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Freedom

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."
—Galatians 5:1

The Newsletter of the Metropolitan Community Churches in Lancaster and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Vol. I, No. 7

October, 1982

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: DIVINE PANACEA OR SATAN'S CURSE?

by Arthur C. Runyan, II

A major bugaboo tormenting the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (as well as most other major denominations) over the past few years has been the issue of inclusive language. While I have long been an advocate of inclusive language and the use thereof in worship, I was challenged recently to rethink my position. I think I have grown some, and I would like to share that growth with you.

Before I go any further, let me proclaim my disclaimer: probably more than any other article I have written to date, the thoughts herein are in process and not anywhere near finalized. What I am sharing is not where I'm at so much as it is a reflection of where I might be headed. Moreover, I don't imagine that what I write will be the last word on the subject. Whatever I say on this issue is bound to bring waves of praise and protest. Hopefully, some correspondents will respond in a format that is suitable for publication in FREEDOM. But enough disclaimers; onward. . .

Some time ago I spent the weekend with my friend Ken who lives in another city. Unfortunately I am not at liberty to share his full name with you because the deadline does not afford us the time to get his approval on this article. His statements then, will be filtered by my interpretation and my memory, and therefore may not be completely accurate. Let us say, therefore, that I am sharing with you my impressions of what Ken argued to me.

Ken, you see, believes that the current push to use inclusive language in the church is the work of the devil. While his arguments go on for days, the one that impressed me the most was the appeal to Matthew 7:15-20. In this passage Jesus is warning his hearers against false prophets. "By their fruits, ye shall know them," Jesus says.

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:22-23 that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. By contrast, the desires of the

lower nature include: quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies (Gal. 5:20-21). Now, which list sounds more like a church in turmoil over the use of inclusive language? (For that matter, which list sounds more like our District Conference business meetings?)

Ken is quick to point out the difference between inclusive language itself and the drive to force people to use it. It is the latter, I think, that he has a problem with, and I must admit that I am forced to agree.

Inclusive language, I believe is a Red Herring--leading us away from the real issue which is inclusive thinking. Inclusive language is not a cause, but an effect. If we are ever going to do away with the inequalities between the sexes and the races, it would behoove us to go after not the effects of racism and sexism, but the causes.

In other words, exclusive language is not the problem, but it points to the problem which is exclusive thinking. If we are going to eradicate sexism and racism (and age-ism and all the rest of the evil -isms you can think of), we are not going to have to change the way people talk, we are going to have to change the way people think. If we do that, the talking will take care of itself.

Indeed, if we neglect the thinking in favor of the talking, we can very easily fool ourselves into believing that the problem has been solved when it has not even been addressed.

Now, having said all that, I would like to contradict it. I use inclusive language. I have tuned my ear to seek out phraseology that excludes vast groups of people so that I can extricate said phrases from my repertoire and thereby avoid offending all those folks. I do not always succeed, but by and large I do pretty well. What I found was

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that the more I worked on it the more I discovered just how hideously exclusive our language patterns are.

Language, you know, reflects the ideology and philosophy of a people, and after a while, through this careful picking and choosing of my words and phrases, I came to realize just what our society thinks of women. (At that point in my development, my use of inclusive language was strictly gender oriented. Color came later.) One day I was driving to school and I had a profound revelation: WOMEN ARE AUXILIARY PEOPLE. They are not real--they exist only to supplement and augment men (who are therefore presumably incomplete without them). Note what happens to a woman when she gets married. She loses her name and her identity. No longer is she Jane Smith, she becomes Mrs. John Doe. What happened to Jane? What happened to Smith? What happened to her own sense of being? All have vanished as she now lives in the shadow of her husband.

Take another example. "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" is a phrase often used to somehow describe the order of the universe in a perfect Christian world. Where are the women? I dare you to find them. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man completely excludes women. Such exclusion is, I think, horribly sinful.

I cannot believe that God intended women to be auxiliary people. That is part of a system of sex role stereotyping that humankind has dreamed up all by itself. While men have the power, it is not (I believe) something that men have forced upon women. Men and women both suffer; men and women both have a hand in perpetuating it.

And I am afraid that this system will not come to an end by simply forcing everybody to talk funny. The sin goes deeper than that.

I reached my profound revelation after years of work, forcing myself to restructure my sentences, and thereby challenging the way I think. But I did it of my own free will. Had I been forced to use inclusive language, I probably would only have reached profound resentment.

It all comes down, I believe, to love. I made myself talk funny (it did seem funny at the time) because I loved women (I still do) and I wanted to talk in such a way that would reflect that love. It was an immature

and ignorant love at first, but as I grew, so did my love. And as my love grew, so did my understanding.

Exclusive language, both in sex and race, points to our sin of not loving each other enough. But we can't make people love each other more by making them talk funny. As a matter of fact, it works the other way around. If we truly love each other, the language will follow.

What we should be promoting then is not inclusive language, but inclusive loving. That is the heart of the matter for me.

Still, I challenge everyone to listen to the words they use. Listen to the words you choose. If they do not reflect love, choose others that do. If you find you have no love, pray to God for the grace to receive it.

