



Go Past Your Proximity

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There is a holy danger in only loving what is close enough to touch.

Proximity can be a gift, but it can also become a limitation. We often care deeply about what is within our reach: our families, our congregations, our communities that look like us, sound like us, and move through the world in familiar ways. But justice has never been confined to comfort zones. And neither has God.

The United Church of Christ continues to proclaim that “God is still speaking,” and in this Pride Month, I believe one of the clearest things God is still speaking into our world is this: Go past your proximity.

Because proximity without transformation can become indifference dressed up as familiarity.

I think about a Pride Month gathering I attended where faith leaders, organizers, and young LGBTQ+ advocates were sharing stories. A gender-expensive youth spoke softly at first, then with growing courage, about what it means to be celebrated in some spaces and tolerated in others. They said, “People say they love us, but they only love us from a distance. They support us until it requires learning our names and pronouns correctly, showing up at school board meetings, or challenging policies that harm us.”

Then they paused and said something that stayed with me: “When you finally come closer, don’t just come to observe us. Come to stand with us.”

That is what happens when we go past our own comfortable proximity to draw close enough to stand alongside others.

Scripture echoes this truth. In Luke 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus reframes the question from “Who is my neighbor?” to “Who proved to be a neighbor?” That shift is everything. It moves us from categories to courage. From opinion to participation. From theology in theory to love in action.

In interfaith and Pride spaces alike, I have learned this is not just a Christian call. Every sacred tradition I have encountered carries a version of this ethic: Do not only affirm dignity in principle. Embody it in practice. Do not only celebrate diversity when it is convenient but protect it when it is contested.

And yet, proximity still comforts us. It tells us we are doing enough because we are doing something. But justice demands more than adjacency. It demands solidarity.

Proximity may make you comfortable, but it will not make you transformed. You can be near LGBTQ+ communities and still misunderstand them. You can attend Pride events and still avoid advocacy. You can affirm inclusion in conversation and still resist it when it costs something politically, socially, or relationally.

That is why this call is not decorative. It is disruptive. It is prophetic. It is urgent.

To go past your proximity is to ask harder questions: Who is still outside my circle of protection? Whose humanity have I only affirmed in private but not defended in public? Where have I mistaken comfort for courage? Where has silence been shaped by convenience rather than conviction?

And then, the call is to move.

Move toward LGBTQ+ youth who are still fighting for safety in schools. Move toward our transgender and gender-expansive neighbors, navigating systems that were never designed with them in mind. Move toward interfaith coalitions doing the lengthy, sacred work of justice together. Move toward policies that do not just acknowledge dignity but actively protect it.

Because here is the truth I cannot unsee: God is already there.

Before we arrive, God is already present in the places we were taught to avoid. In the shelters. In the margins. In the Pride celebrations, there is both joy and protest. In the queer child learning to speak their name with confidence. In the elder who finally feels seen. In the interfaith gathering, where difference becomes a doorway, not a wall.

The question is not whether God is there.

The question is whether we will go.

When we do, we will discover what has always been true: justice is not found at a safe distance. It is found when we cross it.

Go past your proximity.

And watch what love makes possible when you arrive.

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