



galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

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Retreat 2011 Wrap-Up

by Chuck Hewitt



This year's retreat was one for the books. But then again I am unable to think of any GALA retreat that wasn't unique and special in its own way. Having helped plan several retreats I always get nervous just before it starts. Last minute cancellations, people deciding to come, did we order enough or too much? I call it the before retreat jitters. They always happen right before a retreat and this year was no different. Friday we happily greeted people as they arrived, met new people and renewed old friendships. We were

given a special treat during the social time as Allen Fiscus treated everyone to ice cream floats with a large array of different kinds of sodas. Later a rather large group of us went over to the new pool to enjoy a late night swim. We all enjoyed swimming and chatting on the warm summer night. The pool was absolutely fabulous.

We enjoyed early morning devotions from David Woosley as he brought us together in quiet

(Continued on page 10)

GALA

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President's Message

by David Howard

Retreat Schedule for the Future

Next year's retreat, 2012, will be at Camp Doniphan over the Labor Day Weekend. Our guest ministry will be provided by Presiding Evangelist David Brock and we will focus on spiritual preparation for the 2013 Conference. We anticipate that costs for the retreat will remain at \$175. per registrant. We anticipate that this retreat will be one of our largest ever, so make plans now to attend.

GALA Retreat 2013

We have reserved the Temple Grove Campgrounds in Pennsylvania of the Eastern Great Lakes Mission Center for the 2013 retreat. This will also include something at the Kirtland Temple, and again will be held over the Labor Day Weekend. We have requested a member of the First Presidency to be present.

GALA Retreat 2014

We are making tentative plans to hold the retreat in the Denver area over Labor Day.

Regional Retreats

GALA is also encouraging regional retreats that can provide access, support and ministry to a larger population in diverse areas. A retreat is already planned for the Florida region in February with additional conversations occurring about retreats in California and Michigan. The registration form for the Florida retreat is available on the GALA website. These retreats will also be open to anyone around the country who wishes to attend. Information will be disseminated through the newsletter and the website.

Affirmation Award to Bill Russell

Bill Russell received the Affirmation Allies Award from the recently completed Affirmation Conference held in Cleveland and Kirtland. It's typically given to a straight person (or a straight couple) who have made outstanding contributions to the cause of Affirmation and/or LGBT LDS people.

The Community of Christ welcomed Affirmation and their conference at the Visitors Center and the Temple. In meeting with the planning group a year ago, Ron Romig, director of Kirtland Temple, David Howard and Pat

(Continued on page 8)

If you make a purchase from Amazon, don't forget to go to the GALA website first, then click on the Amazon logo. GALA receives a percentage of all purchases this way. Here's a trick: Create a bookmark for Amazon and then go into the properties of the bookmark and change the address to the GALA website.

amazon.com

A Place at the Table

by Charlie Robison

Pam and I are still new to GALA, and this year was our opportunity to attend our second retreat--this time at Doniphan. Being the chaplain for the GALA board, and having responsibilities at the retreat, I was focused on reacquainting with friends met previously and meeting new people as much as possible.

As the weekend went on, I became aware that many were sharing in small groups, if not one-on-one. It seemed to be a time of networking, a time of telling stories and of finding strength in each other. I was also aware of the Spirit moving in our midst, drawing us together to share our pains, hurts, hopes, and longings for the future--inviting us to let our walls down, knowing we were in a safe place.

As the weekend continued, I became aware of the Lord Jesus, moving to invite us all to his table to share the emblems of his body and blood as he offered himself to bridge our divisions, to heal our wounds, and to embrace us for the journey ahead.

As camp pastor, I was responsible for coordinating the closing service, along with several others who brought many gifts and ideas which they offered to make the elements of the service speak to the needs of those who had come. There were gifts of music, video, testimony, and certainly, of each others' presence.

Thinking about and planning for the mechanics of the Communion portion of the service, I felt drawn to the idea that we needed to bridge the divisions in our midst and to be brought together in one body--in the body of the Lord Jesus. Among our group in attendance were those of a wide range of ages, from young to old; many who have journeyed a long time within the Community of Christ and who, because of their sexual orientation, have been denied priesthood and the opportunity for marriage covenant. Others in our midst have had long journeys also in the Community of Christ, but have enjoyed the full privileges of membership. How to bridge that division within the body?

