

# Affirmation

Spring 1994 Volume 19 Number 1

## NATIONAL AFFIRMATION SPRING GATHERING

*Celebrating Through Worship*

**APRIL 8 - 10, 1994**

**Mt. Sequoyah, Fayetteville, Arkansas**

### THE PROGRAM:

One of the things we do best is worship. We have been able to create a safe, warm, inclusive, spiritual place in Affirmation for folks to come together as family, heal from the hurt and celebrate through worship.

Since we are meeting in a retreat center with a variety of worship settings, it is the perfect time to spend the weekend discovering new meaning in traditional aspects of worship, and exploring creative new forms of worship.

Time is allotted for breakout sessions dealing with music, scripture, creative movement and other elements of worship. From these breakouts, we will design our own closing worship for Sunday morning and renew our sense of family once again.

### PROGRAM LEADERS:

Members of National Affirmation who have specific gifts and graces in designing and leading

worship have offered to share those gifts with us during the weekend.

### BUSINESS AND FUN:

On Saturday we will vote on leadership for National Affirmation and discuss a dues structure and a new relationship with local groups. Saturday night we will entertain ourselves with a **Talent Show**, so bring whatever props or costumes you need to best show off your special talent. Bring your favorite table games to share.

### ABOUT

### MT. SEQUOYAH

Mt. Sequoyah is a 30 acre Methodist conference center on a mountain 1,700 feet above sea level, only 1 mile from downtown Fayetteville, and 5 miles from the airport. The center provides all pillows, linens, towels, etc. Rooms are air-conditioned and heated. Bring flashlights and good walking shoes for the wilderness hiking trails and prayer path. An indoor gym and equipment for outdoor sports are available, and there is a Cokesbury Bookstore. **NO SMOKING** is allowed in any buildings.

*Please turn to pages 14 & 15 for details and Registration Form.*

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### Affirmation Staff

*A part time position is now open for Affirmation Staff to perform general office support work. For details see page 6.*

# THOUGHTS ABOUT DEFINITIONS

The Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church has determined that Annual Conferences or the General Conference must define the word "status" and the phrase "self-avowed practicing homosexual" before ministers believed to be homosexuals can be denied appointment or ordination. Paragraph 402.2 of the United Methodist Discipline directs that no self-avowed practicing homosexual shall be received as a candidate, appointed to serve or ordained as a minister in The United Methodist Church.

The word "status" appears in the Constitution of The United Methodist Church in two places. Since 1968, Paragraph 15.14 has specified that "The General Conference...shall have authority...to secure the rights and privileges of membership in all agencies, programs, and institutions in The United Methodist Church regardless of race or status." In 1993, Paragraph 4, subtitled "Inclusiveness of the Church," was amended by the addition of the word "status" to a list of attributes that cannot be used to bar people from membership or participation in the church.

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*"It is obvious that if the normal definition of 'status' is used, it would be all inclusive."*  
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The Judicial Council observed that there was no evidence in the legislative history that could determine whether or not the word "status" was intended to include the clergy status of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. They declared that "It is obvious that if the normal definition of 'status' is used, it would be all

inclusive." Thus if standard meanings are used, the clergy rights of self-avowed practicing homosexuals would be protected by the United Methodist Constitution.

The motion that added status to Paragraph 4 originated with United Methodist Clergy Couples. Leaders of that organization have issued a response to a request to outline their legislative intent. Their response stresses inclusiveness and broad application of the word status.

The Council of Bishops has designated a committee to draft model definitions of both concepts. That committee has determined that "A self-avowed homosexual is a person who engages in sexual acts with a person or persons of the same sex which are either witnessed or openly acknowledged." "Status" is defined as: "A legal relationship or legal condition of a group of persons based on race, sex or national origin."

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*...the definition of status should be broad and strong. This would allow an "honest" definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual...*  
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The Affirmation National Council met before the episcopal model was available. Members determined that the definition of status should be broad and strong. This would allow an "honest" definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual that doesn't make distinctions between identity and behavior.

A broad definition of status has four things in its favor. It doesn't contort the language. It is in keeping with the Constitutional principle of inclusiveness. It will protect people regardless of their sexual orien-

tation. It will extend constitutional protection to characteristics not named in the Constitution, including gender, disabilities and marital status.

I offer the following definition of status for consideration and adoption: **Those non-trivial characteristics by which a group of people are identified, by which their common experiences may be shaped, and by which their legal character or condition may be determined.**

If this definition of status is adopted, the clergy status of self-avowed practicing homosexuals will be protected by the Constitution. This would make it possible to define a self-avowed practicing homosexual as "anyone who publically claims the experiences and identity of a same-gender sexual orientation."

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*A better recipe for rumor, repression, low morale and dysfunctional communication could hardly be devised.*  
\*\*\*\*\*

The bishop's definitions would contravene the constitutional premise of inclusiveness by limiting status in ways that it has never been limited before. In the interests of a narrow application, they would jettison marital status, age and disabilities, as well as sexual orientation, as conditions that must not be a bar to full participation in The United Methodist Church. At the same time, they propose a definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual that would make it difficult to deny clergy rights of appointment and ordination to anyone who was discreet. Taken together, these decisions would shape an environment characterized by fear and frustration. A homophobic standard would be embraced but

*Please turn to page three...*

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not enforced except in the case of clergy who insisted on being honest or direct about their identity and experience. A better recipe for rumor, repression, low morale and dysfunctional communication could hardly be devised.

Jeanne Knepper

## TEN MORE RECONCILING CONGREGATIONS IN 1993!

The grass roots movement welcoming lesbian, gay and bisexual persons into the United Methodist Church expanded significantly in 1993. Ten more congregations became Reconciling Congregations over the past 12 months, bringing the total to 70. This movement spilled over from churches to campuses as three campus ministries declared themselves "reconciling." In addition over 60 United Metho-

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*Two of the new Reconciling Congregations are the largest to have joined the program...*  
\*\*\*\*\*

odist church professionals have joined the Reconciling Pastors' Action Network since it was launched six months ago.

The Reconciling Congregation movement expanded in other ways in 1993. Two of the new Reconciling Congregations are the largest to have joined the program--Glide Memorial UMC in San Francisco (5,000 members) and Hennepin Avenue UMC in Minneapolis (3,000 members). Another addition was the first Japanese-American

\*\*\*\*\*  
*"The tide is beginning to change in the United Methodist Church"*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Reconciling Congregation--Pine UMC in San Francisco. The third national gathering of Reconciling Congregations drew a record turnout of 278 participants to Washington, D.C. last July.

