

Affirmation

United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Concerns



Spring 1995

Volume 20

Number 1

National Gathering Not To Be Missed

Members and friends of AFFIRMATION who have not yet registered for the upcoming National Gathering may want to reconsider. The April 21-23 event will be held in Dallas, Texas, and will be the only national gathering this year.

Keynote speaker Morris Floyd will offer a Biblical and theological framework for the experiences of those working on same-gender sexuality issues in the church. Entitled *A Chosen People?* the talk will provoke thoughtful reflection both on the history of our movement and about the opportunities that still lie ahead. Morris has been a member of AFFIRMATION (and its predecessor organization *Gay United Methodists*) since 1976, a co-spokesperson from 1982 to 1988 and 1990 to 1992, and is currently a member of the National Council. One of a handful of openly lesbian, gay or bi-

Please turn to page three...

Human Rights Witness Planned for General Conference

DENVER (UMNS)--The 1,000 delegates to the 1996 session of United Methodism's top law-making body will take time from their legislative agenda to make a public witness for human rights for all people, including gay men and lesbians.

The Commission on General Conference, which oversees planning for the quadrennial, international session, voted unanimously at its Nov. 18-19 meeting to provide time during

Please turn to page three...

Affirmation's Name Revisited at National Council Meeting

The National Council revisited the issue of Affirmation's name at a recent meeting in Las Vegas in January. Originally, Affirmation's name did not include the term "bisexual." Although there have always been bisexuals who were very active in Affirmation's cause, their orientation was not represented in Affirmation's name. Affirmation members have privately discussed this issue amongst themselves for sometime now and have also questioned the need to recognize

Please turn to page four...

In this issue

Council's Annual Meeting.	2
RCP's Growth in 1994.	2
Understanding SAPH*	5
<i>*Self-Avowed Practicing Homosexual</i>	
Platform Statement (from the Witness Committee).	11

The National Gathering

Dallas, Texas

April 21-23, 1995

Please see insert for details and Registration Form

Deadline for Registering is March 31

UM Churches Welcoming Gays Mark Record Growth

Fifteen United Methodist churches declared themselves Reconciling Congregations in 1994--the largest number in this growing movement's ten-year history.

Reconciling Congregations publicly welcome all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. Initiated in 1984 in response to church policies and attitudes which were unwelcoming toward lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and their families, the movement now encompasses 87 Reconciling Congregations across the U.S.

A newer branch of this movement, Reconciling Campus Ministries, began in 1992 when the Wesley Foundation at the University of California at Los Angeles declared itself "reconciling" and urged other campus ministries to do so. Two new Reconciling Campus Ministries in 1994 (at American University, Washington, DC, and Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL) brings the total to five welcoming campus ministries.

"There is clearly a groundswell of interest and support for Reconciling Congregations and Campus Ministries across the country," noted program coordinator Mark Bowman. "Churches have cast judgment on gay and lesbian persons for too long. Many more Christians are now saying, 'That is not the good news of Jesus Christ.' Churches instead are extending a hand of hospitality and love."

"The word is getting out about vital, growing churches which are reaching out to lesbian and gay persons and their families," Bowman continued. "We continue to get new inquiries about Reconciling Congregations each week. This movement is transforming the church."

In light of its continued growth, the Reconciling Congregation Program also added a full-time outreach coordinator in 1w994. The Rev. James Preston from Lubbock, Texas, joined the four-person national staff in October. Preston will expand the program's efforts to contact and support the many churches and campus ministries seeking to be "reconciling."

Don't Forget.
The National Gathering in Dallas!
ALL REGISTRATIONS MUST BE IN BY MARCH 31

Council Gathers for Annual Meeting

On January 14-16 the Affirmation Council met for its annual week-end long meeting. Many thanks go out to the Wesley Church of North Las Vegas, especially the pastor, Sarah Shirley, and the Wesley United Methodist Women for the welcome, hospitality, and good food given to us.

.....*much was accomplished.*

As is the case with most of these Council meetings much time was spent working in the various committees. As will undoubtedly be evident throughout this newsletter much was accomplished. The Program Committee continues to prepare for our Spring Gathering in Dallas, and the regional gatherings planned for the Fall of this year. They are also working on a revision of the guidelines for local groups hosting a National Gathering. The Witness Committee's focus was on our presence at General Conference in 1996 and legislation including Affirmation's platform statement. The Evangelism Committee continues to monitor our newsletter, membership and mailbox. It also presented to the Council a proposal for the revitalization of the Regional Organizing Program. The Stewardship Committee's work involved the unending task of monitoring the income and outgo of funds and began to prepare for the presentation of the 1995-1996 budget to the Council at the April meeting. The Planning and Evaluation Committee focused on the functioning of the Council, the filling of vacancies on the Council, the election of a representative on the RCP Board, the travel pool, meeting sites for future meetings and an amendment to the By-Laws.

As a whole Council we discussed Council goals for 1995, our continuing commitment to inclusiveness

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*...we are family who care and love one
 another...*
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as an organization, especially of bisexual and transgendered persons, the separation agreement between Affirmation and the Reconciling Congregation Program which expires in March of this year and General Conference. There were times of laughter and times of tears. There was

Please turn to page eleven...


