



galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

July 2010
Volume 21 Issue 3

2010 GALA International Retreat Samish Island Campground Bow, Washington

6:00 PM Friday, September 3—10:00 AM Monday, September 6

The GALA Retreat is just around the corner. Costs will vary from person, place, distance, and time, so it's time to start SAVING! Yes, you heard me, SAVING! It's a fairly new concept in this country, but one we should be able to grasp quickly. Looking ahead to the retreat, you may find some really good deals on flights, so start searching and booking now.



The cost for the retreat this year is \$150.00, per person. We are counting on a wonderful retreat full of love, joy and hope. We are looking forward to new experiences that will last a lifetime. We will share our stories; all while making new friendships and renewing old.



We hope to see you at the Samish Island GALA International Retreat, Labor Day Weekend, 2010!

You may use the registration form found on page 11 or access a registration form on the GALA website:

<http://www.galaweb.org/content/newsletters/GALA212.3.pdf>

Living, Learning and Laughing in the Light of God!

GALA

Executive Board

David Howard, President

howard092248@yahoo.com
(216) 712-7218

Allan Fiscus, Past President

acfiscusrn@aol.com

Clyde Frey, Secretary

cfrey@newstrax.com

**David Woosley, Under
Secretary for Publications**

dwoosley@sbcglobal.net

**Patti Danielson,
Treasurer**

Members At Large:

Chuck Hewitt

mikechuckh@gmail.com

Sandra Merth

s_merth59@yahoo.com

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President's Message by David Howard

Can a summer get any busier? In addition to my full time work as an advocate for good public policy in Ohio, I have the pastoral responsibilities at the Elyria congregation, and 2 new puppies. But GALA continues to call as we progress on our journey to full inclusion in the Community of Christ.

What has happened since Conference?

- All the planters around the Temple were planted by wet GALA volunteers. Our donation and ministry were also recognized from the podium in the announcements before one of the business meetings at Conference. Small but significant progress.
- The Apostolic fields have been aligned to place 5 Apostles entirely within the US field, except for Apostle Maupin who also has Caribbean and Mexican responsibilities. They are in the process of planning the 2012 National Conference. Our issues will be one of the primary items on the agenda for the Conference.
- The World Church Leadership Council and the Standing High Council are meeting in September. "The retreat's purpose is to discuss the 1982 Standing High Council statement on "Homosexuality" and the 2002 World Church Leadership Council statement on "Community, Common Consent, and Homosexuality" to clarify what is policy and what is opinion.
- We had a marvelous experience at the San Francisco Pride celebration, and my testimony is that God is reaching out to many to respond to the freeing and transforming power of the Spirit. One thing for sure, the Walnut Creek congregation is a tremendous example of a welcoming congregation for all!
- I had a chance to conduct a conversational session on the LGBT issue at the Eastern Great Lakes Mission center reunion a couple weeks ago. This is potentially a useful medium to have safe conversations with a larger group of people.
- GALA produced a brochure for the San Francisco Pride that includes a welcome, invitation and scripture pertaining to the welcoming of the LGBT community.

It is important, if possible, to attend the retreat at Samish Island. We are also looking at regional retreats in Florida and California over the next 9 months. We are also exploring the possibility of having the 2011 retreat at Doniphon again so access to participate will be easier. Blessings to each of you and hope to see you soon.

