



LGBTQ Magazine Interviews Interim Moderator for Upcoming Family Edition

co-authored by Linda Brenner and the MCC Communications Team

The MCC Communications Team is excited to announce that Rev. Elder Rachelle Brown will be featured in *The Advocate* in their "Queer Families" issue. The article includes interviews with Rev. Brown and her two partners: Michelle Jestes and Dama Elkins-Jestes, and photos of the family which includes Ayden who is five-years-old.

Diverse families in MCC contribute to the tapestry of our denomination. MCC has a legacy that acknowledges many ways to be in healthy relationships that includes multiple partners, monogamy, polyamory, celibacy, and the choice to remain single.

"The Preamble" for MCC's *Statement of Faith* affirms the diversity of identities and family structures in the denomination:

"...We are people on a journey, learning to live into our spirituality, while affirming our bodies, our genders, our sexualities. We don't all believe exactly the same things. And yet in the midst of our diversity, we build community, grounded in God's radically inclusive love for all people...."

Rev. Elder Dwayne Johnson, a member of MCC's Council of Elders, echoes the theme of diversity and family.

"Since our founding in 1968, MCC has advocated for the right to define family through the broad lens of love, not through the narrow lens of externally imposed expectations. Rev. Elder Rachelle Brown's family has been formed through the mystery of God's love. Her partners and child bear witness to the integrity of love. Rev. Brown and her family make MCC's long held values visible. Their courage in living their love and truth will embolden courage in others to proclaim: We are family, too," Rev. Johnson said.

"Over the decades many, especially in MCC, have hidden their non-monogamous personal relationships. But God created us to love; when our love and commitment has integrity, we have no need to hide the nature of our love from one another," Rev. Brown said. "One person's way to form family does not apply to all persons nor all generations. Even within relationships there is a lively dynamic of becoming something new as our lives and contexts evolve."

"Since its inception in 1968, MCC has affirmed human diversity, especially human sexual diversity," said Rev. Dr. Thomas Bohache, Chair of the MCC Theologies Team. "Genesis 1 teaches that the human creature was made 'in the image and likeness of God,' so everywhere we see humanity, we see expressions of the Divine. The gift of sexual expression has been performed in various ways throughout human history, including a diversity of human relationships to express intimate community. We see models for community when we examine scripture, tradition, and experience. Jesus himself embodied and exemplified ways of being in relationship with many types of people; he expressed intimacy in different ways with different beloveds. Further, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity itself commends an interpenetration of relationships, the mystery of which humanity still grapples to comprehend. God is love, and when we love we are in God."

Rev. Joe Cobb said, "The MCC Governing Board celebrates with Interim Moderator Rachelle Brown and her family on being featured in *The Advocate*. MCC's core values honor the nature of inclusive love and the gift of human sexuality in her myriad forms and expressions. We are grateful to Rachelle and her family for their courage, vulnerability and passion for leading in love and with grace." Rev. Cobb serves as the Clerk for the Governing Board.

"During our search for an Interim Moderator, we were committed to an open recruitment process acknowledging and affirming all aspects of human diversity. Thus, we made our hiring decision based on Rachelle's experience with emerging churches, as an Interim Pastor within MCC, and on the vision she articulated for the denomination during this interim period," said Sarah-Jane Ramage, Vice Chair of the Governing Board.

In 1999, at the MCC General Conference business meeting, a proposed amendment to the bylaws to allow Holy Unions for more than two individuals in a relationship came to the floor but did not garner the necessary votes to pass.

The Advocate article is slated for digital release 11 July 2017. The long version will be available on Advocate.com, and an edited version will be in print for the August/September edition of *The Advocate*.