

AN OUTREACH TO MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF FAMILY OF FAITH MCC

February 1997

KEEPING THE FAITH The Intersection of Gays, God and Government

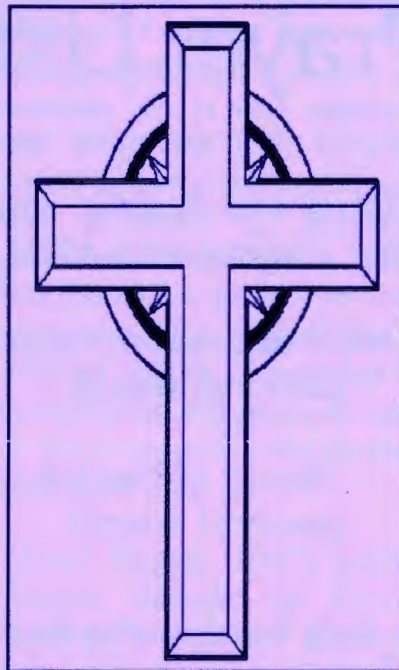
By Danial Zingale

As people of faith see it, one of the worst things that religious political extremists do to lesbian and gay people is to create barriers between us and God. By preaching a message of "love the sinner but hate the sin," or, even worse, trying to alter our sexual orientations through their so-called change ministries, groups like Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition are signaling that gay men and lesbians are not welcomed by organized religion.

Despite those messages, the gay community is a spiritual community, with many gay men and lesbians participating in organized religion for the same reasons non-gay people do - to maintain family traditions, to better connect with their communities, to provide children with a religious education.

Many of us believe that political progress for groups facing discrimination in America is linked to religion, for better or for worse. From the fight to abolish slavery to passage of the Voting Rights Act,

(Continued on page 2)



WISH LIST

A Pop Machine

Piano

Sound System Monitor

CD Player

Cards & Stamps

WEEKLY

Sundays

9:00 am Adult Ed.

11:00 am Worship Service

Wednesdays

6:30 P.M. Praise & Worship

7:30 P.M. Choir

Thursdays

7:30 P.M. Co-Dependency Group

MONTHLY

1st Sunday of Month
Potluck

1st Friday of each Month
SAFE HAVEN
(ages 18-30)

2nd Sunday of each Month
Board Meeting
(open to all)

10th of each Month
Newsletter Articles Due

3rd Wednesday of each
Month
Newsletter Mailing

(Continued from page 1)

many political victories have been won by convincing Americans of the essential immorality of discrimination. Of course, our foes from the religious right also try to use dogma to defeat us, which makes it even more imperative that we fight them on these terms.

Leading the way among gays and lesbians of faith is the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), the first Protestant denomination founded to minister to gay men and lesbians. Just as the black churches were essential to the African-American civil rights movement, MCC can emerge as an important force for gay and lesbian equality. HRC recently initiated a partnership with MCC to distribute voter registration forms to churchgoers at more than 200 MCC congregations nationwide.

And the Rev. Troy Perry, MCC's founder, recently wrote in a letter to the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, "it is incumbent upon every member and friend of our denomination to be registered to vote."

Within mainstream religion, more and more thoughtful people are questioning anti-gay beliefs and practices. Heeding a call to conscience, many of these friends are working on behalf of gay and lesbian civil rights. For instance, Rabbi David Saperstein, director and counsel of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, testified before Congress against the so-called Defense of Marriage Act: "This bill is about targeting scapegoats;

