



the GAY LUTHERAN

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Gays win friends at ALC convention

Four members of LUTHERANS CONCERNED visited the ALC's biennial convention in Detroit Oct. 9-15, maintaining a low-key presence and winning new friends to the cause of gay justice in the church.

Representing LUTHERANS CONCERNED were Coordinator Allen Blaich, an ALC member from Salt Lake City; Treasurer Marie Kent (LCA) of Minneapolis; a New Yorker and a Pennsylvanian.

Their presence was repeatedly visible to the 1,000 delegates and church leaders, reminding everyone of the thousands of devout gays within Lutheran ranks.

The gay presence was noted in the first issue of the daily convention newsletter, which called attention to the LUTHERANS CONCERNED information room at the Sheraton-Cadillac, the main convention hotel.

The group also maintained a display table for a variety of gay informational literature near the Augsburg Publishing House array--the only non-official display at Cobo Hall.

In all, 400 informational brochures about LUTHERANS CONCERNED were distributed at

Ads rejected

The official news magazines of all three major Lutheran churches, which in July refused to carry the news of LUTHERANS CONCERNED formation, have now declined paid ads listing our address.

Although the LCA teaches that gays are "entitled to understanding and justice in church and community," The Lutheran rejected our \$29 classified ad as "inappropriate."

The ALC's Lutheran Standard editor, George Muedeking, quoted a 1966 ALC convention resolution which alleges that being gay "is contrary to God's will" as he rejected our \$15 ad.

The Lutheran Witness, organ of the Missouri Synod, declined a \$106 one-inch display ad (the smallest allowed) as "contrary to editorial policy."

Each ad read, "Seeking love, justice and understanding in our church," adding LUTHERANS CONCERNED name and box number.

the convention, and a wide variety of informal contacts with the delegates was recorded.

While some voices of criticism were heard in convention hallways, just as many defenders spoke up with words of support. When our hand-lettered sign at Cobo Hall was removed by one delegate, it was quickly replaced--and joined by another one in the Sheraton-Cadillac lobby.

No attempt was made to address the convention or to bring resolutions to the floor.

The gay delegation spoke with 12 to 15 lay and clergy delegates who dropped by the hotel room, several of them acknowledging that they, too, are gay. They thanked LUTHERANS CONCERNED for the affirmation it gives them just by existing. Other visitors included a bishop's assistant, with whom the question of gay clergy was discussed.

The group also provided several delegates with a chance for an informal discussion with Detroit gay people. In addition, the LUTHERANS CONCERNED group met with Brian McNaught, president, and other women and men in the Detroit chapter of Dignity, the Catholic gay group.

Three weeks before the convention the ALC's Board for the Division for Service and Mission in America voted to distribute a LUTHERANS CONCERNED brochure to delegates as part of the division's presentation to the convention. To this end 1,300 brochures were printed and shipped to Cobo Hall in advance. Inexplicably, they could not be found when the convention opened, despite repeated searches. Two weeks later the 1,300 unused brochures arrived back in Minneapolis from Detroit, their resting spot in Detroit still a mystery.

Travel to Detroit and hotel expenses were financed by the generous donations of LUTHERANS CONCERNED supporters, above and beyond their membership dues, and by the travelers themselves.

Discussion has already begun about LUTHERANS CONCERNED visits to the Missouri Synod biennial convention in Anaheim, Calif., in July 1975; to the LCA convention in Boston in June 1976; and to circuit, district and synod conventions in the next six months.

On our differences

Recently I returned from a trip, contacting our members from one coast to another. From this I realize that just being gay and Lutheran are not enough to bind us together. Within the people I met were many shades of understanding as to the person's gayness and as to her/his beliefs of the church.

It brings into focus the higher problems of Lutheran churches and the many other aspects that affect one's life.

Yet wound up in the seeming differences is a Gospel message that does not cast people into one mold, but glorifies the fact that there are "many parts but one body."

As with all bodies, only by acceptance of the values of the other parts can the body work together.

I hope that this may be one of the side messages of LUTHERANS CONCERNED--that as it grows and matures, we may seek to truly understand our fellow members so that we can humbly point out to the church one of the basic messages that Christ brought to this world--accepting people as themselves, not as others would want them. --Allen Blaich.

Our mailbag swells

I recently heard of your work in behalf of gay Lutherans. I most heartily applaud you.

