUST SOULFORCE BE IN PITTSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA?**

More than 250 Soulforce volunteers surrounded the United Methodist General Conference in 2000. We asked 1100 delegates representing 8.5 million UM members to *Stop Spiritual Violence* against sexual and gender minorities. When delegates refused to end their ban against marriage and ordination for lesbian and gay people, 181 of us were arrested in a magnificent act of nonviolent civil disobedience that made headlines around the world.



Those who stood with us in 2000 included Dr. King's daughter, Yolanda King; Gandhi's grandson, Arun Gandhi; Phil and James Lawson, Rodney Powell, other civil rights pioneers, and UM bishops, clergy and even Conference delegates.

Since 2000, the conservative, anti-gay 'renewal groups' have gained power in the United Methodist Church. Their agenda in Pittsburg 2004 is to convince delegates to enforce their anti-homosexual agenda permanently.



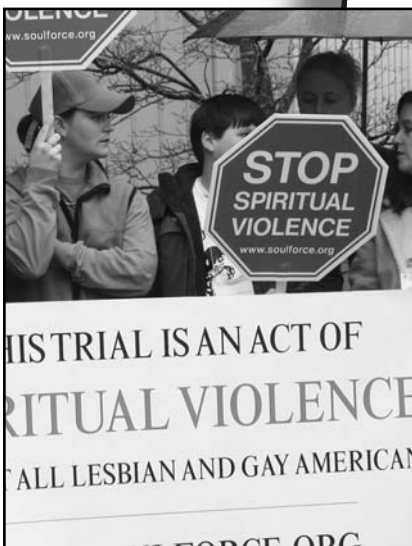
### **IS THIS OUR LAST CHANCE TO STOP SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?**

Conservatives spelled it out in their mailings to the delegates: "Pro-homosexual forces understand that General Conference in 2004 might be their last chance for victory...Time is running out for their cause...Pro-homosexual forces really have to try to win this year, or else...Pray that the pro-homosexual forces will be defeated."





JAKE REITAN'S GRAMPA  
TOOK HIS STAND.



## Dear Friends of Soulforce,

Our Vigil, Protest, and Civil Disobedience at the March 17 Trial of Karen Dammann in Bothell, Washington, made news around the world. The story was carried (usually with dramatic photos of Soulforce volunteers being arrested) by almost all our nation's newspapers from *USAToday* to the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*. Network and Cable Television News and Morning Shows (on ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX) featured deeply moving coverage of Soulforce volunteers demanding justice for one of our own.

Fifty or so Soulforce volunteers paid their own costs (including \$250 bail each for those 33 arrested) to do justice in Bothell, Washington. And Soulforce, Inc. spent approximately \$24,000 in additional funds to make it happen. That small amount wouldn't buy a quarter page add in a newspaper or a ten second spot on a local Television program. And yet we reaped a harvest of publicity in this country and around the world on behalf of justice and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people everywhere.

Unfortunately, that \$24,000 almost cleaned out the Soulforce treasury just as we are about to take on an even greater challenge, the United Methodist anti-homosexual "renewal groups" determined to enforce their spiritual violence against GLBT people at the UM General Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 27-May 7.

We must raise at least \$25,000 in the next few weeks to cover our costs in Pittsburgh.

Sincere thanks to the faithful Friends of Soulforce 2004 who have already donated this year. To the rest of our friends, now would be a great time to send a check or donate with a credit card on line or on the enclosed card. We encourage you to see your own spirit renewed by standing vigil with Soulforce in Pittsburgh, May 5-8 or by standing with us in Spirit with a tax-deductible donation just when we need it most.

We are grateful,

*Mel White*

Mel White  
Executive Director

*Jimmy Creech*

Jimmy Creech  
Board Chairperson

## WHAT WILL SOULFORCE DO IN PITTSBURG?

We will stand prayerful vigil while delegates deliberate as we have stood faithfully before national conferences of Southern Baptists, Presbyterians, Evangelical Lutherans, and Roman Catholic Bishops. If delegates take one small step towards ending their anti-homosexual teachings and actions, we will celebrate with them.

## WHAT IF ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL FORCES PREVAIL IN PITTSBURG?

If delegates vote to maintain their teaching that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching"; or further enforce their ban against lesbians and gays in ministry; or vote to support the Federal Marriage Amendment; or to discriminate against Transgender Methodists, Soulforce will protest their Spiritual Violence in a nonviolent act of civil disobedience. [Remember, you don't have to risk arrest to be an important part of our action in Pittsburgh].

## WILL YOU HELP SOULFORCE STOP SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?

Come to Pittsburgh May 5-8. It is not too late to join us in this historic action. If you can't join us, will you help those who can with a tax-deductible donation or gift of air miles? Thanks to you have stood with us (or will stand with us) in person or in support. We are forever grateful.



*Consider joining Soulforce for these other 2004 events:*

### **SOULFORCE IN INDIANAPOLIS**

June 13-16

Southern Baptist Convention

### **SOULFORCE IN COLORADO SPRINGS**

October 1-3, 2004

Grassroots Training in preparation for direct action in 2005

### **SOULFORCE IN WASHINGTON DC**

November 14-18, 2004

5th year in a row at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops annual meeting