National...from page one

sexual clergy who have served under appointment in the United Methodist Church, he is now in the retired relationship to the California-Pacific Annual Conference.

The gathering will provide participants a variety of ways to interact with each other under the theme "Capturing the Tradition--Responding to the Challenge." Six workshop options will offer skills and insights critical to building the movement. A special worship time will allow for the acknowledgment and memorializing of our losses. And a Texas style banquet with live entertainment will be an occasion to celebrate Affirmation's current work and those who have contributed to it.

The weekend will close with a festival worship celebration featuring the preaching of Chris Smith, associate professor of preaching and worship at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Formerly United Methodist, Chris moved her denominational relationship to the United Church of Christ, which affirms the participation of openly gay and lesbian persons in the ordained ministry. She is the author of *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance: Radical Response to Radical Evil*, which she describes as illustrating her commitments as feminist, lesbian and theologian.

Everyone on the AFFIRMATION mailing list should have received a brochure and detailed registration information about the National Gathering during January. The event will be held at the Harvey Hotel (formerly the Southland Center Hotel) on Olive Street in Dallas, where a special rate of \$62 per night for 1 to 4 persons in the room has been arranged. The registration fee

runs from \$30 to \$110 on a sliding scale basis and includes a commemorative T-shirt. If you want to register or need more information, contact the national office by calling (708) 733-9590, writing the Evanston P.O. Box, or sending e-mail to UMAFFIRM@AOL.COM. 

Human Rights...from page one

the two-week assembly for the human rights' witness.

The commission's decision came in response to church members who criticized holding the 1996 General Conference in Denver after Colorado voters earlier approved an amendment prohibiting laws that guarantee special protection of human rights for gays and lesbians. Implementation of the amendment was subsequently blocked by Colorado courts.

... "the strongest possible
 witness..."

After that controversial decision to keep the conference in Denver, commission members asked its program unit to provide some means for delegates "to make the strongest possible witness in behalf of the civil rights of all persons."

The Rev. William Quick, Detroit, program chairman, will appoint a group to determine the precise content of that witness, proposed for the morning of April 18, 1996, the third day of the international lawmaking session.

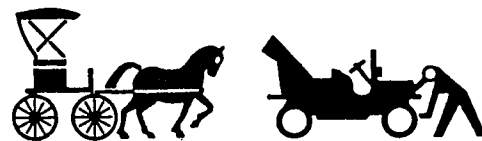
As the Commission on General Conference considered human rights and the push for more inclusiveness, members also wrestled with the challenges presented by the increasing number of non-English-speaking General Conference delegates.

At the 1996 assembly 138 delegates--up from 30 in 1992--will be from outside the United States. Translators have been provided for the floor proceedings, but written materials have been in English.

The commission called for a study on possible translation of major portions of the *Daily Christian Advocate*, which carries proposed legislation, agency reports, information about delegates, and a transcript of daily proceedings.

The commission agreed to investigate the cost of providing materials in large print or Braille to aid delegates with visual impairments.

In a related action, the commission agreed to pay expenses for a person who must accompany and assist delegates with handicapping conditions. ~~77~~



Headin' East

The Planning and Evaluation Committee of the Affirmation Council is responsible for the site selection for our National Gatherings. Since our last meeting was on the west coast, our next meeting is in the Southcentral part of the country and General Conference is in Denver this committee is currently looking to the east for a site for the Fall '96 gathering. In keeping with the Long Range Plan of Affirmation to have one meeting a year in a retreat/hotel setting the investigation into a site is focusing on these types of places. Keep looking to the newsletter for an announcement as soon as the site is confirmed.

other groups who also experience discrimination due to their

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sexual orientation. This includes bisexuals as well as transgendered persons. In 1991, the National Council of Affirmation, after many heated debates, agreed to add "Bisexual" to its name. The discussion still continues today--even more so. The National Council revisited this topic and will continue to examine the unanswered questions.


There are some local Affirmation chapters which do not agree to this name change. There are members who strongly feel that bisexuals have one foot in the closet. They are not fully accepting their sexuality. This attitude has shunned the bisexual community from the gay as well as the straight communities. "Don't give bisexuals a hard time for being bi," states Ken Hanes in his book *The Gay Guys Guide to Life*. "They can't control their attractions to both genders anymore than you can control your attraction to one."

At Affirmation's West Hollywood Gathering, there was a workshop titled *Sex in the Church*. It was led by Connie

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Norman. She describes herself as an "ex-drag queen, ex-hooker, ex-IV user, ex-high risk youth and current 43 year old post-operative transsexual woman who is HIV positive."

Her workshop dealt with issues that the church ignores. Ms. Norman pointed out that if lesbians and gays are rejected by the church once, she has been rejected at least six fold. Are her characteristics part of the lesbian and gay community? The participants of this workshop believed that Ms. Norman was part of the community, including the church community.

If, as stated in its mission statement, "Affirmation is a community...[which] celebrate[s] the affectional/sexual orientation of all persons, why is this discussion going on? Does Affirmation need to define that "all persons" means everyone but bisexuals, trans-gender, the gay homeless person living on the street, the gay IV drug-users, hookers, the gay youth, etc.? The list goes on and on. Can Affirmation recognize **ALL** persons as being people of self worth and, as such, open up Affirmation to be a truly inclusive organization, as its Mission/Vision Statements proclaim? 