God's Persistent, Relentless, Pursuit: A Testimony *by Charlie Robison*

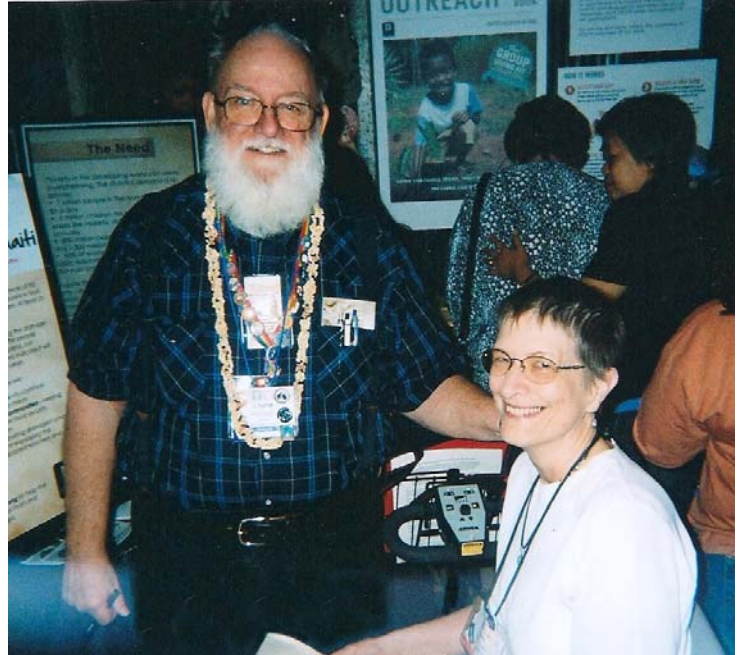
"I am bisexual, with strong same-sex attractions." With those words, I recently stunned my wife of forty years. It was the day after Christmas 2009, and I had asked her to watch again the DVD *For the Bible Tells Me So*. I wanted to use it as a basis for talking about a secret I had kept all my life, and to follow through on a promise I had made to my counselor.

About two years previously, I reached a point of despair and frustration where I decided I really had no choice but to seek out a few sessions with a counselor. I felt like I could no longer deal with personal issues I had struggled with my whole life. When I was about seven years old and in the second grade, I had a run-in with a friend on the playground. All of the other kids had gathered around to hear us verbally argue it out. I don't remember what the argument was about, only that everyone sided with *him* and started laughing and making fun of me. The emotional pain sunk deep, and I went off to an isolated place by myself and cried until the bell rang. But in those moments of solitude, I determined to never risk myself in front of people again. My wall's foundation was laid.

Shortly thereafter, I entered into puberty and found myself having attraction to both sexes. This was back during the '50s, when sexual issues were not talked about at school, home, or church. Because of being afraid of risking who I was, I determined to keep it hidden. I had a very difficult time in high school. I did not have any self-confidence, did not like myself, did not know how to deal with my sexual attractions, and continued to build walls.

After college, I joined the Navy in 1966. One of the questions on the application said, "Are you homosexual?" and I checked the "No" box. Because of my same-sex attractions, I had labeled myself homosexual and said to myself as I checked the box, "Well, that's a lie. I'm living a lie."

Things finally came to a head in 2007 and I made arrangements to see a counselor. It was during these sessions of dealing with my sexual identity as well as other issues that I made a promise to the counselor that I would tell my wife. I was tired of part of me living in silence and secrecy. However, having told no one for almost sixty



years, I found it much easier to make excuses and put it off, rather than take time to sit down and talk.

In September of 2009, GALA arranged to show the video *For the Bible Tells Me So* at our congregation, Open Arms. My wife wanted to attend, partly in support of her brother who had come out several years previously--to better understand him and the issues surrounding his sexuality. I agreed to go with her, though I always felt uncomfortable in GLBT groups, probably because of my unwillingness to face my own sexuality and for fear that someone might find me out or see something that no one else saw. The movie was a very emotional experience for me. I found myself crying through the whole showing, relating to the emotions and feelings of those who were going through dealing with the issues of same-sex attraction in their families.

At one point, Pam leaned over to me and said--after the video had presented the information that the younger son in the birth order of sons is more likely to be homosexual--"Boy, I'm sure glad you escaped that!" and I thought to myself, "If you only knew..." It was at that point that I determined again that we needed to talk, and set the

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date in my own mind as being after Christmas when she would be off work for a week, we would not have our grandson, and I would be through with my gig as Santa.

After watching the DVD together, and me coming out to her with the issues I had dealt with, she kissed me and held my hand, and we sat together for a while. But she made no comment, and I thought to myself, "Well, it's out now, so there it is."

