



Gay Member on Extended World Church Leadership Council

By Mark D. Dixon, M.D.

Nearly a year ago, I received a call from Becky Savage, a member of the First Presidency, asking if I would be willing to participate on the Extended World Church Leadership Council (EWCLC). The World Church Leadership Council recently expanded to include church members from various mission fields in India, Cote' de Ivory, Nigeria, Congo, England, Mexico, Wales, Germany, Ukraine, Honduras, and French Polynesia. In addition, the council includes representatives from the African-American community, the Native American community, and, most recently, myself, representing the GLBT community.

The Council discusses issues vital to the life of the Church. Most of the topics are related to upcoming or past legislative issues from World Conference, and discussions on what it means to be the Community of Christ in the world. We are scheduled to meet twice a year until the 2010 World Conference. I attended meetings in September and December of 2007. There are about fifty on the council. We gather in groups of eight to ten, for about twenty minutes, then rotate with every group in order to gain different perspectives. I have had many opportunities

to share directly with our church leaders from countries around the world, as well as with leaders from the United States, what it has been like for me to be a gay man in the church. I carry your smiles, hugs, tears, and concerns with me, that I have shared with you during our many GALA retreats and our conversations.

My time with the Council has been a real blessing to me. An invitation has been extended to a second member of the GLBT community and we will attend our next meeting this September. Send us your prayers as we participate in this important work.

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Letter to Gala Newsletter Editor and renewal of membership dues

Dear Gala Editor and Staff,

I want to thank everyone for such a well-written, March 2008 issue of the *Gala Newsletter*. I enjoyed reading all about church news and activities, especially Allan Fiscus' 30-year reminiscence of being gay and a church/priesthood member and Apostle Ron Harmon's letter (I've know Apostle Harmon since I was fifteen and walked into my first RLDS church where he was a member of the same congregation. He is indeed of "goodly parents" and has a good heart. I'm glad he's met with incoming president, David Howard.)

I was also happy to see the calendar of events for the Kansas City area in print. Maybe other Gala chapters could add their events to the newsletter. In addition, I'm glad to hear that Gala events in the KC area are being held in more public places. I think that some people, who might like to know more about Gala and perhaps become members, might be a bit intimidated by attending a first meeting in a private home instead of someplace more neutral like a spaghetti dinner at a community center or at the Powell Gardens. I'm glad to see that Gala is branching out in its use of venues.

As part of the news from my part of the world, I attended the Dutch Easter reunion last month where five of 50 people present were either gay or lesbian. The reunion was led by Apostle Dale Luffman who greeted my partner and me and the other lesbian and gay members and visitors warmly as did the rest of the Dutch church leaders. Anyone know how I would go about organizing a Gala chapter over here?

Good luck with future Gala issues and events and God bless. Enclosed you should find my check for my membership renewal plus member survey.

In Gospel Bonds,

Bryan R. Monte
Zeist, The Netherlands

Towards a Welcoming and Inclusive Church

We are pleased to announce that a "**Towards a Welcoming and Inclusive Church**" training will be held in Independence at the Cornerstone congregation. The dates for this training are November 7-9.

It is apparent that there is a growing interest in congregations becoming open and affirming to everyone including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons. These work shops provide information and skills in faith based grass-root organizing, assessment of congregational readiness and resources for the transformational process. Making use of this training can help avoid the pitfalls which often accompany such changes.

This particular training has been developed with Community of Christ in mind. Since trainings are held at various locations around the country, it will probably be a matter of years before another one will be in Independence. So, please mark this date and register early as space is limited.

Information about the training and registration procedure can be found through the WCN web site at www.welcomingcommunitynetwork.org or call Sam or Pat Marmoy (816-795-6276) for registration forms.

Spiritual Formation: The Call to Become

By Bruce Crockett
Spiritual Formation Center, Kirtland, OH

For God beholds
with His merciful eyes
not what you are
nor what you have been.....
but what you would be.

The Cloud of Unknowing, Author unknown

This quote comes from a fourteenth century book entitled *The Cloud of Unknowing*. I think it captures for me a portion of the journey of spiritual formation. *For God beholds with His merciful eyes* speaks about God's awareness of each of us and more importantly His presence with us each moment of every day. Spiritual formation helps raise our consciousness of God's presence and of God's unconditional love for each of us. *Not what you are nor what you have been.....but what you would be* speaks of our potential and the invitation that God makes to us to become in a deeper way His beloved children, to become more fully a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Spiritual formation is a process of becoming and at the same time a process of reflecting. We learn from our life experiences and as we live them out or reflect upon these experiences we learn about ourselves and how God was present with us. We have the opportunity to practice forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation. We have the opportunity to experience God in intimate ways through worship and personal devotions. We can reflect on those who have journeyed with us who have supported us, who have guided us, who have been expressions of unconditional love and representatives of Christ. We reflect on our readings of scripture and the learning's we have gleaned and yet we return to those scriptures to read them again for the first time to draw in

another breath of the Holy Spirit and to go deeper in our understanding. For intimacy with the Holy One doesn't happen superficially but through the repetition of practicing spiritual disciplines that take us to deeper moments and broader understandings of who God is and what our purpose is.

