



gala news

THE LETTER

Winter 2005 – Volume 16 Issue 3

Greeting members and friends!

First, gratitude must be expressed to Arthur Butler for his willingness to step in and serve as President during the past several months, as well as for his long-time service to GALA. Thank you, Arthur!

Wow!—I'm President of GALA again. A lot has changed in the last 18 years. I thought the challenges then were a lot:

- Developing the beginning by-laws;
- Coordinating the two focused centers of membership, Kansas City and Toronto;
- Dealing with occasional informational phone calls;
- Communicating with maybe 50 GALA contacts;
- Holding retreats in GALA members homes; and
- Attempting to get World Church leadership to acknowledge that GLBT persons existed in the then-RLDS community.

Look at us now:

- Revising the bylaws;
- World-wide contacts and membership in GALA;
- An active GALA leadership and Board of Directors;
- Interacting with other faith communities dealing with GLBT issues;
- Holding retreats at Community of Christ camp-grounds;
- Producing quarterly newsletters that reach more than 600 contacts and members;
- Working with church leadership and having a place in the World Church and local activities;
- Working on and attempting to meet our financial budget;
- Employing a salaried GALA leader;
- Co-sponsoring an ecumenical "Welcoming Congregation" leadership training conference in December
- And ... a lot of growth!

During this next year, with your help, I hope to continue the growth and expansion of GALA, and open more doors of communication with the GALA membership and the Community of Christ faith community. I will challenge the GALA membership and friends to assist in this growth!

- We need the membership to meet the financial needs of GALA--by making donations and meeting your pledges--in order to keep GALA moving forward in the communities we touch and hope to touch.
- Making new contacts is wonderful, but we need to communicate directly with the past and present members and friends of GALA. Let's reach out to members and friends we haven't seen in a while at our retreats or functions. Let's reach out to our own...and make sure they are doing well. We miss their presence and gifts.

So many changes, a multitude of growth. What will the next year hold for us? Where will we go?

I look forward to seeing you on the path of growth, personally and collectively, as GALA continues to move forward!

Your fellow traveler,
Allan Fiscus, President

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Treasurer's Report, 10/1/04 – 9/30/05

It has been requested that a financial report should be included in each newsletter. We feel it is important for members to see where our funding is coming from and how it is being spent. We also feel it is important to show how our actual income and expenses compare to the budget that was approved at last year's retreat. A copy of the detailed budget and income and expense report is available upon request.

	Budget FY '05	Actual Expenses	Budget FY '06
Cash on Hand 9/30/04.....		\$15,158	
Income			
Memberships	4,000	2,245	2,000
Contributions	63,800	28,133	50,000
Grants & Foundations.....	200	3,120	
Merchandise Sales	100	95	
Fundraisers	1,118		
Special Projects	1,000		
Interest	30	12	
Total Income.....	\$67,930	\$32,803	55,120
Expenses			
Administrative	6,115	2,101	4,270
Field Organizer	33,925	31,523	34,200
Retreat	5,500	2,345	5,500
Newsletters	3,850	1,532	2,500
Welcoming Community			
Network	10,000	800	2,000
All Other Expenses	8,540	1,281	6,650
Total Expenses.....	\$67,930	39,582	55,120
Expenses in Excess of Income		\$ 6,779	0
Cash on Hand 9/30/05.....		\$ 8,379	

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Notice of Bvlaws Revisions

The GALA Board proposes that the GALA Bylaws be revised and updated to better serve the Association. Two primary revisions affect the power and makeup of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, and the election procedure for Officers and Board Members. Other additions provide for the use of contract personnel and other business procedures.

The proposed Bylaws were reviewed with the GALA membership at the international retreat in Ontario, who recommended their presentation to the membership for approval.

This is official notice, per Article 10 of the Bylaws, that copies of the revised Bylaws, along with a ballot, will be mailed to all paid GALA members within sixty (60) days. Instructions for returning the ballots will be included at that time.

2006 GALA Retreat

The Board is delighted to announce that our 2006 Retreat will take place at *Camp Sionito* outside *San Antonio, Texas*.

