



# galanews

THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of  
Community of Christ

February 2011  
Volume 22 Issue 1



**Rainbow over Yellowstone River**

*Photo by Andrew Greenhill, used by permission*

## Labor Day Retreat 2011

*by Chuck Hewitt*

We are very happy to announce that this year's retreat will be at Lake Doniphan Excelsior Springs, MO, Labor Day Weekend, September 2 thru the 5<sup>th</sup>. We have a very exciting and fun filled weekend of events, classes, spiritual growth and stories. The theme for this year's retreat, is "Beyond the Horizon",

referring back to Doctrine and Covenants Section 162 referring to the opportunity and blessings that are available if we can set our eyes over the horizon. Certainly we are in a position of harvest as we

*(Continued on page 4)*

# GALA

## Executive Board

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**Sandra Merth**  
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**Visit us on the web  
at:**

# galaweb.org

# Temple Plantings by David Howard



GALA will again design, finance and plant the planters around all sides of the Temple. This year's planting will take place on Saturday, May 7. Louie Jorgenson, Grounds Manager expressed his appreciation recently by saying "It really helps us a lot, both financially and with the work load. We really appreciate it." A number of people who work in the building or visited the Temple last year expressed how beautiful the planters were. If you are in Independence May 7, stop by and help us with this outreach ministry.



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.



# **TOGETHER IN CHRIST**

## **....A JOURNEY OF FAITH 2012 USA NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

January 2011

Dear Friends,

We invite you to join us on a journey of faith that will lead to the 2012 USA National Conference and beyond. The delegate conference, July 18–22, 2012, in Independence, Missouri, will determine the level of support for

1. Extending the sacrament of marriage to persons of the same sex/gender OR providing a church-recognized way for two persons of the same sex/gender to publicly express their commitment to each other.
2. Allowing people in committed, monogamous, long-term, same sex/gender relationships (legal marriage, civil union, church-recognized commitment) to be considered for ordination.

The delegates' common consent will determine if present policies will remain in place or new policies will need to be written and implemented.

These are difficult issues. We could choose to approach the national conference with fear, trepidation, and resistance. However, as apostles who serve with you in the United States, we choose to approach the national conference in faith, believing the Holy Spirit is in our midst and will show us the way. We also commit to allowing our own perspectives on these issues to be shaped by God's Spirit as we journey together in faith.

Together in Christ, we ask you to join us in the following ways to discover God's will:

- Daily prayer for the church in the United States.
- Allow your own perspectives on these issues to be shaped by God's Spirit.
- Daily prayer that delegates, who will be elected at 2011 fall mission center conferences, will be open to God's will and to the challenge of reaching common consent.
- Engage in a preparation process that will include
  - ◊ 2011 and 2012 reflection questions and spiritual practices for individuals and groups.
  - ◊ A scripture DVD presented at mission center and delegate preparation gatherings.
  - ◊ 2011 reunion/study text on Section 164:6a, b and 2012 reunion/study text on Signal Communities in Mission.
  - ◊ *Herald* articles and web updates.

Next month you will receive more information about the preparation process and a timeline of when resources will be released to help us journey toward the USA National Conference. This journey will not end at the conclusion of the conference on July 22, 2012. As disciples of Jesus Christ we must commit to lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to a common mission, even if we do not agree. It is our prayer that our response to the challenges before us will bear witness to the One who calls us into relationship with each other and sends us out in mission for the sake of the world.

In Christ's Peace,

Linda L. Booth, Stassi D. Cramm, Ronald D. Harmon Jr., Rick W. Maupin, K. Scott Murphy,  
USA Team of Apostles

*Reprinted with permission of the USA Team of Apostles*

continue to focus on the horizon that is getting ever closer.

The 2011 retreat will be blest with the presence of Apostle Ron Harmon. Apostle Harmon heads up the US Apostle Team that is planning the 2012 US Conference. Apostle Harmon will share planning for the Conference, as well as answering questions about happenings and polity in the Church. Ron brings a thoughtful and deep ministry to his field and the Church. We welcome him into our group as we all get to know each other better throughout the weekend.

Our classes will be focused around “community building, reaching out, pathways for healing, extending hands of reconciliation and promoting peace”, in addition to Apostle Harmon’s offerings. There will be something offered that will challenge us to grow and increase our discipleship. Evangelists’ blessings will be offered for the first time at the retreat. If you feel the need for additional guidance and affirmation in your life, please consider this sacrament. Our Chaplain, Evangelist Charlie Robison will be available for this ministry. Please contact him at [lazaruscomeout@gmail.com](mailto:lazaruscomeout@gmail.com) and make arrangements.