"The tide is beginning to change in the United Methodist Church," observed Mark Bowman, RCP coordinator. "The extent to which churches have condemned and even abused lesbian, gay and bisexual persons in recent decades is now being exposed. An ever-growing number of individual Christians and whole congregations are saying: 'This must stop!' 'Such hatred and fear is contrary to the love of God in Jesus Christ!'"

\*\*\*\*\*  
*[H]omosexuality need not be a divisive issue in churches.*  
\*\*\*\*\*

"The future of our movement is wide open now," Bowman noted. "Thanks to the pioneering efforts of current Reconciling Congregations, and kindred churches in other denominations, it has been demonstrated that homosexuality need not be a

divisive issue in churches. More and more congregations are recognizing that this is simply a matter of loving their brothers and sisters--not making moral judgments about people who may be different."

The Reconciling Congregation Program celebrates its tenth anniversary in 1994. Several new initiatives for this special celebration year will be announced after the February 1994 meeting of the board of directors.

New Reconciling Congregations in 1994, in addition to Glide Memorial, Hennepin Avenue and Pine noted above, were: First UMC (Williamstown, Mass.), Rutland UMC (Rutland, Vermont), Faith UMC (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), Toluca Lake UMC (N. Hollywood, Calif.), Claremont UMC (Claremont, Calif.), Lake Merritt UMC (Oakland, Calif.), Grace UMC (Santa Cruz, Calif.). The first Reconciling Campus Ministries are Wesley Foundation at UCLA, Wesley Foundation at University of Delaware, and United Methodist Student Fellowship at Illinois Wesleyan University.

## 1994 NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

### DEADLINE DATE

### PUBLICATION DATE

### SUMMER

April 25, 1994

May 18, 1994

### FALL

July 15, 1994

August 10, 1994

### WINTER

October 22, 1994

November 15, 1994

All submissions should be sent to:  
National Affirmation  
P.O. Box 1021  
Evanston, IL 60204

# WHAT DID THE LAW MEAN TO JESUS?

Jesus and his disciples were hungry on the Sabbath and picked something to eat. When they were confronted by purists of the law Jesus responded: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27) In Matthew,

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[The] laws of God are given to serve people...

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Jesus gives the very same message in different words: "If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Matthew 12:7)

This is a simple, straightforward principle of Jesus regarding law: laws of God are given to serve people--people are not created to serve laws. For instance, Sabbath laws are generally beneficial for people for we need rest, time to enjoy and to find satisfaction in our work, time for relating and for uplifting celebrations in community with others, and time to worship which draws us into the presence of God. So in a general way the laws restricting work and normal activities provide room for the positive elements of Sabbath.

However, they may also bring harm when they force people to go hungry or disabled or diseased. Jesus put the Sabbath law, and all law, in its proper perspective. Laws are ethical and valid as long as they benefit people and they are unethical and invalid when they harm people.

\*\*\*\*\*  
For heterosexuals to engage in homosexual sex is to distort or harm the persons God made them.

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Laws in the Bible regarding homosexual practices primarily, if not exclusively, prohibit behavior which is unquestionably harmful to people--gang rape, kidnapping and/or enslavement in a sex industry (both commercial and religious), and sexual harassment in the workplace. Such laws are ethical and valid according to Jesus.

\*\*\*\*\*  
[W]hen the laws of God in the Bible do not serve the well-being of people, they are superseded by a higher law...

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Since the people of Bible times did not recognize the reality of homosexual orientation, it is obviously written to heterosexual persons. For heterosexuals to engage in homosexual sex is to distort or harm the persons God made them. Therefore, a general law written to heterosexuals forbidding homosexual practices is ethical and valid. However, that same law would be harmful to homosexual persons and, therefore, according to Jesus' principle, it would be unethical and invalid for that population.

Jesus is clear that the laws of God are good in so far as they serve the well-being of people. But Jesus is equally clear that when the laws of God in the Bible do not serve the well-being of people, they are superseded by a higher law--the law of love and mercy.

*submitted by Lowell Headley*

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## COUNCIL WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

We welcome to the National Council Rebecca Richards, lay member of Saint John's of Baltimore City UMC (a Reconciling Congregation) who participated in the January 1994

meeting in San Francisco. She agreed to fill the vacant seat on the Council as a regional member from the Northeast.

Rebecca is the Director of the Racial Justice Center of the Baltimore YWCA. Recently, as part of her advocacy work with the YWCA she has been working with the Free State Coalition on a Sexual Orientation Civil Rights Bill for the State of Maryland. She also does education and public policy work around anti-racism, gun control and multicultural issues.

In the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, she is co-chair of the local MFSA (Methodist Federation for Social Action) chapter and represents the national MFSA board to the meetings of RCRR, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights. At St. John's Church she has been a student intern, student pastor and now a lay member active in a variety of ministries.

Rebecca graduated from Wesley Theological Seminary in 1989. In 1990, Rebecca, Greg Wise and Tom Russell "came out" to the executive session of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference and left the ordained ministry in protest of the UMC's discrimination against homosexuals. Rebecca is not one to be silent! One of her reasons for leaving the ordained ministry was "to have a voice" on this issue in the Church. As part of the General Conference's study on homosexuality, she testified at the "listening post" at Drew University.

Rebecca's partner is Kathy with whom she celebrated a Holy Union in 1991 at St. John's Church. They called it a "Circle of Blessing," which was attended by many friends and loved ones, except that the Bishop forbade

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the pastor of St. John's to be present for the event. Rebecca also has two children, ages 22 and 25. We are grateful for her energy, her spiritual and political insight and the enthusiasm she brings to Affirmation's mission.

## AFFIRMATION ELECTS NEW MEMBER TO RCP BOARD

The National Council of Affirmation, meeting January 15-17, 1994, elected Ms. Jan Olson to a new three-year term representing Affirmation on the Reconciling Congregation Program Board of Directors. She joins Ms. Peggy Gaylord and Rev. Morris Floyd to comprise the three Affirmation representatives on that Board.

Ms. Olson is a long-term active member of Affirmation and is completing extensive service on Affirmation's National Council. She was an integral part of Affirmation at the time that we birthed the Reconciling Congregation Program and is excited about another opportunity to actively support that movement. She is a resident of Chicago and has had relationship to Reconciling Congregations there.