I felt very much drawn to want to ask Janice Wright to serve the bread. She represents someone who has a long history in the church but also has been denied priesthood and marriage covenant because she's open

about her sexual orientation. I felt strongly to ask Apostle Ron Harmon, our guest minister for the weekend, to serve the wine--representative of the ministry and full inclusion that membership in the church brings. To assist, I asked Erin Cavanaugh, one of the youngest in our group, who is just beginning her journey of faith within the church--to assist by passing out the cups for the juice. What legacy will we leave for the young who are in our midst?

However, there was one problem with this scenario. Since Janice is not an ordained priesthood member, she could not legitimately serve the bread as part of the Communion within the Community of Christ. So the decision was made that rather than a Communion service, we would share together in an Agape meal.

Janice **did** pass the bread to each individual, along with a napkin, followed by Erin, who handed each individual a cup, followed by Ron, who poured the juice to each one partaking. And once all had their portions, we--as one body--broke bread and shared juice together.

Something unplanned happened. As Janice moved in the midst of the body, a number of individuals thanked her, embraced her, and kissed her on the cheek. As Ron poured the juice, each was given words of peace.

While in the technical sense it was not a Communion service in the Community of Christ, it was far more. It was a deeply moving, sacramental moment, in which--as Janice told me later--we **were at the last supper**. There was a strong sense that the Lord had invited each one there, he had prepared the table and the emblems, and he claimed the right to share with whom he chose. In this sacramental moment, we were one body, Christ having bridged the division among us, as we each shared in a place at the table.

It is my hope and prayer that as we continue to move toward the 2013 Conference, that we will continue to uphold the body in prayer that the time will come when Christ--who invites us all--will have bridged the division within us, and we will each come rejoicing and take our place at the table within the Community of Christ.

AFFIRMATION at Kirtland, Ohio

by Allan Fiscus

For the second time in my gay spiritual journey I had the privilege to join with the GLBT Mormon members of AFFIRMATION at their annual conference, held this year in Cleveland and Kirtland, Ohio, on September 16-18, 2011. Again, I was privileged to share my story and Community of Christ experiences with several Affirmation members.

It was great to reconnect with Affirmation members I met at their 2000 conference held in Washington DC. It was easy to blend with the Affirmation members in love, fellowship, class sessions, worship and song. Hearing their, present day, stories reminded me of the early days of the RLDS church views and actions with its GLBT members. The GALA and RLDS/Community of Christ journey has been rough and painful, but we have progressed into a more welcoming journey than our Affirmation brothers and sisters.

This conference “*Visions and Blessings*” offered a wide variety of speakers and classes as well as tours to Kirtland, Ohio where the group was able to visit The Kirtland Temple and other surrounding Latter Day Saint historic sites. Follow this link to see the guest and program, and a few pictures from the Affirmation weekend: <http://www.kirtland.affirmation.org/index.shtml>.

During the Saturday evening banquet, Bill and Lois Russell, Community of Christ and GALA members received an “Allies Award” for their work with the

Affirmation community.

The highlight for me was the Sunday morning worship in The Kirtland Temple with Affirmation members. The wonderful messages and stories shared filled my heart. And the music..ah music. Singing in the choir was amazing! Singing songs of the Restoration with these wonderful people was so moving. When the group sang the closing song, *The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning*,... well you can imagine the multitude of emotions flowing through the room... very few eyes were dry...and wonderful expressive faces were everywhere. Thanks be to God for the Spirit that filled the room, touching a bruised and broken hearted people.

One of the emotions conveyed to me many, many times on Saturday, after the groups returned from The Kirtland Temple and again after the Sunday worship and luncheon, was extreme gratitude and thanks. Thanks and gratitude for the welcoming and accepting members of the Community of Christ at Kirtland. I also heard “you’re so lucky to be in this church”. It’s hard not to feel some pride in where the Community of Christ has come in welcoming members of the GLBT community. I give my thanks to the Community of Christ staff and workers at Kirtland who gave of themselves so freely to the Affirmation community and made their experience so amazing.

GALA Regional Retreat

Deerhaven Retreat and Conference Center
Paisley, Florida

February 24-26, 2012

For more information, visit the GALA website

Stephen Donahoe



On October 1st, I became an official GALA board member! I am very excited and honored to participate on the board of such an inspiring and courageous organization with people who have been at the forefront of the struggle for equality in the Community of Christ for many years.

