



galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

December 2014
Volume 25 Issue 2

Go Local!

by *Cindy Campbell, GALA Secretary*

Wouldn't it be cool to be able to drive to a GALA Retreat in your own state? Since the 2013 National Conference, GALA has been spreading the good news. One place this shows has been through start-ups of local state GALA retreats.

The annual International GALA Retreat (held over Labor Day Weekend) to which GALA members, friends, allies, and simply put, everyone, is invited and encouraged to attend is held in a different state each year. In 2014 the annual Retreat was held in Arizona at Whispering Pines Campground, and in 2015 it will be held at Blue Water Campgrounds in Lexington, Michigan (on Lake Huron).

Interest in the LGBTQ and Allies community among Community of Christ and friends is mushrooming. Folks attend GALA retreats for support, advocacy, education and spiritual reconnection. Three states, Missouri, Florida and Michigan, have organized GALA Affiliates and offer local events and some hold annual state-wide GALA retreats. It may be easier and more economical for some people to attend a retreat nearer where they live and work. The ministry of GALA has the opportunity to touch the LGBTQ community and allies through the localized retreat as well as the annual GALA Retreat.

We encourage you to invite folks in your local area to 1) become members of GALA, if they are not already members; and, 2) apply to organize an Affiliate in your area. It's an easy process. Check the GALA website: www.galaweb.org > about us > affiliate information: "How to become and Affiliate" Guidelines and/or Application. You can conduct meetings of your local Affiliate and organize a local GALA Retreat or other get together events in your state. GALA supports you in this outreach because we want to share the good news of the love of God for all persons! Contact Erin Cavanaugh, Vice President - Affiliate Development and Supervision for more information, ercavana@gmail.com

An End to an Era and a Time of Transition

Approaching the close of 2014, we see an end of an era and a time of transition.

Cindy Campbell will be departing the GALA Board and leaving a legacy as an ally, active board member, and sister of the late GALA President, David Howard. Thank you, Cindy, for your tireless efforts on behalf of GALA on the Board of Directors as well as your continued efforts in the Florida region where you've been instrumental in activities of the regional Florida Affiliate. We wish you and your spouse, Ken, all the very best and look forward to seeing you at the 2015 Annual GALA Retreat, Labor Day Weekend, at Blue Water Campgrounds, in Lexington, Michigan!

Sandra Merth, will transition to Past President for calendar 2015, where she will continue to act and assist in providing continuity and consistency on the GALA Board of Directors. Sandra took over the leadership of the organization following the untimely passing of the late GALA President, David Howard. The strength, vision, and guiding light that Sandra let shine led the organization through the U.S. National Conference and has brought us to where we are today as we diligently work with members and congregations that all might be fed, that all might be ministered to, and that all might recognize the peace and love of God as we worship together.

When you happen to see either of these exceptional individuals, please give them a hug and tell them that you appreciate all that they have done and continue to do for GALA and Community of Christ.

GALA

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Sandra Merth - President
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Erin Cavanaugh
Vice President
Affiliate Development and
Supervision
ercavana@gmail.com

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Visit us on the web

www.galaweb.org

President's Message

Sandra Merth, GALA President

This has been a difficult article to write since it is the last that I will ever write as the GALA President and I want it to be profound and meaningful. There seems to be much to say and yet I cannot seem to get the words to come in any particular order and that makes any sense.

Let's start with the honor I have felt over the past couple of years serving you the members of GALA my friends and family. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve you. It truly seems that I have gotten much more than I have given.

With the passage of new rules regarding LGBT members of Community of Christ in the United States, Canada and Australia we are poised to move in new directions with new GALA leadership in 2015 and I am excited to see what the future holds for us all. There is much that we can be about in this world and it will require all of us to roll up our sleeves and get on our knees in prayer to discern the direction we are to go.

One thing I know for certain is that we need to encourage those close to us to speak courageously and lovingly about all those who might be marginalized in our world. We need to be supportive of each other wherever we are, to work with those in our local congregations to be more inclusive, open and loving towards all. We can accomplish this by being actively involved in our congregations, planning services, attending and contributing our time and monies. Many of us already contribute a great deal of time locally and are quite 'out' with our local congregations and mission centers but I would ask you to take it a step further. Consider contributing to the World Church regularly either through automatic monthly bank withdrawals or using offering envelopes to contribute to Worldwide Ministries. Becoming regular contributors to the World Church can really make a difference to the mission of the church and to our mission which really is the same when you boil it all down. To proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

I pray that we continue to listen and discern what is next for both of our communities – GALA and Community of Christ as we move forward with our eyes fixed on the place beyond the horizon.