About a week later, she said "Okay, it's my turn to talk." She also is a very private person and finds it difficult to talk about sensitive issues. She told me that when I had shared with her, it felt like a kick in the stomach and she really didn't know how to deal with it or how to support me--and just had a lot of questions racing through her mind. She visited with a friend who she remembered had a doctorate in human sexuality, which helped her focus in on how she wanted to talk to me and what to expect. The friend's parting comment to her was, "Well, Pam, I don't know where this is all heading, but hang on for the ride!"

After sharing, we both felt like our marriage really opened it and it became a very freeing experience. About a month later, I shared with our grown son Mark, and he was likewise very supportive. However, as is often the case, while I'd begun to share it with family, I found that all the walls I had built still walled God out. I still did not see myself as lovable or that God could forgive me for some of my failings.

At the end of January, the World Church scheduled a weekend gathering for evangelists and spouses and other interested persons. Pam and I registered to attend. During the weekend, one of the suggestions was that all evangelists should have spiritual directors. That was something that I really longed to do, but it also felt threatening. In order to take advantage of spiritual direction, you have to be willing to open up. I finally got up enough nerve to ask one of the trained spiritual directors if she would be willing to work with me in the area of *lectio divino*, one of her specialties. I thought to myself, "Well, that's an area that should be pretty non-threatening!" If it went well, we could go into deeper areas. Little did I know!

We arranged to meet in the middle of February for our first session at 3:00 on Wednesday afternoon. About 1:30 I found myself being so tired that I decided to take an hour's nap before meeting with her. While napping I had this dream: I was driving over into Kansas City to take care of some personal business when I decided I needed exercise, parked the car, and got on a bicycle (always

handy in a dream). I rode on downtown, took care of whatever the business was, and was returning home in early evening. As I was riding back, I became aware that I had no clue where I had parked the car. I found myself pedaling through various sections of the inner city in Kansas City, places that were not healthy to be late in the day. I stopped at an intersection to try to get my bearings, when a young boy (seven or eight years of age), who obviously was a street urchin and homeless, came up to me and looked at me pleadingly and asked, "Can I come live with you?" It shocked me. "Well, golly, I feel sorry for you." It was obvious he was not living in a healthy environment and there were bad influences around. I continued to myself, "But what would Pam do with you? She's under a lot of stress at work and dealing with a lot of other issues--and having you around would be unsettling at home." And I didn't know what to do with him either! I finally decided I would just have to tell him that Pam didn't want him to come live with us; that's when I woke up. "Well, that's a weird dream!" I mused.

I met with my director at 3:00 for our first session. We had a nice chit-chat and talked through and practiced *lectio divino*. As we were wrapping up, she mentioned that she was going to be attending a workshop on dream interpretation, that she had taken quite a bit of training in dream interpretation and feels that they have a lot to tell us if we're willing to listen to the issues they bring to us to deal with. I said, "Oh really?" And I told her my dream. She looked at me and said, "Well, Charles, you know who that boy is, don't you? That boy is you! You have some issue from your childhood that you need to deal with." It stunned me, because she had no sooner said that than I recognized that the little boy was that part of me that I had walled off and he was now asking to come home.

I left in a state of emotional shock. I didn't really know what to do with it. I felt like it was related to my issue of who I was sexually and my lifelong habit of walling that part of me off--but I felt like I had already dealt with it. I had talked to Pam; I had talked to Mark. What else was I supposed to do with it?

That night as I was retiring to bed, I picked up a book I had read previously titled *The Lance and the Shield: the Life and Times of Sitting Bull*. I was about a chapter into the book for the second time, and this is the first paragraph I read as I settled into bed:

Wichasha wakan were dreamers--men who had experienced dreams with sacred content or who had attained visions of powerful spiritual meaning. Not all dreamers were holy men, but all holy men

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were dreamers. One function of holy men was to help people interpret dreams, for they imposed obligations as binding as a personal vow, and **to ignore their intent was to invite personal calamity.**

For the second time that day, I was stunned. I thought to myself, "God, what are you trying to tell me?" I was at a loss to understand what issue I needed to deal with or how.

