



# galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of  
Community of Christ

March 2013  
Volume 24 Issue 1



## Prophet-President Stephen M. Veazey will share Words of Counsel to the Church at the First Presidency's World Conference worship on Sunday, April 14

We invite you to join with sisters and brothers around the world at 7:00 p.m. CDT in the Auditorium Conference Chamber and by live webcast at [www.CofChrist.org](http://www.CofChrist.org).

We will also plan to share in three ordinations based on calls to be considered by the World Conference: K. Scott Murphy is called to serve as a counselor to the president of the church and member of the quorum of the First Presidency; James A. Poirier and Steven E. Graffeo are called to serve as counselors to the Presiding Bishop and members of

the Presiding Bishopric.

A complete order of worship will be available by April 7 at [www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/upcoming.asp](http://www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/upcoming.asp) for those who will gather in homes and congregations to worship with us through the webcast.

Please join us in prayerful preparation for this worship and for the entire 2013 World Conference. Thank you for being part of Christ's Mission, Our Mission.

# GALA

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Visit us on the web  
at:

**galaweb.org**

# President's Message

*by Saundra Merth*

## We Are Companion's On the Journey 2013 Labor Day Retreat at Temple Grove

Our theme for the annual retreat at Temple Grove (Transfer, PA) – “We are companions on the Journey” seems very fitting given the USA National Conference that will be happening this April in Independence, Missouri this year. Most of those reading this article probably find themselves more affirming than most in regards to the legislation that will come before that body but none of us can predict the outcome.

Either way, there will be church members who will be disappointed and distressed at the outcome. People from other religions will be watching our proceedings and how we handle ourselves during this challenging time. That's why the GALA Board chose this theme for our retreat to be held after the conference. No matter the outcome, we are still companions on this journey of Christ's mission – our mission – to share with the world Christ's outpouring of love and generosity.

We might have to practice faithful disagreement with our fellow congregants during this time and do it with an open mind and heart to all who cross our path. It won't be easy for whichever group is most disappointed by the outcome of the USA National Conference but it will be important to our survival as a church and as GALA to practice a deeper form of understanding.

We are looking forward to sharing this time in Temple Grove with Becky Savage from the First Presidency. It is sure to be filled with fun and laughter with a potential trip to the Kirtland Temple sometime during the weekend and of course our famous talent show and silent auction. Please give us feedback about what your favorite activities from past retreats have been and we will give those ideas first consideration when planning.

Since planning for this retreat is just in the beginning stages we have lots of ideas to bounce around. We had a great time last year designing a Vision Board led by Della Mowrey on Friday night. We have done “Minute to Win-It” type games a couple of years and different types of Gay Olympics. Let us know which activities you like most. The grounds at Temple Grove are just beautiful and so inviting to the great gathering we plan to have there.

Please set aside time and money to come spend with us over Labor Day weekend. It starts Friday evening, August 30 thru Monday

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Florida Winter Reunion by Cindy Campbell

At the Florida Winter Reunion, the last week of January, Sharon Gernaat attended from McBain, Michigan and generously donated 30 copies of the book Touched By Grace. The copies were displayed on a table at the back of the room and after the worship service, people flocked to the table and emptied it in a matter of minutes. Sharon was right there to facilitate open and safe conversations and sharing about personal LGBT experiences that began there and lasted the rest of the week.

Conversations were further enhanced at the Reunion by two showings of the dvd "Anyone and Everyone", a 1 hour documentary by IronZeal films borrowed from a local PFLAG chapter. Here is a film synopsis. "Connected by having a son or daughter who is gay, parents across the country discuss their experiences in the documentary Anyone and Everyone. In it, filmmaker Susan Polis Schutz, depicts families from all walks of life. Individuals from such diverse backgrounds as Japanese, Bolivian, and Cherokee, as well as from various religious denominations such as Mormon, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu, and Southern Baptist, share intimate accounts of how their children revealed their sexual orientation and discuss their responses.

The parents also talk about struggling with the pain of their sons and daughters dealing with not being accepted by relatives or friends, and being ostracized by religious congregations.

*(President's Message Continued from page 2)*

mid-day, Sept 2. Watch out for great deals on flights now into the Cleveland airport since sometimes reservations over holiday weekends can be more expensive. The cost for the retreat itself will be \$150 per person and scholarships will be available but limited so save a little every month and you will be set to go. If you have received a full scholarship last year you will be asked to pay a portion this year so that those funds can help others in need.

We are looking forward to having a great time

"It was so evil and so bad that we almost couldn't talk about it... You just had the idea it was so terrible that it was unspeakable," said a Mormon mother in the film.

