



galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

May 2010
Volume 21 Issue 2

World Conference 2010

by David Howard



What a week it was! I guess that can be said about every Conference week. GALA partnered with WCN on a number of events during the week to provide information, networking, ministry and worship for Conference participants. One hundred and fifty

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President's Message *by David Howard*

We did it! Well we really didn't do it, but we played a very important part in making things happen at this Conference. Our presence was everywhere. Two thousand rainbow "unity in diversity" buttons were worn by delegates and friends alike. Rainbow lanyards graced the necks of many and looked particularly fabulous when they showed on the big screens. One person even positioned himself around a lectern, so whenever it was used, his décor brightened the screen!

We were present, also to share with whomever asked or had questions. Faces were put on the issues; hearts were turned. The witness of our community and our allies was tremendous. The planning work of the last 15 months paid off in a well executed plan and loyal volunteers who gave up a social life and events to make sure everything planned, happened. Thank you to ALL who participated and made it happen! Many new LGBT persons active in the church are now a part of the process.

My take on the legislation that was addressed? I think we are exactly where we as a church and as a community need to be to continue on a process and find a satisfactory resolution to full inclusion in the life of the Church. With the passage of the document, now Section 164, we have a framework and a process to proceed. In my take this has opened up the ability to have a conference discussion and approval to ordain LGBT persons to priesthood, whether they are in a committed relationship, or are single. Priesthood ethics guidelines coming out in September will help clarify expectations. I also feel this document allows priesthood to conduct marriage and unions in places where it is legal. I also feel the document gives the opportunity to recognize sacramental relationships even in places where the civil aspect is not legal. This could truly place us in the forefront among US denominations.

I know it is hard to wait. Many have waited for so long already. I think however this is the first time we actually have a timeline with a date certain for when these issues will be addressed and the possibility of full inclusion. If we continue to be referred/deferred/tabled or whatever in 2 years, then I think that each one of us will have to make a decision.

However this time is different. We have a leadership team (First Presidency) that really gets it...about us but also about process that brings fundamental change. The work they did since resolutions began to come in last Fall to design a process and navigate through it to Conference was transparent and masterful. I thank them for that effort and continue to look forward to working with them.

attended the reception with GALA recognition awards given to Bill Russell, Jan Fitzgerald, and Fran Zimmerman. WCN presented awards to John Billings, Dick and Barbara Howard, and Arthur Butler. We up-scaled a bit this year and from all accounts, it was a huge success.

The worship service was a bit different this year. Of course it included the usual wonderful singing and inspiration. This year's service included a baby blessing (Kennedy Cavanaugh, daughter of Erin Cavanaugh and Lisa Meyer); a congregational blessing by Presiding Evangelist David Brock; a multi-media presentation; and special music by Lauren Hall and the Sweet Harmony Trio. In all 18 LGBT people and allies were used in the service....Now that's inclusive!

Additional activities included a movie night and a WCN welcoming training teaser; both of which were well attended. GALA also participated in the Diversity Team booth in the Peace Village and co-sponsored a drop-in center off-site. Through these initiatives, over 100 new contacts were made, including persons from Australia, Canada and Tahiti.

As you all know by now, Section 164 was approved overwhelmingly by the Conference body. Through the provision to convene national/cultural conferences, the issues of rescinding the Standing High Council's 1982 and 2002 declarations, in effect prohibiting LGBT ordinations, calling LGBT priesthood, exploring marriage in the sacramental sense and our ability to perform ceremonies can be discussed and implemented. Plan now to attend the National Conference in 2012.

On top of all the wonderful events and approval of the document, there was such a wonderful spirit of peace that pervaded all of the conference activities. That, coupled with

the fellowship, music, and renewal of friendships, made for a worthwhile, productive week.

An LDS blogger's view of World Conference 2010

Note: The following is excerpted from a blog by John Hamer. The full article can be found at

<http://bycommonconsent.com>

Then scroll down to the April 15 article.