That night I had the following dream: There was a baby girl who was bleeding but none of the adults seemed at all concerned. It was to be expected, as she was beginning her period. And I thought to myself, "If that was a baby boy and he was bleeding, all sorts of emergency action would be taken to discover the cause, get it corrected, and stop the bleeding. Oh, baby girls and baby boys are viewed differently!" I awoke, more confused than ever, and wondered if the last dream in particular dealt with the family lore that had said a number of times that after already having two sons, I was to be the girl in the family (though I don't particularly remember feeling negative about that history).

Then out of the blue I received an e-mail asking if I would play the role of the father in our church drama of the prodigal son next Sunday, March 14, with Mark playing the role of the prodigal. I agreed. Then I received a separate e-mail asking if I would do the scripture moment. You guessed it—it was the prodigal son! Maybe God was being none too subtle about giving me hints. As I read over the script in preparation for the drama the next several days, I found myself being emotionally involved repeatedly in the story with a sense of longing of wanting to come home, even as the little boy in my dream, but feeling I didn't know how. (The drama turned out to be a powerful experience for both Mark and me and gave me pause to ponder all that was happening in rapid succession in my life.)

I met with my spiritual advisor the following Wednesday again at 3:00 in the afternoon, and we discussed the dreams and the story of the prodigal but really didn't sense any new light on their possible meaning other than the need to come home. I was still very confused over how to deal with them and their potential significance in my life. She suggested I spend time with Psalm 139. For the next week I read it every day—a beautiful psalm, but I couldn't really accept its implications for myself. How could God really love me? My walls stood firm!

Toward the end of March, I had another dream. In this dream there were five or six of us, dressed in full Army combat gear, searching for a criminal in the pitch-black of night. We entered a building, and ahead of us—with his back turned to us—was the criminal we were looking for, silhouetted in the soft light of the room. Everett Graffeo threw his hand up and said, "Stop!" He handed us his rifle and said, "I'm going to try to reach him." He began walking toward the individual, speaking in English—no response. He spoke in a foreign language; again, no response. It was at this point I woke up.

With my director's instructions that all dreams focus on the self, I thought about the person of Everett Graffeo, former presiding evangelist of the church. To me he symbolizes the office of evangelist, which priesthood I hold. Also, ten years previously Everett had given me a continuing life blessing at a time when I really needed it. It was a blessing in which God reaffirmed his love for me as a beloved son. It also challenged me to reach out in significant ministry to those around me. It was a beautiful experience, but again, because of walls I had built, I found myself thinking, "Yeah, but God can't really mean me," and placed it on the shelf. Because of the dream, I thought maybe I needed to take that blessing out and read it again. I had the same reaction as before—a beautiful blessing, but God couldn't really mean me. While I accepted it intellectually, it didn't take residence in my heart.

It was now drawing close to World Conference, and feeling the stress of all the things I needed to get done at home, I debated about whether I should continue being a delegate or resign and use the time "more productively" at home. Still feeling overwhelmed by the need to break through the walls around me, and to find focus for my life, I determined that I needed to remain a delegate; I needed to be immersed in Conference on the chance that *something* would happen. Emotionally I was desperate.

The first Sunday afternoon of Conference was a delegate session on spiritual formation. We went through a series of activities that are outlined in the publication *Yearning for God*. They asked us a series of questions, followed by spiritual practices. The following modified notes are from my journal:

- **How deeply do I want to go in my discipleship? Yes, I do want to go deep.**
- **Am I willing to be more completely formed into the likeness and life of Jesus Christ? Yes, that is the yearning of my heart.**
- **Holy indifference. I had not a clue what they meant by this until they defined it: Be focused on**

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divine sharing with us...being indifferent to our own agendas.