Rev. Dr. John Rice

It is with great sadness that we report the death of the Rev. Dr. John Stewart Rice on Tuesday, November 8th after a tragic automobile accident in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dr. Rice was an Associate Minister on the staff of Wilshire UMC in Los Angeles from 1984 to 1988, with special emphasis in the area of worship and music. John left Wilshire to form his own consulting firm, *Worship Works*, which assisted local churches and church leaders in the area of effective worship.

John's special gifts in worship were highlighted by the national telecast of Wilshire's 1985

Easter Festival Service on ABC television.

John is survived by his partner Dr. Brian Davison, his daughter Cathlin Rice, his mother Doris Rice and two brothers. Memorial gifts may be directed to *Worship Works* c/o the family at 10619 Alameda Dr., Knoxville, TN 37932 or to National Affirmation. *(Information provided by Affirmation/Los Angeles and Paul Thompson.)*

New RCP Board Member

Maggie Roe from Denver, CO, has been elected by the Affirmation Council to serve on the Reconciling Congregation Program's Board of Directors as a representative from Affirmation. She will be serving on the Board until April of 1996, completing the term of Jan Olson who resigned due to new job responsibilities. Maggie served on Affirmation's Coordinating Committee at the time Affirmation and the Reconciling Congregation Program signed its formal separation agreement.

A Call For Memorabilia

The 20th Anniversary National Gathering is fast approaching! If you haven't yet started hunting for memorabilia to bring for display, we hope this reminder prompts you to do so right away. In addition to the photographs and other items you bring for display, we are still needing photos, slides, movies and video tape to be used for composition into an Affirmation history video for the opening session April 21. Send these no later than March 10, 1995, to Judy WestLee, 5705 James Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55149-1643.

Understanding SAPH*

****Self Avowed Practicing Homosexual," and how to define for inclusion in and in relation to various sections of the *Book of Discipline*.**

One Point of View

It is worth noting that while the debate over SAPH at our last Council Meeting was both passionate and emotional, it was neither bitter nor divisive. It seems that each side has deep sympathy for the concerns of the other, yet come to differing conclusions for strategic and principled reasons.

I was among those who argued to adopt a "narrow definition" of SAPH for practical and strategic reasons. The definition suggested reads:

"A 'self-avowed, practicing homosexual' is a person who declares to the Board of Ordained Ministry that he/she has engaged in genital sexual practices with a person of the same gender in the two year period immediately preceding the avowal."

It may be rightly argued that to be defined by one narrow aspect of our lives (genital behavior) is unjust and dehumanizing. Our challenge is to create opportunities for justice making within a system which unjustly deploys such definitions. When some whom God has called are excluded, perhaps we are called to be "as wise as serpents." I argue for a "narrow definition" of SAPH, because it provides some "wiggle room" for those who choose to hold on to their call to ministry within the context of the church's current hypocrisy. Many believe that there will be a strong push for a universal definition (as opposed to leaving it to each Annual Conference or BOOM). A definition which is very specific as to the context and content of that "self-avowal" provides that "wiggle room" which other definitions surely will not.

A further argument for a "narrow definition" is that it is what its critics claim: unjust, ignorant, dehumanizing to define any group of persons by one characteristic. As church and society have struggled to understand racism and sexism, that pattern has been recognized as unjust and inherently evil. Perhaps in self-reflection, or more likely in Judicial Council challenge, this definition can be the mirror which reflects to the church its sinful heterosexism and homophobia.

Rebecca Ruth Richards

Push or Pass

(Another Point of View)

The chaotic current of the late 20th century pushes up hard against those of us who seek to be in balance with it. Is it time to push or pass?

Artist Jolene Rickard

The definition of a "self-avowed, practicing homosexual" is being left up to interpretation by Annual Conference. This is due to a recent Judicial Council decision. Some Annual Conferences have interpreted this to mean, for instance, an individual telling their Board of Ordained Ministry that they are a homosexual. Other Annual Conferences have interpreted it as an individual's disclosure that he/she has homosexual thoughts or dreams. As you can see, there is wide variation in the Annual Conferences' definition of this statement. We believe that there will be many proposals defining the statement at the next General Conference. Should Affirmation hold firm on eliminating this statement from the *Book of Discipline* (the United Methodist book of law)? Or should Affirmation lead the way at General Conference to define exactly what the definition should be, since this issue will certainly be brought to the General Conference floor? The question boils down to, do we stand firm on Affirmation's principles or join the fight of the "lesser of two evils"--i.e., is it time to push or pass?

There is no correct answer to this complicated issue. National Affirmation Council has been unable to reach consensus on this issue despite much discussion. The following are arguments on both sides of the issue.

No matter how strong we are lobbied internally, by our allies, and by our detractors, National Affirmation must -- at all cost -- stand firm in opposition to the adoption of any and all definitions of "self-avowed, practicing homosexual" by the 1996 General Conference. While this may not be the most politically popular stance to take, it is the only Christian alternative we have.

