

# bread for the journey

## On the other hand

We live in a culture of relativism.  
Everything is up for grabs.

Anything and everything seems permissible. Call it the “Age of Consent.” Even if it’s all wrong, it’s all okay. We have witnessed startling changes in how we view what is right and what is wrong. It is unsettling to have grown up believing what was once wrong yesterday is permissible today.

On the other hand...

It keeps you on your toes as you argue your moral point for the sake of the higher ground, whatever your point might be. Everything is negotiable in an “Age of Consent.” Moral/ethical/theological matters are discussable before they are disposable. It seems wise to preface our remarks with the disclaimer: “On the other hand,” instead of claiming certainty and the exclusive rights to the corner on absolute truth.

The existence of God is a good example. Even that is negotiable. During my years as chaplain for Rosecrance, the subject of God’s existence often came up for discussion during spirituality sessions with our adolescent population. Most kids in treatment question authority and who but “God” is the number one authority figure in their still-developing though addled brains.

I would often side with the outspoken atheist in the group by saying, “You are right, God does not exist.” Timid believers in God expressed shock and feigned apoplexy. The resident spokesperson for the *dark side* was struck dumb though not deaf. Suddenly, he was all “ears.” “What do you mean? God does not exist? You are a preacher? You have to believe in God!” Unconsciously, he was saying (in my opinion) “You *have* to stand up for God, man. If you don’t stand up for God and speak on God’s behalf, who will? I will be left with nothing solid to push up against.”

Before you know it, the ardent atheist was inadvertently arguing for the side of faith. He struggled with the demons of doubt in early childhood and experienced firsthand parental hypocrisy. He longed to trust God and ached for a secure mooring on behalf of a soul cut adrift.

After a few moments of jawing back and forth, I suggested God does not exist as humans exist. We are limited by space and time. Not God. No argument for God’s presence among us airtight. But the idea God is beyond space and time gave the youngster pause. He somehow got to the “On the other hand,” page in the recovery textbook. It is important to understand what others think—peer into the heart of the matter as they understand it— and accept them *for* it instead of merely tolerate it or accept them *in spite* of what they think and believe.

Rosecrance is Christian to the core. We take seriously the example of the Christ who *judges* no one, accepts everyone unconditionally, and *urges* us to deny no one an opportunity for treatment based on creed, race, gender, sexual orientation or an ability to pay for services. All are welcome.

**“ What kind of world would it be if positive unconditional regard for all was the benchmark for justice??”**

We live in a culture of relativism. All of us are learning—ever learning—to judge no one because they think differently from us. We promote faith in the God of “our own understanding.” AA has passed along this message since its inception. More recovering people have come to faith in God through the program and fellowship of AA than through any religious organization. That’s quite an assertion. Faith comes to recovering people in relationship with other recovering people and in a fellowship that accepts them for who they are and for what they believe. Within the fellowship, recovering people give each other the encouragement and opportunity to trust a power greater than themselves through the prism of their own “lights” and resources.

(continued on back)

Within the Methodist tradition, we have come to believe Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Thank God, we have come to a more *inclusive* understanding of what that means. This important text means at least this much for many of us:

**Jesus is the way**—the way to understand unconditional love. It is how he treated people. **Jesus is the truth**—the truth in Jesus declares God’s love. It is universal and eternal. **Jesus is the life**—the truth about how to live life is how Jesus lived his ... as a man for others.

What kind of world would it be if unconditional positive regard for all was the benchmark for justice? What would life be if

recovery, peace, justice-for-all prevailed? Where would we be if we lived up to the wisdom of, “On the other hand”? What if the “Age of Consent” did *not* mean “Anything goes,” but meant we accepted and embraced others for who they are and for what they believe? 

Wishful thinking or hopeful imagination?



The Rev. Dr. William Lenters, D. Min.  
Church Relations Coordinator

**Rosecrance Health Network**  
1021 North Mulford Road  
Rockford, IL 61107

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is a bi-monthly news and views letter from Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Rosecrance Church Relations Coordinator. Bread for the Journey is written on behalf of people who live with substance use and mental health disorders. Together, and by God’s grace, we will try to make a difference.