

Spokespersons - Male & Female Both Sought

In the last issue of the newsletter we celebrated the life of Affirmation's male spokesperson Randy Hagan and shared our sorrow at his death. Now very recently we have

received the resignation of our female spokesperson, Amory Peck.

Affirmation's National Council now has the task of naming both a new male spokesperson and a female spokesperson. We invite nominations to be received no later than Jan. 1 (you

Transgender Victims Mourned

by Diane DeLap

On Dec. 21, 2001, a still unknown assailant shot 51 year-old Terrianne Summers in her Jacksonville, FL front yard. On Oct. 3, 2002, 17 year-old Gwen Araujo of Newark, CA was beaten and strangled by three men.

Then her lifeless body

GC 2004 Planning

Affirmation Council is already deep in preparation for General Conference 2004. That effort began officially April 2002, when the Council held it's spring session in Pittsburgh, site of the upcoming GC.

Council members walked the area, first spending time in the still under construction David L. Lawrence Convention Center. We tried to imag-

Continued to Page 5

Continued on Page 5

Continued on Page 7

Study Asks: Why Do We Stay United Methodist

Heritage, identity, family, local church, not denomination, Wesleyan theology, social justice focus, challenge, to work for change, faith, calling, stubbornness, welcoming or Reconciling Congregations, hope.

"It's my church, too!"

Jamie Bigham Stroud of

Philadelphia was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy recently by the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco.

Dr. Stroud's dissertation explored the question of why many gay, lesbian

Continued to Page 6

Tale of Out Gays Facing the Music

Book Review

Julian Rush – Facing the Music:

A Gay Methodist Minister's Story

by Gary Shephard

I experienced a profound sadness reading this book. Sure, it's about Julian Rush. It says so right in the title.

It's also about Judy WestLee, co-convenor of this organization. Ordained in the UMC, currently working at American Express Financial Advisors after a stint at Sears. (First tools, then water heaters. Lots of really predictable jokes about Judy being in hot water all the time. Julian Rush wound up at Wards selling tires at one point.)

It's also about my domestic partner. Ordained a deacon (back when deacon was a step to becoming an elder,) he's currently working as a computer programmer. He's trying to find a job more suited to his calling to ministry.

It's about a lot of

talented, committed people that our church says are of sacred worth, but which our church says are not qualified to be in ministry. It's just so hard to write a book review about a book that's the story of just one person, and yet so many people.

The book's a quick read, full of the lyrics from the numerous church musicals Julian wrote. The lyrics are often funny, often sad, often quite revealing in light of what was to come.

It's a detailed and humanizing story of just one of us. Proceeds from the sale of the book benefit the Colorado AIDS Project.

Next Kairos CoMotion

There is a second Kairos CoMotion Celebration scheduled for Oct. 30 - Nov. 1, 2003.

The location will again be in Wisconsin. The following key people committed to this event: Minerva Carcano, Joretta Marshall and Tex Sample.

Affirmation Newsletter

This Affirmation newsletter is a quarterly publication. Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here signed or unsigned are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

Co-Editors for this issue:
Judy WestLee
Gary Shephard

Affirmation's Mission Statement

Affirmation is an activist caucus of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, our families and friends organized to speak for ourselves. Together we:

Proclaim a gospel of respect, love and justice;

Relentlessly pursue policies and processes that support full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in all areas and levels of the United Methodist Church:

Overcome the barriers that diminish our common humanity by excluding or judging people because of their race, gender, class or physical abilities;

Empower people to undertake works of inclusion and justice where they are.

Strategic Visioning Contributions Sought

Affirmation last created a Strategic Plan in the late 1980's, which has carried us to today. We have recognized a time of significant transition has arrived. It is time to plan

Continued on Page 3

Council Storms Boston

Your National Council of Affirmation put its hand to the plow and looked forward toward both immediate housekeeping needs and long range goals at its last meeting, Oct. 12-14 in Newton, MA.

The Council continues to be concerned about how we communicate with our members and the public, and vice versa. Our phone voice mail has been discontinued. It was seldom used. Instead members may call Council members whose phone numbers are listed in the Council roster listing.

The Council is very concerned that our newsletter be published on a regular basis four times yearly. Judy WestLee was named newsletter editor. Her term as a Council member ends April, 2003, but she may be newsletter editor without being a Council member.