"Yesterday was truly history making, because this revelation does for gay members what the 1984 revelation (D&C 156) did for straight women. The Community of Christ will now unambiguously allow full participation for gay members (without discriminatory provisos). However, the new scripture pragmatically compromises by stating that policies will be implemented on a nation by nation basis. In a way, this is like throwing a troublesome Federal issues back to the states. The only difference is that in this case one of the states is the whole U.S. And the U.S. is just as relatively dominant in the Community of Christ as it is in the LDS Church.

Given that the Community of Christ's leadership is fully in support of ending discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the revelation means that unambiguous policies regarding priesthood ordination and marriage equality will follow soon in the church in the developed world (US, Canada, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) Probably much of Latin America and possibly the South Pacific are also on the relatively fast list. However, the revelation allows the church in the developing world (Haiti, Africa, India, SE Asia, China, etc.) to move more slowly as the members become more familiar with the issues involved."

Newsworthy

Nominating Committee

The GALA Nominating Committee was tasked with nominating individuals for the following positions: Secretary, Treasurer-Elect and 3-Year Member At-Large.

The following nominations are hereby submitted to the membership for consideration:

Secretary—Clyde Frey

Treasurer-Elect—Chuck Hewitt

Member At-Large—Erin Cavanaugh

Additional nominations may be made by any member. Additional nominations must be received by the Secretary by July 1, 2010, and must include the consent of the nominee.

The Nominating Committee consisted of the following individuals appointed by President David Howard:

David Woosley, Chair
Todd Davison
Ellen Frye
Chuck Hewitt
Saundra Merth

Temple Plantings

Again this year, GALA will plant the large planters around the circular drive at the entrance to the Temple. This is a ministry and outreach that GALA does for the church. This year we will also be planting the three (3) planters at the corner of Walnut and River

and four (4) other large ones on the plaza outside the west entry to the Temple. Plantings will occur the weekend of May 15-16. When in Independence, be sure and visit the planters. Last year they were stunning and added a lot to the Temple landscaping.

Annual Labor Day Retreat

GALA's annual Labor Day retreat is September 3–6, 2010 at the beautiful Samish Island Campground. The theme for this year is "Into the Light", reflecting the many personalities of sunlight on the campground, while also projecting the importance of light in our lives.

We are able to roll back retreat registration fees to \$150 this year. PLEASE register before August 7, 2010. PAYMENT is not due until the first day of the retreat. A registration form is included in this newsletter and it is also available on the website.

Guest ministry will be provided by the President of the 12, Jim Slaughter. This retreat is very important as we continue the journey toward total inclusion. National conferences, priesthood ethics, strategy and welcoming will all be discussed. We invite everyone to share in this rich experience.



If you plan on making a purchase from Amazon, don't forget to go to the GALA website first, then click on the Amazon logo. GALA receives a percentage of all purchases this way. Here's a trick; create a bookmark for Amazon and then go into the properties of the bookmark and change the address to the GALA website.

First Time Delegate

by Chuck Hewitt

This was my first time as a delegate during a world conference and also the first time that I was able to attend all of the daytime sessions. Having never even seen how the process works I went into this not knowing how or what to do. Most of all I went in with no expectations. I knew my job was to attend many caucus sessions and meetings to get a well rounded view of all the issues from different cultures and peoples. Boy, was I amazed at how my own attitudes and understandings changed by allowing myself to open up. Not just to others, but to the spirit as well. It amazed me how I went into this thinking I would vote this way or that way depending on the issue. But by allowing myself to be open and vulnerable, it all changed. It gave me a better understanding not only of the workings of the church, but it's members as well.

The spirit of God was truly present during the week. I was opened up to a new sense of understanding of the church's role in not only the United States but as a WORLD WIDE CHURCH. At times, I was almost ashamed of how we Americans seem to only be able to think about us, when we are just a part of the whole body. The spirit moved among us as we discussed and gave testimonies on the inspired counsel to the church.

Understanding really began to happen for those that were open and listened. A young man from Australia discussed how he lived with his partner for a few years or more before marriage and that it is the norm in his country. Then a man from Africa got up and literally risked his life talking about



homosexuality because in his country, they will torture or even kill a person for saying the word or talking about it. My understanding totally changed. If any place needs our presence as a church it is there in Africa, where we can start planting our journey in Christ as a church. Promoting communities of Joy, Love Hope and Peace and in time.....who knows?