Sandra Merth
GALA President

**Here Come the Brides;
Here Come the Grooms!**

By Stephen Donahoe

This summer and fall has been a wedding season like never seen before in the Community of Christ. With the coinciding of the implementation of U.S.A. National Conference decision to allow gay marriage this past April, and the rapid expansion of gay marriage recognition in more states across the country, many same sex couples took this perfect opportunity to tie the knot. Two GALA board members and several more GALA members were married this summer and fall. Erin Cavanaugh and Lisa Meyer were married by GALA President Sandra Merth, an ordained Community of Christ minister on June 14th in Michigan. My husband and I had our formal wedding ceremony and celebration on September 27th just outside of Washington, D.C. The wedding was performed by Community of Christ ministers Holly and Bob Pranaat.

I was a little reticent about inviting many Community of Christ members and leaders to our wedding. I guess I still had a lingering worry that if this became too publicized it might cause problems. However, I did invite Angie Kochukudy, a good friend and the Chesapeake Bay Mission Center President. She brought along a weekend guest- Presiding Evangelist Dave Brock. When I saw him at the reception, my first thought was: "Uh-oh." When I greeted him, I knew from his warm congratulations that he was not there to break up the party, but to wish us well, send his love, and bless our marriage. This was confirmed a few days later when he wrote about our wedding on his Community of Christ Evangelists blog: http://ministriesofblessing.blogspot.com/2014_09_01_archive.html. So much for not making a stir!

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President-elect's Message

Clyde Phillips-Frey

Just what is this organization known as GALA, where has it come from and where is it headed in 2015?

GALA is an organization that welcomes persons of all sexual orientations and gender identifications to join together and experience spiritual growth as they share sorrow and joy.

GALA is a community welcoming gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons and their allies. GALA hosts a website at www.galaweb.org; provides a newsletter; offers regional retreats and workshops; acts as representatives at Community of Christ jurisdictional and World Church gatherings; and sponsors an annual international retreat. We feel we are on a journey of spiritual growth that has brought us to the point of confronting issues of acceptance, prejudice, and justice for all persons alienated by society and organized religions, particularly people of different sexual (affectionate) orientations. Together, we continue to learn, share, and expand our understanding of the world and Christ's love for each one of us.

Our membership community is made up of gay, lesbian and bisexual and transgendered persons, as well as their parents, children, siblings, ex-spouses, spouses, friends, allies, and pastors. All are welcome. If you are not currently a member or know of someone that would be interested in becoming a member of GALA, please see our Membership Page on the GALA website.

GALA is an association of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities affiliated with Community of Christ. Over twenty years old, this non-profit organization supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, their allies, family and friends. We celebrate our diversity and anxiously anticipate and promote full participation for all in the life and ministry of the church.

We are a grass-roots organization committed to proclaiming Jesus Christ, affirming the worth of all persons and acting in response to God's transforming love.

GALA offers dual ministries of sanctuary and transformation. Our regional and international retreats offer safety for telling our sacred stories in the confidential environment which promotes acceptance, healing, and spiritual wholeness.

We are committed to working with the Community of Christ members and leaders to build bridges of understanding and share information about the ministerial needs for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities. GALA envisions communities which witness that persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities have sacred worth; are fully included, celebrated, and affirmed with their chosen faith traditions. We are dedicated to the celebration of diversity. We are committed to exploring issues of spirituality and justice through dialogue, education, and action.

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The purpose of GALA is to affirm the dignity and worth of all persons without regard to gender, race, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation. We support and encourage self actualization in an atmosphere of love, understanding, and confidentiality.

These statements can generally be found on the GALA website and give a sense of who we are, where we've been, and hopefully, where we are headed in 2015 and beyond. In coming together in such things as local congregation worship services and events, congregational and mission center reunions and retreats, and interactions with World Church appointees and leaders, we have the opportunity to raise the awareness of the needs of those in the larger community that have been bruised and broken. We also have the opportunity to recognize and work together to heal the brokenness that others may now be experiencing. We know how our lives have been affected over the past years, we held out great hope for the future and now it is time to move with greater hope and love as together we experience spiritual growth in our congregational communities along with our sisters and brothers in Christ. Look to the future with hope and expectation and pray that eyes will be opened and hearts will be touched!

2014 Election Results

Welcome to our newest Board members!

During the Annual Retreat over Labor Day Weekend, the results of the A2014 Annual Elections were shared:

Stephen Donahoe (OH) Secretary (2015-2016)

Lisa Meyer (MI) Treasurer-elect (2015) and will then serve as Treasurer (2016-2017)

David Brosh-Hanson (CA) Member-at-Large (2015-2017)

Welcome to the 2015 Board of Directors!

Will YOU answer the call?

The GALA Nominations Committee will be appointed in mid January and will begin their search for candidates to stand for elections in 2015. Two members of GALA that are not currently Board Members shall serve on the Nominations Committee along with three (3) current members of the Board of Directors . If you are interested in assisting in this capacity, please send email to: clydefrey@gmail.com

Looking to the Future....

What Do You Find In Your Mailbox?

We, the Phillips-Frey family, live in a community for which all of our mail is delivered to a central area where there are a group of mailboxes.