The Council continues to make plans for our involvement at General Conference 2004, April 27 - May 7 in Pittsburgh, PA. A draft of the Affirmation Platform for this General Conference will be discussed at our next meeting, January, 2003, in Austin, TX. Also at the meeting we will be dis-

cussing possible legislation to be submitted.

It has been decided that we will again be publishing daily newsletters at this General Conference. Gary Shephard was named Editor in Chief. Judy WestLee will be Assistant Editor.

Affirmation is working in coalition with other groups in such things as volunteer housing, hospitality room and volunteer coordination for General Conference.

Affirmation has again said it will run both the hospitality room and the combined office space in Pittsburgh.

There was discussion without conclusion about the role Affirmation should take in providing worship opportunities at General Conference. More work will be done in this area.

The Council is always interested in the thoughts, ideas and concerns of its members. Please contact either the organization or one of the Council members if you have something to contribute.

Visioning...

Continued from Page 2

the next phase of our work in the UMC. Without a broad based plan, our work will be less effective. Some old strategies need to be replaced by new ideas.

The environmental situation has changed dramatically. General Conference 2000 was a time of sadness for us but also a time of strengthening and making a powerful witness to the Truth of Jesus. The GLBT justice movement within the denomination is very visible and powerful on several fronts. Clearly, society is rapidly changing to a more welcoming stance. And though some people in our denomination have hardened their hearts, others ask why this persecution continues.

Affirmation must reassess its history, challenges, capabilities and environment to create a vision that empowers our future work.

It takes funding to get the broad input from our community within the denomination to do this plan. Help us prepare for the future by making a special contribution to our Strategic Plan today. Mark it for our Strategic Plan on the commitment card enclosed in this newsletter.

Introducing Rusty Norment

by Judy WestLee

I would like to introduce you to my dear friend - Clarence R. (Rusty) Norment. You will notice he is of average height and weight, has silver hair and wonderful kind smile. But take particular note of his twinkling blue eyes ... the eyes of a pixie, if I ever saw them!

Rusty has been on the Affirmation Council for 2 years. He is serving as our treasurer - a job of detail and responsibility with little thanks given.

A native of Virginia, Rusty lives in the house his Daddy built. He has lived in Virginia his entire life except when he served in the Navy during World War II.

Rusty taught high school science and math for 10 years in northern Virginia. He then worked in a public school system for another 22 years, the last 17 of which he was an assistant principal for the high school. When he came out as a gay man, he was fired on the spot. He was not even allowed to return to his office to pick up his personal items.

For the past 21 years

Rusty has been a cashier for UKROPS Supermarkets.

Rusty and his partner Brett took a long vacation a year ago to Australia and New Zealand. There Rusty made a new record as being the oldest person to make the world's longest bungee jump. He has pictures to prove it.

When asked why he is staying in the United Methodist Church (UMC), Rusty explains he grew up in the Methodist Church. "I was born into the church and I've spent all of my 76 years there," he says.

Rusty is "out" and completely accepted in his local congregation. He has taught Sunday School there for many years. He was Lay Leader for many years. He is active on the Stewardship Committee.

Rusty is serving on the Affirmation Council because his "ultimate aim is to get the discriminatory language out of the Book of Discipline."

Rusty wanted to add the following: Rusty and his partner Brett will be celebrating 15 years together this Christmas. **Merry Christmas, Rusty and Brett!**

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Spokespersons...

Continued From Page 1

must be sure the nominee would be willing to serve). Nominees will receive a list of questions from the Council's Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, and will submit their responses in writing to be circulated to Council members.

Affirmation's next Male Spokesperson and Female Spokesperson will be selected during the Jan. 17-20 Council meeting.

The Spokespersons Job Description reads: "1. To be the only ones authorized to officially speak for Affirmation (All Council Members are encouraged to be an Affirmation presence when opportunities arise.) 2. To be the official contact for the media. 3. To assist with press release procedures: identify issues; write and/or assign press release responsibilities; edit and distribute according to procedures. 4. To proactively seek places and events where official presence is needed and arrange for such (consult with Lynx Committee and Council as appropriate). 5. When representation is delegated to someone other than spokespersons, spokespersons shall receive a summary report.

6. At least one spokesperson shall be present at the whole of General Conference and any pre-General Conference official briefings. 7. To attend Council meetings if not already a council member. 8. To arrange for reasonable continuous availability of at least one spokesperson for contact."