We are assured an affordable price, a warm welcome, and will stay in their new guest lodge.

Please mark your calendar for
Labor Day Weekend, Sept. 1-4, 2006.

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Greetings from the GALA Field Organizer...

Following our wonderful international retreat in Canada and the board meeting that preceded it, we in GALA leadership have been excited about the renewed interest in strengthening GALA's presence in more regions of the church. We know that in the Toronto area there is an expressed interest in becoming a sanctuary for many seeking a spiritual community.

We need to hear from you. Where would you like to see a GALA regional retreat? We have found that our regional retreats bring a sense of community that is greatly needed, especially in areas of the country where open support for LGBT persons is not prevalent.

I invite you to take a moment and think seriously about the area where you live. Are there people who might welcome contact or an invitation to participate in GALA, or might be looking for a welcoming congregation? As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to continue to bring good news to those who feel despair or hopelessness. We know that one way we can do this is to celebrate that **we are all created in God's image**, each blessed with a purpose in life that will help bring an end to suffering. During the retreat this year--as in so many past years--we heard testimonies that the fellowship and love of God felt in our circle was life changing. As people of integrity and joy, we have much to offer those around us!

We know that having an international retreat each year, as wonderful as that event always is, is **not** enough. We would love to help you develop a small regional retreat in your area, so please let us know if you are interested in doing that. We envision a day when there will be networks of relationships among us, all across the country, wherein no person needing support and encouragement will be found wanting.

There are still lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons who believe that Christianity offers them no embrace, and the resulting wounds are deep in the souls of many, including loved ones. We know that GALA cannot answer the questions of how the church will respond, but we do know that building relationships of love and caring will always bring God's love into the hearts of those who enrich our community with new giftedness.

Some of you will feel called to attend the Welcoming Church Leadership Training in December. You know who you are. Others can respond in other meaningful ways. Write us a letter and share a story of how your life was enriched by having a "GALA moment," a time when you experienced a celebration of the life of a LGBT person. If you haven't renewed or paid your GALA membership, let this be a call to do so immediately. If

you can make a contribution, large or small, to help us reach our budget, it has never been more needed! Without this kind of financial backing, GALA cannot fulfill its mission to promote spiritual wholeness in the lives of those whom we touch! Respond now, and we know you will be richly blessed by this giving! Sharon Troyer

...and from GALA's Past President

It is with relief and joy that I write this letter. Relief, that after four years as an officer of our organization, I will no longer feel the weight of leading GALA. The joy is the memories and friendships that I have rekindled and the new friends I have made. It has been a great honor to serve in the positions to which you elected me over the last four years.

GALA is not the organization I took over four years ago; we have come a long way toward being a "truly out" and influential organization. Our name and purpose are now recognized throughout the church. We have a reputation of being a place of sanctuary and ministry for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. In our advocacy role we seek justice by helping the Church and its local congregations change into places of welcome and full inclusion for all people. I am grateful to those congregations who are considering the welcoming process, and salute those who have had the courage to become a "Welcoming Congregation."

Another important development has been GALA's association and alliance with "PROUD," the new name for the Graceland Gay Straight Alliance. PROUD stands for "*People Representing Our Unique Diversities.*" Several of us, along with PROUD members, spent Saturday of Graceland Homecoming staffing a booth which provided presence and information to the many people there. We hope that we can continue to support this new organization.

Much of the leadership for these important steps forward can be attributed to the hard work of our Executive Field Organizer, Sharon Troyer. She puts in far more hours and effort than could be expected from a person in a part-time position. It has been an exciting journey for me to work with her and the Board as we have laid plans for GALA's present and future activity. I sincerely hope that you will continue to support the executive position and GALA's program with your donations.