Affirmation expresses gratitude to Ms. Nancy Carter, who just finished representing us on the RCP Board, completing the unexpired term of Ben Roe who resigned in late 1992.

The Affirmation Council invites any persons who have an interest in being considered for future Affirmation vacancies on the RCP Board to notify the chair of our Planning and Evaluation Committee, Ms. Jeanne Barnett, 737 Post St., #915, San Francisco, CA 94109.

## GERMAN LUTHERANS APPROVE GAY PASTORS

By David E. Anderson  
Religious News Service

(RNS)--The synod of a regional Lutheran church in Germany has approved a proposal to allow homosexuals in the pastorate, an action with possible repercussions for Lutherans in the United States.

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*But implementation...remains uncertain...*

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Under the proposal adopted--by a one vote margin--by the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, pastors and their companions who live in single-sex partnership would be eligible for church employment, including service as pastors.

But implementation of the proposal remains uncertain, as some church authorities have questioned the synod's jurisdiction to act on the issue.

In the United States, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America released the first draft of a proposed statement on human sexuality in October that holds up the possibility of the church affirming and celebrating same-sex relationships.

The proposed statement has come under intense fire from social conservatives within the 5.2 million-member denomination drawn frowns of disapproval from the denomination's Council of Bishops and prompted the Church Council to appoint a special panel to monitor the work of the task force that wrote the paper. That task

force is now preparing to revise its proposal into a new draft.

In Germany, home of Martin Luther and the 16th century Reformation that gave the world the Lutheran movement, Lutheran bodies are debating the issue as fiercely as the ELCA, the fourth largest Protestant body in the United States.

Meanwhile, the bishop-elect of the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg said it was "possible that there will be a service of blessing for homosexual couples in the future"

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*[T]he church...must also help people to acknowledge their homosexuality openly and make it possible for them to live publicly in partnerships of the same sex.*

\*\*\*\*\*

But the bishop-elect, Wolfgang Huber, cautioned against an overly hasty process and said the move toward such an action must be gradual.

Huber said that if the church declares that homosexuality is "neither pathological nor sinful" then it must also help people to acknowledge their homosexuality openly and make it possible for them to live publicly in partnerships of the same sex. He said no exception should be made for women or men pastors.

In the United States, the Council of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has specifically ruled out any actions that could be interpreted as giving church approval to any blessing of same-sex marriages or partnerships.



## **AFFIRMATION STAFF**

Affirmation staff is a part-time position to perform the general office support work for National Affirmation. The position is hired by the Affirmation Council and is supervised by the designated co-coordinator of the Council.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

The following are qualifications sought for this position:

1. Communication skills both verbal and written
2. Well organized work habits
3. Knowledge of the United Methodist Church
4. Office skills, including typing, word processing, letter writing, phone contacts
5. Access to computer and work space
6. Commitment to Affirmation Vision and Mission
7. Cannot be a member of the Council
8. Personally sensitive to and identified with lesbian, bisexual and gay people and issues

### **DUTIES:**

1. Maintain membership records and send quarterly renewal notices
2. Coordinate flow of information among Council and constituency
3. Assist the Council Secretary in the minutes
4. Maintain National Affirmation files
5. Respond to inquiries
6. Assist with registration of national gatherings
7. Assist with Council meeting arrangements
8. Assist Newsletter Editor with articles/production/ mailing
9. Maintain Local Affiliate records and assist Evangelism with appropriate notices and records
10. Do major mailings, such as quarterly Newsletter, program notices and fundraising appeals
11. Attend Council meetings
12. Other duties as assigned

### **SALARY:**

Rate of Pay: \$10.00 per hour

Hours of Work: 10 hours per week

Actual hours of work may be flexible. Within the total budget, actual hours worked may vary to meet the needs of quarterly Newsletter and national gatherings.

### **APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION:**

Applications are to be mailed to Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60202 by **March 10, 1994**. Include the following:

Employment for the last 5 years, employer, address, phone number, supervisor's name and position.

Work references -- three

Personal references -- three

That you have computer equipment for your use.

# WITNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

## General Conference, 1996

Midway through the quadrennium it's time to begin preparations for the May 1996 General Conference in Denver, Colorado.

For many years, Affirmation's presence has been characterized by two attitudes: a willingness to cooperate with colleagues in other caucuses in our presence and our legislative strategies; and an unwillingness to let "the Church" define us or determine how we will express our commitments to love, justice and each other.

\*\*\*\*\*  
We want your ideas and energy.  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Witness Committee has responsibility for planning our General Conference presence. It will include legislation and presence. Legislative proposals must be prepared well in advance if they are to be effective. Our physical presence and celebrations also require advance planning. We want your ideas and energy. We plan to solicit your input at the next three National Gatherings. We hope the following schedule will help you participate in the planning process:

- April '94 Solicit ideas about physical and legislative presence, primary emphasis on legislation.
- October '94 Finalize platform and legislative proposals. Continue to plan physical presence and programming.

Late Fall '94 Send platform and legislative proposals to allies.

April '95 Finalize plans for physical presence and program.

## Homosexuality Study Materials

The 1992 General Conference authorized the church to prepare study materials that can be used to bring the information and insights of the Committee to Study Homosexuality to local church groups. Now available, the student book contains the complete report from the committee, an annotated bibliography and study materials. The teacher's kit includes a book with information and guidance and an audiotape with comments and discussion by the members of the Committee. They may be ordered from Cokesbury (1-800-672-1789). Student Book SF4-783798 \$3.95; Teacher's Kit SF4-778964 \$12.95.

Jeanne Knepper  
Convenor

## OPEN HANDS PROBES ANTIGAY AGENDA OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

A new resource about the antigay agenda of the Religious Right and how other Christians are responding to this threat is now available in the Fall 1993 issue of the quarterly magazine *Open Hands*.

This special issue of *Open Hands*, "Responding to the Right: Strategies for Change," contains articles analyzing the history and agenda of the Right by well-known author Virginia Ramey Mollenkott; Scot Nakagawa, director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task

Force's Fight the Right Project; Jean Hardisty, director of Political Research Associates, and others. *Responding to the Right* also includes stories from Christian groups in North Carolina, Maine, and Washington that have challenged antigay actions in their communities. An extensive bibliography and other resources for education about the Religious Right are also available in this special issue.

