

Opinion: Anonymous online commenting only encourages civic bile

By William Endicott

It was with some trepidation that I logged on to sacbee.com and scrolled down to reader comments on Jennifer Garza's recent story about the inclusive philosophy of St. Mark's United Methodist Church and its gay and straight congregation.

Stories that mix religion and gay rights are always ripe for the most outrageous comments from both sides of that divide. So I feared the worst and those fears very quickly proved to be well-founded.

The very first comment I saw made mention of a particular body part and was so offensive that it does not bear repeating.

That was followed by this: "Is it just me, or does anyone else weary of the 'gay in your face' news we endure day in, day in, day out."

From the other side, someone compared anti-gay Christians to sociopolitical fascists and another declared, "Nothing is so immoral as Christianity."

And my favorite: "Another reason why I quit getting the *Bee*," apparently missing the irony in the fact that he or she was commenting on a *Bee* story.

A few of the nearly 300 comments that were there when last I looked were thoughtful, some were inane, ignorant and/or snide, others were hateful and mean-spirited. But most had one thing in common: They were anonymous.

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Bee.

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