



The exterior of Glide Memorial Methodist Church on Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019. (Ellie Doyen/Special to S.F. Examiner)

# GLIDE's passionate voice for justice

In the face of resurgent anti-LGBTQ discrimination, SF needs civil rights leadership more than ever

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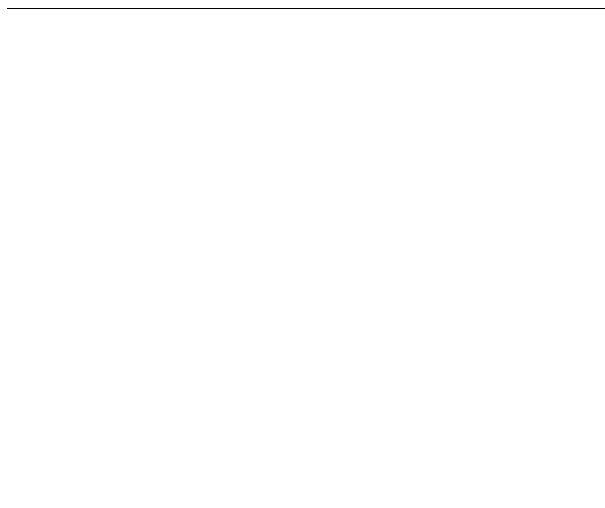
By **Lateefah Simon**

In San Francisco, GLIDE has been called the “conscience of the city,” a place of hope that provides resources, support and critical services for those among us most in need.

To all of us in the community, it is an indispensable institution, a beautiful idea that has grown up amongst us, one that stands for social justice, inclusion, and the basic truth that we should love and accept those who walk through their doors, no matter their race, sexual orientation, or physical and mental condition. These values are made real in the direct services that GLIDE gives to thousands of San Franciscans every day.

To those in the African American community, GLIDE has also stood for civil rights. On the heels of Pride month, it is important to recognize and honor the leadership GLIDE has provided for the LGBTQ movement as well.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Having always embodied this, the Rev. Cecil Williams and GLIDE became an early and enthusiastic supporter of LGBTQ rights.



Rev. Williams and Rev. Lloyd Wake, a Minister of Community of GLIDE, joined gay and transgender activists in opposing endemic police harassment, and as leading Methodist ministers they were among the signatories to a 1965 “Brief of Injustices,” in which clergy decried the legal and social oppression of gays and lesbians. It was a groundbreaking message of social justice and paved the way for future support and coalition building.

Rev. Williams and Rev. Wake, respectively African American and Japanese American, explained that their experiences of race-based prejudice placed them in solidarity with all marginalized communities.

GLIDES's leadership was not limited to San Francisco. Over the years, it became a nationwide leader of a movement inside the Methodist Church, where members across the country have called for inclusion of LGBTQ ministers and celebration of same sex marriages.

Unfortunately, GLIDES's longstanding values of inclusion and solidarity with the LGBTQ community are under attack. Recently, ignoring the wishes of many of its parishioners, the United Methodist Church (UMC) voted to strengthen its ban on gay and lesbian clergy and prohibit same-sex marriages. The national UMC vote doubled down on current church policy, which states that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." Members of the national conference also voted for new provisions that will allow the UMC to punish disobedient clergy more harshly than before.

These are troubling times. Racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ discrimination and a basic lack of decency have returned in force. Today, we need more tolerance, compassion and love, not less. GLIDE's approach to radical inclusion and unconditional love for all communities should be followed as an example. The recent vote of the United Methodist Church regarding same-sex marriage and LGBTQ clergy does not represent the values of San Francisco or the values of GLIDE. GLIDE's approach to radical inclusion and unconditional love works in our community and should be followed as an example. These values are being threatened by the recent vote of the United Methodist Church regarding same sex marriage.

Driven by the very social inequality that GLIDE seeks to address, America is becoming less generous, less welcoming, and less sympathetic, and GLIDE's humanitarian work in San Francisco is more urgent than ever before. On every single day of the year, it opens its doors without reservation or judgment and feeds thousands of people who are hungry and homeless. It provides vital education, job training, childcare, recovery support, access to primary and mental health care, and HIV and hepatitis C testing services —and helps transition thousands of San Franciscans from homelessness to increased stability.

In troubling times, we cannot look back to the past. We need leadership from institutions like GLIDE that serves as a bridge between those of different backgrounds, perspectives, and social and economic opportunities. I thank GLIDE for its longstanding leadership and its strong voice for LGBTQ rights and social justice.

*Lateefah Simon is president of the Akonadi Foundation and an elected member of the BART Board.*

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