

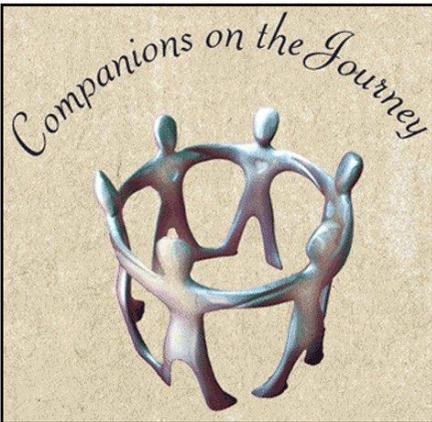


galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

October 2013
Volume 24 Issue 4



GALA Retreat 2013



GALA

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President's Message

by Sandra Merth

Joy, Hope, Love and God's Peace – I heard this phrase several times during the first day or so of the Peace Colloquy held in Independence recently. It made me think. Have we been searching for man's Peace or God's Peace on this journey we've been on lately? There have been times when I have wanted to walk away for good because Peace did not seem possible and if there was to be any it seemed that I would have to find it somewhere else.

Seek out the new Community of Christ Sings hymnal that has so many songs of hospitality and inclusion that it is overwhelming. So many titles speaking to the marginalized and poor in our society and around the world – and so many languages are included too. It is a most amazing book and will be a powerful ministry in our church for years to come.

We can no longer sit on the sidelines and complain we are not included. We can't whisper outside the church doors that we aren't welcome. We must come in and sit down and be a part of the solution within the community. I encourage you to seek out God's Peace in this world we live in and come with open hearts and minds to work together with those who may not understand – because Love demands it. Love of our church and our community within and our deep desire to serve both.

May we bring God's Peace to this journey –



Sandra Merth with Addison and Kennedy at the GALA Retreat

Companions on the Journey

by Megan Mines

Anyone who's had the experience of attending church camp knows about the special Spirit that can be found there. For me, the Temple Grove campground holds a special place in my heart. I've attended camps there, in one form or another, every year of my life.

Temple Grove is a place where I have continually experienced God's Spirit working in my life. Upon entering the campgrounds, I am always filled with a sense of belonging and of pulling away from the world to commune with and be closer to God.

As I arrived at Temple Grove for this year's GALA Retreat, that same peaceful Spirit was there.

Although I have known about GALA for several years, this was the first activity I had participated in. As a straight friend and ally, when I heard that the retreat was going to be so close to home, I just felt that I needed to be there.

Being at this retreat was truly a blessing. Most of the faces were new to me and I enjoyed getting to know each one throughout the weekend. Sharing our stories in small groups was a powerful experience. It allowed us to go deeper together, as we shared of both the good times and the struggles in our lives. Each of us had unique experiences that brought us to the retreat, but we all came together as 'Companions on the Journey' (which was also our theme for the weekend).

We lived in community as we shared in laughter and tears, in games and campfires, and in worship.

We were blessed with the guest ministry of Becky Savage, a member of the First Presidency. It was great to hear her personal testimony and

also some information on what Community of Christ is doing and how things are progressing since the recommendation of the USA National Conference.

Another highlight was witnessing the baptism of a new member to our faith. What an awesome experience demonstrating God's welcome to all. This man has been longing to embrace our church, and finally we opened our arms to embrace him as well.

Although we're all individually unique, at our core we really are the same. We're just people who long for understanding and love... for relationships with one another and with God.

I am so thankful to have been a part of this retreat. New friendships were forged and this experience will remain with me as I go forward. I will certainly make an attempt to attend in the future and I would encourage all of you readers to do the same.

We are companions in this life. Let us look at each face we see, with compassion and love. And let us affirm and uphold one another as we journey together in Christ.

There is room for everyone at the table of God. Let us be open to God's Spirit and the limitless possibilities that God can provide when we truly exist in community together.



You Are Here

by Clyde Phillips-Frey

“You are ‘HERE’” Do you recall the last time you stood in front of a map of a mall chocked full of shopping opportunities, the beginning of a trail that branched off into many divergent paths, the infamous ‘strip’ in Las Vegas with so many different hotels, or any other time or place that you had that happen to you? It made me stop and think as I said, “I am ‘here’, where have I been and where am I headed?” It almost evoked that ‘so what’ emotion that I used to get every time I opened my email when I used AOL...remember? “You’ve got mail!” (well, duh!)