"When you explore the Right's history and agenda in more depth, you discover a web of organizations with a larger social agenda that denounces all philosophies, political stances, groups and individuals except those that subscribe to the beliefs of the Right," noted *Open Hands'* editor Mary Jo Osterman. "The antigay agenda is in the forefront today because the groups that form this loose coalition of the Right play upon fear and ignorance about homosexuality to bring in more people and money. For churches and other Christians who are distressed by this antigay rhetoric and by the actions of these groups, this issue of *Open Hands* is a valuable tool."

*Open Hands* has been published quarterly for nine years by the Reconciling Congregation Program, a national network of United Methodist churches that welcome all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. *Open Hands* has been honored with awards from the Associated Church Press. Beginning in 1993, *Open Hands* became an ecumenical publication of the RCP in conjunction with More Light (Presbyterian), Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ), and Reconciled in Christ (Lutheran) programs. This coalition encompasses over 350 congregations that publicly welcome lesbian and gay persons,

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## Affirmation National Council

**Jeanne Barnett**  
San Francisco, CA  
415/441-7630

**Sue Bock**  
Austin, TX  
512/452-6399

**Robert Bryant**  
Raleigh, NC  
919/851-5880

**John R. Calhoun**  
Oklahoma City, OK  
405/528-1177

**Ellie Charlton**  
San Francisco, CA  
415/441-7630

**Peggy Gaylord**  
Binghamton, NY area  
(717) 833-4434

**David L. Gunnell**  
Evanston, IL  
708/475-4321

**George Hodgdon**  
West Yarmouth, MA  
(508) 771-8609

**Rick Huskey**  
Washington, DC

**Jeanne Knepper**  
Portland, OR  
503/760-4215

**Jay McCarty**  
Kansas City, MO  
816/363-6892

**Jan Olson**  
Chicago, IL  
312/539-4626

**Tom Russell**  
Washington, DC  
202/986-4808

**Gloria Soliz**  
San Francisco, CA  
415/647-4635

**Jim Scurlock**  
Richmond, CA  
510/232-7958

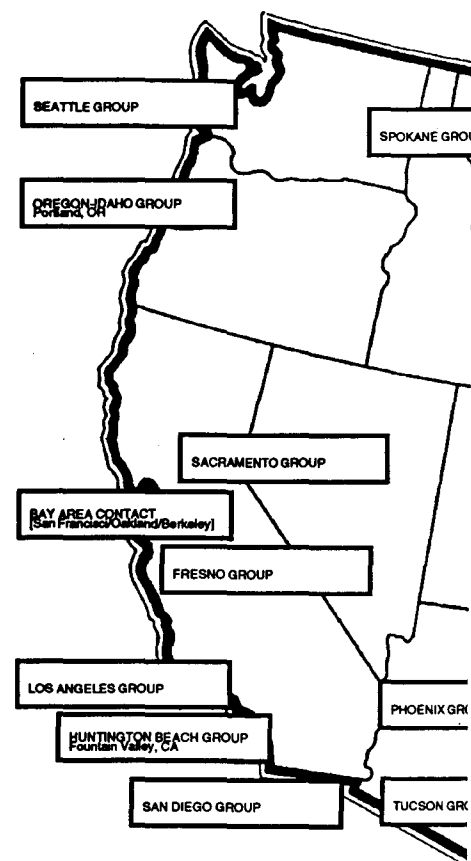
**Paul Thompson**  
Studio City, CA  
818/760-6633

One man in Chicago

One Woman in Maryland

One woman in Pennsylvania

One woman in Tennessee



## LOCAL NEWS FROM AROUND

Affirmation Oklahoma City meets the first Saturday and the third Thursday at Leland Clegg Memorial UMC, 108 E. Hefner, Oklahoma City. For more information write Affirmation, P.O. Box 25741, Oklahoma City, OK 73125-0741 or call Jimmie at (405) 495-8672.

Affirmation Los Angeles is a family that welcome everyone who can share our interest and vision. The group's November meeting explored how racism effects the Gay and Lesbian community. The group participated in a Inter-Faith/Inter-Ethnic service of prayer, healing and remembrance on World AIDS Day. As part of their Annual Christmas Party gifts were collected and donated to the Youth Shelter Program and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. Affirmation Los Angeles meets the second Sunday of each month for

programs, worship, refreshments and fellowship at Westwood United Methodist Church at 7:00 p.m. For additional information write to Affirmation Los Angeles, P.O. Box 691283, West Hollywood, CA 90069 or call 213/969-4664.