"Having heard all these awful things and what homosexuality was and then having a member of your family, a person that you have seen, a child that you have seen since the child was born, a person that was absolutely wholesome, good, kind, gentle and that put together with the word lesbian didn't add up," said an

Hispanic mother.

This film is especially important since up to 26% of gay teens who come out to their parents or guardians are told they must leave home. Of the approximately 1.6 million homeless American youth, 20-40% identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Nearly 40% of LGBT (GLBT) students report being physically harassed. In a 2001 Department of Health study of youth in Massachusetts, about 40 percent of gay and lesbian students attempted suicide,

compared to about 10 percent of their heterosexual peers.

The film also depicts meetings of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) where people get support and help. "

There are local PFLAG chapters in many cities, and you can locate one near you at [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org). Their national website is full of educational and advocacy resources and I recommend taking advantage of what they have to offer.



with all of you able to attend – check out our website for more details in the upcoming months – and the registration form. Fill out the form just to let us know you plan on attending and then pay the registration fee once you arrive at Temple Grove. This will help us to reserve the proper number of rooms and the number of meals. Don't forget to let us know if you are vegetarian or vegan – we can make accommodations for special dietary needs.

See you in September!

# Marriage Equality by Jerry M. Dale, Jr.

I am writing this shortly after returning to work from the Marriage Equality Rally in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

I was honored to represent the Welcoming Community Network, GALA and several Community of Christ members and friends at a Prayer Service before marching to the Court for the rally. Over 100 ministers from all walks of faith offered prayers at the service. The service contained prayers of:

Welcoming and Opening; Discrimination is Judgment, Judge Not; Ending Persecution; Moment of Remembrance and Calling of Names; Liberation, Love and Marriage Equality; and prayers of Blessing of Couples. Intermingled between prayers were beautiful songs which moved me to tears. I am so honored to have represented you at this event and felt your presence with me.



After the service we sang 'This Little Light of Mine' and processed down the street to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court where many had already gathered. The love was pouring out of everyone present. The last time I felt such a feeling of love and gratitude was at the most recent GALA retreat. Those present listened to speakers and stood in unity and shared a communal if not a communion experience.

Today I was part of history and I am changed. As we move forward to the USA National Conference and the decision, in June, from the US Supreme Court, let's pray that the arc of justice, long as it has been, has finally reached us.

# GALA Tech

*By Erin Cavanaugh*

GALA is working hard on coming further into the technological age! We are doing this through several different ways and can't wait to show you them all! To start, we are trying to become more interactive with Facebook. We have been on Facebook for a while as a group, but we have now changed to an actual Facebook page. This will allow us to be better connected with each other and keep each other better informed about what is going on in all the different areas that our membership reaches. Make sure you "Like" the new page to keep connected. In addition to Facebook, we are looking forward to getting on to Twitter. Because most of us are new to this form of social media, it has been a slow going process. We are looking forward to learning all about Twitter and tweeting the most up-to-date GALA news.

Finally, we have created a QR code for the GALA website. I'm sure you're wondering what a QR code is. A QR is the funny looking bar code type boxes that are popping up everywhere. When you scan them with your smart phone, it takes you to a link it is associated with. We have created one for the GALA website. When it is scanned, it will link to the GALA homepage. This will be put on our GALA pamphlets so that people will be able to easily connect to our site and find up-to-date information.



GALA is excited to be getting up-to-date with social media and keeping everyone connected in the best ways we can. In the first day of the new Facebook page, we had almost doubled the number of people who had joined the old Facebook "group" over several years. It is exciting to keep connected to everyone even if we may not see each other more than once or twice a year!

# Nominations Now Being Accepted for GALA Board of Directors!

By Nathan Phillips-Frey, Member-at-Large

Each year a Nominating Committee is selected and charged with seeking individuals that will stand for election to the GALA Board of Directors. The terms of office and responsibilities are prescribed in the Bylaws; available online at [www.galaweb.org](http://www.galaweb.org) >tab: About Us > By-Laws. The Committee, "...shall solicit the GALA membership for suggestions for nominees and shall strive to include, both within its composition and its proposed slate of nominees, representation of persons of all sexual orientations, differing abilities, racial-ethnic backgrounds, gender identification, geographic locations and ages."

The Nominating Committee: Sandra Merth, [smertth\\_coc@yahoo.com](mailto:smertth_coc@yahoo.com), Stephen Donahoe, [sjydonahoe@gmail.com](mailto:sjydonahoe@gmail.com), and Nathan Phillips-Frey, [NateP617@aol.com](mailto:NateP617@aol.com) are standing ready to hear from YOU, the members of GALA....who do you want to see run for office on the Board of Directors?