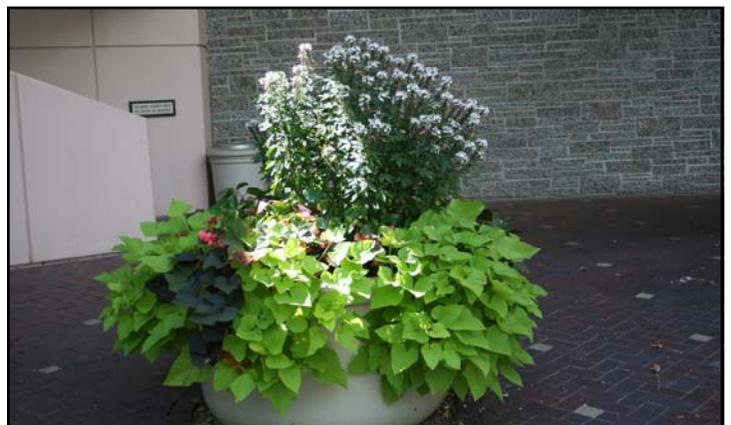
Anyhow, as I survey where I, and in the greater sense we as the group identified as GALA, have been in the past several months I am reminded of the moving of the gentle and comforting spirit that was present during the USA National Conference. Here we are about six months since that time and I realize that we are at the half-way point to receiving an interim policy statement based on the recommendations of that conference.

Just about a month ago, over the Labor Day weekend, GALA held the annual retreat in my reunion grounds at Temple Grove in Pennsylvania. We had a hearty group in attendance that enjoyed the peaceful setting on a man-made ‘lake’ and participated in an assortment of activities. It was interesting that this year we decided to provide a greater amount of time for those in attendance to share time with each other. Sure, we shared our stories with other LGBT folks and our supporters, but we also took time to chat, put jigsaw puzzles together, play cards, enjoy a sometimes not-so-roaring campfire and other times a back-the-benches-up campfire.

We had the opportunity to share with our guest ministry, Becky Savage, from the First Presidency, in a relaxed atmosphere where everyone felt welcome.

Looking ahead, we understand that the policy provided from the First Presidency will be about another six months before it is presented. We can always hope for an earlier presentation, but can expect it will be about that amount of time. We have heard and some have seen that there are those in congregations that continue to struggle with the recommendations made at the USA National Conference. We understand how important it is for them to receive ministry as they continue their journey with the Spirit, just as it has been important for us to continue to receive ministry in our struggle to equally share at the table.

So, I am not so sure where I will be when I next see the, ‘You are HERE’, dot on the map of life, but I am hopeful that the ministry each of us has to offer will be accepted with open hearts by everyone so that the love of God will be able to work with us as we move together as a growing, inclusive, and welcoming church.



Moved by the Spirit

by Mark Davies

On September 1, 2013, I was baptized into Community of Christ at a GALA retreat at Temple Grove. To say that I was surprised would be to fib a little as I had, for a long time, wanted to join Community of Christ.

Many years ago I became familiar with the Book of Mormon, and having decided it contained some great truths, I began seeking out a community that shared my enthusiasm for the Restoration. After much research I realized that the RLDS Church embodied what I felt to be the most reasonable expression of the Scriptures and practices of the Latter-Day Saint movement, and I visited a congregation near my home. Some members there suggested I write to Headquarters in Independence for more information, so I decided to be forthcoming and asked what the position of the Church was on LGBT people. The answer was disappointing. Like many of you I found that we were barred from the priesthood, that our relationships weren't recognized, and that same-sex marriage wasn't even on their radar. I decided then that the RLDS Church wasn't where I needed to be, although I didn't give up on it.

When I saw the name change to Community of Christ, I was again intrigued by the church and rekindled my interest in the group, following along with the excitement of the new temple. During those years I visited the Kirtland Temple twice and started reading the Doctrine and Covenants, deepening my interest in possibly belonging to this new Community. When I read about the recent USA National Conference decision to be inclusive of LGBT people in the ministry and sacraments of the Church, I became excited that I could finally be a part of it.

For some reason, while I was searching the Web, I landed on the GALA site and realized that there was an organized group of us. I immediately joined and, as luck would have it, traveled the relatively short distance to Temple Grove for the retreat. After meeting all the wonderful people and feeling the love



and sincere warmth of the group, I was moved by the Spirit to ask if it would be possible to be baptized and make a start in becoming part of Community of Christ.

With the help of some of the GALA members, I was blessed with the sacrament of baptism and it really felt like a coming home. It was not only the fact that I was entering into discipleship in Community of Christ, but that I was beginning to do this in the presence of other LGBT people and our allies. I didn't have to hide anything and could be all I am at the time of immersion into the warm waters of the Temple Grove lake. Now I am reborn into a new Community; one that is both old and new to me, and that is inclusive of all the people like myself who thought they would never be fully welcome.