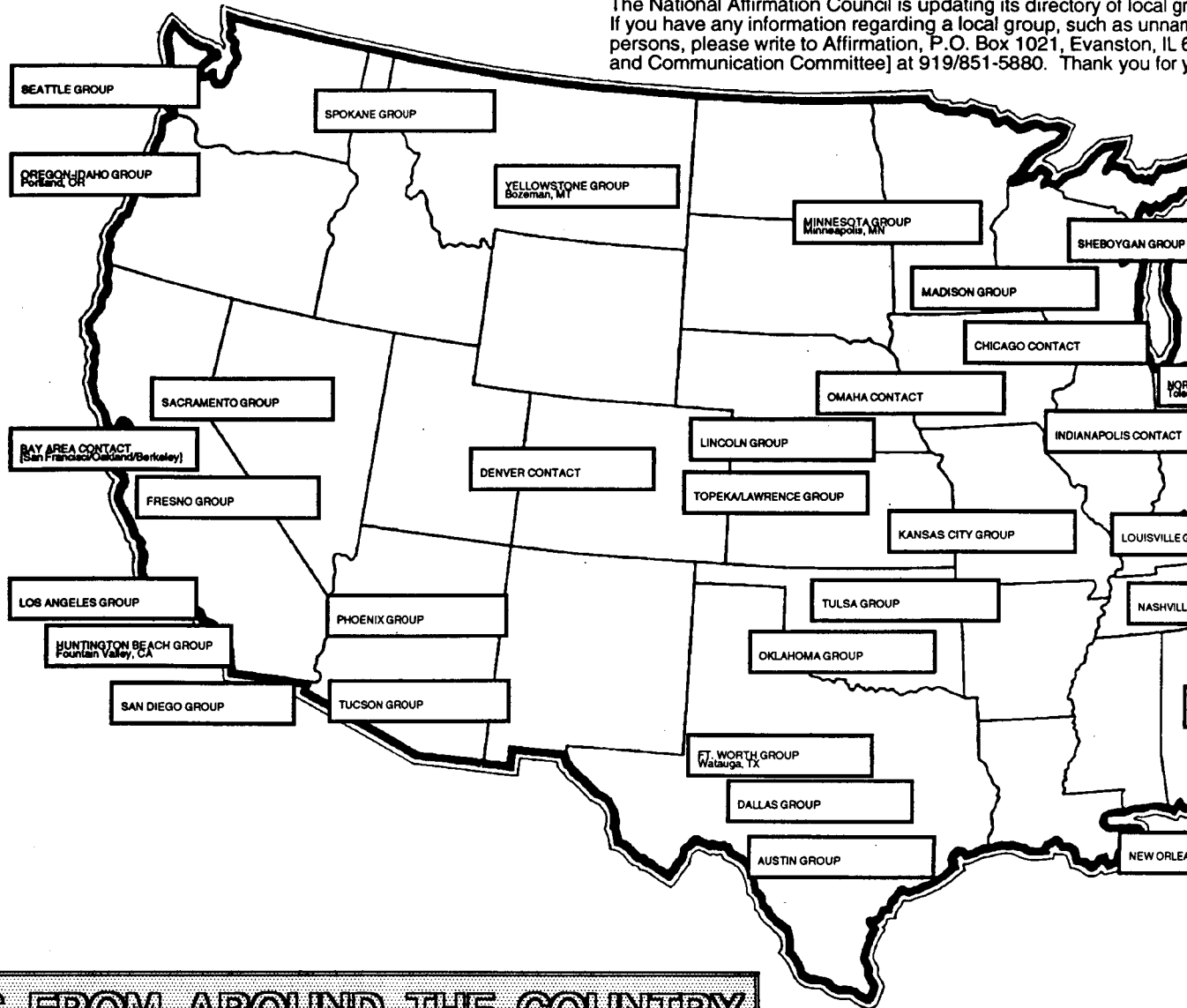
Central Virginia Affirmation holds meetings at Pace Memorial UMC, 700 West Franklin St., Richmond, Virginia. In January the group attended a party for the Virginia Gay Lesbian Bisexual Community Center. In February the group is looking forward to a covered dish fellowship in the home of two of it's members. The group also meets at Lebanon UMC for informal suppers and worship. For more information write P.O. Box 25615, Richmond, VA 23260-5615 or call 746-7279 or 746-1204.

Affirmation Conference has every Sunday at 7:00 p.m. in the Narthex of Tabernacle Church, Binghamton, New York. The group had a brunch to celebrate the group's first anniversary. The group has an incredible range of programs. For more information write to Affirmation Conference, P.O. Box 1390, Binghamton, NY 13902 or call 716/733-4434.

Dallas Affirmation meets you at their next meeting on the fourth Monday at 7:00 p.m. at UMC, 11211 Preston Road. Nearly fifty members will celebrate a year of growth, activity and service. In December the group will



The National Affirmation Council is updating its directory of local groups. If you have any information regarding a local group, such as unnamed persons, please write to Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60122 and Communication Committee] at 919/851-5880. Thank you for your



## LOCAL NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

worship, refreshments and at Westwood United Church at 7:00 p.m. For information write to in Los Angeles, P.O. Box 1021, Hollywood, CA 90069 or call 54.

**Virginia Affirmation** meets at Pace Memorial UMC, Franklin St., Richmond. In January the group party for the Virginia Gay Sexual Community Center. In the group is looking forward to a dish fellowship in the of it's members. The group is at Lebanon UMC for suppers and worship. For information write P.O. Box 25615, VA 23260-5615 or call 746-1204.

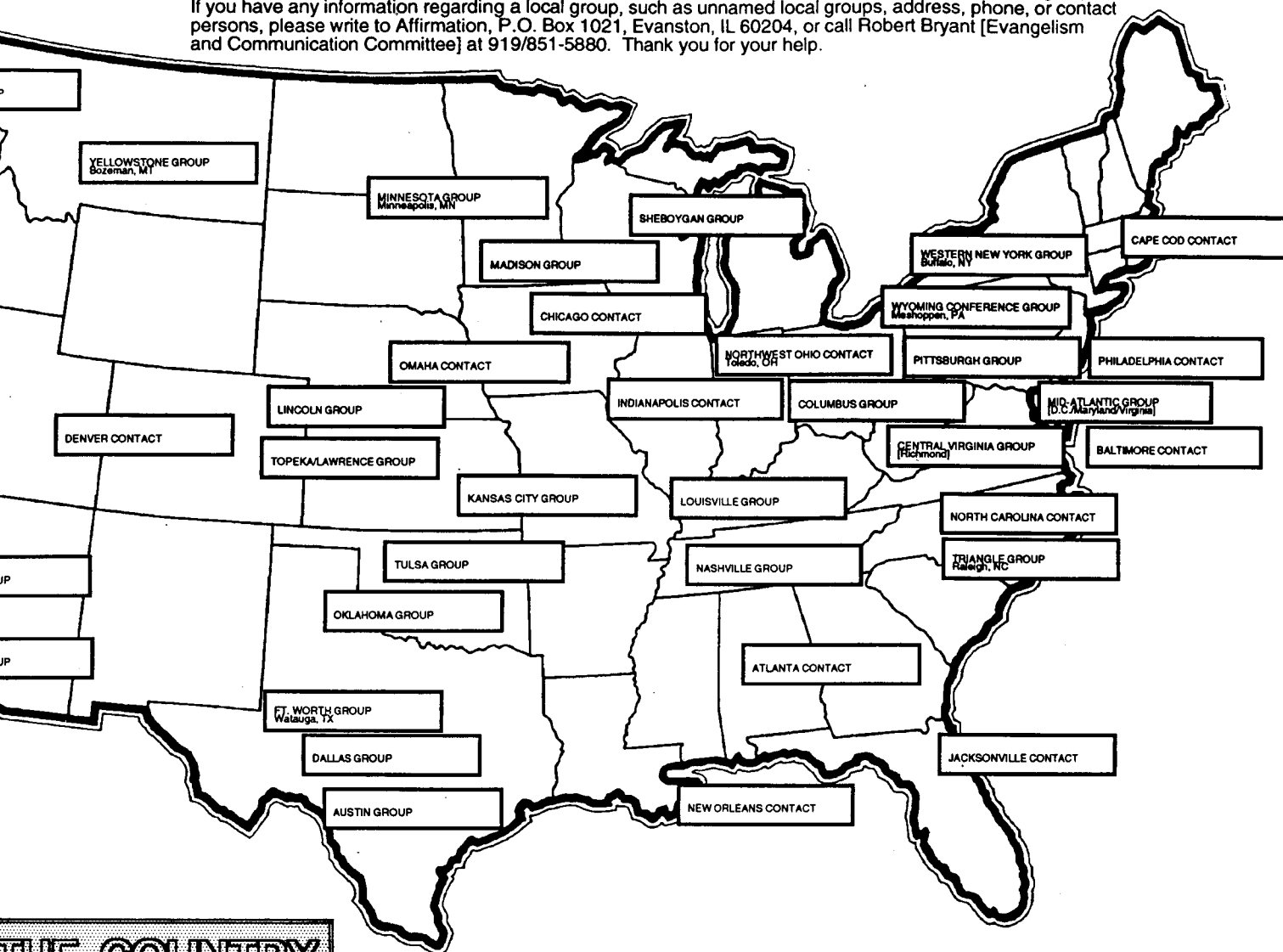
**Affirmation of Wyoming Conference** has a worship service every Sunday at 7:00-8:30 pm in the Narthex of Tabernacle UMC, 83 Main St. Binghamton, New York. In December the group had a tree trimming and brunch to celebrate the holidays. This group has an incredible ministry and a wide range of programs. For more information write to P.O. Box 2988, Binghamton, NY 13902-2988 or call 717-833-4434.