So what will you or I become in our quest for understanding God's invitation for our lives? *Seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you* is one scriptural response. Discernment is the practice of Holy Listening and creates the pathway (opens the door) to receive God's guidance and insight. Spiritual formation teaches the practice of discernment and helps to open up the communication between the individual and the God that receives him/her with open and loving arms. Look for the presence of the Divine in your life this day and in the days ahead. Be open to where this Holy Spirit may invite you to go. The journey is never over and the process of becoming never stops. God's blessings to each of us as we travel together towards community, the Christ centered community.

Visit us on the Web



at galaweb.org

Called to Proclaim

Excerpts from a letter from Brad Shumate, Pastor, Portland Community of Christ, to the congregation, January 24, 2008

Much like in Jesus time, there are cultural and societal forces present today that would limit or nullify Christ's message of love, compassion, justice and peace as being for all people. A member of our church family is in the midst of such pressures while transitioning from female gender to male gender. In the past, you've known this person by the name of Glenda Langevin.

Going now by the name of Ryan Polly, Ryan has enlightened me numerous times during our visits together the past few months. For me, some of that enlightenment has amounted to a proclamation and seeing a great light as regards our Christian brothers and sisters transitioning from one gender to another.

The enlightenment Ryan has brought me is that most individuals going through the changes he's experiencing choose to go and hide until their transition is relatively complete. They do so out of self-consciousness or fears that people will be judgmental, intrusive, prejudicial or hostile. As a follower of Jesus, Ryan witnesses that he has been blessed by the Holy Spirit with an undeniable sense of love and acceptance from God, both as to his personal worth and sense of calling to serve the cause for God's Peaceable Kingdom. Prompted by the Spirit, Ryan has therefore decided not to go and hide, but to be with us during his transition. He does so because he grew up in the Community of Christ and has a deep and abiding love for the church. Presently Ryan splits his time between our congregation and the Portland Metropolitan Community Church. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) is a Christian denomination known for its mission and ministry since the late 1960's to support gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons (GLBT), doing so in the midst of a culture and society that's often hostile or neglectful.

As chair for the Theology, Education, Dialogue and Peace Committee for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, I and our committee had opportunity for a lengthy interview earlier this month with the pastor for the Portland MCC church. The visit was very informative and enlightening as the pastor led us through a discussion regarding God's inclusive love for all people and the work for justice that such love entails. The pastor shared that a founding principle of the movement was a goal that it would eventually go out of business. It would go out of business when Christian denominations became inclusive and fully accepting of GLBT persons. Four decades later, the denomination senses that the goal may no longer be realistic.

For us, I hope our proclamation will always be the inclusive love of Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated that inclusion profoundly. He proclaimed it courageously. He let no one stand in his way even in the face of being chastised by others regarding what he should and shouldn't do. Lastly, he called others to bring similar ministry such as Andrew and Simon Peter and James and John as noted in this week's lectionary scripture*.

Our part in that proclamation is that we are a church family that loves inclusively. If there is nothing else that any one can say about us, it is certainly that. And you can demonstrate that inclusive love every time you're with Ryan by simply calling him the name he now uses. God will bless you every time you do so.

There are others in our lives being called to proclaim. They are being called to come and share in our wonderful church family of inclusive love. Pick up the phone, make the call, offer your invitation to come and share with us this Sunday.

* Matthew 4:12-23

Called to Serve

The following GALA board positions will become vacant on
October 1, 2008:

Secretary

Under-Secretary for Publications

Treasurer-Elect

3-Year Member at Large

GALA will hold a special election to fill the positions of Secretary, Treasurer-Elect and 3-Year Member at Large; the President will appoint an individual to fill the position of Under-Secretary for Publications until the 2009 election.

If you are interested in serving GALA in any of these positions, please contact David Howard at howard092248@yahoo.com or (216)712-7218

40 Years Together

by David Woosley, GALA & WCN Board Member

On July 6, 2008, John Leakey and Vernon Register celebrated 40 years together by holding a commitment ceremony in Hyde Park in Kansas City, Missouri.

Approximately 70 family members and friends joined John and Vernon for the ceremony conducted by Rev. Donna Simon, pastor of Abiding Peace Lutheran Church, Kansas City.

A reception followed in the Trinity United Methodist Church, Kansas City, fellowship hall where John and Vernon are active members.



John and Vernon both participate in the Kansas City Coalition for Welcoming Ministries (KCCWM) where John serves as treasurer. KCCWM was founded after GALA & WCN, together with Reconciling in Christ/Lutherans Concerned and Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist) hosted a Reconciling in Christ Leadership Training workshop at the Temple in 2005.



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

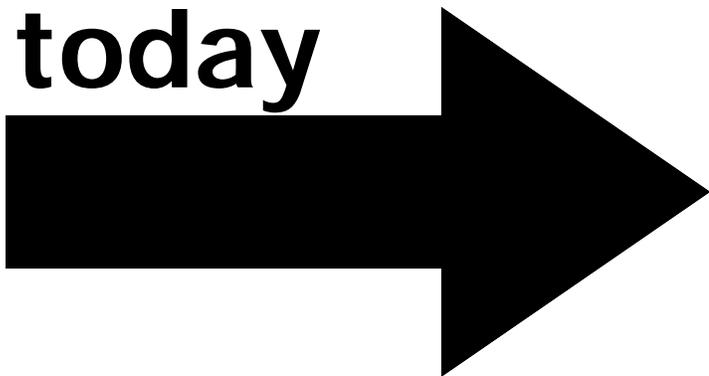
\$165 per person Late Registration—after August 16th

**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

the galanews letter July 2008

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July 2008

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