



April 2008—Volume 19 Issue 2

## Visits With World Church Officials

*By David Howard, President-Elect*

March the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> were important days in the life of GALA. Over the two day period meetings were held with the First Presidency (all three), Mary Jack Dynes and Stassi Cramm (the Twelve), David Brock and Rich Kohlman (Presiding Evangelists), Dave Brown (Presiding Bishopric), Jane Gardner (High Priest, phone), Don Compier (Dean of the Seminary), Bob Kyser (senior President of Seventy), and Sandee Gamet (Listening Circles). The purpose of the meetings were to begin to build a relationship, understand perspective on LGBT issues of inclusion and full membership rights, and to identify ways that we can work together on these issues.

Each of the meetings were blessed by a good spirit and a rich experience as participants shared of gay children, of hopes and dreams, and of positive past experiences at GALA retreats. We were warmly received at each meeting with one of the high experiences occurring when President Veasey offered prayer in our circle at the close of the 90 minute meeting. The Homosexual Saints book was distributed to 38 World Church officials covering every order and quorum. Books will also be distributed to members of the Standing High Council of the Church and to the committee members dealing with human sexuality and homosexuality.

As a result of these meetings, we have been given a lot of opportunities to educate and share with larger groups within the Orders and Quorums. This will require each of us to step forward so that we can share the workload. Immediately we need volunteers to write condensed versions of their story (200 to 250 words) to be considered for the High Priests newsletter. We are working on similar opportunities with the Evangelists and the Seminary. We also need volunteers to participate in lunch bag discussions

during the 3 week seminary classes. Please contact me about the Seminary discussions ([howard092248@yahoo.com](mailto:howard092248@yahoo.com)) and also send me your condensed stories for submission. Participation is not restricted to active members of Community of Christ congregations. Stories also need to be shared from those of you who have found a welcome home in other communities or are still searching.

**Brother and sisters, we are opening doors of opportunity which can result in change in the church. I am asking everyone to participate and walk through those doors together...PLEASE, step up to the plate.!**

The Board will continue to work on other avenues that were identified in the meetings, including presentations to priesthood meetings at World Conference and in the field, use of GALA members as a resource in the field to help carry the load, working with mission center presidents to craft friendly resolutions for World Conference that will stand the test of the legal and procedural minds, ability to use the name of the Church, expanding the Temple School courses for the Aaronic Priesthood to include ministry to the LGBT community, priesthood, and general education of the leadership. Nearly all the leaders that we met with agreed to use the GALA business cards when they are out on assignment.

A final highlight of the meetings occurred the first day when we met with the Bishops and Evangelists. The concept of church as sanctuary is being pursued as an overriding theme and sensibility. How beautiful that is in light of the journey we have trod. Another sweet moment was the discussion of moving the Church toward a culture of integrity... acting because it is the right thing to do. This applied to all things the Church considers. How refreshing!

We plan on conducting quarterly meetings with the leadership and continuing to pursue opportunities that are presented to us.

***GALA Members and friends,  
I often share in wonder ,  
conversations with people through the  
church, and again I was blessed with a  
chat with Wanda. She was willing to  
share her thoughts with the GALA  
membership at large...so here's her letter  
to me and GALA.***

***Allan Fiscus***

Dear Allan,

I really enjoyed visiting with you over the phone the other evening and again yesterday afternoon. You mentioned that it would be good if I could write down some of the things we talked about! So, here are some thoughts I'd like to share with you. You may do whatever you wish with them.

First of all, I'd like for you to know that my roots run deep in the Restoration movement. On my mother's side of the family, I am what many people would call a 'fifth generation Latter Day Saint,' I am a high priest, a former pastor and former district president. In the twenty some years that I have been a priesthood member it has been both my privilege and my responsibility to call others to the priesthood.

However, I am deeply saddened and troubled that although both men AND women are now allowed to serve in this capacity, the present position of the church still does not allow such calls to be presented to ALL deserving people. I have written and talked to several World Church leaders regarding this issue and my feelings about it.

When I see the deep devotion and leadership capabilities of a very dear friend and am told she cannot receive a priesthood call because of her life style, I am appalled. She and her partner have been in a loving, committed relationship for over forty years. That's certainly a better record than many of our heterosexual priesthood members can claim. She is bright, honest, loyal, compassionate, a community leader and an active church worker. She is loved and respected in both the community at large as well in the Thunderbird West congregation. YET, she is still not 'worthy' to serve as a member of the priesthood.

So, some of my questions to our church leaders continue to be: What does this say about my own insight, when I am almost overpowered with the absolute conviction that this woman has a call to

priesthood? Does it mean that I do not have the spiritual discernment, expected of one who holds the office of high priest? If I am so out-of-step with an official church position, does it mean that I should be seriously looking at my own calling to see how valid it is in my own life, at the present time?