**Dallas Affirmation** hopes to see you at their next meeting held every fourth Monday at 7:00 pm, at Northaven UMC, 11211 Preston Road at Northaven Road. Nearly fifty members attended a Christmas candlelight service to help celebrate a year of unprecedented growth, activity and strength. Also in December the group supported a

family affected by AIDS. New Officers and Steering Committee was elected at their January 24th meeting. The group will be attending the interfaith Perfectly Pink Persuasion party planned by Dignity to celebrate Saint Valentine's Day on February 12. For additional information write to P.O. Box 225831, Dallas, Texas 75222-5831.

**Nashville Affirmation** met in December for supper and carol singing to celebrate Christmas. Members brought gifts and financial support to be given to Bethlehem Center as a gift to give to others. The group met in January for a potluck supper and to hear a report on the Affirmation executive committee's meeting in San Francisco. Nashville Affirmation meets monthly for a potluck and a time of fellowship at Edgewood UMC, 1502

The National Affirmation Council is updating its directory of local groups. Below is a map of all known groups. If you have any information regarding a local group, such as unnamed local groups, address, phone, or contact persons, please write to Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204, or call Robert Bryant [Evangelism and Communication Committee] at 919/851-5880. Thank you for your help.



## THE COUNTRY

Wyoming  
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Edgehill Avenue. For information about monthly meetings and other activities write to Affirmation, P.O. Box 24213, Nashville, TN 37202.

Austin Affirmation meet bimonthly for the usual potluck and program. Recent meetings have been in member's homes and local restaurants. For additional information write to Affirmation, 7403 Shoal Creek Blvd. Austin, Texas 78757

Affirmation Susquehanna Valley Call Joel at 234-2093 for more information.

Mid-Atlantic Affirmation meets weekly for Sunday Evening worship services and a Tuesday Evening Bible Study. For more information write to P.O. Box 23636, L'Enfant Plaza Station, Washington, D.C. 20026-3636.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From the Hawai'i Equal Rights Marriage Project

December 8, 1993

Dear Friends:

We are making history in Hawai'i. In May of 1993, the Hawai'i Supreme Court ruled that the ban on same-gender marriage was discriminatory, and must be ended unless the state can prove a compelling interest in continuing to discriminate. A final ruling should come in early 1995. The chances of a legal victory for gay and lesbian civil rights here is excellent.

The Hawai'i Equal Rights Marriage Project has formed to support legalization of same-gender marriage through education, litigation and advocacy. Supporting the court's decision is a coalition of many local and national civil rights organizations, churches and individuals. Reverend Kit Cherry of UFMCC suggested your name as someone who would be interested in this issue. We hope that you will join us in this exciting movement.

I believe that this case is of particular importance for the Christian church for several reasons. First, it allows churches that believe in the equality of gay unions and heterosexual unions to treat both equally. Second, the quest for marriage rights debunks myths of gays and lesbians as promiscuous and anti-family. Our pursuit of the right to marry shows that lesbian and gay couples seek to enter into lifelong committed relationships blessed by their church or temple.

Third, much of the opposition to same-gender marriage comes from the *religious right*. It is critical that people of faith make it clear that the *right* is not the only Christian voice. If gay and lesbian people hear only rejection from Christians, how will they come to know Christ? It is the voices of mainline Christians that have been critical to other stands against the *religious right* and their political agenda.

How can you help? You can play an important role in supporting this case and ensuring the legalization of same-gender marriage. We are asking for you to endorse the decision of the Hawai'i Supreme Court and the legalization of same-gender marriage and to ask your denomination to do the same. It would be very helpful if you would contact local clergy and churches of

your denomination here in Hawai'i to encourage them to support same-gender marriage. We would be happy to provide you with the names of churches and clergy in your denomination who are on record supporting this. Financial assistance is needed to continue our outreach and advocacy to ensure victory here.

The chance for winning this landmark case for gay and lesbian civil rights is very good here. Hawai'i is a state that has learned to value diversity and to encourage tolerance of differences. Because of the unique situation here, we can win rights that will affect the entire nation. When same-gender marriage becomes legal, there will be repercussions throughout the United States and beyond. The Christian church will also have to decide how same-gender marriages will be handled within each denomination.

We hope that you will join us in this struggle for equal marriage rights. We look forward to working with you on this issue. Please contact us at (808) 942-3737 if we can provide you with any further information.

Sincerely,

Rev. Maggie Tanis  
h.e.r.m.p.  
1820 University Avenue, Suite 8  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

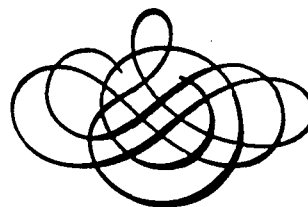
### LOCAL GROUP NEWS

Local groups now have two ways to submit their news items to the Newsletter. Local groups can continue sending copies of their local newsletters and/or releases, or they can send a camera-ready layout. The camera-ready layout cannot be any larger than 3" x 5". There is no required format other than the size. Releases and/or camera-ready layouts must be received before the Newsletter deadline. Include information about your group, the day, time and place of meetings, and a contact person, address and phone number. Send all releases and layouts to Fritz Schultz, 801 Cole St., Apt. 2, San Francisco, CA 94117. Phone (508) 753-1354.