Oh my goodness, did I say swimming? One of the newest features at camp Doniphan is a new level entry pool so those with disabilities will be able to enjoy a nice dip too! We will enjoy “Minute to Win It,” GALA-style, with Sandra Merth; similar to Gay Olympics, but less physical in nature. ‘GAY BINGO’ may be reprised this year; encourage Gladys Over (aka Nathan Phillips) to attend the retreat when you have the opportunity.

Now for the big moment, PARTY THEME **“FLAMING HORIZONS”**. The colors for the this year’s banquet are, **ORANGE or RED or YELLOW and for those bold enough to dare,,,,,,WEAR ALL THREE!** Boy if we thought the pink banquet was good let’s see what we can do for this one. So please bring your talent, music, jokes, special and unique quirky things that we all love to do and share with all of our loved ones, and friends.

The SILENT AUCTION, an enormous and FUN event, will be held; so please plan on bringing items that will peak interest and create massive bidding wars; all in good fun! The funds raised from all of the events will help cover the expenses incurred at the annual GALA retreat.

The weekend retreat fee will be \$175.00; GALA will subsidize additional costs. Proceeds from the silent auction will be used to cover expenses and an offering will be taken during the last service. Camperships will be available thanks to generous gifts designated for this purpose. **WE WANT EVERYONE TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE!** If you feel that finances are an issue, please advise us as early as possible of the need. This is an important retreat because of the preparation for the 2012 Conference, the need for us to be affirmed and reenergized through the relationships we have developed, and to experience the power of the Spirit moving in our lives to heal and restore our souls.

Lake Doniphan features a beautiful campground for walking with peaceful areas to relax and contemplate. Full linen service is provided, so there is no need to haul your pillows, blankets and towels. Full beverage service is available 24hours. I have also been told they have a new cook and the food has improved dramatically.

So please plan ahead, save up, check out airline flights (reserve early) and find that special knick-knack to auction off. Most of all, practice that special talent to share with everyone.

See you in September.

#### **In Memorium:**

In December, we lost a member of GALA; David Swart, from Houston , Texas. David was one of the directors of our Annual Retreat held at Camp Sionito, near San Antonio, Texas. David will be missed by all.

Glenn Coven, of Cincinnati, OH, died February 14 from leukemia. Born May 8, 1931 in Charleroi, PA, he has 4 children and was known for his beautiful baritone voice. He attended Graceland College and several GALA retreats and had hopes of starting GALA gatherings of Ohio people. We will miss his sense of humor and characteristic laugh!

# Is Your Congregation Welcoming?

by David Woosley

Is your congregation welcoming? I imagine if you asked any of your members, they would say, "Yes, we welcome everyone." But what does it really mean to be welcoming? According to the Welcoming Community Network (WCN), a welcoming congregation is a congregation that publicly and successfully welcomes bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender persons and have the following qualities (only a partial list):

- Include and address the needs of LGBT persons at every level of congregational life; in worship, in programs, in social occasions, and in leadership; welcoming not only their presence, but their gifts and the hopes of their lives as well.
- Assume the presence of LGBT people and celebrate this diversity by having inclusive language and content in their worship.
- Offer congregational and ministerial support for union and memorial services for LGBT persons.
- Celebrate the lives of all people and welcome same-sex couples, recognizing their committed relationships, and equally affirms expressions of caring and affection without regard to sexual orientation.
- Celebrate the rich diversity of human life we have in the Community of Christ.

There has been a lot of interest in the last year from congregations



wanting to begin the steps to become welcoming. Wondering how your congregation can become welcoming? Once again, WCN has developed a procedure that is very helpful for a congregation on the path. Some of the steps include:

- Form a small, informal group to initially discuss welcoming needs in your congregation.
- Make contact with WCN at [Info@WelcomingCommunityNetwork.org](mailto:Info@WelcomingCommunityNetwork.org).
- Begin a process of study, discussion, and prayer using welcoming church materials appropriate for your congregation.
- As a congregation, create and adopt a welcoming covenant statement.
- Put into practice what it means to be an extravagantly welcoming congregation.