- **Shedding—shed barriers, letting go. *Oh, how I need to do that!* Doctrine and Covenants 163—pray with body gestures. *I immersed myself in this prayer.***
- **“God the Creator weeps...”—*We cupped hands to catch his tears, then poured them over our heads.***
- **“God yearns to draw you close so that your wounds may be healed”—*We circled our arms as if hugging a tree and then brought them to our chests. While doing this, I visualized God drawing me close to heal my pain and woundedness.***
- ***Many times when we’re praying or meditating, our mind wanders and it was suggested that we pick a word to help us refocus. I picked the phrase, “Be vulnerable to divine grace.” I don’t remember how long they gave us; I am sure it was not long. But my memory of the time focused on the phrase was a time that was unhurried, immersed in a sense of peace and a yearning for me being able to be vulnerable to divine grace.***
- ***A scripture from the first chapter of Mark was quoted: “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and left the house and went into a solitary place...” I thought to myself, “I need to do that.”***

I can’t say that I had any “blinding light” vision or an overpowering sense of God’s presence, but in that moment, my life was turned upside down and I have not been the same since! I sensed growing within an overwhelming yearning to magnify my calling as an evangelist. Before Conference, I could easily have signed my name “Charlie Robison, R.E.”—reluctant evangelist—but no more! The Spirit continued to well up within me without abatement. I found myself being aware of individuals who needed blessing. I found myself writing many thoughts that needed to be shared with them. I sensed a renewed desire to move to the Heritage Plaza across from the Temple complex, to be available in the immediate area to share with people who might desire an evangelist blessing.

Two years previously, Pam and I had discussed with Lach Mackay, Director of Historic Properties, about being guides at the Heritage Plaza location in Independence, Missouri. However, difficulties with the heating and air conditioning systems caused us to turn it down because of Pam’s health concerns with MS. But now sensing a desire

to revisit that issue, I looked up Lach at Conference to talk about the possibility that if we were able to sell our house, would we be allowed to donate funds for the installation of a new heating and air conditioning system? Before I had a chance to say anything, Lach said, “Charlie, I’d like to update you on what is happening with Heritage Plaza.” My first thought was that he was going to tell me that someone else was going to be taking over the responsibility. “We are just finishing up work on installing new heating and air conditioning, so that heating and cooling should no longer be an issue in the house. Does that make any difference?” I could hardly contain my excitement when I said to him, “All the difference in the world!” I went racing off to tell Pam of my excitement. I bumped into her in the hall as she was madly dashing between events, under a lot of stress with all of her responsibilities at Conference. I said, “Guess what? We may be moving to Heritage Plaza!” She threw up her arms and said, “Don’t even go there,” as she wildly waved me off. “I can’t deal with that right now!” and off she tore. Since Conference, however, she has become excited as I am about the opportunities of the move, and we have now committed to moving to Heritage Plaza no later than January 1, 2011.

As the week progressed, I was sensing an emerging call to reach out specifically to the GLBT community in my ministry as an evangelist, feeling that perhaps there are others who have built walls for similar reasons, who have felt they could not approach God for a blessing. I asked David Howard this question: “Do you know of any evangelists who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered...anyone who’s dealing with those issues?” Basically his answer was “No, but there are many evangelists who are supportive,” which is what I suspected. I was sensing a desire to share my story openly in the GALA newsletter with the offer to be available at the retreat over Labor Day to share in the sacrament of blessing with any who might desire it. I was still not sure how this would all turn out, but felt I wanted to visit with David further after Conference and get his opinion. After our visit in May, he encouraged me to follow through.

In the meantime, Pam was scheduled to play for the Conference GALA service at College Park at Thursday noon. Originally I was going to support her. But I now realized that if this was going to be part of my ministry, then I needed to become familiar with gatherings of individuals involved in GALA. It was a beautiful service, and I felt blessed by the ministry of those who shared. At the same time, as I looked around the sanctuary, I sensed

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many individuals who still had walls, walls like mine that needed to come down.

I also became aware on Thursday that it was time to follow through on the scripture from Mark to arise early. Accordingly, I awoke Friday morning at 2:30 a.m. and spent several hours in meditation, prayer, and journaling, followed by sharing with an individual in a beautiful continuing life blessing. Since that morning, while not as early, it has become a new way of starting each day—up early with reading, prayer, and meditation. What a blessing this part of the transformation has been!