Here's a little bit about who I am: I was born and raised in the Community of Christ (then RLDS) in McArthur, Ohio in what is now Bountiful Mission Center. From a young age, I was very active in congregational life, and at the age of 16 I was ordained a Priest in the church.

In May of 2008 I graduated from Graceland University, where I studied nonprofit management with a minor in peace studies and church leadership. Throughout college, I was very involved in activism and fundraising toward the goal of ending global poverty with Outreach International. I was also active

in other peace and justice issues through Campus Ministries.

After college, I moved to Washington, DC to work for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), a Quaker peace and justice lobbying organization. I served as a Program Assistant for two years at FCNL, before transitioning to major donor fundraising. I am currently the Major Gifts Officer at FCNL.

I am also on the board of PeacePathways, an organization started by the Community of Christ in the last couple years to connect peace and justice affiliated ministries and organizations of the church. Although I struggled with my sexual orientation since middle school, I finally accepted that I was gay and came out during my senior year of college. During the last World Conference, I came out publicly on the conference floor in hopes that it would help in a small way to encourage some people to accept the ordination and marriage of GLBTQ people. My message to the church then and now was: "Although there are many things that prevent me from living out my potential as a Priest, the loving, committed relationship with my partner is not one of those things."

I am excited about using my skills and experience in fundraising and advocacy to help GALA grow and expand. I am excited about the potential we have for GLBTQ acceptance in the Community of Christ in the next few years and GALA's role in advocating for that change. Most importantly, I am excited about the opportunity to reach out to people who are struggling with accepting their sexual orientation like I did for many years.

***Homosexual Saints* traveling to KINDLE**

GALA will be working with John Whitmer Books in the next couple months to get our books into the Kindle format. We will be starting with *Homosexual Saints*, and adding the second book, *Touched by God's Grace...LGBT Stories in Community of Christ*, sometime in January. We are hoping that Kindle's popularity will extend our abilities to share our stories.

The Legacy and Blessings of the Kirtland Temple and the Community Created by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the lives of ALL Types of Latter-Day Saints

“Joseph’s vision called the Saints to to prepare for the creation of a community where all people will be accepted as they are, and their gifts and talents appreciated”

by William D. Russell

An address delivered in the Kirtland Temple on September 18, 2011 as part of the 2011 Affirmation Conference.

I am so happy to have the opportunity to stand in this historic, sacred space and proclaim that we are all one in Christ Jesus! As the Apostle Paul put it, in Chapter 4 of Ephesians, we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

In the Mormon movement, the Kirtland period is when we were all together. The divisions that occurred in Nauvoo –and later– had not occurred yet. Today we participate in breaking down those walls of division –here in this sacred space. The building of this “House of the Lord” –and the dedication services in 1836– represented a time of high purpose in the infancy of the Mormon movement. Joseph’s vision of a “House of the Lord” where we would receive power from on high was a vision that called the Saints to high purpose, to prepare for the creation of a Zion community –a community where all people will be accepted as they are, and their gifts and talents appreciated. In short, the kingdom of God on earth.

Human frailties prevented the achievement of that Zion community. After the Temple was built the community of Saints began to splinter and the Prophet and most of the Saints moved to Missouri in the wake of problems that arose here.

Walls of division were created in the movement. In chapter 2 of Ephesians Paul declared that in Christ these walls are broken down. In Christ we are no longer strangers and aliens. Today—in this sacred space—we are participating in that process of reconciliation.

Accidents of geography were no doubt a major reason why this holy place ended up in the hands of the Reorganized Church. Our proximity to Kirtland and your

huge distance from Kirtland in a horse-and- buggy age made it easier for us to obtain “The House of the Lord.”

We in the Reorganization were fond of claiming that we received title to this temple because the court

found us to be the “true successor” of the original Mormon Church. For years we loved to say that –but it just wasn’t true. For one thing, American courts have no right to make any judgments about the truth or falsity of any religious claim. As Kim Loving concluded in his *Journal of Mormon History* article seven years ago, the Reorganized Church was granted the temple because of the legal doctrine of adverse possession (Kim L. Loving, “Ownership of the Kirtland Temple: Legends, Lies, and Misunderstandings,” *Journal of Mormon History* [Fall 2004], 1-80). We had taken possession of the building, used it, took care of it, repaired it when needed, and so forth. In Ohio law at the time, if you lived in open possession of a piece of real estate for 20 years, unchallenged, and took care of it during that time, you were entitled to the property.