The passing of 164 was almost 100 percent for, with less than 20 percent against, spoke volumes to me. The passage of this document places every marginalized group, not just the GLTB community, but everyone on an equal playing field. This allows for change where we are ready and support to help other areas grow and develop. Eventually allowing them to come to a true understanding of the Church and it's concepts of promoting PEACE, LOVE, JOY, and HOPE for all. Does this mean that we are there? Not yet, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel where all members are

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Reflection on World Conference

by Clyde Frey

Many of you have participated in a meeting of what is generally referred to as 'World Conference' [WC]; this was my very first experience and I was a delegate. Sure, I was at WC when I attended Graceland, but I worked in the dish room at the Stone Church during the breakfast serving and in the Laurel Club for lunch and dinner. That was, let us say, more than a year or two ago.

Having slipped on wet grass about a month prior to WC, I arrived with a 'walking boot'. In fact, I'd only been in the boot for about a week before flying into Kansas City International Airport. The logistics of driving with a shoe while still experiencing a somewhat swollen driving foot made the experience a challenge; not to mention navigating the ramps in the Auditorium and the walk to the Temple and back while toting a three-ring binder large enough to hold a ream of paper.

I was even fortunate to have been sitting center first row in the balcony of the Temple in January when President Steve Veazey presented the then, Inspired Counsel, now Section 164 of the Doctrine & Covenants to a

full-house. My son-in-law, son & daughter-in-law and I were all able to hear the counsel as it was first presented and I was amazed when I realized that hardly anyone moved from their place and there was such a feeling of peacefulness in the sanctuary.

Leading up to WC, I participated in activities that were designed to encourage thought, prayer, and discernment individually and in groups. During these times I continued to feel the peaceful presence of what I can only determine was the Spirit, working in our world. Once WC began, there were additional opportunities for each participant to become aware of what we are to be about in this world. During the first couple of days we discussed the Inspired Counsel in smaller group settings and then we came together as a body during which the counsel was approved and became Section 164.

If one has never experienced a WC before, it can be overwhelming, as the day began by 6:30 a.m. and there were many days when I found myself arriving where I was staying at 10:00 p.m. and then needing to check e-mails from work to see if there was anything to which I must attend before heading off for a few hours of rest to restore some strength to my body. There was just so much to do, so many discussions, events, worship services; to miss even one of them was to miss out on the WC experience!

In the midst of this were the operating hours for the World Community center in which a table was located that included displays and information from GALA and WCN (Welcoming Community Network). The hours

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expended there by those that were available to 'meet & greet' attendees, especially those with questions, were beyond mind boggling and so greatly appreciated!

On Tuesday night, GALA and WCN hosted a reception at the Truman Memorial Center at which several presentations were made by each group. The response by attendees was overwhelmingly positive, the food was delicious and plentiful, and the décor was, of course, superb! My mother, a delegate from the Greater Pacific Northwest area, was able to attend WC and attended the reception where she was able to contact friends that she had not seen in some time as well as make some new friends.

The GALA/WCN worship service at Beacon Heights Community of Christ was awesome! The service at which Kennedy Cavanaugh, daughter of Lisa Meyer & Erin Cavanaugh was blessed was wonderfully attended. The music was terrific, the prayers were beautiful, the sense of worth of everyone was bolstered and the Spirit moved among us!

The weather was probably the best, I did hear that this WC was the best one that they had ever attended—this was from someone that had been coming to these each time they were held for many, many years. Why, I asked? The response was, as I expected, because of the movement of the Spirit of God within the people, and the willingness of the people to discern, recognize and respond.

World Conference came to a spectacular wind down at the International Hymn Festival on Friday evening; the celebration of God's people was electrifying and the air was filled with color from the ribbons that floated from the huge overhead oval ceiling of the Auditorium. One truly needed to be there (for this service and for the entire World

Conference) to experience the full effect, feel the movement of God's Spirit, and respond in joy, love and peace.

The work is now before us as we continue to provide opportunities for others, those that were unable to attend, to learn, pray, discern and grow as we determine what we can do to be a blessing in our diverse communities. The journey is ahead, there is hope in our heart, we are all a part of God's community. We are loved for who we are, appreciated for the ministry we bring and a joy to those with whom we come in contact. Move out in faith with the Spirit to guide!