Shopping

by Sandra Merth

The season for serious shopping has begun!

Christmas is right around the corner, so please keep in mind that when shopping for any occasion, please click on the amazon.com link found on our website first:

<http://www.galaweb.org>

By going thru our website to get to amazon.com, they track your purchases and then donate a portion of their proceeds to our organization.

So far this year, that has amounted to almost \$500 from amazon.com! And you didn't have to do anything more than do your



regular shopping via the internet. We don't have a large budget and though this amount may seem small to some, it means a lot to us; so let the shopping begin!



Treasurer's Report

**Balance January 1, 2013:
\$10,599.44**

**Balance September 30, 2013:
\$14,431.02**



Editor's Note: Pictures of planters throughout this newsletter are the result of plantings at The Temple by GALA last Spring.

I Am Not God

by Marvin Kleinau

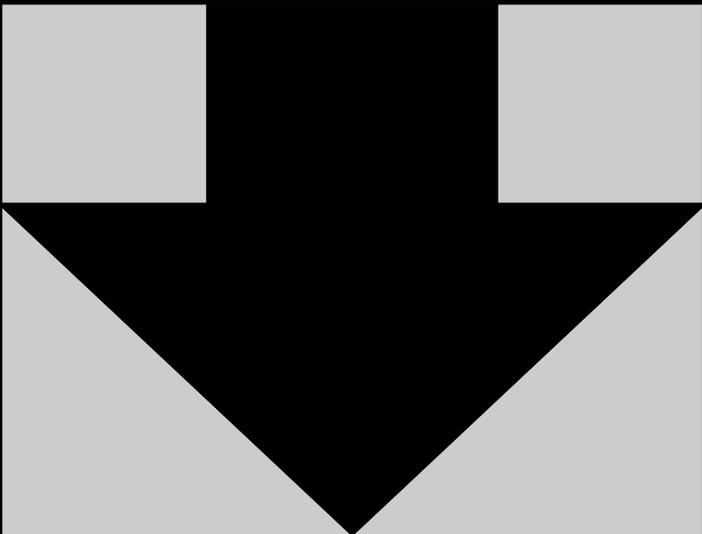
The most difficult task I've had to perform as an Evangelist in the Community of Christ church is to remember I am not God. One of the reasons I was baptized in this church is because of its firm conviction that God has not stopped speaking to us with the scriptures. When I pray, I do so expecting God to talk to me via the Holy Spirit.

When I hear the Prophet speak I open my head and my heart and seek to soak up as much of the message as possible because I know it is the Holy Spirit speaking. I have known from day one that in our church, we are blessed with that effort by God to guide and direct us.

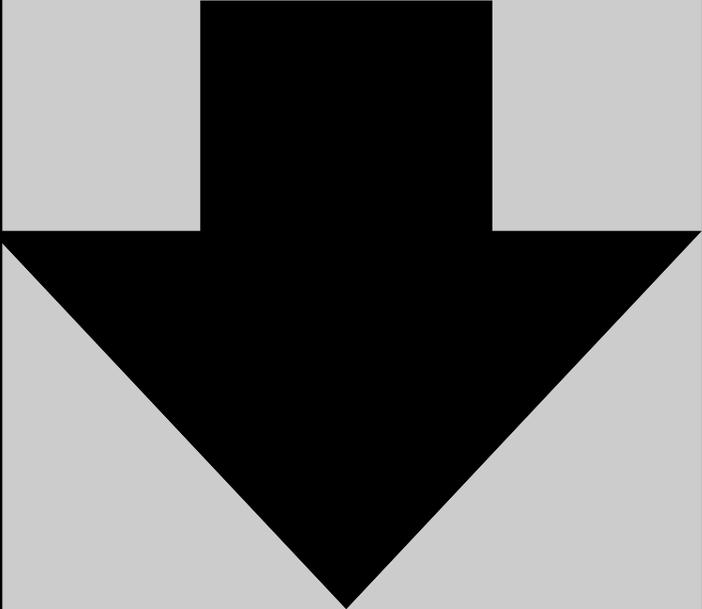
It is with that understanding that I was inspired by the words of counsel given by President Veazey at the recent world conference. I had prayed to exhaustion for an answer to my question, "How can I make the claim that God loves all of us, yet we (man) believe some should not receive God's sacraments?" President Veazey through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit answers that question for me. He said, "...it is not right to profess oneness and equality in Christ through sacramental covenants and then to deny that equality by attitude, word, or action. Such behavior wounds Christ's body and denies what is eternally resolved in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ."