Saturday morning, just before the start of the last delegate session, an individual came up to me that I had known when we were attending Norton Heights several years previously. She's no longer attending there, but in the course of our conversation, she asked, "Have you heard what they've done at Norton Heights?" and I replied, "Do you mean about Stonewall Ministries?" She said, "Yes. I don't know why they separated themselves out. We were a very open and welcoming congregation. But now that they are meeting separately, they're not around people who are living a healthy lifestyle..." At that moment, I felt an overpowering urge to stop the comments, and I threw up my hand and said, "Stop! Stop right there! They need sanctuary because of the hurt, the wounds, the abuse that they have suffered. They need a place where they know they can meet and worship in safety. Besides, there are all types of sanctuary that are needed for people who've been marginalized and abused and cast out. Really, that's what Zion is all about—being sanctuary for all who can come and receive the blessings of healing and wholeness, acceptance and love, living in God's presence." By the time I finished and we parted, we were both crying. It was a very powerful moment and also a realization that it was perhaps a literal fulfillment of the dream I had had when Everett threw his hand up and said "Stop!"

I left Conference transformed, energized, renewed, and saying for the first time in my life two things I'd never been able to say from the heart before—and really mean it:

- **I'm a beloved child of God**
- **It is no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me!**

I have found that for the first time in my life, I really see *people* rather than hiding behind my own concerns and pity parties. I really *see people*. It truly is as the scriptures say, that when we become one with Christ, we are transformed and all things become new. Am I still bisexual? Yes. Do I still have same-gender attractions? Yes.

I am who I was created from birth. But my life has been transformed in the moment of becoming vulnerable to divine grace, when the Spirit touched the deep-walled places of my heart with forgiveness, healing, and love, and called me forth into God's light.

As I write this, it has now been fifty-five days since the Sunday of transformation. New insights and understandings continue to come as I ponder the dreams that I have had as well as excitement over the challenges of the blessing I received from Everett that I have now come fully to embrace. I rejoice each day in the light as I am learning to live out what this means: "It is no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me." As new opportunities and challenges continue, Pam and I are now frequently saying to each other, "Hang on for the ride!"

I want to emphasize that this testimony is not really about me. My life's journey is simply a vehicle for proclaiming the good news of **God's persistent, relentless pursuit** of each of us...God who will not take "No" for an answer! I would simply plead from the depths of my heart to your heart with any for whom this sharing might touch: Don't wait sixty years like I did! God calls you to come out of the dark places of your soul into the light. Let God bless, heal, forgive, and love you for who you are!

New GALA Board Positions for 2010-11

In the last issue of this newsletter, the Nominating Committee announced the following nominations for open positions on the Executive Board:

Secretary: Clyde Frey

Treasurer-Elect : Chuck Hewitt

Member-at-Large: Erin Cavanaugh

Section 3.4 of the By-Laws states, "If a candidate on the Nominating Committee's slate is not challenged by the nominating procedure described in Article IV, Section 3, no balloting shall be necessary and that candidate shall be elected by affirmation at the Annual Meeting of the GALA membership."

No challenges were received by the July 1 deadline; therefore, all three individuals will be presented to the membership at the GALA Annual Meeting, Labor Day weekend at Samish Island Campground in Bow, Washington, to be elected by affirmation.

Newsworthy

Is this you...or someone you know?

WANTED: Professional Web Designer!

We have been fortunate to have people like Andrew Chesnutt and Meredith Bischoff, to cite a couple, that have provided us with their expertise to get us where we are today, and to them we extend our most heartfelt 'thanks' and look to them for continued support and assistance in the area of Web Applications. Moving into the future, we're looking for someone to give us some professional expertise....panache, zing, creativity, imagination from their experience to 'move us to the next level' in the area of 'look and feel.'

Is this you? Do you know of someone that fills the bill? Who might you recommend? Contact a member of the GALA Board with your favorite volunteer referral!