In *laymen’s* terms, we got lucky. I’m not sure what *Lemuel’s* terms would be.

In Kirtland, the temple was built by the unified efforts of all the Saints –men and women, rich and poor, priesthood and non-priesthood, gay and straight– all working together for the cause of the kingdom.

To paraphrase the Apostle Paul in Galatians—he had a way with words– there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, gay nor straight –for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

This temple today is open to all expressions of Mormonism for worship services of their own design, as it was also during Joseph Smith’s lifetime.

In the 1830s here in Kirtland we were one. We can be sure there were gay Mormons in Kirtland, but they could hardly come out of the closet. No one knew they were gay, and many gay Saints probably didn’t themselves know



(Continued on page 7)

what to call this attraction to the same gender that they felt.

For those who split with the RLDS Church in the 1980s after women were ordained, the Kirtland Temple has special significance. They are usually referred to as "Restorationists." Kirtland is the only temple they recognize, since they don't recognize the 20-year-old Community of Christ temple in Independence as legitimate. As my friend Richard Price, one of the best known Restorationists, put it in his book *The Temple of the Lord*, the Independence Temple is located in the wrong place—it should be across the street from where it stands.

It is of the wrong design. It should look sort of like this temple.

And it is for the wrong purpose—the temple was supposed to be a place of refuge where the Saints could gather and wait for the return of Christ. According to my friend Richard, it is not supposed to be dedicated for "the pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit," as stated in our Doctrine and Covenants Section 156, approved by the delegates at our 1984 World Conference.

So, the Independence temple was built in the wrong place, by the wrong design, and for the wrong purpose. Other than that...

So for the Restorationists, there is just one legitimate temple—this one. But we own it! I am pleased that we let them use it even though they have left our church.

LDS people are likewise benefited by this ecumenical policy. Most of our Kirtland Temple visitors are LDS. Visiting LDS groups often participate in meaningful sacrament services, firesides, testimony services, and musical events.

So, the Kirtland Temple remains a symbol of unity among the Saints. And to the credit of David Ettinger, Barb Walden, Lach Mackay, and Ron Romig, and others who have had a hand in guiding policy at the temple, this "House of the Lord" is open for worship by Mormons of the Utah affiliation, and the various schismatic groups that have broken away from the RLDS Church over the years.

My faith is an ecumenical faith, influenced greatly by bringing raised in a strong RLDS family, and my education at a Methodist theological seminary and religious thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and most of all – Dr. Martin Luther King.

So I am really pleased that this temple is open to all factions of Mormonism, because this "House of the Lord" is important in the history of all Latter Day Saints organizations. It is the one temple all factions believe is

approved by the Almighty.

For some of us in the Community of Christ who have enjoyed fellowship with people from the Utah branch of the Mormon movement, the Mormon History Association has been the vehicle for sharing both our scholarship and a wonderful fellowship. Beginning in 1971 a significant number of us began attending their annual meetings.

In 2003 the Mormon History Association met here in Kirtland. The program planned by Ron Romig was one of the best ever. Ron is now the director of the Kirtland Temple. At the close of that weekend, we held a worship service here in the temple, led by retired Graceland College orchestra director, Dick Clothier. He had a 90 voice choir seated in the four corners of the sanctuary, along with a dozen instrumentalists.

We sang the hymns that were sung in the dedication service in 1836, concluding with "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning." There wasn't a dry eye in the place.

GLBT people are not yet first-class citizens in the Community of Christ. But significant progress has been made. Almost every year at our annual Gay and Lesbian Acceptance retreat there has been what you call a General Authority—our current president and his immediate predecessor or an apostle. Two weeks ago Apostle Ron Harmon attended. At one point he carefully scanned his eyes over the room, looking at each person and said, "I'm sorry for the pain the church has caused almost every one of you." The leadership seems to be on board and are educating the members prior to our 2013 conference where we expect a decision to be made.

It is my prayer that one day this GLBT community of wonderful people will be fully recognized and appreciated in all expressions of the Mormon movement, and all denominations of the Christian religion.

May the Spirit of God burn within us today and forever more. And in this sacred place today, and for the rest of our lives, may each one of us realize that we, too, are sacred in the eyes of God.

Amen.



Danielson met with Dave Melson and Hugo Salinas to work out details of tours, worship, and other items we could help assist the success of the Conference. Ron was extremely welcoming and really impressed the Affirmation members with what we would provide. The Kirtland congregation opened their facility for the meal after the Temple worship, which impressed the group, since they are not welcome in any of their facilities. GALA consulted and found volunteers to help with different aspects of the weekend. Ten GALA members attended the banquet on Saturday evening and the worship service in the Temple.