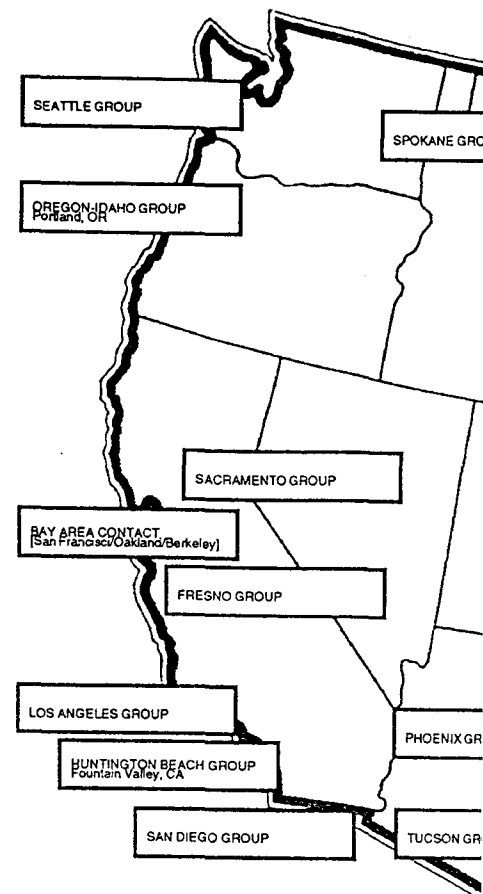
There are, I believe, four solid reasons for assuming this posture.

First, the definition of who I am as a gay man is much more far-reaching than what I do in bed. Any attempt to categorize me on the basis of my genital activity is to dehumanize and devalue me.

Please turn to page eight...

Affirmation National Council

Jeanne Barnett, Sacramento, CA 916/489-2340
 Tom Russell, Washington, DC 202/986-4808
 Robert Bryant, Raleigh, NC 919/851-5880
 Gloria Soliz, San Francisco, CA 415/647-4635
 John R. Calhoun, Oklahoma City, OK 405/528-1177
 Paul Thompson, Studio City, CA 818/760-6633
 Ellie Charlton, Sacramento, CA 916/489-2340
 Judith WestLee, Minneapolis, MN 612/823-7587
 Morris Floyd, Minneapolis, MN 612/824-5021
 Mark Wilson, Tuscaloosa, AL 205/752-5799
 David L. Gunnell, Evanston, IL 708/475-4321
 Jeanne Knepper, Portland, OR 503/760-4215
 Nancy Levan, Fresno, CA 209/432-6107
 Jan Olson, Chicago, IL 312/539-4626
 Sam Wilson, Dallas, TX 214/426-6188
 Ann Freeman Price, Nyack, NY 914/353-7522
 Rick Huskey, Washington, DC 202/232-0010
 One Woman in Maryland
 One Man in Chicago
 One Woman in Tennessee



Two New Council Members Elected

An election in the Northeast Jurisdictional Region was recently held to fill the unexpired term of Brian Smith, who resigned from Affirmation's Council in 1994. That election resulted in a tie between Ann Freeman Price of Nyack, NY, and Rick Huskey of Washington, DC. Upon learning the results of the election Rick graciously withdrew his nomination and Ann officially became the Northeast Jurisdiction's representative on the Council, where she will serve until April of 1997. Since the death of Jay McCarty from Kansas City left another position on the Council vacant, Rick was asked to complete Jay's unexpired term as an at-large member of the Council. He will serve until April of 1996. Welcome, Ann and Rick!



LOCAL NEWS

Dallas Affirmation has been busy planning for the National Affirmation 20th Anniversary meeting in April. Pam Whatley, a volunteer with the Candy Marcum Institute for Women's Study spoke on the various women's organizations in the Dallas community. In December, Dallas Affirmation held a Christmas Candlelight Service and dessert only "no calorie" potluck. The group also adopted a family in the Christmas Gift project. The January meeting honored Rev. Sheron C. Patterson as the speaker at their monthly meeting. Rev. Patterson holds the distinction of being the first and only African American woman to be ordained a deacon and an elder in the North Texas Annual Conference (UMC). The group usually meets every fourth Monday at 7:00 pm, at Northaven UMC,

11211 Preston Road at Northaven Road. The Third Sunday Lunches are regular gatherings of Affirmation members and their friends. For additional information write to P.O. Box 225831, Dallas, Texas 75222-5831.

Affirmation Los Angeles

begins its 14th year at a new meeting site at Holman UMC located at 3320 West Adams Boulevard. In November, Rev. Sharon Rodes-Wickett, led a service of "Hope and Remembrance" at Westwood UMC. Participants had the opportunity to remember those who have died of breast cancer and AIDS. In December the group participated in United Methodist night at Disneyland. Later that month, the Kings of Cuisine, Bob Klein and Bob Ficklin hosted the group's Christmas bash. In January

