

Letter to the editor

NIC caucuses affirm struggle of dead sister

Editor's note: Phyllis Athey, member Wheaton UMC, Evanston, and a candidate for the ordained ministry died Monday, May 23, 1988, at her parents' home in Holland, Mich. Following is a letter prepared in her memory.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our sister, Phyllis is dead. It was the violence of a self-inflicted gunshot wound that took her life. But for us, the greater violence was the destructiveness of a church and society that rejected her personhood as "incompatible" and unacceptable.

We feel rage, guilt, deep grief. But in the midst of all of these painful emotions, we affirm life in the face of death.

Phyllis was full of life. Her commitment to justice was unflinching as she worked with every ounce of her being for the UMC to be open and inclusive to all people regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, age, handicapping condition or class. Phyllis lived life on the front lines, carrying more than her share, bearing the extra burden for us all.

Together we affirm her struggle. We acknowledge our debt to her resolve to confront the exclusive judgments of the church. We pray that the spirit of her life will infuse us with new strength as we now pick up her justice banner and journey on.

Our deep concern and prayers extend to her family, her life partner, her faith community of Wheaton UMC, and to the Kinheart Women's Center, a safe space for women, a safe space for all persons, which Phyllis co-founded.

May God be with us all.

— NIC Women's Caucus

Affirmation: UMs for Lesbian and Gay Concerns

NI Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action