WCN has a wealth of information available to help individuals and congregations to take the path to become welcoming. Much more information can be found at:

[welcomingcommunitynetwork.org](http://welcomingcommunitynetwork.org)

## GALA Treasurer's Report

For the period  
October 1, 2010 through January 18, 2011:

**Total Income—\$4,696.21**

**Total Expenses—\$2,395.99**

**Cash Flow—\$2,300.22**

Cash on hand:

**Checking Account—\$3,419.46**

**Savings Account—\$8,308.66**

**Total Cash Available—\$11,728.12**

# Newsworthy

## Donations

The Board is pleased to announce the receipt of 2 sizeable donations by members of GALA. One of the donations was from a member who attends another church and is allowed to designate placement of her tithing dollars to a non profit. Her generous donation will be set aside for camperships for the annual retreat because "GALA meant so much to me during a time when I needed it the most, and I don't want to deny anyone else that opportunity when they need support the most on their life journey."

The other large donation was from one who generously has supported us financially over the years and will be used to support the retreat, outreach by the Board during the summer, and planning for the 2012 Conference.

Both of these were year end surprises and greatly appreciated. Thank you very much!

## Board Retreat

The GALA Board met in Independence over the Martin Luther King Holiday, January 14-16, 2011 for fellowship, business discussions and worship. Cornerstone Community of Christ was the host and the Independence Chapter hosted a pot luck for Board members and local members Saturday evening. Topics covered included Board structure, 2011 strategic plan, GALA chapters, Fall retreat, Graceland GSA and a second volume of LGBT stories in the church. Below is a summary of decisions made by the Board, not covered in other parts of the newsletter.

**Strategic Plan 2011.** The Board discussed the World Church process for the 2012 conference and then tried to discern the best approach for the LGBT community during 2011. It was decided that it would be expedient that we focus on three things:

- Our home congregations become welcoming
- We practice the ministry of presence
- Build personal relationships with our field Apostles

This strategy is also one that we encourage each member of GALA and the LGBT community in the

church follow. How do we implement? The ministry of presence is so important in the life of the church. Board members committed to be present whenever the church meets, especially in the Mission Center activities, such as retreats, reunions, conferences and other special activities. Will you also join in this ministry? Its not too early to contact your reunion planners and see if they will program a session on LGBT issues or an afternoon chat.

Everyone is also encouraged to get to know your field Apostle. Share with them your story and journey and hopes for the Church. Board members live in the fields of Apostles Harmon, Cramm and Murphy. We need help from our Texas and Florida friends to build relationships with Apostles Booth (who many already have), and Mejias. Will you help?

Three Board members worship in welcoming congregations. The remaining Board members have committed to move their congregations toward welcoming and visit other congregations in their Mission Center to nurture the conversation.

**Chapters.** A committee was established to explore the development of chapters where a large number of Community of Christ LGBT members and friends exist. The committee, chaired by Charlie Robison will explore a definition and guidelines for becoming GALA chapters. Bill Russell will also explore the possibilities of a relationship with the Graceland University GSA that can provide organizational and financial support for the organization.

The Board spent the whole day together and accomplished a lot. And during this whole weekend we drew closer together and became a closer knit family. Thank you to all the members for their hard work and sacrifice.

## Stone Church

Sunday morning was memorable for the GALA Board and the members of Stone Church. The Board conducted a class on growing up LGBT in the church and the issues the church now faces. Thirty were in attendance during the church school hour. Then during the worship service, Evangelist Charlie Robison, Board chaplain, bore his testimony on his

*(Continued on page 7)*

life's journey and coming out as bisexual. Charlie is a gifted speaker, keeping the attention of the 175 in attendance during the service. It was great to be there, to lift our voices in song in this beautiful, historic edifice and to worship together. Our thanks go out to Pastor Terry Snapp and his team. Let us remember the congregation in our prayers as they journey toward healing and becoming a welcoming congregation.

### **Homosexual Saints, Book Two?**

With the positive response to the book *HOMOSEXUAL SAINTS: The Community of Christ Experience*, and numerous requests for a follow up edition, the GALA approved the launch of a second book. The Board contacted book editor, Bill Russell, and publisher John Whitmer Books for feedback for such a project. We received positive support for the project and were given ideas to make the book a reality.

So now, The GALA Board will be contacting some individuals for potential stories, but need help from the GALA membership, family and friends! We need stories! We are looking for **your** stories; stories from congregations; stories from family and friends. Each story will show the path of self discovery, coming out, joys and tears in your faith, or making community of acceptance in our faith. A title of the second book has not been decided, and suggestions are welcome.