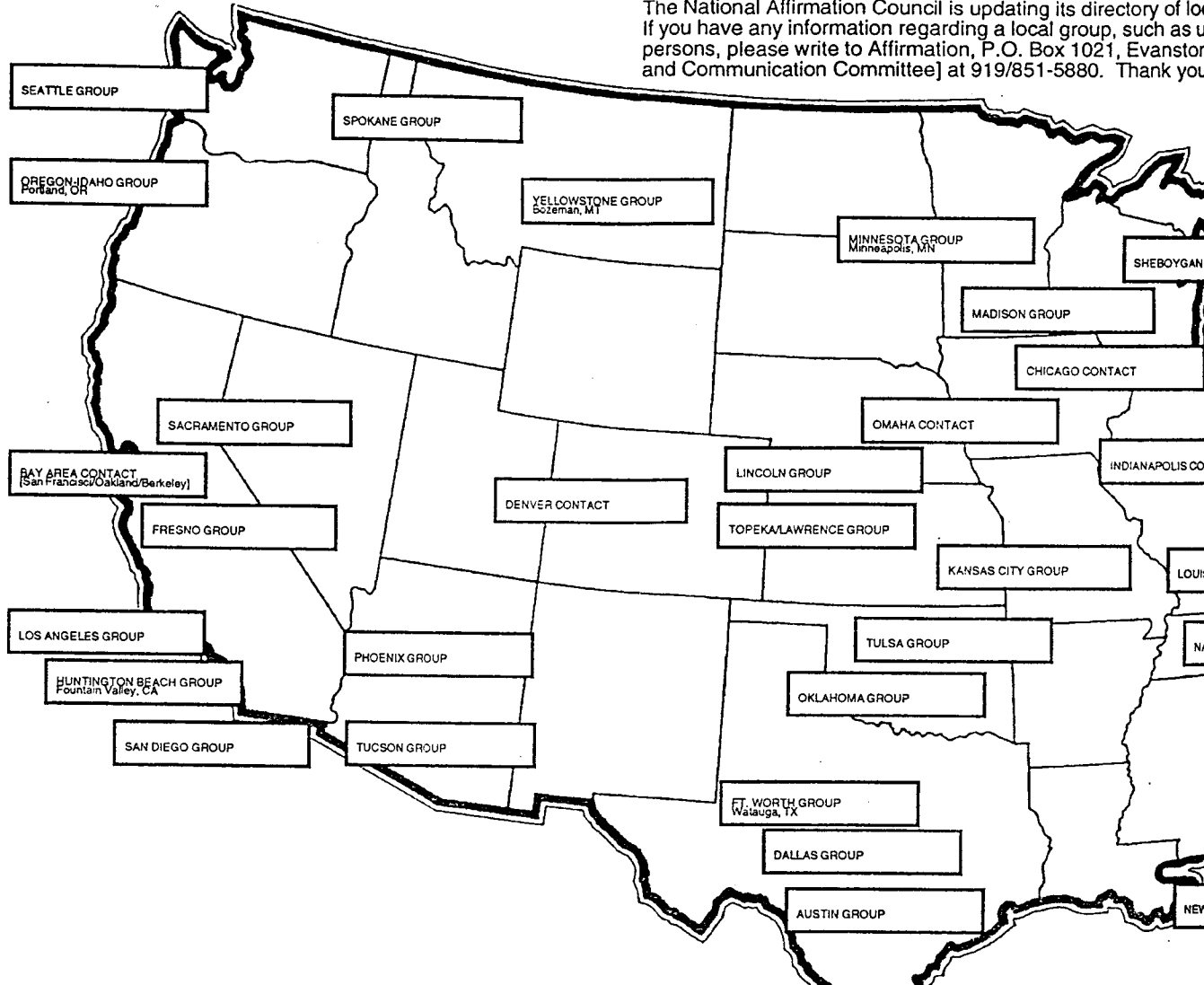
the group helped c Bert All at the Holly one of the founders Angeles and w Affirmation Los A second Sunday of programs, worship, fellowship at Homar For more informati 691283, West Hollyw 213/969-4664.

Nashville Affi

Integrity for a Holy Rev. Rod Kochtit pastoral counselor, preacher. The joint groups in Novembe annual tradition. dinner, the two program on "Relatio

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The National Affirmation Council is updating its directory of local groups. If you have any information regarding a local group, such as its name, address, or phone number, please write to Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60201, and Communication Committee] at 919/851-5880. Thank you.



LOCAL NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

ston Road at Northaven Road. Sunday Lunches are regular meetings of Affirmation members and friends. For additional information write to P.O. Box 225831, Las Vegas 89122-5831.

Affirmation Los Angeles
celebrated its 14th year at a new meeting place, the Hollywood UMC located at 3320 West Hollywood Boulevard. In November, Rev. Rod Kochtitzky, led a service of "Remembrance" at Westwood. Participants had the opportunity to remember those who have died of cancer and AIDS. In December, members participated in United Methodist night at Disneyland. Later in the month, the Kings of Cuisine, Bob and Bob Ficklin hosted the Christmas bash. In January