Nominations may be e-mailed to umaffirmation@yahoo.com or mailed to Affirmation, P.O. Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204-1021.

Preparing for GC 2004

Continued from Page 1

ine the workings of our denomination's governing body while standing in the middle of an AKC dog show. We also wandered the blocks around the center, locating adjacent hotels and finding local churches, putting together initial ideas for housing, events, and working space.

We also spent an afternoon a First UMC Pittsburgh, talking with local members and exploring ways we, and they, can work together in conference preparation.

May 16 - 17 Judy WestLee and Amory Peck joined a group of 16 allies meeting

in Chicago. Representatives of RMN, MFSA, Parents' Reconciling Network, Clergy Alliance, Church Within a Church, United Methodists of Color, MoSAIC, Soul Force, the Shower of Stoles and Affirmation, began working together to forge strategy and give attention to the many details.

To this point Affirmation has committed to the production of a daily newsletter during all of General Conference, and to the management of shared office space. We are also working on our platform statement, and on possible legislation.

This work will continue, right up to the opening of General Conference 2004.

Affirmation Seeks Legal Counsel

Since Affirmation is an organization that sticks its neck out, someone may get unhappy and attack us with a suit. And we may have occasional issues as a volunteer-run corporation.

We have no known current need, but we want to be prepared. Please send a resume, and information on availability and fees to the Affirmation PO box or e-mail.

Why We Stay

Continued from Page 1

and bisexual United Methodists remain loyal to and active in their churches despite the denomination's increasingly restrictive policies toward sexual minorities.

Her research revealed that the participating gay, lesbian and Bisexual United Methodists remain loyal to the church despite feelings of disappointment, hurt, anger and frustration over denominational policy that declares the practice of homosexuality to be "inconsistent with Christian teaching." More than 350 research participants answered Stroud's research questionnaire.

A primary reason given by many for remaining loyal to the denomination is that they feel welcomed, accepted and at home in their local churches. Others frequently mentioned family church connections, the denomination's historic advocacy of social justice, Wesleyan theology and hope that over time the denomination will become more open and accepting.

One respondent said simply, "It's my church, too." Other respondents echoed that response and

elaborated on why they felt that way.

For additional information, contact Dr. Stroud at 610-664-6280 or by e-mail at jbstroud@GUMresearch.org

Wyoming Chapter Closes Shop

The Wyoming Conference Chapter of Affirmation had its closing worship service Oct. 20. The following is excerpted from the service:

...we have changed and...many situations around us and in our community have changed.

Although we come to acknowledge that we will not again worship together as the Wyoming Conference Chapter of Affirmation, we also come to celebrate our history and our contribution to our community in the past 12 years. In the intervening years, literally hundreds of people have passed through our doors.

From the beginning we were ecumenical, since there was no safe space in town for anyone gay-identified and Christian. We invited affirming pastors and lay leaders of all traditions. After a hundred, we lost count of how many different pas-

tors led our services.

In the meantime, both our secular and religious worlds shifted, and the need for us to exist lessened.

This letter from the Affirmation National Council was sent:

To the members of Wyoming Annual Conference Affirmation:

With sadness we have received the news that your chapter will soon stop meeting after many years.

You filled a void, providing a safe space for ecumenical LGBT worship for 12 years. You offered friendship and support when some felt none could exist. You modeled mutual respect and love to the entire community. You demonstrated that strength and tenderness were not antithetical but rather can exist simultaneously.

In other words, you did good work. Be proud of your accomplishments. Don't avoid reunions. Keep in touch with us and more importantly with each other.

All of Our Best Wishes and Heartfelt Thanks -signed, Gary Shephard and Judy WestLee, Co-conveners of National Council of Affirmation

Day of Remembrance.....

Continued from Page 1

was placed in a shallow grave 150 miles away in the Sierra foothills. The three are currently in jail on various charges in connection with the murder.

Separated by a continent, a generation, 10 months time and the disposition of the cases the two are connected by one important similarity — their transgender lifestyles had incurred such hatred that their lives were brutally terminated by those who could not deal with them. Unfortunately, this same connection is another element that “Trans” people have in common with the larger lesbian, gay and bisexual communities.

Each year in November, an International Transgender Day of Remembrance (<http://www.gender.org/remember/day/index.html>) is held to mourn those from the Trans community lost during the previous years. Less than a month after the 2001 Day of Remembrance, Terrianne Summers was killed.