(First Time Delegate *Continued from page 5*)

created equal in the church and are allowed full inclusion with no BUTS.

We will need to continue to work together to help bring change to the Church, we are getting there folks! It is time for us to be counted as members of The Community of Christ. Participate in your congregations and be active in your mission centers. Let our presence be known. We are good people and all of us are God's children.

So now that Conference is over, have I changed? You bet, I now have a better understanding of the different ways that the church leadership is being pulled. It's a delicate balancing act that needs to be done in order for us, as a church, to reach out to all of God's children, allowing for growth in the areas where there is understanding and unity on the difficult issues. We are getting there! This doctrine is truly divinely given! Let us now move forward with the challenges before us working together in God's call to us as part of his wonderful creation. Doing it as proud members of the church we love known as Community of Christ.

The Political Scene

by Bill Russell

I had an eerie feeling last Friday when at a few minutes before 7:00 p.m., after darkness had descended upon Lamoni, a dark van with tinted windows pulled up to "smokers' corner" across the street from the McDowell Commons. Five adults and a little boy about seven got out. They proceeded to picket Graceland with the most hateful signs imaginable. They were protesting the presentation on campus of the play, "The Laramie Project."

"The Family," as I will call them, has every right to protest as they do, and they do it frequently. That is their life. And believe it or not, they are a "church," consisting mostly of members of the same family.

Our First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly are written in absolutistic language: "Congress shall make no law..." restricting these rights. However, the Supreme Court has allowed some restrictions on freedom of expression. There is a security exception: if the expression endangers national security or may cause a riot, the government has the right to restrict the expression. You have no right to utter "obscenity," but the court has had a difficult time defining what that means. Justice Potter Stewart once made the memorable statement: "I can't define it but I know it when I see it." You also have no right to defame the character of another person. Here the courts have to balance your right to expression with the other person's right to be free from being the victim of malicious libel or slander.

The Family has a long history of picketing

with their hateful anti-gay signs. There were about 100 Graceland students standing across the street from smokers' corner when the Family got out and assumed their positions on the sidewalk.

While they have the right to express their hateful ideas, Graceland, as a private university has the right to prevent them from coming on campus. Arrangements were made with Lamoni Police Chief Dale Killpack for the Family to picket at smokers' corner and counter demonstrators would be across the street. Barricades were set up on both sides of the street.

These five adult members of the Family may have been surprised that there were about 100 Graceland students waiting for their arrival. They thrive on confrontation, so they might have been disappointed that the students remained silent the whole time.

In contrast to the hate-filled signs of the Family, students very prominently displayed a large sign, "God loves everyone" and a smaller one, "God is love."

Students who were not aware of the Family's past activities were shocked at the signs they brought. "God hates fags" and some version of "Matt is burning in hell" have been regulars at their demonstrations ever since the tragic murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998. In what has to rank as one of the most disgusting things I have ever heard of, the Family showed up at Matthew Shepard's funeral with these two signs, and others.

Other signs last Friday included, "Hell is

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real, ask Matt," "Matt is 10 years in hell," "Fags are beasts," "Mourn for your souls," "God hates Jews," "God hates Obama," and "You will eat your babies." Some people blame the mother when a son turns out to be gay, so in a way the worst sign of all was, "Judy sent Matt to hell." Judy Shepard has been a very outspoken advocate of tolerance since Matt's death. I had the pleasure of meeting her and hearing her speak in Des Moines last year.

Near the end of their one hour visit they sang some songs. Rewriting "God bless America" they sang, "God hates America." Rewriting "We are the world," they sang, "God hates the world, and all its people."

"I was expecting them to be hurling offensive profanities at us," said Paige Webberly, a student from Washington. "But they just stood there, holding their signs and silently preaching their message of hate. Nonetheless, you could feel the tension in the air, and although the protest was silent, it was still an intense situation."

Sally Norton, from England, said, "I recognize the worth of all persons and I wanted to stand up for those who I feel are unfairly judged. I witnesses students, faculty and friends gathering to show unconditional love for each other."