We anticipate that most stories will run about 1,000 to 2,000 words, but that is neither a minimum or a maximum. The length of stories in the first volume varied considerably.

Bill Russell, will be submitting updated information regarding actions and activity in the Community of Christ and GALA since the first book. We look forward to another wonderful book of sharing, love and faith!

Allan Fiscus will be collecting the submissions for the GALA Board. If using e-mail, please include as an attachment in a WORD document and put "HS BOOK TWO" in subject line. Deadline May 10, 2011 to e-mail to: [acfiscusrn@comcast.net](mailto:acfiscusrn@comcast.net) or mail to Allan at PO Box 2173, Independence, MO 64055.

### **Nominating Committee**

The GALA Nominating Committee for 2011 was appointed at the January 2011 Board Retreat and is composed of three (3) Board members: Clyde Frey, Chairperson, Chuck Hewitt, and Erin Cavanaugh and two GALA members: Keith Carter and Arthur Butler. In accordance with the corporation Bylaws which may be found on the website: [www.galaweb.org](http://www.galaweb.org), there are three (3) Board positions for which we are seeking nomination suggestions; term of office shall commence October 1, 2011:

**President-elect**, elected in odd numbered years for a one (1) year term, followed by one (1) year as President and one (1) year as Immediate Past President.

**Under Secretary for Publications**, elected in odd numbered years for a two (2) year term; responsible for oversight, editing and publication of GALA publications such as our newsletter.

**Member-at-Large**, one (1) person is elected each year to a three (3) year term of Member-at-Large.

The Nominating Committee shall solicit the GALA membership for suggestions for nominees and shall strive to include, both within its composition and its proposed slate of nominees, representation of persons of all sexual orientations, differing abilities, racial-ethnic backgrounds, gender identification, geographic locations and ages.

**NOW** is the time to take the opportunity to suggest persons for nomination to the open positions on the GALA Board of Directors. **SEND** your suggestions in written form to the attention of Clyde Frey, Nominating Committee at [cfrey@onairaudit.com](mailto:cfrey@onairaudit.com) or fax: 716.875.0275 or mail: Clyde Frey, 339 Lakefront Boulevard, Buffalo, NY 14202. Please include the name of nominee, position for which you are recommending and whether you have contacted said person and received their consent to stand for election.

Since we are charged with supplying the membership with a slate of candidates in the spring, *your consideration and nominations should be submitted shortly after receiving the newsletter in which this article is published.*

# “GALA 2011 Membership Dues Invoice attached....”

Those members for whom we have an e-mail address in our membership database may find the above indicator to sound familiar; it is the tag that was used in the ‘Subject’ line of individual e-mails sent out recently as the annual dues invoicing process has begun.

The following statement was included in the body of the e-mail:

**GALA Membership Dues invoice for calendar 2011 is attached for your convenience.**

If paying by mail, please include a copy of the invoice and include your name, mailing address and e-mail address if you would like to receive notice of the newsletter electronically.

If paying online, please use the GALA website: [www.galaweb.org](http://www.galaweb.org) - click on the link on the right-hand side of the web page.

Thank you for your continued support! Clyde Frey, GALA Secretary

The general invoice mailing to those that receive the newsletter by surface mail will be completed shortly, everyone is encouraged to go to the GALA website or mail a payment for annual dues into our post office box in Independence.

Each newsletter we include a convenient reminder to renew membership or to provide an easy means join the organization, pay membership or make a donation.