Terrianne had been a human rights activist in the Jacksonville area for

some years, and had been a driving force behind protests at the Jacksonville corporate headquarters of the Winn-Dixie supermarket chain. At the time, an ACLU lawsuit was underway over the firing of one of Winn-Dixie’s Louisiana employees, Peter Oiler, for crossdressing occasionally off-duty. In September, 2002 a US District Court Judge dismissed Oiler’s complaint, ruling that the federal ban on sex discrimination does not apply to people who are transgendered. Speculation was that Terrianne’s murder was connected with her protest activities against Winn-Dixie, but like over 60 per cent of Transgender victims of hate, her killer has not been located.

Just about a month before the 2002 Day of Remembrance, Gwen Araujo’s body was found. Gwen was an active teenager who had been struggling with expression of her gender identity for years. At age 14 she began to wear girls’ clothes and makeup, and changed her name from Eddie to Gwen.

Gwen was assaulted and killed Oct. 3 during a party at Paul and Jose Merel’s Newark house. Paul Merel’s girlfriend, Nicole Brown, allegedly

took Gwen into the bathroom to resolve questions about her gender identity. When she returned she declared that Gwen was a boy, following which Jose Merel along with Jason Nabors and Michael Magidson beat Gwen, then dragged her semiconscious body into the garage and strangled her to death with a rope. Her body was then transported to a remote area of Silver Fork campground in the Sierras and buried.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance this year marked over two dozen reported anti-transgender murders with rallies in over 50 US cities as well as Canada and Chile. The Transgender Day of Remembrance began in San Francisco in 1999 in remembrance of the November, 1998 murder of Rita Hester. Rita Hester’s case, like most transgendered murders, remains unsolved. This year’s Boston Transgender Day of Remembrance activities included a special Service of Remembrance on Nov. 17 at the Cambridge Welcoming Ministries, a LGBT ministry supported by the New England Conference of the UMC. In addition, several are UMC ministers served as grief counselors at the Boston Day of Remembrance rally held Nov. 20.

New Project & Web Site on LGBT Religious History

The LGBT Religious Archives Network (LGBTRAN) is an innovative new project to assist us and other LGBT religious groups to preserve our historical records and to encourage study of LGBT religious movements. LGBTRAN serves to: 1) resource LGBT religious leaders and groups in determining how to best preserve their records in an appropriate repository; and 2) provide information on LGBT religious collections through a central electronic database and other services on its web site—www.lgbtran.org. LGBTRAN can perhaps be best understood as a “virtual” archive.

On the LGBTRAN web site (www.lgbtran.org) you will currently find a Pioneers Gallery, the beginnings of an extensive collection of biographies and photos of LGBT religious leaders. An Archival Exhibit, a sampler of some early records from modern LGBT religious movements, is another feature of the LGBTRAN web site. You will also find information on the goals and work of this ground-breaking project there.

For more information, email mbowman@lgbtran.org or call 773-322-0290.

The LGBTRAN is a project of Chicago Theological Seminary.

Together In Love Faith Stories of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Couples

by Amory Peck

The contributors to “Together in Love: Faith Stories of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Couples” are 26 couples who share with bravery and honesty their life stories.

The couples in this book have been together from three to over 40 years.

Reading this collection is very much like getting to know new friends. Through their words, these couples share what we most want to know about others – the backgrounds that formed them, the faith that sustains them, the joys and perils of their journeys.

If you’d like to “meet” these new friends, copies of the book are available through Roberta Showalter Kreider, PO Box 101, Sellersville, PA, 18960, \$24 postpaid.

Seeking Nominations

Affirmation is now seeking nominations for its governing Council. Individuals who want the opportunity to shape the voice of LGBT people in The United Methodist Church are needed.

In addition to having a strong commitment to change the UMC to become more accepting and supportive of LGBT people, nominees are committed to attending three long-weekend meetings per year (travel expenses reimbursed) for three years, completing agreed-to tasks, and maintaining communication with other Council members. (Shorter time commitments are available to fill at-large vacancies.)

Nominations should be sent to the Affirmation PO box or e-mail, to be received by Jan. 10. Please include name, address, phone and e-mail of the nominee. Self-nominations are encouraged. People of diverse backgrounds and interests are encouraged to run.

Nominees will be listed on ballots sent to all current Affirmation members in their region in early 2003. Additional information is available from Council members Kathryn Mitchem or John Calhoun.