The terms of office are staggered so only part of the Board are elected each year which provides for and promotes a continuity and flow from Board-to-Board. The following are the positions with the calendar year terms for which the

committee is seeking candidates in the 2013 elections. Preferably a minimum of two (2) candidates shall stand for election for each position.

**Vice President (2014-2015)**

**President-elect (2014)**

*who then serves as President (2015-2016)  
and as Past President (2017)*

**Undersecretary for Publications (2014-2015)**

**Member-at-Large (2014-2016)**

Please remember that *GALA members with annual dues paid are eligible to stand for election.*

**That being said, if you have yet to pay GALA dues for calendar 2013, please feel free to do so today!**

Nominations of GALA members may be emailed to any member of the committee or mailed to: Sandra Merth, GALA President, PO Box 11626, Pleasanton, CA 94588-1626. Feel free to self-nominate or have a friend send in your name along with the office for which you would like to seek election and be sure to include your contact information.

The Nominating Committee is charged with providing the membership with a list of candidates. Due to the timeliness of the election process, please submit your nominations as soon as possible!

# 2013 Membership

Did you renew your GALA membership for 2013? If you did, thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking your time and resources for supporting us during this vital year of transformation in the church. Your membership is essential to the work we are doing – especially this year in the life of the national church and beyond. GALA will be part of the Diversity Booth in the International Peace Village during World Conference. Please be sure to stop by when you visit the Peace Village!

GALA will hold a worship service in the Stone Church sanctuary, Tuesday, April 16 at 12:30PM (lunchtime); everyone is welcome to come and worship!

Join us Thursday evening at 7pm at the College Park Congregation for an evening with the authors of several of our new hymns that are coming out this fall. David Lohman, Ken McLaughlin, Barbara Howard and Danny Belrose will all be there to discuss and play their songs.

Please bring a friend along and enjoy the fun!

All of our ambitious events and activities are funded by your thoughtful membership dues receipts and generous donations. Please consider digging out that membership renewal form, or use the one included in this newsletter, and mailing it in today.

Thanks again for all your support!

Sandra Merth, GALA President

If you are making a purchase from Amazon, don't forget to go to the GALA website first,



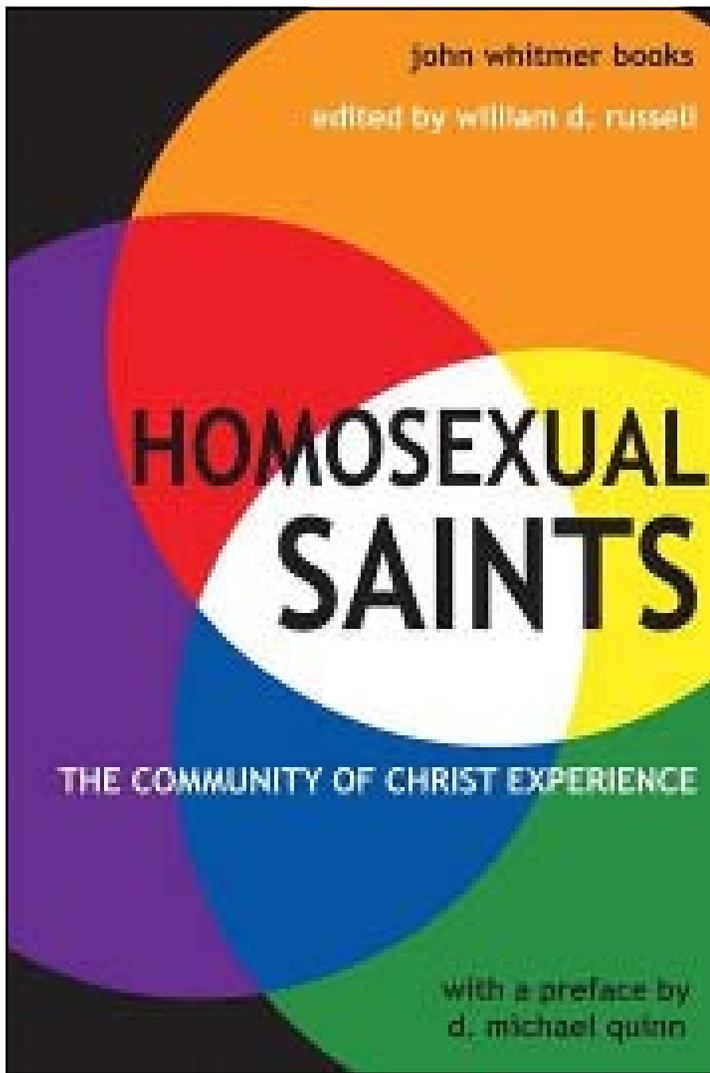
then click on the Amazon logo. GALA receives a percentage of all purchases this way. Here's a trick; create a bookmark for Amazon and then go into the properties of the bookmark and change the address to the GALA website.