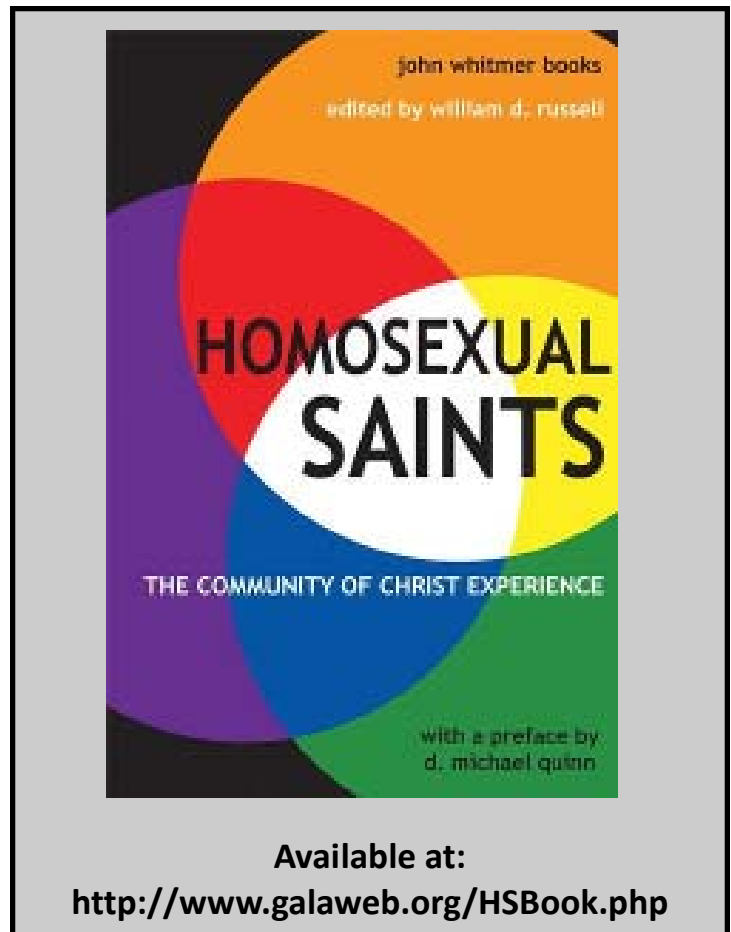
The question has been asked, why do you solicit donations if you accept membership funds? Well, the obvious answer is that the amount of membership dues funds we receive covers far less than half of our budgeted expenses. Printing and mailing of the newsletters remains one of the most costly budget items annually, but that is not the only expenditure we incur. Each year we participate in a service project that provides beautiful plants around the Temple entrances, we contribute to the ongoing Auditorium organ recital project, we provide assistance for those groups that make a request to enable participation in local Pride events across the country, and we provide

campership subsidies.

Due to economic conditions, we have found that there are increased requests for campership subsidies so that some folks are able to attend the annual GALA Retreat. We are thankful for the continued support of individuals that contribute to help fund camperships in addition to their annual dues support. From time-to-time we find that there are corporations that will match their employees donations which makes the contributions stretch even farther and for this we are also thankful.

Looking forward to 2012 and the journey together to the USA National Conference, we expect to find that there will be activities, events and projects in which we will become involved for which your continued support will be greatly appreciated.

The bottom line is thanks for contributing through Annual Membership Dues and donations; we appreciate your support!





**Beyond the Horizon**  
GALA RETREAT  
REGISTRATION FORM  
September, 2-5, 2011  
Camp Doniphan 12856  
Doniphan Lake Rd.  
Excelsior Springs, MO  
64024



**Please fill out this form and send it in By: August 15, 2011**

**You do not have to send payment we need an accurate count. Payment is due no later than registration  
September 2, 2011**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical/Special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Need to be Picked up? Please contact Chuck Hewitt for arrangements;  
(816) 616-5883 or mikechuckh@gmail.com

Payment Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Retreat Cost:**

**Adults: \$175.00, kids 5-12 \$116.00 (5 and under free)**

(Limited sponsorships available contact howard092248@yahoo.com )

**2 people per room (Private room costs \$10.00 per night)**

**Preference on roommate \_\_\_\_\_**

(Pillows, bedding and towels provided)

Mail Registration to:

**GALA RETREAT**

**P.O. Box 2173**

**Independence, MO 64055**

**Information: Call or e-mail Chuck Hewitt, (816) 616-5883,  
mikechuckh@gmail.com**



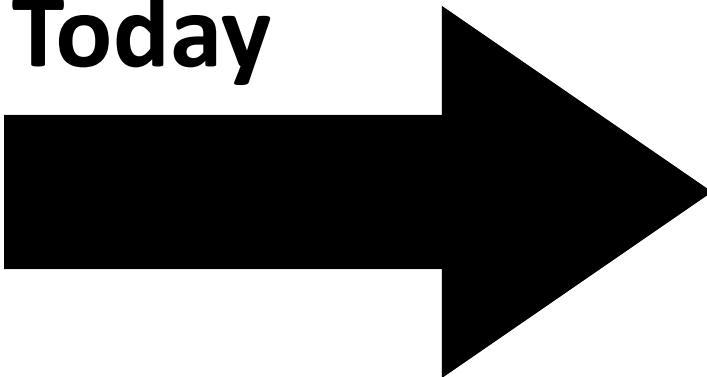
February 2011

P.O. Box 2173  
Independence, MO 64055

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# Join, Or Renew Your Membership Today



## 2011 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**