

# Is this what Jesus' church might look like?



## Highland Views

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Guest columnist

In the 1840s a petite Quaker preacher by the name of Lucretia Mott was stirring things up. Not one for holding her tongue, she spoke out for women's rights and the abolition of slavery. Ad-

ressing a convention of Unitarians in Philadelphia in 1846, she confronted the image-problem in religion – "God has made man after his own image, and man has made God after his image" – while emphasizing "the importance of free thinking and honest speech."

"Be not afraid of the reputation of Infidels." She welcomed the label of heretic or infidel since, as she preached elsewhere, "Jesus taught the heresy of [his] age, and it was his opposition to the

cherished forms and creeds of that day that constituted his greatest offence." She observed that it is now considered heresy to do essentially the same thing Jesus did: to confront the self-righteous and comfortable, to challenge "cherished forms and creeds."

I was conscious of the radical wisdom of Lucretia Mott while sitting in a service at the Haywood Street Congregation in Asheville. I was welcomed by "John" who sat on a table in the back of

the sanctuary. With a smile and handshake, he invited me to a Bible study and offered an order of service. Thanking him, I found a seat at the end of a long wooden pew.

A middle-aged white man in a T-shirt walked to the front and began to speak. I wondered if that was planned. Apparently it was. He welcomed us, leading the congregation into the experience—

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