I could have denied those words and left the church in anger or disappointment. But to do so would have meant I thought I was God and knew better than Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the Prophet.

I can not and will not make decisions for other Saints, but as for me, I elect to believe that God would not deny his blessing to a single person on this earth. I know he will bless the sinner, because he has blessed you and me.



Now is the Time



**Renew Your
Membership or
Join GALA Today**

See page 8 for application

British Isles Multi-nation Conference Recommends Policy Changes

First Presidency and Council of Twelve Will Have to Approve before Implementation

The Community of Christ British Isles Multi-nation Conference was held October 12. After years of study, dialogue, and prayer, members from the British Isles met at Dunfield House in Herefordshire, England. The conference explored its level of support for two issues: same-sex/gender marriage where legal, and a recognized way for same-sex/gender couples to express their commitment where marriage is not legal; and ordination of people in monogamous, committed, same-sex/gender relationships.

After hearing multiple perspectives, the British Isles Multi-nation Conference, by more than the required two-thirds majority, made the following recommendations to the Community of Christ First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles:

- The 2013 British Isles Multi-nation Conference recommends the sacrament of marriage be extended, where legal, to persons of the same sex/gender and, in places where this is not legal, a recognized way for two persons of the same sex/gender to publicly express their commitment to each other be made available.
- The 2013 British Isles Multi-nation Conference recommends allowing a priesthood call for a person in a monogamous, committed, same-sex/gender relationship (legal marriage, civil partnership) to be processed according to established procedures.

The First Presidency and the Council of Twelve will need to approve the policy revisions recommended by the British Isles Multi-nation Conference. To develop, approve, and implement interim policies can take up to one year. Any policy changes will pertain only to the nations of the British Isles (Channel Islands, England, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales). Other nations will continue to abide by existing church policies.

Save the Date!!

You are invited to attend the Florida GALA Retreat! It will be March 21-23, 2014 at Community of Christ Deerhaven Campgrounds near Paisley, FL. We will have sharing and support, classes for education on relevant issues, worship, and lots of fun and fellowship. Write Cindy Campbell at cicamp7@gmail.com or call her at 352.222.5822 for more information.

Moving from Acceptance to Advocacy

by Cindy Campbell

Is one of your gifts enthusiasm? Do you like to start things? Do you long for more frequent connection with LGBTQ friends and straight allies? Do you sense a calling to reach out to others in community?

You're probably busy. Maybe reticent. Maybe an isolated Community of Christ member. Or maybe you have a community friend, who also feels called to be a blessing to others.

"Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go." Doctrine and Covenants 163:1.

Hmmm. What are the possibilities for connection? Where are your interests? What renews you?

Might you take a friend and visit a local PFLAG meeting (pflag.org)? Might you facilitate a movie viewing/potluck gathering? (Anyone and Everyone DVD for starters—Google a review) Would a list of LGBTQ movies for discussion be helpful to you?

Might you and a friend even plan a mini GALA retreat for your area? Maybe even invite your local Seventy or Apostle or Evangelist or High Priest for guest ministry?

What are the needs apparent everywhere in your community? What is your vision? What is your energy? What is God's increase?

"When your willingness to live in sacred community . . . exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be." Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b.

Lastly, how can GALA support you in this adventure?



Megan Mines, Jean Reich and Sandra Morgan at the GALA Retreat

Mission Practices

By Cindy Campbell

Be still.
Listen to God
In your heart
For 20 minutes
Daily.

Lectio Divina.
Centering Prayer.
Chanting.
Breath focus.

Be creative.
Be disciplined.
Just do it.

"Experiment on my word". Alma 16:151
Let God be your therapist.

Transformation!



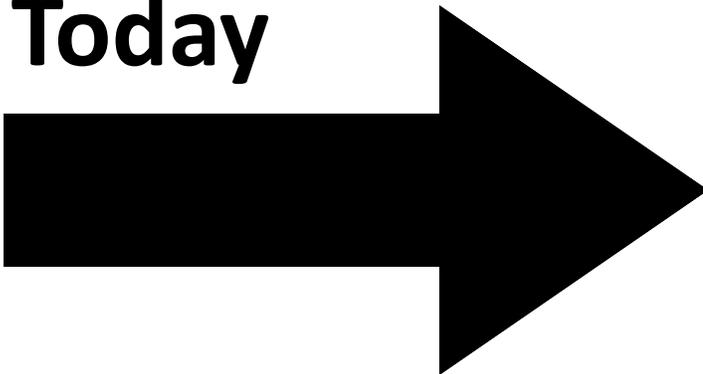
October 2013

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

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