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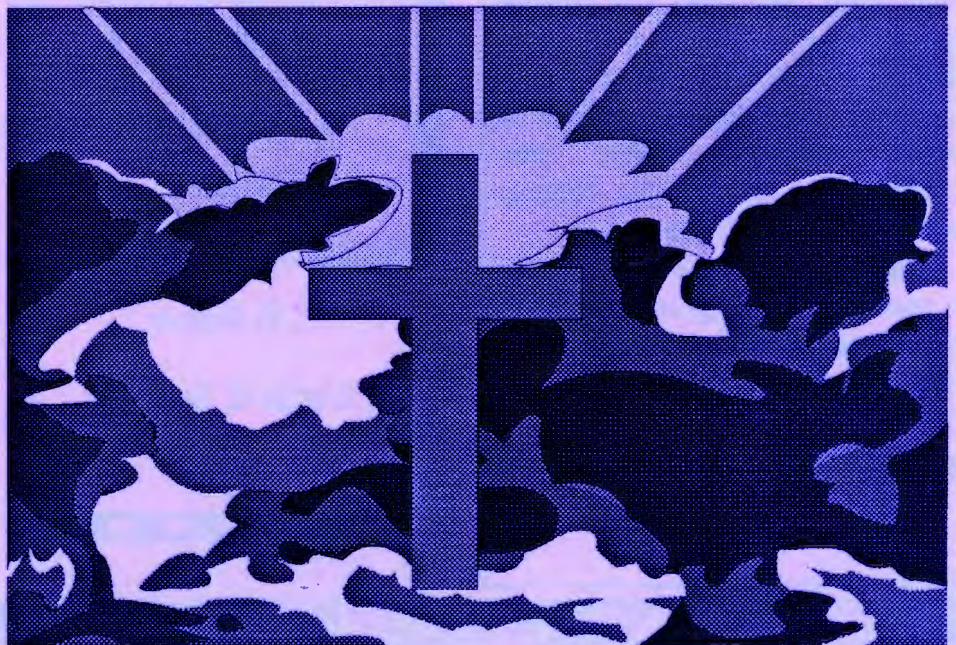
- Carol and Family, who are dealing with AIDS
- MCC of Greater Tulsa's pastoral search
- Family of Faith's pastoral search
- Deb Hardy, who has AIDS

"A knowledge of the path cannot be substituted for putting one foot in front of the other."

- M. C. Richards

POTLUCK DINNER

1st SUNDAY EACH MONTH



(Continued from page 2)

and as a people who have been the quintessential scapegoats of Western civilization, we stand with our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in saying that this bill is immoral and unjust." The United Church of Christ has also been a consistent and active voice on Capitol Hill against the Defense of Marriage Act and in favor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. When Elizabeth Birch addressed members of the Christian Coalition during their annual meeting in September 1995, she was introduced by Hilary Shelton, program director of the United Methodist Church. This appearance was unprecedented; a national gay leader and a mainstream religious leader confronted the anti-gay religious political extremists on their own turf. Ralph Reed, Christian Coalition executive director, refused to allow Birch and Shelton to address the convention directly, so they spoke in an adjacent room at the same hotel. "Neither of us should forsake our fundamental convictions," Birch said, reading an open letter to the coalition. "But we could hold those convictions with a humility that allows room for the lives of others." Afterward, several Christian Coalition members who chose to attend the speech told Birch that she had raised serious doubts in their minds about their leaders' anti-gay tactics.

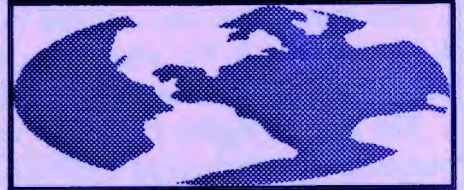
Reed and Robertson appear cognizant of the rumblings of dissension among their flock. In his book, "The Harvest Begins With You," Robertson wrote: "We have taken some polls of evangelical Christians, and about 20 percent of them say homosexuality and

abortion are no big deal." Even more recently, Reed wrote in his autobiography: "[R]eligious conservatives must shun harsh language on critical issues _ chiefly abortion, Clinton-bashing, and homosexuality and learn to speak of our opponents with charity." Nevertheless, the Christian Coalition has not stopped using gay and lesbian Americans as scapegoats for their narrow political agenda. Indeed, the Christian Coalition has been a leading promoter of anti-gay marriage bills in state legislatures and before the U.S. Congress. Reed's actions prove that his softer tone is meant to disguise a persistently hateful agenda. But the fact that he felt the need to tone it down may also suggest that the religious politics of exclusion and demonization will prove no match for the simple notion that we are all children of God.

Daniel Zingale, HRC's political director, attended the Harvard Divinity School and graduated from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard

Get Involved

AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP



WE ARE FAMILY Defending Our Rights As Parents

By Nancy Buermeyer

One of the most critical issues facing the lesbian and gay community today is the assault by extremists on our rights as parents. A central tenet of the bigotry aimed at lesbian and gay people is the premise that having young people see us, know us or even learn of our existence will somehow be detrimental to their well-being. While family law and education policies have traditionally been left to states and local communities, more and more often these issues have reached the federal arena. The 104th Congress considered two such legislative initiatives: adoption rights of District of Columbia residents and so-called "parental rights" legislation.