My heart and soul are committed to the forward movement of GALA. I wish the new board members great success as they work on GALA's behalf. And so I wish you all adieu for now. I look forward to seeing you at the December workshop in Independence, or next Labor Day weekend at our international retreat in San Antonio, Texas. Arthur Butler



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Allan Fiscus, President
Alan Zimmerman, President Elect
Pam Mayfield, Secretary
Fran Zimmerman, Treasurer
Sam Marmoy
Leah Sheppard
David Woosley
John Billings, Chaplain

REGIONAL FACILITATOR

Meredith Bischoff - West

**FIELD COORDINATOR
WCN PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

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Dear GALA and WCN Friends,

I am writing to personally invite you to the Ecumenical Welcoming Church Leadership Training, which GALA and the Welcoming Community Network (WCN) are proud to co-sponsor! Reconciling in Christ (RIC) of Lutherans Concerned North America and Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) of the United Methodist Church are our co-sponsors. This dynamic training, December 1-4, 2005, will be held at the Community of Christ Temple in Independence, and has grown out of the Kansas City Coalition for Welcoming Churches. As someone interested in GALA's ministry of promoting a more inclusive church, I hope you will consider attending! We are looking for those who want to partner with us in helping Community of Christ congregations near you to become genuine communities of welcome, spiritual nurture and hospitality for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

This is an exciting time in the life and ministry of Community of Christ. Never before has there been such a need for congregations to offer genuine welcome which celebrates diversity and recognizes the God-given gifts and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the church and in society. This training seminar will give you Core Team Leadership skills and help you learn about a faith based organizing process which is adaptable for the unique needs of your congregation.

Staff includes:

- Emily East, Executive Director of Reconciling in Christ Program of Lutherans Concerned/North America
- Sharon Troyer, National Field Organizer of GALA, which offers ministry of the Welcoming Community Network within Community of Christ
- Susan Laurie, Outreach Coordinator of Reconciling Ministries Network of the United Methodist Church
- David Weiss, who coordinates the Twin Cities RIC program and has taught religion at Augsburg College, College of St. Catherine, and Hamlin University. David is a poet, known for his interests in sexual ethics and writings on sexuality and spirituality.

Please take time to visit the IWR (Institute for Welcoming Resources) website, www.welcomingresources.org, and read the linked description of the training, along with registration materials. For credit card registration and a detailed description of the seminar, go to www.lcna.org/rictraining.shtm. Housing is available at the Olive Branch Inn (816) 836-0292, which is within walking distance from the temple, and is included in your registration.

If you want to empower local congregations or other jurisdictions to develop welcoming attitudes and behaviors, we need you at this training. I hope to see you there! If you cannot join us this time, I encourage you to visit our website, send in your GALA membership and know you are partners with this valuable program of ministry.

Your sister in Christ,

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<http://galaweb.org>

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GALA National Field Organizer
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Ecumenical Core Team Leadership Training

Join the growing list of committed Christians who are working together across North America to foster the expansion of the welcoming church movement!

“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

Community of Christ—The Temple
1001W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050

4:00 pm Thursday, December 1, to 3:00 pm Sunday, December 4, 2005

Housing: Olive Branch Inn 200 N. Delaware, Independence, MO 64050,
816-836-0292, <http://www.olivebranchinn.us>

Registration (including housing, meals and materials) closes 11/24/05. Cancellation fee: \$25.00.

Double occupancy.....\$215.00	Commuter/Host Housing:\$75.00
Single occupancy:\$345.00	(meals/materials, no housing costs)

For more information, see the GALA website at: <http://GALAweb.org>

To register online: <http://www.lcna.org/rictraining.shtm>

Core Team Training is focused in Three Primary Areas:

- **Faith Based Community Organizing:** Learn the skills to organize people and money.
- **The Implications Wheel®:** Learn to facilitate small groups in the use of this graphic tool which produces broad and intense conversation on a difficult topic without debate.
- **Training Processes and Resources:** Learn how to use a variety of resources, including the comprehensive CD Rom resource: The RIC Ministry Planner.

Who should come? Anyone interested in supporting the expansion of the welcoming church movement.