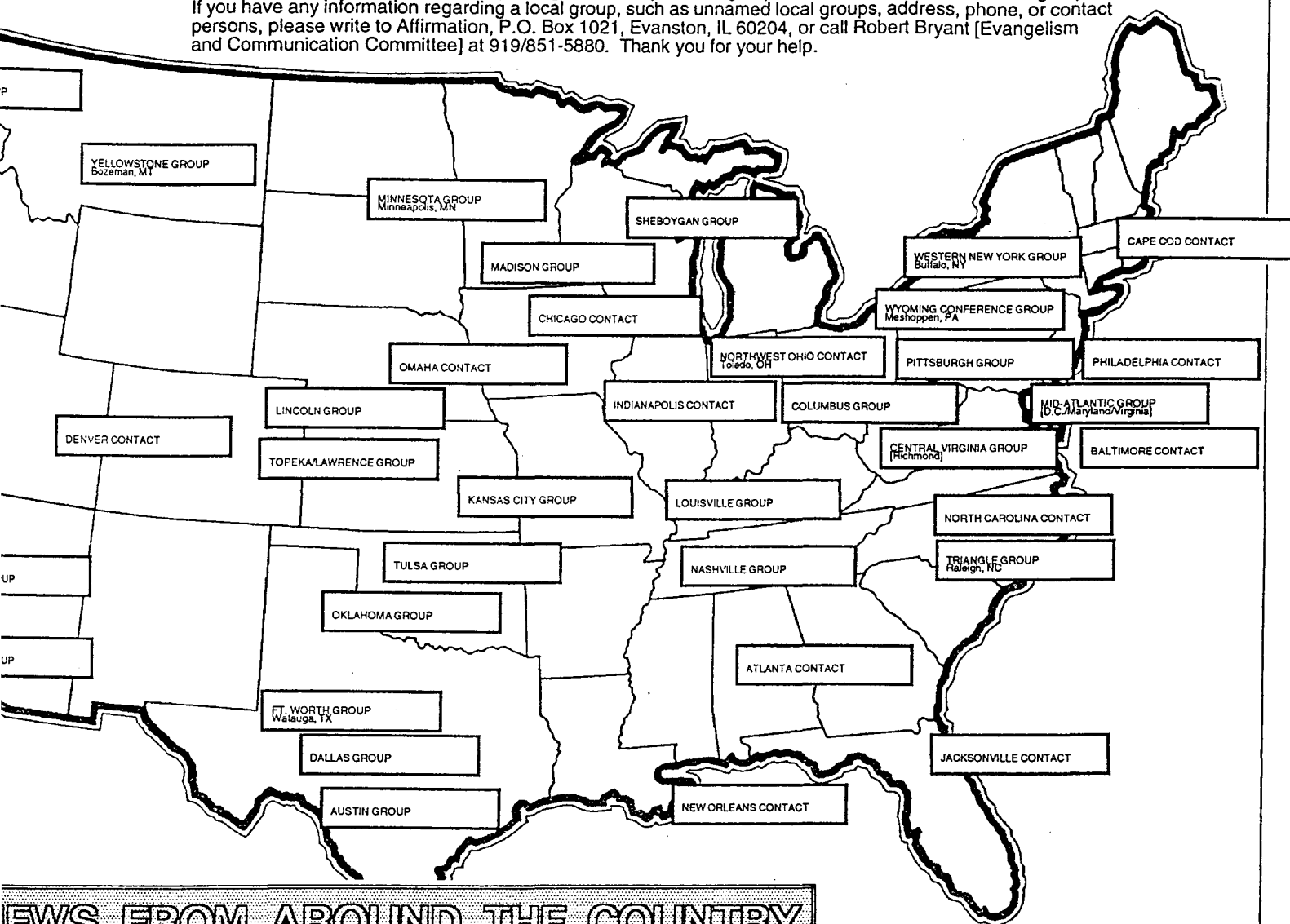
the group helped celebrate the life of Bert All at the Hollywood UMC. Bert was one of the founders of Affirmation Los Angeles and will be missed. Affirmation Los Angeles meets the second Sunday of each month for programs, worship, refreshments and fellowship at Homan UMC at 7:00 p.m. For more information write to P.O. Box 691283, West Hollywood, CA 90069 or call 213/969-4664.

Nashville Affirmation met with Integrity for a Holy Eucharist with the Rev. Rod Kochtitzky, a Nashville pastoral counselor, as the celebrant preacher. The joint meeting of the two groups in November, has become an annual tradition. After a potluck dinner, the two groups heard a program on "Relationships". Due to the

holidays, the group met a week earlier than usual for a potluck and a time to share favorite Christmas stories, poetry, and music. The group also collected toys and money for the Bethlehem Center's Christmas ministry. In January, George Hurst, long-time volunteer for Nashville Cares spoke to the group about the work of the organization and its plans for the future. Nashville Affirmation meets monthly for a potluck and a time of fellowship at Edgewood UMC, 150 Edgemoor Avenue. For information about monthly meetings and other activities write to Affirmation, P.O. Box 24213, Nashville, TN 37202.

Affirmation of Wyoming Conference meets weekly for worship service every Sunday at 7:00

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.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

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Affirmation of Wyoming Conference meets weekly for a worship service every Sunday at 7:00-

8:30 pm in the Narthex of Tabernacle UMC, 83 Main St. Binghamton, New York. The worship services are led by a variety of service leaders. In November, the group heard Marcel Duhamel speak about his experience with Reconciliation Programs at Chenango UMC. In December, the group participated in World AIDS Day activities. The group also celebrated its fourth anniversary in December by sharing memories and stories. Service leaders change weekly 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.

Please turn to page nine...

Second, any attempt to enact a "one size fits all" definition only further serves to downplay who I am. Even the terms in the proposed definitions I have seen would require the adoption of further definition. Activities which I might consider "genital activity" may well not be considered as such by others!

Third, adoption of a definition would mean that lesbians and gay men are the only group of persons who must answer questions about their bedroom behavior as a condition of ordination. and/or consecration. Why don't those persons who are identified as non-gay have to respond to whether they have had consensual genital activity with a member of the opposite sex? That only seems fair. But such a proposal would be laughed out of the General Conference hall.