D.C. Adoption Amendment

In the summer of 1995, the District of Columbia courts ruled that two unmarried individuals could both be the legal adoptive parents of a child. The case, which involved two gay men, set an important precedent.

As Congress considered the District's budget for 1996, Rep. Jay Dickey, a Republican from Arkansas, offered an amendment

in the Appropriations Committee to overturn the court case by forbidding unmarried couples from jointly adopting children. The amendment was backed by such organizations as the Traditional Values Coalition, a religious political extremist group run by the notoriously anti-gay Lou Sheldon.

The amendment was included in the House version of the bill, but was not included in the Senate bill. Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., who chairs the Senate committee handling the D.C. budget bill, led the efforts to remove this discriminatory language from the final version of the bill.

The Human Rights Campaign organized a group of lesbian and gay parents from the District to lobby key members of Congress at a critical point in the process. It was an extremely successful day as members of Congress and their staffs got to meet face-to-face with lesbian and gay families.

The attempts by Dickey and the Traditional Values Coalition to add the anti-gay language to the 1997 budget were unsuccessful, but HRC anticipates further state and national attacks on the rights of lesbian and gay parents.

"Parental Rights" Legislation

The Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act of 1995 has an entirely reasonable name, but this legislation would have sweeping and very damaging effects if it ever became law. So-called parental rights legislation is one of the 10 planks of the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family" and was a top legislative priority for them in this Congress.

While purporting to protect parents' "fundamental rights," this legislation could subject programs that help children to a slew of lawsuits. Whenever a public library, public school, or health or welfare agency made a decision or merely offered information that a particular parent disagreed with, that parent could file suit in federal court. It could undermine the ability of minors to get essential medical care, protection from child abuse or lifesaving information including sex education. The implications of such legislation are extremely broad and devastating, particularly for the lesbian and gay community.

"Among other things, passage of this legislation would completely change public education as we know it," says Rebecca Isaacs, public policy director for People for the American Way. "For instance, any public school providing life-saving information to lesbian and gay youth would be subject to lawsuits in federal court, even if the overwhelming majority of the community supported the policy." The availability of basic information about homosexuality, sex education curricula, school library materials and health care services could be challenged, even by a single individual filing suit. Schools could be forced to tailor curricula for each student based on the demands of individual parents.

HRC has joined a broad coalition opposing this legislation. Headed by People For the American Way, it includes children's health and safety advocates, parents, educators and religious and civil liberties groups. The bill's prospects in the 104th Congress remain unclear, but it is probable that similar legislation will be back next year, in both state legislatures and Congress.

HEARTWINGS '97

"LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES"

February 14-16 Denton Texas

Featuring Marsha Stevens in Concert February 15th

On Sunday March 2nd
Family of Faith MCC
Will do something NEW- something BOLD...
Something we've never done before...

Join us at the first-ever

Congregational Forum

aka- "CHEW & SPEW"

Following potluck we will have a relaxed and informal question and answer session on topics that YOU have chosen. We all know how important it is to communicate, so let us hear from you... bring yourself and a covered dish for potluck, and let's talk!!!

February

1997

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

						1
2 11:00 am Worship Potluck after Worship!	3	4	5 6:30 PM Prayer & Praise Service 7:30 Choir Practice	6 7:30 PM Co- Dependency Mtg	7 Safe Haven 7:00	8
9 11:00 am Worship	10 Worship Team Mtg 7:00 Newsletter Articles Due	11 Fund Raising Mtg 7:00	12 6:30 PM Prayer & Praise Service 7:30 Choir Practice	13 7:30 PM Co- Dependency Mtg	14	15
16 11:00 am Worship Children's Ministry	17	18	19 5:30 Newsletter Mailing 6:30 PM Prayer & Praise Service 7:30 Choir Practice	20 7:30 PM Co- Dependency Mtg	21	22
23 11:00 am Worship	24	25	26 6:30 PM Prayer & Praise Service 7:30 Choir Practice	27 7:30 PM Co- Dependency Mtg	28	

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