"I was really proud of the Graceland community for all the support they showed for our counter protest," said Christy Pratt of Lamoni, chairperson of the Gay Straight Alliance at Graceland.

Jon Hetherington, another Washington student, said, "One of the saddest things was to see that seven-year old boy with the sign, 'God hates fags.'" One young mother, seeing the little boy, said, "This breaks my heart. I would like to take him home with me."

As they started to leave, Sheriff Bert Muir stopped them and told them the sheriff's department would escort them out of the county. So with patrol cars in front and behind them, the Family was escorted from the State of Iowa.

The play was wonderful. Directed by Melissa C. Thompson, the nine student actors each played several characters extremely well: Annie Merab Arnold, Valeria Avina, Sam Clegg, David Cook, Abby Hernandez, Darrell James Johnston, Andrew Nilsen, Kari Ann Nilsen, and Tammy Sawyer. The play is based on research done by Moises Kaufman and the members of the Tectonic Theater Project. It deals with how a university town had to come to terms with the fact that such a heinous crime had occurred in their community. They had to ask themselves whether the environment in Laramie was partly to blame.

A few years ago in Michigan, the Ku Klux Klan had a Sunday afternoon rally on the steps of the state capital. When they left, members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought buckets and mops and scrubbed the steps where the Klansmen had been standing.

Last Friday's demonstration was similar to the typical Ku Klux Klan rally. There are usually more police than Klansmen, and more counter demonstrators than police. Last Friday in Lamoni there were five adult demonstrators (I refuse to count that poor little boy in the group), about eight or ten law enforcement officers, and approximately one hundred counter demonstrators.

Our Graceland students stood tall last Friday night. Too bad they didn't have buckets and mops to scrub the sidewalk when the Family left town.

Time Goes By Quickly

by Chuck Hewitt

The GALA Retreat is just around the corner. Costs will vary from person, place, distance, and time, so it's time to start SAVING!. Yes, you heard me, SAVING! It's a fairly new concept in this country, but one we should be able to grasp quickly. Looking ahead to the retreat, you may find some really good deals on flights, so start searching and booking now. The cost for the retreat this year is \$150.00, per person. With 4 months till retreat (May, June, July, August) you will need to save \$37.50 per person, per month, in order to have your



registration paid by the retreat time. That's not bad. Most of us will hopefully, be able to manage it.

As we look forward to the retreat at Samish Island this year, lets plan ahead. I am counting on a wonderful retreat full of love joy and hope. I am looking forward to new experiences that will last a life time. We will share our stories; all while making new friendships or renewing old. I hope to see you there, and remember, **PLAN AHEAD! SAVE! SAVE! SAVE!**



In the Light
GALA RETREAT REGISTRATION FORM
 September 3-6, 2010
 Samish Island Campground, 11795 Scott Road
 Bow, WA 98232



Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

If you need transportation from the airport, please provide your flight information:

Arrival Airline: _____ Flight: _____ Time: _____

Dietary needs: _____

Medical/Special Needs: _____

Retreat Costs:

\$150 per person Registration

Bedding, towels, etc. not provided

Limited camperships available; contact howard092248@yahoo.com

Please register by August 7, payment due on or before 1st day of Retreat

Mail registration to:

GALA RETREAT

P.O. Box 2173

Independence, MO 64055



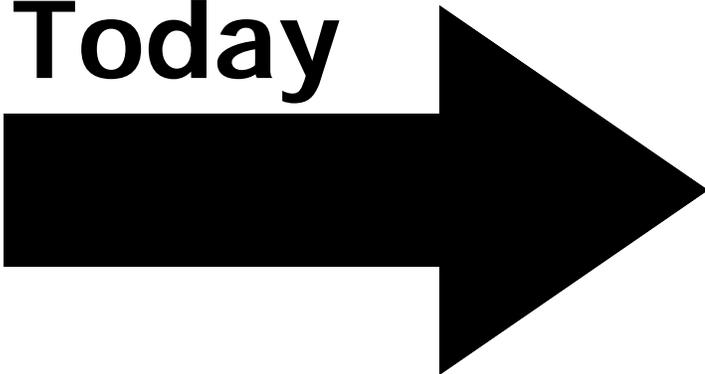
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