Fourth, if we support adoption of any definition, we are giving our detractors the necessary rope by which to hang us. I, for one, am simply not willing to do their work for them! If someone wants to bring charges against me, let them do their own discovery. I want the burden of proof on the charging party; I'm not about to hand over self-incriminating evidence voluntarily. And, if I were to fail to do that, then I would have to choose between lying and remaining faithful to my call to ministry. The organization that proclaims to be my advocate can't, in clear conscience, put me in that position!

This is a difficult choice for National Affirmation to make. But, we are living in difficult times and we simply can't afford to take the easy way out. I know full well that our agreement to support adoption of a "liberal" definition would make life a lot easier for our allies; I appreciate that. But my conscience and my faith call me to do otherwise. Anything less would, at best, be unchristian!

A Gay Man from Chicago

EDITOR'S NOTE: Any comments should be sent to LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, Affirmation Newsletter, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204.



DEADLINE DATE

PUBLICATION DATE

SUMMER

April 26, 1995

May 19, 1995

FALL

July 16, 1995

August 11, 1995

WINTER

October 25, 1995

November 17, 1995

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

*Register TODAY
for the National Gathering
in DALLAS!*

SEE INSERT FOR DETAILS & REGISTRATION

**Notice from the
Program Committee**

This is to serve notice of our intent to consider
and possibly amend the By-laws at the next full meeting of Affirmation: United
Methodists for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns, Inc.

Report of NCCC Annual Meeting

National Affirmation Councilperson Sam Wilson attended the National Council of Churches of Christ annual meeting in New Orleans last November. As you may be aware, MCC (Metropolitan Community Churches) has been seeking membership in the NCC for over a decade. Although they meet all membership criteria, they have not won a majority vote of the general board which consists of 300+ delegates from 30+ denominations. MCC requested each of the major G/L/B religious organizations to send a rep or two to the New Orleans meeting. Sam was selected to represent National Affirmation.

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MCC has temporarily let the issue of membership...rest.

[illegible]

The reps from the G/L/B organizations met for a long afternoon Wednesday, then met with the Counseling Committee of the NCC. The Counseling Committee was organized to create dialog between the denominations that are not supportive of MCC's membership and those that are. Over the last year, the Counseling Committee found little interest to dialog from many of the denominations. MCC has temporarily let the issue of membership in the NCC rest.

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The Methodist delegation is very supportive...

[illegible]

One of the members of the Counseling Committee was from the Methodist delegation and invited Sam to the Methodist delegation's dinner held Wednesday evening. Sam was then invited to become a Proxy to fill a vacancy in the delegation. The Methodist delegation is very supportive of equal rights for and full inclusiveness of all G/L/B persons everywhere.

Thursday and Friday were all-day meetings of the General Board. The main topic of the meeting was a major restructuring of the organization.

The second-most important issue of the meeting was the presentation for adoption of a Policy Statement on Human Rights. This document is intended to broaden the scope of the Policy Statement on Human Rights adopted in 1963. The proposed policy includes condemnation of discrimination based on sexual orientation among

many other issues such as environment, war and economics that were not included in the 1963 policy.

Please turn to page ten...

Local News...from page seven

Central Virginia Affirmation

holds meetings at Pace Memorial UMC, 700 West Franklin St., Richmond, Virginia. In November the group participated in "Bring-A-Friend" Sunday at Lebanon UMC. World AIDS Day was observed in December. The group encouraged its members to educate their legislators on Virginians For Justice Citizen Lobby Day. Central Virginia Affirmation has a new address at PO Box 501, Hanover, VA 23069-0501. For more information write or call (804)746-7279 or (804)746-1204.

Shalom Ministries provide weekly support and fellowship groups where all are welcomed. Members worked hard battling anti-gay ballot measures in Oregon and Idaho. Shalom Ministries is an outreach ministry of empowerment, education and justice that serves lesbian, gay and bisexual people, people living on the social or economic edge, people who have been alienated from religion, and churches who want to welcome any of these people. For more information about Shalom Ministries write to P.O. Box 66147, Portland, OR 97266 or call (503)-760-4215.

If you want news about your local group included in this Newsletter, I need to hear from you! If your group was not mentioned in this issue, its because I haven't heard from you. Please send a copy of your Newsletter or information about how, when, and where your group meets. Be sure to include a contact person, address or phone number. You can send all information to Fritz Schultz, 801 Cole Street Apt. 2, San Francisco, CA 94117. 415-753-1354.



the ever present feeling of frustration at the amount of work to be done and the limited time available to us. And there was a powerful reminder, perhaps a strong nudge from God through a sudden and scary (and thankfully treated successfully) illness of one of the Council members, that we are individuals on a common journey, we are family who care and love one another and that though the work can be overwhelming at times we need to take the time to share with one another in the present and not wait until tomorrow or next week or...