I continue to pose these questions, Allen, because I believe that not only are you, of the gay community, affected by all this—all of us are affected. I recently heard another member of our congregation state that until we, as a faith community, can begin calling PERSONS to various priesthood offices, rather than thinking of them as: men, women, heterosexuals, homosexuals, blacks, whites, there will continue to be a form of discrimination. I further believe that until the church can also rid itself of other forms of discrimination this organization cannot call itself, a Christian faith community, in the fullest sense.

One final personal note. My deceased husband's youngest nephew, who is no longer alive, was gay. And my only nephew also is gay. One day, I laughingly mentioned to my own nephew that I had no idea how it happened he turned out to be a right handed, homosexual male; while I am a left handed, heterosexual female. However, I do know, that not too many years ago, my left handedness could have caused me to be labeled—a witch! We humans still have a lot to learn, don't we?

Thanks for letting me share some of my concerns. And good luck in all your endeavors.

*Wanda Canaday Talcott*

## **Recording Marriages/Domestic Partnerships**

During meetings with the First Presidency we addressed the issue of GALA/Community of Christ members living in areas of the world with legalized marriages/domestic partnerships meeting resistance in recording their union in the Community of Christ database.

The First Presidency investigated. These unions can be registered in the Shelby (church database) under the church members "life events" section.

If there are individuals desiring their legalized union to be recorded in their church records, and are meeting resistance at the local level, please send the information to the GALA leadership, and we'll contact our resource at Community of Christ Headquarters.

# Welcoming Leadership Training in Minnesota

by Jon Mendenhall

Twenty six participants gathered in sub-zero weather at the Mayflower Community Congregational United Church of Christ in Minneapolis for training February 15-18. Rev. Anita L. Bradshaw (National Field Organizer) and Rev. Rebecca Voelkel (Institute for Welcoming Resources) led the international group consisting of 10 American Baptists, 9 Brethren Menonites (8 from Canada), 5 Community of Christ and 2 Disciples of Christ participants. Topics included:

1. Shifting our perspective on conflict
2. Shifting our theological perspective
3. Shifting the strategy (Community organizing tools)
4. One-to-One Conversations
5. Strategic Storytelling
6. What about the Bible
7. Exploring Transgender and Bi-Sexual issues
8. Model for Change
9. Guidelines for an effective welcoming process

The interaction and fellowship of the diverse denominational backgrounds was a valuable part of the experience. Upcoming training dates include:

June 6-8 in LaVerne, CA

Sept 19-21 in Winston-Salem, NC

Additional training events are being scheduled in Harrisonburg, VA, Washington, DC and Goshen, IN. For more information and to registration for these training events, go to:

[welcomingresources.org/welcomingchurchtraining.htm](http://welcomingresources.org/welcomingchurchtraining.htm)



Community of Christ participants from left: Jon Mendenhall, Vern Hill, Karen Hill, Mike Hewitt and Chuck Hewitt

# Chapter News

## SoCal GALA:

Passover Seder - April 20, 2008

Coming in just a few weeks will be the 15th annual observance of the Passover Seder by GALA in Southern California. We will be gathering at the Anaheim congregation at 4:00 PM for the retelling of the exodus from Egypt and our own struggles with ourselves as creations of God. Observing the Passover, retelling the Exodus story, and relating it to our own fears, hopes and dreams is gay liberation theology in action. No one should be alone or feel disenfranchised from the possibility of creating an environment where all are loved and accepted just as God created them to be. If you would like to celebrate the Passover Seder, contact Meredith Bischoff at [merigrri@merigrri.com](mailto:merigrri@merigrri.com) for a reservation. This event includes the serving of ritual foods, sharing and a full dinner.

Orange County AIDS Walk - May 10, 2008

Join together at Anaheim Stadium for a 5K walk to the benefit of those in Orange County living with HIV/AIDS. The GALA AIDS banner is carried each year in this walk remembering those GALA members who are no longer with us.

Later in the year, we will participate in Gay Days at Disneyland, October 3-5; Solidarity Sunday, October 5; and World AIDS Day, December 1.

## Lawrence GALA:

The Lawrence, KS group meets monthly for a movie night and snacks. In February, we watched SHOWBOAT and the 5th episode of MORE TALES OF THE CITY; in March we watched GREASE, however MORE TALES OF THE CITY was preempted by the University of Kansas basketball game. In April, our movie will be JACK (the Showtime version) and the 6th episode of MORE TALES OF THE CITY. For more information, contact David Woosley at [dwoosley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dwoosley@sbcglobal.net).