Evangelist Charlie Robison

Evangelist Charlie Robison will be attending the GALA Labor Day retreat at Samish Island with his family. He will be available to visit with anyone interested in sharing in the sacrament of the evangelist blessing. He can also be emailed ahead of the retreat at lazaruscomeout@gmail.com.

Buffalo Gay Pride, June 6, 2010

Could there be MORE rain in the forecast? It had been pouring, more on than off, for

what seemed like the better part of the last few days leading up to the festivities! Alas, the forecast was that we would suffer some rain in the early morning, but by early afternoon it would cease; the parade to Bidwell Park was set to step off at 1:00PM – SHARP!

A late appraisal of available support indicated that there would be less than adequate help to sustain a table in the Marketplace; and a mid-morning assessment of the grounds confirmed that standing water, slowly soaking into the ground, would quickly turn into a grassy mud pit. So the call was made to forego a table for 2010 and to put our efforts into marching in the parade and sharing as best we could.

Nathan Phillips, took on the challenge of procuring tee-shirts for this year's event and came up with a bright (not screaming) yellow tee with large block purple lettering that read: 'Community of Christ' on the front, and a dove and the address for the Buffalo-Clarence branch on the back. The shirts were very attractive yet they definitely stood out in a crowd! As an aside, the members of the branch will be able to take the shirts with them to reunion this year and wear them for one day to indicate their solidarity.

The rain did abate, the colors of pride came out in full bloom, the marchers and floats were more than we'd seen in previous years, and the turnout of people on the streets was exceptional. The 'Power of Pride is...the Power to Be Me...the Power to Marry...the Power to Love' was the multi-layered theme to Buffalo's Pride celebration in 2010. The gathering place where the stage

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and sound was set up, next to the Marketplace, was all rather 'mushy' as we expected, but the fervor was running high as gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and our supporters came out to celebrate the Power of Pride 2010.

We look forward, with hope, to the future of Pride Buffalo 2011 and what may become of issues that directly affect us in the New York State legislature!



GAY Pride Kansas City

For this year's gay pride, the Kansas City area GALA chapter decided not to have a booth. Instead we gave a donation to help both the Kansas City Coalition for Welcoming Ministries and Stonewall Ministries booths, giving us a presence at both locations. The KC Coalition is a grass roots organization of which our now current Welcoming Community Network sprung up from. Through these two organizations we shared not only with each other but with the GLBTQ community making new contacts and sharing our stories with them.

The weather could not have been better and the crowds were well managed. I do know that Stonewall Ministries made numerous contacts as well as the local GALA Chapter. (Article provided by Chuck Hewitt)

Temple Planters Planting

This year GALA was privileged to share in our talents and gifts to plant the planters around the Temple. On May 6, it was a rainy day, so with rain gear on and shovels in hand,

we played in the mud. Not only did we plant the planters around the circle drive, but also three on the corner of Walnut and River, and three on the World Plaza. The designs and flowers all had to be different due to sun light and heat. Mike Hewitt and David Howard created a fabulous design of color and splendor, as those of us who know them have come to expect and appreciate. We all posed for one final quick photo and darted off to clean up and wash away the mud.

Even with the rain, the day could not have been better, bringing friends and family together to share and worship. We were truly fortunate to have the opportunity to share Christ's love, expressed in the planting experience. The planters are extremely beautiful, just as all of God's children. What a blessing it is to share our talents for all to see. Thank you to everyone who helped.



"What a glorious thing to be in the light, in the light..."

Walking in the Light GALA Retreat 2010 Samish Island, WA September 3-6

Light in the Pacific Northwest is extremely changeable - from brooding and stormy to sudden flashes of golden clarity. In many parts of Western Washington, you can experience four seasons every day. In many ways, it's more like mountain light, even though it is at sea level. This light and more is waiting for you to come and experience at the GALA Retreat being held this year on Samish Island.