A strong welcoming ministry was brought by Community of Christ which hopefully will bring on a new era of cooperation between the 2 groups as we support each other's journey on the road to full inclusion.

Safe Congregation List

A couple of months ago GALA received an inquiry from a Mormon couple in the Saint Louis area who had been looking for a new church home and had been researching the Community of Christ. They asked us if there was a congregation that would welcome them and where they would feel at home. Looking at the WCN list, I soon realized that there are no official welcoming congregations in the St Louis area. What to do???

Following research, conversations and connections later with a lesbian couple who attends the Kirkwood congregation, they are now attending the congregation and are becoming a part of a welcoming and loving community.

That got me to thinking about the bigger issue. What about those who are searching and don't have the persistence to make the connection with someone who is willing to take the time to assist? WCN has done a wonderful job in assisting congregations on their journey toward becoming welcoming. However their process is thorough and it takes time for congregations to understand and accept. Not all congregations feel the need or have the time.

GALA is starting an initiative that can bridge this gap. We are developing a list of safe congregations around the country where LGBT people will feel welcomed and safe to find a place of worship and community to fill their spiritual needs. The list will appear on the website. Our goal is to have at least one safe congregation in each middle and large metropolitan area around the country and in Canada.

What is a safe congregation? A safe congregation is one that if an LGBT person, couple or family would visit

the congregation on any Sunday or for an event, that they would be welcomed and included and invited to participate in community.

We need your help. In order to develop this list, we are asking each of you to submit congregations that fit this definition. But to make this effective and useful, we are asking you to submit names of congregations that you know will welcome LGBT persons...not the ones you wish would, or the ones who will only if certain people are there, speaking or on good behavior! The worse thing that could happen is to direct a vulnerable person to a healing experience and then have the door slammed in their face. Please be sensitive to this when submitting congregations to either cfrey@onairaudit.com, or howard092248@yahoo.com.

Our hope is also that this will begin to start the congregation in a conversation that will challenge them to understand what it means to become welcoming and participate in the Welcoming Community Network process.

GALA Affiliates

How does GALA expand its reach to provide access to the supportive and affirming ministry offered at the annual retreats? This has been something the Boards have been considering for several years. Having considered this the Board has come up with the policy to foster local relationships and provide ministry without too much oversight. These will pertain to the United States and Canada at this time.

Affiliate: An affiliate is a local group of at least 5 LGBT members and allies meeting intentionally to foster relationship building, mutual support and ministry at the local level. Local affiliates must be self sustaining, but may receive national financial support on a loan basis for retreat and event planning. Events, retreats, meeting schedules, and other items will be advertised on the GALA website. Application can informally be made by email or letter to either cfrey@onairaudit.com, or howard092248@yahoo.com. The complete policy is on the GALA website.

The Board encourages areas that qualify to formalize the relationship nationally. We see this as an opportunity to reach out and be available for our own, but also a valuable tool for those who may be seeking a new spiritual home that is inclusive and supportive. Florida and Independence are already affiliates. We see opportunity in Buffalo, San Francisco, Michigan, Houston, Phoenix,

(Continued on page 9)

Denver, St Louis, Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis, and I am sure other places.

Reunion Initiative

How do you put a face on you? And how does this assist in the 2013 Conference deliberations? These are questions that have been kicked around over the last year or so as we move closer to the "decision"...and that is not LeBron James'!

The US Apostle team is doing a marvelous job in developing resources for those who have to be convinced or shown through scripture and study. These are being rolled out over the next few months with more coming. But how many people does that reach? How many of us are really students of the scriptures or will take the time to research? And this takes nothing away from the effort... which is reaching those who are so inclined.

We certainly learn and process information in many different ways, among them through study. We also learn through prayer and meditation and we all have testimonies of the spirit moving through us, gently opening new avenues of understanding. We also learn through experience...relationships with others who are not like us...that "face" mentioned above. And yet others just want the prophet to tell us what it is!

Sadly however, there are many who rely on the 15 second sound bite for their information and views on any issue. How do we reach the relationship people and the soundbiters?