## Kansas City GALA:

The Kansas City group met March 15, for a Spaghetti Dinner and Game Night with Lois Sloan and Gwen Smith at the Independence Square Townhouse Community Room. On April 19, a Family Outing and Picnic is planned at Powell Gardens. For more information, contact Velton Peabody at [MisterPeabody@comcast.net](mailto:MisterPeabody@comcast.net).

## Community of Christ Seminary

One of the many fruitful visits while we were in Independence, was with Don Compier, dean of the church's seminary. We are working together on several exciting opportunities with the seminary, and should have more information in the next newsletter.

One important piece of information did come out in our discussion. The Dean strongly encourages LGBT members and allies to enroll in seminary classes and be willing to share their life experiences as part of the teaching experience, thus enriching and educating other class members on LGBT issues of acceptance, journey and inclusion. A great idea indeed!

The faculty has also enthusiastically agreed to lunchtime presentations on LGBT issues during the three week seminary classes. The first one is scheduled for May 28. Others will follow and we may also have the opportunity to share with other ongoing classes during the day. PLEASE e-mail David Howard at [howard092248@yahoo.com](mailto:howard092248@yahoo.com) if you wish to participate in this inaugural presentation.

## Executive Board Elections

It's that time of year again for election of new Board members. We will also have additions to the by-laws that need to be approved. These additions provide for expansion of the board to include an Under-Secretary for Publications and a Treasurer-Elect. In addition, The Board appointed an ex-officio position as liaison to the World Church Leadership Council (expanded). This leaves us, if new by-laws are approved, with the following openings for the Board: An At-large Member (3-year term), Treasurer-Elect, Under-Secretary for Publications and Secretary.

I would encourage each of you to consider running for a board position. We need to have a board that reflects the composition of the membership. We especially need women, allies, and people from the upper Midwest, Pacific Northwest, the South, and New England to consider a position. Please send your notice

of interest to David Woolsey, [dwoosley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dwoosley@sbcglobal.net), along with a brief biography. Ballots will be sent to all members in early June.

## For The Bible Tells Me So

What a great Bible song that was...and how many times did you have to sing that in front of campfire or the congregation on Sunday morning? Well its also now a great documentary on the Bible and homosexuality. It features the lives of 5 families that dealt with the issue of their sons and daughters in different ways and with different results. And it also shows how their journey turns into action! You may get a copy from their website. Many churches and state Equality organizations are beginning to show it too. We hope to set a showing with World Church officials in the next few months. Take a look. It is a good resource for your congregation and friends and family.

## Help Us Out!

Most of Sunday during the retreat will be at the Kirtland Temple and grounds. This will require transportation from Temple Grove to Kirtland. The Board decided that the best means of travel would be by commercial bus, which would be safe and also keep us together as a group to continue our fellowship, fun and relationship building. However, two buses (for an expected registration of 100) will cost nearly \$2000! The Board also wants to keep the cost of the retreat to no more than \$150. Therefore, I am looking for enough people to donate \$100 or more to cover the transportation expense. You will be receipted and it will be tax deductible. If you are able and willing, please contact Curtis Filer at [cfiler@solve.net](mailto:cfiler@solve.net) or me at [howard092248@yahoo.com](mailto:howard092248@yahoo.com) in advance, thank you for this consideration!

The field is more than white...ITS RAINBOW!...and ready to harvest

D AND C SECTION 4...WAY REVISED!

Temple Grove, Pennsylvania - Kirtland Temple  
GALA RETREAT REGISTRATION FORM  
August 29 to September 1, 2008

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Will you need transport from Airport? \_\_\_\_\_

Flight Information: Airline: \_\_\_\_\_

Flight In: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Flight Out: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any special dietary needs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any Medical Concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Retreat Costs:**

\$150 per person Early Registration—before August 16th

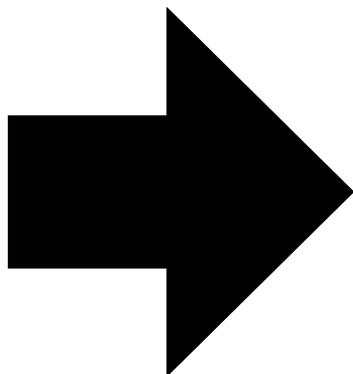
\$165 per person Late Registration—after August 16th

\*\*Private room cost: \$10 per night per person/couple

What type room would you like? Regular or Private\*\*

Mail registration to: David Howard  
1467 Hopkins Avenue  
Lakewood, Ohio 44107

# Renew Your Membership today



## 2008 GALA Membership

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 \_\_\_\_\_ or \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Contributions to GALA are tax deductible.*

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



April 2008

214 E. Hansen Ct.  
Independence, MO 64055

ADDRESS SERVICE  
REQUESTED

NONPROFIT  
ORG.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 35