What to bring?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ♥ Well rested body, mind and spirit | ♥ Casual clothing and one church outfit |
| ♥ Your favorite writing implement | ♥ A little cash or check book |

Co-Sponsors:

- **Reconciling Ministries Network** of The United Methodist Church
- **Reconciling in Christ** program of Lutherans Concerned/North America
- **Welcoming Community Network**, GALA’s ministry to Community of Christ congregations

“All this is from God who reconciled us through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Retreat Memories

Don Compier, Retreat Guest Minister:

My spouse Yolanda and I will always treasure our memories of the GALA retreat in Ontario. It's hard to imagine a more beautiful setting. It was wonderful to wade where the creek and the river come together! The hospitality of the staff at Five Oaks Retreat Center was exemplary. I am particularly grateful for their great book store and for the before-meal meditations shared by chaplain Don. He followed the pattern of the Iona community in Scotland. Readings celebrated the glories of creation, and there was plenty of time for silent prayer and meditation on beautiful recorded musical offerings.

As always, the heart of our experience was the opportunity for personal and communal sharing. It is such a privilege to get to know one another. We were deeply touched by the "sharing our stories" session. I've rarely encountered such a safe space for everyone to tell of their personal journey. We were moved by the beauty of each life, by the evident gifts, by the hope and grace experienced even in the most trying of times. The depth of encounter and acceptance experienced was rare and precious.

We also enjoyed the classes. I particularly remember how J.W. Windland shared objects and rites from many religious traditions. As a member of the church's Task Force on Homosexuality and the Church, I really appreciated the opportunity to receive input and suggestions. The quality of worship was exceptional, with evidence of lots of musical talent. We marveled at the creativity expressed. And it was just delightful to share in an old-fashioned campfire. I hadn't sung many of those songs in years! We shared lots of laughter that evening.

Coming at the beginning of fall, the retreat was a deeply renewing and centering experience. We feel stronger and more hopeful as a result of our participation. I know that relationships were formed which will continue to bless the lives of all of us. We received a glimpse of what we spiritual folk are like at our best. We felt thoroughly at home. I am deeply grateful to the leadership of GALA and all those who worked so hard to organize this great event. I hope to share in such a weekend again soon.

Gratefully,

Don Compier, Dean,
Community of Christ Seminary

*Ontario, Canada,
Retreat Participants*

Ken Cullen:

This weekend was quite an experience for me. I didn't want to be there, and I told Chuck Boyd that. He sent the brochures. He e-mailed me. I told him quite bluntly: I didn't want to be stuck on a holiday weekend with a bunch of fags sitting around feeling sorry for themselves, trying to over-throw the religious right. (You see, I got conned into going to a Homosexuals Anonymous meeting once, so I could get over my "problem," "get delivered," and "turn straight" so that I could become a "truly Spirit-filled Christian"-- what a horrendous, negative experience and whole lot of bull-pucky!) And besides, I'm not Community of Christ, so I would be the "outsider" for the weekend.

Wednesday afternoon Chuck called me at work to invite me for dinner as Arthur Butler was there. I accepted the invitation and drove to Toronto. Arthur was okay. Then he plied his sales skills to make sure I would attend.

After dealing with a church problem in Kitchener, I drove out to the Retreat Center on Saturday morning. Don Compier was speaking when I arrived late, and I gained an immediate respect for him. Then I heard Sharon Troyer during the interaction period with Don, and felt I could identify with her. She and I chatted at lunch, and I was sunk at that point.

I enjoyed the free time in the afternoon and the chat with Don. But it got worse. When I heard that everyone would be sharing their stories in small groups, that was something I really didn't want to be a part of--but what could I do? Alan Zimmerman shared his story at the onset; then we split into the smaller groups. Mark Dixon shared his story, and my heart was sliced to the core after that. God spoke very clearly: "Ken, cut the arrogant attitude. Why are you always so hard to get through to?" Good question--still haven't found the answer to it. As more people shared, my heart was changed.

Thank you for including me in the weekend. I don't think that I will ever be able to fully share the impact it made on my life.

Ken Cullen





Members and friends of GALA in Southern California joined with Basileia--An Open Door Community of Christ--in observing Solidarity Sunday on October 9 at the Orange County Gay and Lesbian Center in Garden Grove, with Brian Sadler presiding.