# Affirmation

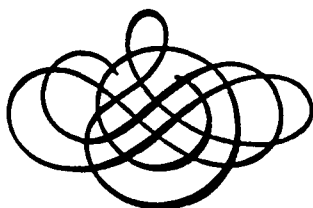


United Methodists  
for  
Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual  
Concerns



## Affirmation seeks to:

- coordinate advocacy with supportive United Methodist groups;
- respond to opportunities for ecumenical and interfaith witness and action;
- sponsor education and information services;
- inform members of activities in the church that may be of interest and offer suggestions as to possible responses.



## Who We Are ...

Affirmation is a churchwide, inclusive community of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and heterosexuals who affirm full participation of all persons, regardless of affectional/sexual orientation, in the United Methodist Church. We serve both as a network for justice-seeking ministries and as a personal support network for lesbian, gay, and bisexual United Methodists. Both laypersons and clergy are active, valued members of our family.

All persons interested in being part of Affirmation and its programs are welcome to participate in our National Gatherings. These Gatherings provide an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth, fellowship, support, and a way to make a difference in the church.

All are welcome as part of the Affirmation family regardless of religious affiliation. We welcome your participation and membership in our national organization and local groups. Participation could range from attendance at events to service on committees and working groups. A wide variety of social activities, programs, and committees, and fabulous opportunities - all requiring creativity, ideas, work, and financial support - are available for your consideration at our national, regional, and local levels.

## I am interested in knowing more about:

- ☐ Becoming a member of national Affirmation and receive the quarterly newsletter.
- ☐ Upcoming national Affirmation Gatherings
- ☐ Affirmation groups or events in my region or city.
- ☐ Starting a local group.
- ☐ I want to provide financial support for the work of Affirmation.

I enclosed a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference \_\_\_\_\_

All Affirmation correspondence is mailed discreetly.

All contributions to national Affirmation are tax deductible.

✦ CLIP AND MAIL THIS COUPON TO:  
✦  
✦ NATIONAL AFFIRMATION  
✦ P.O. BOX 1021  
✦ EVANSTON, IL 60204

## Open Hands

Continued from page seven

along with over 2,000 individual subscribers to the magazine in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Copies of *Responding to the Right*, the Fall 1993 issue of *Open Hands*, are available for \$5 each (\$3 each for 10+ copies) by calling 312/736-5526 or by writing to: *Open Hands*, 3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641.

### NEEDED:

**Lesbian Christians**  
to complete a survey  
about their spiritual journey.

Give a voice to your experience!

Women who have left the church  
are also encouraged to participate.

For a survey or more information, contact:

Social Psych Project

P.O. Box 1222

Plaistow, NH 03865-1222

Responses will remain confidential.

A nominal monetary compensation will be  
provided.

## NEW LESBIAN BOOK CATALOG AVAILABLE

*Heartland Books*, a company run by two Vermont women, has announced the arrival of the second *Heartland Books* catalog. Linda Weiss and Joyce McKee-man of East Corinth, VT are offering a wide variety of lesbian and feminist reading by mail. The new 16-page annotated and illustrated *Heartland* catalog contains approximately 125 book selections, covering such categories as fiction, biography, relationships, erotica and sexuality. In addition the new catalog will feature a fine selection of lesbian and feminist wall calendars and datebooks. Linda and Joyce are distributing the catalog free upon request. They can be reached at P.O. Box 1105F, East Corinth, VT 05040.

(Reprinted from the Austin, Texas, *American-Statesman* of 9/1/93)

## Don't Blame homosexuals for strain on the family

By Tom Teepen, national correspondent for Cox Newspapers

The folks hustling "family values" have a problem. The term is wooly, and everyone is pretty much for them already, by one or another definition.

So the values-mongers who are using the term as a cover for their busy reactionary agenda have to lean more on what they are against than on what they are for to get their foot in the political door.

What they're mostly against right now is homosexuals, as a means to the larger end of political control of school boards and local government.

It's a free shot. Most people hang back from defending homosexuals, and the burden of trying to point out what's really going on is left to gays and lesbians, their witness discredited by their marginalization.

That's precisely the case in the prosperous Atlanta suburb, Cobb County, that lately has become nationally notorious for its anti-gay paroxysms--all because the local theater staged a play in which, get this, there's no homosexuality or homosexual characters but homosexuality is sometimes talked about.

The first upshot was the adoption by the county commission of a resolution declaring homosexuality incompatible with the county's family values. (What comfort it must be to the parents of homosexuals to have their government officially declare their sons and daughters foul. Nice family value, that.)

And, second, the county canceled all its aid to the local arts, lest any ever mention homosexuality again, even pulling the rug out from under the children's theater and children's museum in the name of family values.

Sorry, kiddies. The money will be used to train police dogs and buy video cameras for squad cars.

The American family is indeed under stress, but the strain has little to do with gays and lesbians deciding in increasing number that they're unwilling to live a lie.

(If the religious right is looking for a sexual scapegoat, adultery would seem a better candidate than homosexuality. It involves far more of us, is a more direct threat to marriages and, as homosexuality did not, made it into the Bible's Big Ten, the Commandments.)

The family is strained just now mainly by the broad necessity for two incomes and by the turmoil and job insecurity that have crept into what had been thought to be reliable careers.

Even so, the picture is hardly as grim as the doom-sayers make out.

Most folks still aspire to get married, most still do, most still stay married and although we could wish for a lower divorce rate, most folks who divorce remarry, often more successfully.

The real trauma is in an underclass that has become entrenched and socially isolated and whose poverty is increasingly racialized and feminized and thus falls beyond the political or social inclination of most people to do anything about it.

That's fixable. But the fix would take soul-searching, innovation, a little sacrifice and a lot of persistence, and first we would have to begin seeing ourselves as one large national family, maybe a little weird but with

*Please turn to page thirteen...*

Continued from page twelve  
the last shirttail cousin.

The family-values crowd is  
having none of that.