The group Planting Peace bought a home across the street from a church in Topeka, Kansas, we are all familiar with, and painted it like the gay pride flag.

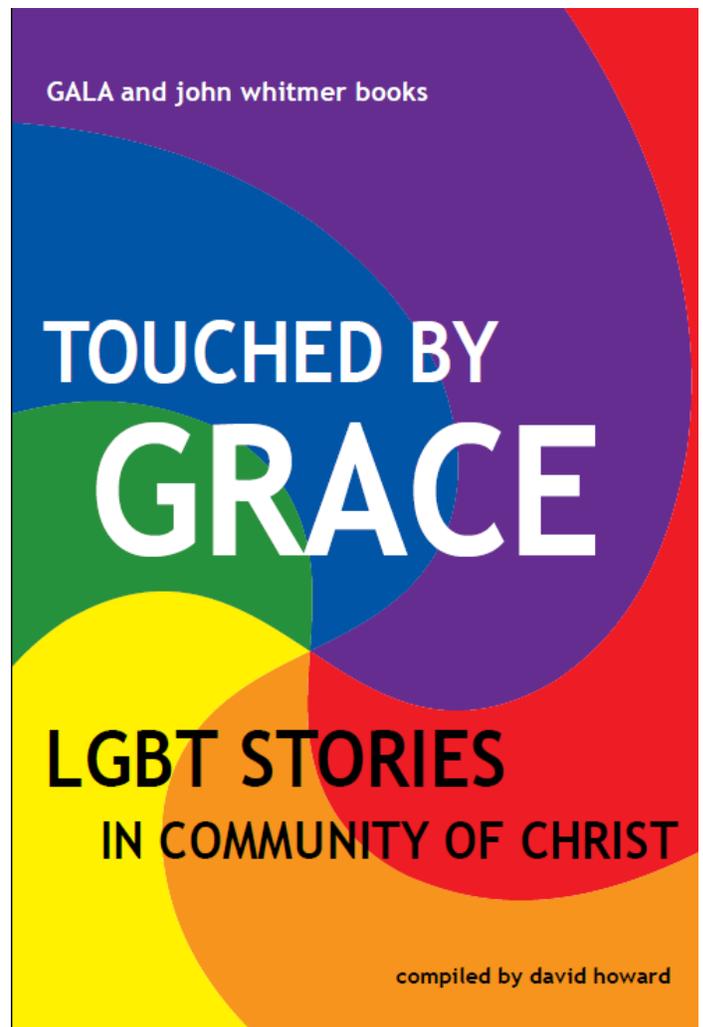
[www.PlantingPeace.org](http://www.PlantingPeace.org)





*Homosexual Saints* was the first compilation of life stories from GALA members, family and friends. Edited by William D. Russell, it was published by John Whitmer Books in 2008.

*Touched by Grace* is another wonderful compilation of stories from GALA members, family, friends and congregations. Compiled by David Howard, former President of GALA, after months of work collecting stories, reading stories, editing stories, designing covers, finding



pictures, the final proof reading and implementing the corrections, the GALA Board and John Whitmer Books published *Touched by Grace* in 2012.

Both books provide a valuable resource for insight and history as Community of Christ in the United States moves toward a National Conference in 2013.

Check out the GALA website ([www.galaweb.org](http://www.galaweb.org)) and order your copies today!



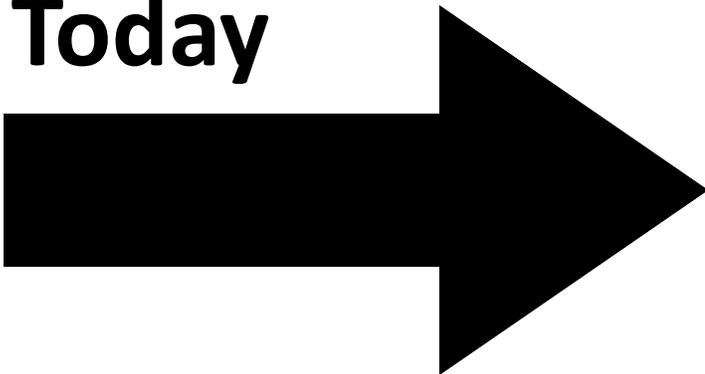
March 2013

P.O. Box 2173  
Independence, MO 64055

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# Join, or Renew Your Membership Today



## 2013 GALA Membership

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

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

YES; send me the newsletter by e-mail

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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**