--LCA, Hollywood.

I read about your group with great joy. I have felt estranged from the church for some time, partly because of its lack of Christian concern for homosexuals....Thanks very much for the work you are doing.

--LCA, Indianapolis.

How marvelous it is to feel that you "belong" to a gay family of believers.

--Chicago.

Enclosed is a small contribution to the new group whose presence I warmly welcome....Perhaps a professed gay presence in American Lutheranism, genuinely concerned for the integrity of the church's pastoral ministry, will help stimulate

Staff hears gays

New friends and supporters were gained among the 15 pastors and staff members of the ALC's Division for Ministry and Life who attended an all-day presentation on gay questions in Minneapolis Oct. 22.

Coordinator Diane Fraser of St. Peter, Minn., and Marie Kent, Minneapolis, were among the LUTHERANS CONCERNED members who presented the program, joining speakers from Gay Community Services Inc. and Lesbian Resource Center.

"We met some old friends and we won some new ones," Fraser said afterwards. "By the end of the day, even the foot-draggers were asking different kinds of questions."

The varieties of gay, bisexual, celibate and active life were discussed in lecture and small groups during the morning and at lunch. Later the film A POSITION OF FAITH, which shows the ordination of an openly gay United Church of Christ minister, was shown.

On Sept. 21 Fraser appeared at Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Peter to discuss gay life with an adult class studying the full range of human sexuality.

A sociology instructor at the LCA's Gustavus Adolphus College, Fraser said that the presentation prompted further discussion of gay questions both on and off the campus.

that search for understanding.

--LC/MS, New York.

Being in prison and gay means double trouble... 16 when my first gay experience came...My family condemned me, along with the church...I became bitter, left home, my family, my church. In coming to California, I entered college; my school became anti-Gay, so I really became depressed, couldn't pray with sincerity, began using amphetamines, downers...Was involved in a terrible car accident, ran, eventually was captured. I came to prison.

Thankfully, I can go home in February, maybe sooner...Thanks to you, I have something to look forward to. Hope others like you will write to me; will answer all.

--Monte Krier, Room 8219, Box AE-B-54807
San Luis Obispo, Calif. 93409

Gay and rejected at 16

By DIANE FRASER

The good Christians who lead our churches can be fine, upstanding and admirable people. But their misunderstanding of gay people, a misunderstanding that is often abetted by the church itself, can lead them to most unChristian deeds. I can cite my own experience when I was 16, when I first recognized that I was attracted to a girl.

She was 17 and we were working on summer science projects in the Los Angeles area, where I grew up. Our projects were on the same floor of a research building.

And I knew she had a driver's license, so I suggested one day that she get her parents' car so we could drive up to Mulholland Drive. Why? she asked. Oh, to look at the lights and things, I replied. What kind of "things"? she answered. Well, I confessed, hugging and kissing and such.

She turned me down--so politely that I didn't realize that anything gay was supposed to be "wrong." She said she sometimes had the same feelings I did and she recognized them as homosexual, but she said she didn't want to do anything about those feelings. She was pretty well together about gay questions, for her mother's best friend was a lesbian.

Unfortunately not everyone has the same stable approach. I told my best friend in Burbank about the incident, being turned down and all. My friend's head was definitely not together, and she told all the rest of my friends that "Diane is queer." By the time school resumed in September all the kids in high school had heard it.

I didn't know what "queer" meant. Since I was always considered a "brain" and had been taunted about it before, I thought it was just a new word for "egghead." But many of the parents went to our church, and it took the church to tell me what "queer" meant.

You should understand that I was kind of a Jesus freak of that time--active in the church since I was a kid, singing in the choir and attending both Sunday School and worship service every Sunday morning. And I'd be right back at church Sunday night for Youth Fellowship, where I was financial secretary.

The church session called me in, at age 16, and asked me about this reputation I had around school. What did I have to say for myself? they asked. Well, I told them about the summer incident and added that, while I had no experience in bed with a woman, I did have these feelings.

Their answer was along the lines of--I can't remember precisely today--maybe I should stop taking communion until I got over these feelings, or maybe they'd revoke my membership. I told them they needn't bother, that I'd leave the church if that was the way they felt.

So I left the church--it happened to be Presbyterian, but that makes little difference--and it was two years before I found a new church home.