I shared in a previous newsletter about the experience Nate and Clyde and I had at the Eastern Great Lakes Mission Center reunion last year where we conducted a 2 hour chat session safe place to discuss LGBT issues. Having been inspired by that experience, GALA is launching a major initiative for the 2012 reunion season. Our goal is to visit as many reunions in the US as possible during the season, establishing safe spaces to have a conversation about the issues being considered for the 2013 Conference. We will be doing this in coordination with the Apostles, Mission Center presidents and reunion planners.

Sound like a daunting task? It is...and we need your help. There are between 50 and 60 reunions held in the US each year, counting the winter and singles reunions. The Board does not have the resources to cover these, and also may not be the best messenger in each case. And that's where you come into the picture.

Over the next few months I will be developing a matrix of reunions and dates along with a template for conducting the chat session and talking and discussion points. Once these are completed we can begin to schedule personnel for the reunions, conduct some training sessions and make sure everyone is secure in the task. We will go in groups of 2 or 3 whenever possible. This will be a chance to share your story or commitment and provide information to all who attend.

A list of mission centers is included on the GALA website. **I NEED YOU TO VOLUNTEER TO BE A PART OF THIS EXPERIENCE BY EMAILING ME WITH A REUNION OR LIST OF REUNIONS THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ATTEND.** Limited funds will be available to assist with any travel. Donations of travel will be matched by tax refundable receipts. I am at present thinking the time commitment would include the day of event and possibly the next day to give an opportunity for those who need a private conversation. This is a very important task in the long journey on which we have embarked. Please give this your prayerful consideration and respond. You will be blessed with that wonderful spirit that Nate and Clyde and I experienced at the EGLMC reunion. Don't hesitate...this field is more than white!

Book Update

Progress continues on the development of the new book. A title has been chosen "Touched by God's Grace...LGBT Stories in Community of Christ" and the final copy editing is nearly completed. Pre orders will be taken in early December.

The book will contain 45 stories of LGBT persons and allies who have remained engaged in Community of Christ and have worked within their congregations to serve and for full inclusion.

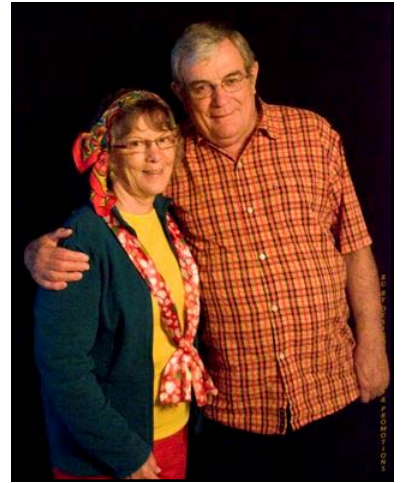
An added feature of this book is that it will be available on Kindle. John Whitmer Books will train Allan Fiscus from GALA on the conversion. "Homosexual Saints" will be available by the end of the year with "Touched By God's Grace...LGBT Stories in Community of Christ" available early in 2012. Pricing is yet to be determined.

Year End Giving

Please consider GALA when you are determining your year-end contributions. Generous donations in the past have provided retreat scholarships, transportation, book expenses, and funded short term projects. GALA will need additional funds for the reunion initiative expenses and to underwrite some costs on the publication of the new book. We appreciate your consideration.



challenging! It was so fun to watch adults of all ages trying to stick a cotton ball to their nose and transfer it to a cup on another table a few feet away. Another task was taking a stick of spaghetti off the side of the table using your mouth only. We had to pick up round 4 penne noodles on the stick of spaghetti. You can only imagine all of the other fun activities and the fun experienced in watching every one try to maneuver around the room with noodles and cotton balls on their noses. Thank you so much Sandra Merth and Della Mowrey for the fun.

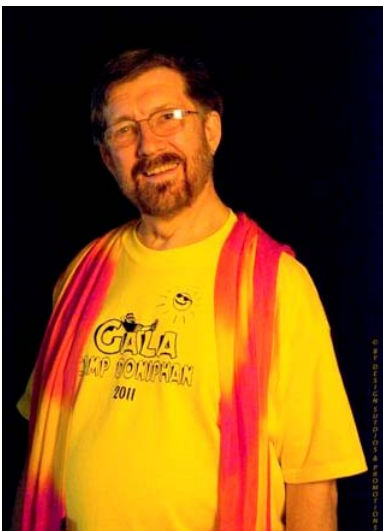


reflections. What a great way to start out our days with calmness of the Spirit. This year we had 50 people join in the fun and festivities. New faces and old joined together in groups to share our stories of struggle, pain, growth and joy. As always we were moved and grew together in sharing of our stories. It always amazes me how our sharing has changed as time has gone on. My first retreat 12 years ago the stories were of struggles, anger and frustration. Our outlook for the future with the World Church was discouraging. Now, we have our struggles but with a positive outlook with the church.