## Where is the love?

In the name of a God that is love,  
They hate. They discriminate.  
They exclude us from their spiritual worship.  
In the name of a God that is love,  
They expel us from family relationships.  
They insist our commitments mean nothing.  
They prevent us from legally marrying.  
In the name of a God that is love,  
They attack us, wounding, maiming, killing us.  
They lose all sense of compassion and turn into  
vicious beasts.  
They judge, "It's God's punishment," as the horror  
of AIDS devastates us.

**And I wonder - WHERE IS THE LOVE?**

Excerpts from a poem written by Richard K. Smith  
of San Diego, California, who has AIDS.

*Reprinted from the Jacksonville, FL, Coalition News*

## IT'S NOT TOO EARLY!

by Jan Olson

Do you know what you'll be doing in April of  
1995? I plan on being at the Affirmation  
gathering where we'll focus on our mission  
statement:

Affirmation is a:

Community  
Gospel-Speaking People  
Family  
Justice-Seeking People  
Reconciling People  
Celebrating People

We'll be looking at how we can witness to each  
of these aspects of our organization at the  
1996 General Conference. Start planning now  
to be with us in April 1995 and at General  
Conference in Denver the spring of 1996.



## WANTED -- ITEMS FOR TWO NEW COLUMNS!

"THE CLOSET CORNER" -- stories of  
how members have been able to "come  
out" to family and friends--their experi-  
ences, and suggestions for those who are  
still in the closet.

"OF THINGS SPIRITUAL" -- personal  
stories of our relationship to God and of  
God's love for us just as we are.

Send your stories to Newsletter, c/o  
Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL  
60204. The deadline for the next issue of  
the Newsletter is April 25, 1994.



# NATIONAL SPRING GATHERING -- THE DETAILS

## OUR WEEKEND SCHEDULE:

**Friday, April 8, 1994**

- 5:30 p.m. Dinner
- 6:30 p.m. Gathering & Registration
- 7:30 p.m. Evening Program

**Saturday, April 9, 1994**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Gather & Singing
- 8:45 a.m. Morning Program
- 9:00 a.m. Breakouts
- 10:15 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. Breakouts
- NOON Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Affirmation Business Meeting
  - ★ *Elections*
  - ★ *Dues*
  - ★ *Local Groups*
- 3:00 p.m. Free Time
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Program
  - Talent Show*
- 9:00 p.m. Women's & Men's Social Gatherings

**Sunday, April 10, 1994**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. General Conference Planning Session
- 10:30 a.m. Closing Worship
- NOON Lunch

## A WORD ABOUT COSTS

Since we are gathering at a retreat center, all attendees pay for room and board. You have a choice of shared or private rooms and baths. We will be provided with six meals, Friday night through Sunday noon. Your registration fee is used to cover other meeting expenses.

## REGISTRATION FEES

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>FEE</u>
Student/Subsistence	\$ 0
Under \$20,000/year	10.00
\$20,001-\$30,000/year	25.00
\$30,001-\$40,000/year	40.00
Over \$40,000/year	75.00

## ROOM & BOARD

(Includes 2 nights & 6 meals)

<b>Shared bath with:</b>	
3 persons/room	\$ 65.00
2 persons/room	70.00
<b>Private bath with:</b>	
2 persons/room	75.00
1 person/room	90.00

## HOW TO REGISTER

Fill out the registration form, printed elsewhere in this newsletter, enclose your check payable to **National Affirmation** and mail to:

Ellie Charlton  
Affirmation Treasurer  
737 Post St., #915  
San Francisco, CA 94109

Registration confirmation will include maps of Fayetteville and Mt. Sequoyah.

## DEADLINE

Since we **MUST** send one-half of our total meeting cost to Mt. Sequoyah **one month** prior to our event, your early registration is greatly appreciated. Mailing deadline is **FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 1994.**



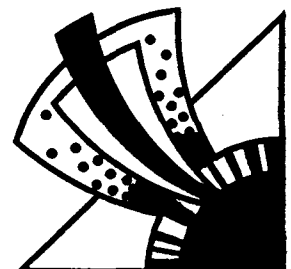
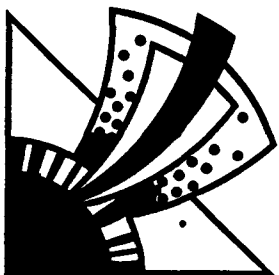
## TRANSPORTATION

American, Delta and Northwest Airlines fly into Fayetteville. The airport shuttle to the center is \$7/person for one person--\$5/person for two or more people.

????????

## QUESTIONS?

Please read all the material about the gathering contained in this newsletter, and the registration form, carefully. If questions remain, call Sue Bock at (512) 452-6399.





**NATIONAL AFFIRMATION SPRING GATHERING  
APRIL 8 - 10, 1994**

**Mt. Sequoyah, Fayetteville, Arkansas**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

To register, complete the information below and mail with your check payable to **National Affirmation** to:

**ELLIE CHARLTON  
Affirmation Treasurer  
737 Post St., #915  
San Francisco, CA 94109**

**DEADLINE: FRIDAY- MARCH 20, 1994**

**EARLY REGISTRATION GREATLY APPRECIATED**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY/STATE/ZIP

**REGISTRATION FEE: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**ROOM & BOARD: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b><u>FEE</u></b>
Student/Subsistence	\$ 0
Under \$20,000/year	10.00
\$20,001-\$30,000/year	25.00
\$30,001-\$40,000/year	40.00
Over \$40,000/year	75.00

(Includes 2 nights & 6 meals)  
**Shared bath with:**  
3 persons/room \$ 65.00  
2 persons/room 70.00  
**Private bath with:**  
2 persons/room 75.00  
1 person/room 90.00

**I am enclosing additional dollars to enable another person to attend \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Fill in the amount for registration, room and board, and any additional amount and record the total here:

**TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**I am requesting scholarship assistance to attend this gathering (specify amount): \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Roommate Preference (1 or 2 names): \_\_\_\_\_**

**Confirmation will include maps of Fayetteville and Mt. Sequoyah**

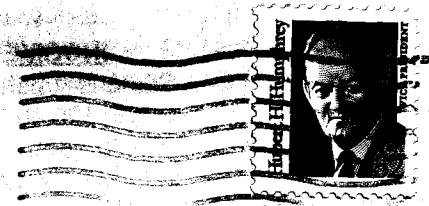
\_\_\_\_\_  
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Confirmed: \_\_\_\_\_

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P.O. Box 1021  
Evanston, IL 60204



Bledsoe M. Michael  
6013 Dusty Road  
Watuaga, TX 76148-3650