Apostle Jim Slauter is our guest minister this year and we are looking forward to sharing in several classes and worship with him. He will lead discussions on the new sexual ethics statement that will soon be released by the World Church and the upcoming USA conference in 2012 that will deal with the issues of ordination and marriage as they relate to LGBT members of the church. There will also be a class on getting the welcoming conversation started in your congregation.

Saturday afternoon recreation will be GALA playing on the Olympic Range. Sandra Merth will be leading games and contests on the lawn. Everyone is encouraged to go for the gold!

Our banquet and evening of entertainment this year, is designed to share the true flavors of the Pacific Northwest with you. We will gather Sunday evening for a potlatch – a northwest tribal tradition that includes feasting and the exchange of gifts as a community. Come dressed as your favorite lumberjack or lesbian – flannel shirts and suspenders will be the rage. Our fare will include Samish Island's famous BBQ salmon roasted over alder wood and blackberry cobbler made from berries grown on the campground. The gifts can be the exchange of special items or sharing gifts of entertainment. Following the potlatch feast, we will hold an open mike night at the local coffee house where gifts of entertainment and amusement will be the order of the evening.

The silent auction will also be taking place during the weekend; your donations of items and bidding



will help GALA continue to provide ministry to members and to the church.

Getting to Samish Island is not as difficult as it may sound. There is a bridge, no need to take the ferry. Once you fly in to Seattle, it is approximately a 90 minute drive north. Ground transportation to and from the airport will be made available for those who'd like to carpool. Please bring your own bedding and a warm jacket. The mornings and evenings will be nippy, but the days look to be a comfortable 70+ degrees. There are plenty of trails for hiking and exploring this end of the island, so bring sturdy shoes and a camera to capture the beauty of the setting.

Get your registrations in now so we can count on your contribution to the retreat. If you have any questions or special needs, do not hesitate to contact Meredith Bischoff at merigrll@merigrll.com or 714-579-1573.

See you on Labor Day weekend, September 3-6, where we will be living, learning, and laughing in the light of God!



Living in the Light
GALA RETREAT REGISTRATION FORM
September 3-6, 2010
Samish Island Campground, 11795 Scott Road
Bow, WA 98232



Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

If you need transportation from the airport, please provide your flight information:

Arrival Airline: _____ Flight: _____ Time: _____

Dietary needs: _____

Medical/Special Needs: _____

Retreat Costs:

\$150 per person Registration

Bedding, towels, etc. not provided

Limited camperships available; contact howard092248@yahoo.com

Please register by August 7, payment due on or before 1st day of Retreat

Mail registration to:

GALA RETREAT

P.O. Box 2173

Independence, MO 64055



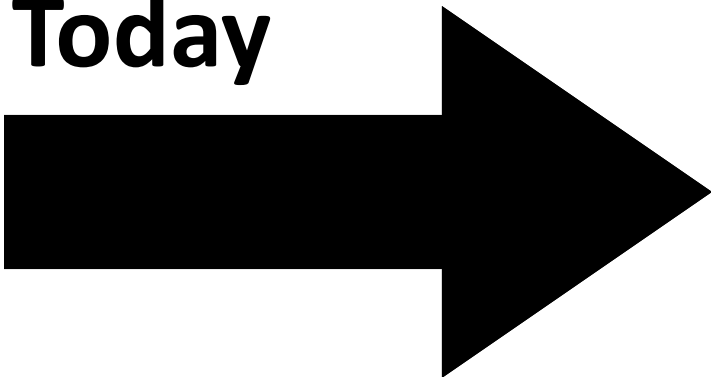
July 2010

P.O. Box 2173
Independence, MO 64055

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Join, Or Renew Your Membership Today



2010 GALA Membership

Name(s): _____

E-mail: _____

YES; send me the newsletter by e-mail

Address: _____

City,State,Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Membership Level (U.S. dollars):

Individual(\$25) Family(\$40)

Limited Income(\$10)

I would like to make an additional contribution to advance GALA's outreach and educational goals:

\$50 \$100 \$200 or \$ _____

Contributions to GALA are tax deductible.

Please return to: **P.O. Box 2173
Independence, MO 64055**