The evening followed with a Banquet and talent show. Banquet decorations were out of this world. People showed-up in their colorful (red, orange, yellow) outfits. The silent auction ended with a bang and brought in a whopping \$809.00! Wow! Thank you, everyone for your donations of unique items and to those that purchased the items. The evening concluded with a talent show. Who knew we had that much talent. Words cannot begin to describe what fun it was when each person shared their talent.

Our guest ministry was Apostle Ron Harmon. What a blessing! His ministry was so inspiring and uplifting words cannot begin to describe the Spirit from which he brought and shared. The fireside chat was a good discussion about the 5 initiatives for the church, of which we are invited to be a part. We as GLBTQ and allies are now able to truly openly talk about our concerns, hopes, joys and fears. Thank you so much for your ministry during the retreat Apostle Ron Harmon.

We ended the weekend on Monday morning with a service of healing and strength. During the service we shared an Agape meal together. We all left changed people, full and ready for facing life's challenges. We are looking forward to next year's retreat 2012.



We enjoyed a good round of GAY OLYMPICS. Talk about



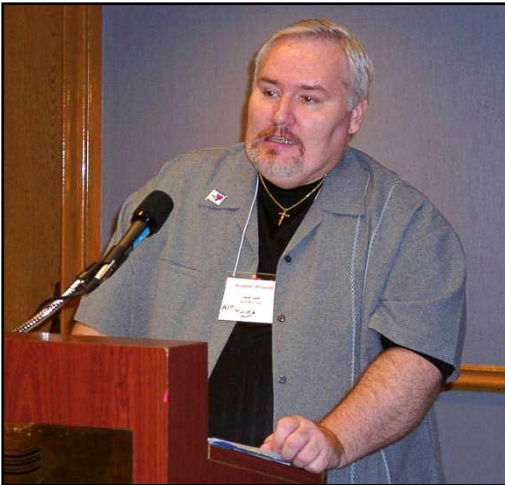
Event in History:

RLDS and Homosexuality: A Church Experiencing Growth

(from the Affirmation Conference Program 2000)

Although they are rarely, if ever, mentioned in proper LDS society, there is a second branch of Mormonism—the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Within this church the attitudes toward homosexuality have been developing differently. Although it might be hard to see how such lessons could apply to the Salt Lake variety Mormons, it was interesting to see how our long lost brothers and sisters of the RLDS church are approaching this very important issue.

Allan C. Fiscus has been a lifelong member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS). Professionally Allan is a registered nurse, working in trauma and surgery. Allan first discussed his homosexuality with church officials in



1978 while serving in the US Navy. Later, he became the first President of Gay and Lesbian Acceptance (GALA), in 1987. During his life in the church Allan

was ordained to the office of Deacon, then silenced. Priesthood restored, he was later ordained to the office of Elder. Allan is presently Program Director of Gay and Lesbian Ministries for the Michigan Region of the RLDS church (encompasses 90 congregations). He is part of a panel traveling around Michigan's RLDS congregations discussing "Understanding Homosexuality in Our Faith." He is an openly gay pastor of his congregation in East Lansing, Michigan.

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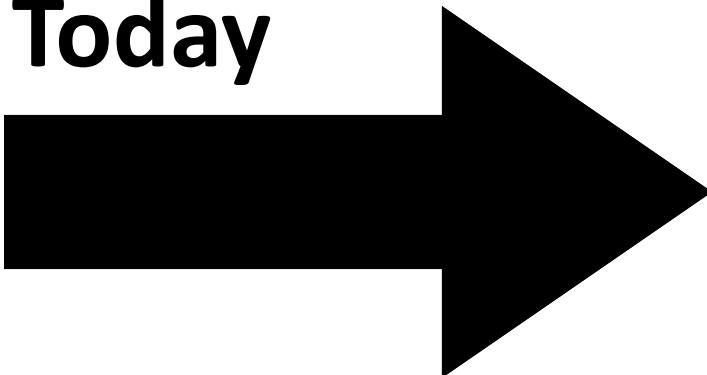
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