Fortunately for us, or so we feel, our townhouse driveway is next to the mailboxes, so we have relatively quick and easy access when we go to pick up our mail.

It is interesting that on certain days we receive regular mail and on others we almost always exclusively receive advertisements, commonly referred to as "junk mail."

The best kind of mail is when the mailbox is opened and we've received a check, regardless of the source!

We can only imagine how the GALA Treasurer must feel when the GALA mailbox is opened and there are checks representing donations and checks representing dues renewal or new memberships!

Thank you in advance for thinking of GALA!

Dues, new memberships, and donations are always gladly accepted!

We look forward to receiving 2015 Dues (\$25/person or \$40/family) and donations in the GALA post office box: PO Box 146, Lapeer MI 48446



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GALA Members Tour Historic Sites by Cindy Campbell
GALA members were well represented on the 2014 Community of Christ sponsored Historic Sites Bus Tour. The well-organized annual October, 10-day tour leaves the Community of Christ Temple in Independence, MO and visits church historic sites including Plano, IL, Palmyra, NY and the Sacred Grove, Kirtland, OH, Nauvoo, IL, and Lamoni, IA as well as nearby historic sights in each state. Fifty-three of us went on the tour this year and the theme was Sing the Sacred Story! Using tunes from our new *Community of Christ Sings!* as well as historic tunes from Emma Smith and others, and lots of stories. The tour was led by Barbara Walden, Director, Historic Sites Foundation, Peter Smith, Tour Worship Leader and GALA member from Clearwater, FL, and David Bolton, Tune Writer/Arranger. Also on the bus tour were GALA members, including Tom Beck and Max Coopwood from Loveland, CO, and Ken and Cindy Campbell from Gainesville, FL. Charlie and Pam Robison dramatized the parts of Joseph Smith and his daughter Audentia Anderson at both Nauvoo and Lamoni.

After we visited the Canadian “Horseshoe” Niagara Falls, we were warmly hosted for dinner by the Buffalo-Clarence, NY, Community of Christ congregation and GALA members Nate and Clyde Phillips-Frey. We were chilled to the bone from getting wet at the beautiful Falls, and when we arrived at the church, greeters met us as we disembarked from the bus and invited us into the church. As I took off my coat, I heard Clyde’s voice ringing out in welcome. Then others led us into the fellowship hall where a great big fire was roaring in a great big stone fireplace! It was lovely and toasty warm. Nate emceed the evening’s festivities. He was so welcoming and fun! I ate the turkey cookie at my fancy decorated place setting while Nate shared the story of Buffalo through an entertaining word game at our place. We were served a ‘Buffalo Style’ meal with Buffalo Chicken Wings, Famous Buffalo pizza, Roast Beef on Kimmelweck Rolls (topped with kosher salt and caraway seeds), horseradish, and salad in a hearty atmosphere. Then after we ate, we were treated to a meaningful worship service in their beautiful sanctuary. Thank you Peter and Clyde and Nate for your part in a fantastic trip!

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Here Come the Brides; Here Come the Grooms

To me, this highlights the change that is happening in the Community of Christ in the U.S. We are making the journey toward full equality for the LGBTQI community in the church. We still have a long way to go, but we are making significant steps together. To me, this season of fully sanctioned and celebrated Community of Christ lesbian and gay marriages is a very powerful moment. I want to dwell in this tremendous victory for our community...And then move forward to the next step toward equality for the entire community. On the GALA board we are painfully aware that many LGBTQI members and friends of the Community of Christ still do not feel welcome and safe in their congregations. Please do your part to reach out to people across the gender and sexuality spectrum. We know that it is especially difficult for our transgendered members. Let us continue to pray for them as we actively work toward full equality.

Stephen Donahoe



Stephen Donahoe
and Ranajoy Ray-Chaudhuri



Lisa Meyer
and Erin Cavanaugh



Mark Dixon
and Peter Smith





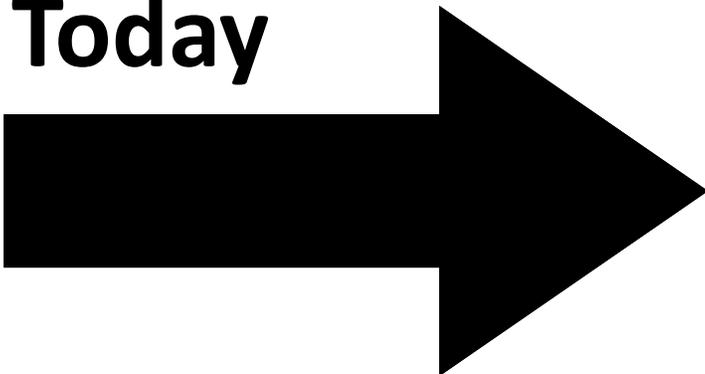
December 2014

P.O. Box 146
Lapeer, MI 48446

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Join, or Renew Your Membership Today



2015 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 146
Lapeer, MI 48446**