During that time I must have attended or checked out just about every Christian denomination there is. And then I heard The Lutheran Hour radio broadcast. The subject was sexuality, and the sermon said that sex was a gift from God, to be used responsibly. That was the first positive thing about sex I had ever heard out of the church.

Of course, I figured all Lutheran churches were the same. So I picked up the phone book and started attending the nearest Lutheran church--St. John's in Sacramento, the biggest parish in the LCA's Pacific Southwest Synod. I attended for a couple of months, liked the worship and felt really comfortable and at home. So I was reconfirmed as a Lutheran.

That was at age 19, and I knew I was gay--intellectually, that is. It was three years later before I came out, and that was at a Daughters of Bilitis meeting. I was teaching Sunday School and singing in the choir at St. Michael's in Berkeley, where I was living then. I met my first lover a couple of months later, and I felt happier then than at few other times in my life. I'm glad I'm gay.

Should I feel bitter toward the church, for telling me to get out at the age of 16? Well, I don't. I'm just waiting for the majority of the church to discover the message it has been teaching all these years--that Christ offers love, joy and reconciliation to all human beings.

Church voices divided over gay rights

The LCA's official position is that gay people are "entitled to understanding and justice in church and community," but at least two LCA groups act otherwise:

TORONTO--The LCA's Canada Section executive committee has praised the Manitoba government decision not to recognize or register same-sex marriages.

PHILADELPHIA--The LCA has joined the Catholic diocese in opposing an anti-discrimination bill to protect gay people before the City Council.

Endorsing the bill are the Episcopalian diocese, the United Methodist conference, the United Church of Christ, Quakers and B'nai B'rith, as well as the American Baptist Churches, whose national ministries secretary, James A. Christison, said no legitimate social or moral reason exists to justify the denial of gays' basic constitutional rights.

NEW YORK--LCA's Metro New York Synod criticized the City Council for failing to enact a gay job-rights law in this city, and pledged to work for adoption of such a bill after the November city elections.

Terence Cardinal Cook, the Catholic prelate of New York, opposed the bill--as the bishops of Worcester, Mass., and St. Paul, Minn., did of similar bills in their cities.

However, the bishop of Newark, N. J., came out for the New York bill, and John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit said the church has an obligation to defend the civil rights of every human being, gay or not.

SAN FRANCISCO--Two LCA pastors, the Revs.

news notes

Richard Bennett and Earl Johnson, enrolled for a symposium Nov. 8-10 on the varieties of gay lifestyles, conducted by the Council for Religion and the Homosexual Inc.

DENVER--The United Methodist Council on Youth Ministry will ask that church's 1976 convention to delete all anti-gay language from its statements, and to declare that "sex, race, marital status or sexual orientation shall not be a bar to the ordained ministry."

NEW YORK--The Unitarian-Universalist Association voted \$38,000 to finance an office for its Gay Caucus--the first such denominational subsidy in the country.

BERKELEY--Some 50 professors, students and spouses attended a day-long symposium on gay lifestyles Oct. 12, sponsored by the Council for Religion and the Homosexual and by the Gay Caucus of the Graduate Theological Union, a consortium of nine Berkeley seminaries.

HELP WANTED

This feature brings together our members who, on their own, want to form task forces, committees and chapters. Items should describe the nature of the group (local, national) and purpose, listing an address or phone number.

Dec. 20 is the deadline for the next issue. Submit to Newsletter Editor, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115.

CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE AREA: For time and place of next chapter meeting, phone Kris War-moth evenings at (note new number) 955-4285 in Chicago. Be persistent.

MINNESOTA CHAPTER: Film, A POSITION OF FAITH, to be shown at meeting Friday, Nov. 22, 8 p.m., at Luther Hall, 1813 University Av. SE., Minneapolis. Also plans for district conventions. Or phone 341-2418 Minneapolis.

LOS ANGELES AREA: Watch The Advocate's Calendar for date of next meeting.

MISSOURI SYNOD: Planning for national convention in Anaheim, Calif., in July 1975. Ideas welcome. Write Allen Blaich, Box 15592, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115.

SOUTHERNERS: Gays and those with same-sex orientation but not yet 'gay' about it are invited to explore need for common support, action. Write the Rev. Wilbur C. Cain, 1230 Royal St. apt. 11, New Orleans LA 70116 with phone no. and address (if not confidential), to be contacted for meeting of God's people who are gay and godly too.

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