TRAVEL POOL UPDATE

Affirmation members who have been involved with the organization on the national level for many years will be aware of the travel pool. For those who are new to Affirmation or have never attended a national gathering a little explanation is appropriate. The travel pool was created in an attempt to equalize the cost of travel to a national gathering for those in attendance. At the gathering participants were asked to report their

travel costs and the average cost was calculated. Anyone who paid more than the average could ask that the difference be reimbursed to them. Likewise, anyone who paid less than the average travel cost was asked to donate the difference to Affirmation. This system allowed some people to come to a gathering who may otherwise not have been able to attend. But it also put a burden on the local participants. Often times Affirmation needed to supplement the funds in the travel pool to make reimbursements.

The Council's Planning and Evaluation Committee has periodically looked at this program in an attempt to structure it in a way that would not put a burden on Affirmation or local participants of a national gathering. At the January Council meeting the issue was again discussed. It was decided that since we have not had the travel pool at the last few meetings and no one commented about its absence negatively we would officially discontinue the Travel Pool.



PLATFORM STATEMENT And Grace Will Lead Us Home

(PRESENTED BY THE WITNESS COMMITTEE)

*Through many dangers, toil and snares, we have already come.
'Tis grace has lead us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.*

We are Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns, and we proclaim God's amazing grace. Our church has taught us to sing out our confidence that God promises good, to set aside our fears, and to know that God will be our shield and portion as long as life endures.

In our lives and in the life of the church, we have known dangers, toils, and snares. We have met homophobia: discrimination, denial of our gifts and hateful abuse. We've listened to language that denies our identity and denigrates our loves. We've been driven from our call to ministry. We've known a church more willing to accept our dollars than our gifts. All

too often, we've known the church as graceless, hateful, and punitive.

And yet we affirm: grace will lead us home. As United Methodists and as Affirmation we hold a vision of a church that proclaims God's grace to and for all. As individuals and as a church we have lived by narrow vision and short sight. We have held grudges and old legislation long past the time for letting go. Now we say: let go. Trust in God's grace. Claim who we are called to be as God's church. God calls us all to come home.

Come home to a church that no longer calls our lives incompatible with Christian teachings. Come home to a church that listens when God calls people into ministry. Come home to a

church that isn't afraid to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in its membership, its ministry, its deliberations, its clergy, its life. Come home to a church that has repudiated its own homophobia, recognized and works to overcome heterosexist attitudes and forthrightly includes sexual minority persons in its proclamations for human rights.

Alone, we find cynicism easier than hope and old patterns more comfortable than new vision. But we are not alone. We are surrounded and led by the love of God, who offers us a grace-filled alternative: reconciliation built on love, justice and a determination to see Christ in each other. Alone, we may not find the way, but we are not alone. Grace will lead us home.





The Witness Committee presented a platform statement and legislative packet for General Conference. Proposed legislation includes one resolution to oppose discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people and another asking the UMC to hold meetings addressing "Heterosexism and the Mission of the Church."

We recommend altering Paragraph 71F of the Social Principles by substituting a paragraph that describes the character of covenantal relationships

...we recommend listing the basic rights of all persons...

and by deleting the clause, "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teachings." In addition, we recommend listing the basic rights of all persons, adding a paragraph affirming rights regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and adding sexual orientation to the Social Creed.

The Council affirmed a petition to celebrate the diversity of church members, permit the use of inclusive supplemental worship resources, delete references to "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness," delete the

prohibition of ordination or appointment for "self-avowed practicing homosexuals," and delete the ban on general church funding for groups that "promote the acceptance of homosexuality."

Concerning definitions, Affirmation recommends that status be defined as "Those characteristics by which groups of people are identified, by which their common experiences may be shaped, and by which their legal character or condition may be determined."

...recommend.. "self-avowed practicing homosexual" not be defined.

After considerable discussion, the National Council decided to recommend that the phrase "self-avowed practicing homosexual" not be defined. Instead, we ask that the following statement be attached to paragraph 402.2 if that paragraph is not deleted:

"Because the term 'self-avowed practicing homosexual' intends to describe behavior that is referenced by sexual orientation, and because the same standard is not applied to all persons regardless of sexual orientation, and not applied to all persons who self-avow that they are practicing their sexual orientation, we do not find it possible to create a definition of 'self-avowed practicing homosexual' that will be adequate to the constitutional test that requires the same standard for everyone regardless of status."

Interested parties may request a full legislative packet through the Affirmation mailbox or telephone number.

...to continue contact with intercaucus connections.

In other business, the Witness Committee made arrangements for presence at the General Conference press briefing in November 1995, planned to send Sam Wilson to the 1995 meeting of the National Council of Churches, agreed to participate in an interfaith meeting of lesbian, gay and bisexual caucuses, and planned to continue contact with intercaucus connections.

Jeanne Barnett wrote a letter to the President of Lindsey-Wilson College of Columbia, Kentucky, protesting the firing of lesbian coach Diana Chalfant.

John Boswell

John Eastburn Boswell, a gay historian and author, died on Dec. 24, 1994, due to complications from AIDS. He was 47 years old. He was a professor at Yale University who made academic history with his theories on the existence of homosexuality in medieval ages. He was a loved teacher at Yale University. It is reported that Boswell read and spoke 17 languages. This helped in his understanding original Christian text.

His first book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe From the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* won the 1981 American Book Award for history. Boswell's book looks in depth at the mid-11th to mid-12th centuries of a pronounced gay sub-culture.

He is survived by his life partner of more than 20 years, Jerry Hart; his parents; a sister; and two brothers.