

REPRESENTATIVES of the United Methodist Gay Caucus began arriving in Portland Saturday for the General Conference. Representing every Conference and Jurisdiction, this is the fourth national meeting of the caucus; previous meetings were held in Evanston, Illinois, Kansas City Missouri and Nashville, Tennessee as recently as March of this year.

This is the first edition of the several newsletters that the caucus will be making available to the delegates to keep them in touch with the progress of the concerns of the caucus.



BLAIR BLURBS

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Blair Blurbs is named after a young man whom John Wesley counseled, against the wishes of the townspeople. The young man, Blair, was accused of homosexuality.

HISTORY - The first national meeting of the Caucus was held in July of 1975. Since that time the Caucus has met several times, and now in Portland in conjunction with the General Conference. These gatherings have given gay United Methodists and supporters a chance to unite their efforts to change the church, support each other, discuss the ways in which they can minister to the Global community, and most importantly to spread the Good News of Liberation found through the Christian faith.

People's Celebration

"A CELEBRATION" for delegates and visitors will be held on Saturday night at Sunnyside United Methodist Church in Portland. The Gay Caucus will be one of the sponsoring groups for the event, which will be a time of sharing and relaxation, hosted by several Portland groups.

The various other caucus groups in the church have been asked to share in the event. Delegates should be able to interact with folks involved in the caucuses in a less hectic/political atmosphere during the celebration.

Directions to the church and further information will be available later this week.

Social Principles

At the 1972 General Conference in Atlanta, the Board of Church and Society proposed the adoption of the Social Principles Statement for the United Methodist church. Included in the original statement was a call for the church to affirm its responsibility in working for the civil rights of homosexuals. After the Social Principles statement was presented on the floor of the Conference, there emerged a statement of social principles that is confusing and contradictory in its relationships to homosexual persons.

One of the major arguments used for the inclusion of such contradictory language at the 1972 General Conference centered around a fear that local church persons were not yet ready then to deal with homosexuals coming out in church communities. In an effort to help better understand the gift of sexuality, as this gift applies to both hetero and homosexual persons, the social principle of the UMC states, "Medical, theological and humanistic disciplines should combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely."

It is out of confusion, the fears and the homophobia of United Methodists that a number of groups in the UMC have called for the 1976 General Conference in Portland to:

1. Create a study commission on humansexuality.
2. Delete derogatory language towards homosexuals from the Social Principles Statement.
3. Call upon the church to accept persons into the community of the church regardless of their sexual preferences and/or marital status.

At the same time the Good News Caucus of the UMC has waged an extensive campaign to encourage annual conferences and local churches to petition the General Conference towards a more exclusive relationship to the church. One of the petitions calls for the stoning to death of homosexuals, as was done in Biblical times; most petitions focus on excluding self-proclaimed or "discovered" homosexuals from the ministry and or youth work of the church, or church membership.

In response to the Good News people and the Social Principles Statement, the United Methodist Council on Youth Ministries (UMCYM) began a study of homosexuality through which they concluded that homosexuals should not be excluded from the church either as lay persons or as ministers. After re-

Receiving much criticism by elements of the Church, the UMCYM held another seminar in December, 1975, in Cincinnati. The seminar consisted of members of the Good News Movement, persons actively involved in ministries with gay persons and members of the U.M. Gay Caucus. They agreed that a study was and is much needed on the issues of sexuality as it relates to the church and Biblical tradition. Members of the ethnic minorities who serve on the UMCYM were vocally conscious and uncomfortable with the similarity heard between the anti-gay arguments and the racist arguments - both used to exclude people in this society from organizations, clubs, churches and so on. Since the December meeting, the Good News Caucus has officially rejected the need for a study on the grounds that in such matters, further study only confused the Word of God. The UMCYM continues to call the church to further study, but they themselves are threatened with a church agency proposal to restructure the make-up and work of the UMCYM.

It was decided by the U.M. Gay Caucus to come to Portland to let the UMC know that homosexuals do already exist in our church; according to most accepted statistics and research, approximately a million. It is also the purpose of the Gay Caucus to let the church know that neither homosexuals nor their sexuality are going to disappear. The Gay Caucus hopes to be able to minister to the church by encouraging the establishment of a human sexuality study commission, and by helping the church to understand the detriment to itself if it continues to carry derogatory and dehumanizing language within the Social Principles statement.

GATE "G" FOR GAY

The Gay Caucus is visible at the General Conference!! Part of that visibility will be found at Booth 35 in the Southeast corner of the concourse level. Delegates are welcome to join us there for discussion and to browse through a large selection of materials. It is hoped that the booth will provide a focal point for meeting and discussing. Materials will include resource information, bibliographies, and other reading items. As important, and perhaps more so will be the opportunity for everyone to come and visit and discuss subjects with Gay persons. As often as the subject of homosexuality is discussed, it is seldom with a homosexual. Here is the opportunity to be in tune with those persons who are willing and able to be open and who will be able to discuss their lifestyle with others. We hope that all of you will do us and yourself a favor by joining us there for as little or as long a time as you can spare. Remember- we're at gate "G"

The United Methodist Gay Caucus, although not proposing any legislation of its own, is supporting the legislation of other Boards and Agencies that are in favor of the three items found in the article on the 1972 General Conference. One common error in appraising this legislation is that if the Conference votes to delete the derogatory language in the Social Principles Statement, that that is also a vote for ordination, marriage, and other issues. What must be done at this point for the Church to fully appraise and understand the issue is to set up the vehicle for study, thereby opening the doors for study, questioning, and answering.

A MILLION UNITED METHODISTS CAN'T BE WRONG

Figures set by researchers, based on as much accurate information as is now available, estimate that the homosexual population of any community, whether it be church, school, or government, is 10%. To exclude this many persons from any organization appears to many to be unethical and unChristian. For that reason, the Caucus has adopted this slogan; they and the supporters of certain legislation will be wearing the buttons; indicating their respect for all humans, whether or not they share any identity beyond their Christian faith.

It is with fervent hope, good faith, and reverent prayer that the United Methodist Gay Caucus presents themselves and their needs at this 1976 General Conference in Portland, Oregon. It is hoped that we can enter into dialogue with as many of you as possible. Please feel free to join us at our resource center at any time; we welcome the chance to talk and share our Christian faith with you.