Solidarity Sunday falls on the Sunday before National Coming Out Day—this year October 11th. It is a time for congregations to let LGBT individuals know they are a safe place to come out. It also recognizes and rejects aloud the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual violence that has been done to members of the gay community. If your congregation did not observe Solidarity Sunday, at some point you might want to share with them the Solidarity Prayer and Pledge below:

Solidarity Prayer:

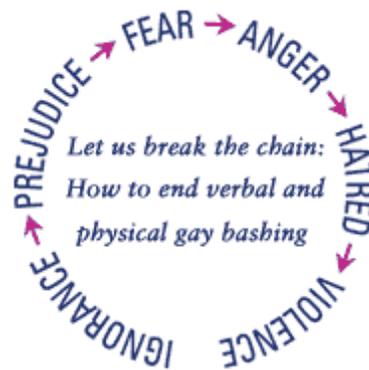
God, you are the Creator and Lover of all. You wish us to live in solidarity with each other and to rejoice in our diversity. We pray that Your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight children may experience justice, enjoy peace and spread Your love throughout the world. We pray in the name of God, who welcomes all to a holy circle of friend-ship. Amen.

The Solidarity Pledge

I pledge:

- I will work for civil and human rights for all people, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender. Civil rights are not special rights.
- I will seek to stop jokes and unkind language about anyone, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender, when spoken in my presence. Words that hurt and bigotry are not funny.
- I will speak out against any slander, lies, debasement, or dehumanization of anyone--including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender--including when spoken by political or religious leaders. Violent speech leads to physical violence.
- I will work to stop physical violence against anyone, including violence against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender. Violence against any person is violence against all people.

--Meredith Bischoff, Reporter



We are PROUD!

Graceland University's new LGBT organization is called PROUD (People Representing Our Unique Diversities). Since the name changed earlier this year, our numbers have grown, allowing for more inclusive membership. The organization replaced the original name of Gay Straight Alliance in September. PROUD's membership has grown from 50 to 81 members this year. The attendance usually is around 30-40 per meeting, allowing for a diverse and creative mind set.

PROUD has been incredible ever since the beginning when it was known as GSA. Changing things for the better, the organization is striving towards raising awareness on and off campus. PROUD is looking forward to helping the local community and high school develop a safe zone for students. Our goals this year allow us to form not only a relationship with the student body, but also with the faculty and community. We are focused on creating an atmosphere where acceptance and understanding can prosper along with love and support.

With the support of the Graceland student government, the faculty, and GALA, PROUD will sponsor a drag show in the spring, the goal being to push the limits in which we bind ourselves. We will push the envelope of what is tradition, and will shape the future of the LGBT community on campus.

GALA has been a wonderful, spirit-driven support for our organization. We would like to say thank you for your presence at Homecoming and also for what is to come. Meeting those who came to Homecoming truly made the experience a memorable one for me. We hope to develop a closer relationship with GALA as the year continues. Thank You!

Kevin Williams
Graceland University

Join Or Renew Memberships Online!

Streamlining the way GALA does business has been a goal of the executive board for some time. You can now join, renew, or make gift contributions on GALA's web site, GALAweb.org. Our Webmaster, Meredith Bischoff, has designed a way to get WHAT you want WHEN you need it. If you have not yet paid your annual dues for 2004 or made your pledge, we invite you to do so now using this service!

GALA continues to need your support. Your gift, membership or contribution helps:

Produce and publish our GALA newsletter
Operate our web site <http://galaweb.org/>
Provide sponsorships for retreats
Finance our new Field Coordinator position
Support the costs of GALA's many expenses

Our organization has the vision. We have the leadership. Now, all we need is YOU.

Membership & Contribution Form

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership Level (U.S. dollars)

Individual (\$25) Family (\$40) Limited Income (\$10)

I would like to make an additional contribution to advance GALA's outreach and educational goals:

\$50 \$100 \$200 \$ _____

Contributions to GALA are tax deductible.

Please return to: P.O. Box 2173, Independence, MO 64055

I would like to receive the galaNEWSletter electronically for future issues. This will help save GALA money and make better use of our web site, www.GALAweb.org