Above all, remember that your words are your own. By what comes out of your mouth you are defiled or sanctified. Words are not cheap. They reflect who you are. Don't let anyone put words in your mouth. But let your language reflect your love.

LOVE FEAST

MCC-LANCASTER, Pa.

Starting October 31, and continuing the last Sunday of every month MCC-LANCASTER will be having a LOVE FEAST POT-LUCK DINNER open to the LESBIAN & GAY Community of Greater Lancaster.

It will start at 5:00 PM with a brief communion service follow by dinner. I would like to extend this invitation to the Lesbian & Gay Community to come to share in the meal & fellowship with us. Please call 392-2729 for further information.

A. Fred Johnson

SAVE THOSE CANS

We are saving aluminum cans for recycling and to raise a few dollars for the church. If you have cans, contact Colin in Harrisburg.

MCC continues to meet once a month with our friends from the greater Williamsport area for study, rap, worship and fellowship. Eight people attended the September meeting. The next meeting will be at Dale's in Williamsport at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 10th. For more information phone 323-5170 or 398-7481 in the Williamsport area or the Harrisburg church office at 238-3746.

Our thanks to the West Branch Gay Support Group for their help in coordinating this effort. We also look forward to seeing some of you in Harrisburg.

WE ARE GROWING

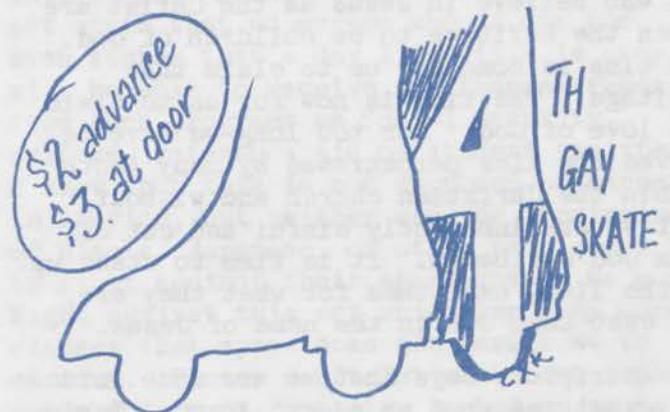
Both the Harrisburg and the Lancaster groups are increasing in numbers, with three new members in Lancaster on the 12th of September and one in Harrisburg on September 19th -- Welcome to Don, Earl, and Mike in Lancaster and to Sheri Lee in Harrisburg. If you are interested in membership or just learning about MCC, please contact the Worship Coordinator in your church.

NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

This newsletter has been well received in many places and the mailing list (particularly in Harrisburg) continues to grow. We have been able to keep costs down by going to bulk mailing, but costs have continued to increase with additional printing and envelopes. Also, the time involved in mailing and distribution has increased. While we do not intend to cut anyone from the mailing list at this time, we sometimes wonder about those few people we haven't seen or heard from in over a year. We need to hear from you! Do you wish to continue to receive FREEDOM? Drop us a line and a couple of bucks if you can. This newsletter costs about \$5.00 per person per year to produce. We thank those who have contributed and urge the remainder of you to do so.

A weekly men's rap group will start on Monday, October 4th at 7:00 p.m. at the Friends Meeting House in Harrisburg. The group is open to the community. We expect to deal with a number of topics of interest to gay men depending on the expectations of the group.

SKATE WITH
DIGNITY



THURSDAY - NOV. 11 7-10 PM.
AT GOLD SKATE IN MIDDLETOWN

"Singles"

Due to poor response, the singles get-together has been terminated.

I would like to thank the 3 people who called in response to my article last month. Now for those of you, who for some reason or other failed to respond. DO NOT complain "that there is nothing to do", especially the Lancasterians; you were given a viable option.

--Bill Dixon

It has now been six months since FREEDOM was born, and Philip thought it would be a good idea to rehash the lead article of the first issue. Many people now receiving this opus did not receive the first issue and do not, therefore, understand as well as they might what FREEDOM is all about and why it is so named. The remainder of this article is from our first front page.

Freedom is, after all, what we are all about. We are no longer shackled by the bonds of laws, rules, and edicts that have held us down and oppressed us for most of our lives. We are free in Christ Jesus, and we must learn to claim and to love that freedom.

There is more to knowing God than, "If you're good you'll get to heaven, and if you're bad you'll go to hell." God loves us. The Gospel of John says that ALL who believe in Jesus as the Christ are given the heritage to be children of God. The time is come for us to claim that heritage. The time is now for us to claim the love of God. For too long we have believed the lies perpetrated by many (both within the Christian church and without) that we are inherently sinful and cut off from God's kingdom. It is time to stand up to the lies, name them for what they are, and cast them out in the name of Jesus.

Scripture says that we are made into new creatures when we accept Jesus. Scripture does not say that we make ourselves into new creatures. The significance of this is that our transformation is God's work and not our own. In that light, we must reject the teachings of any who try to tell us that we must do this or do that to earn God's love.

God's love is free. And that is a good thing, because by our own power, we could never earn it. God loves us so much that Jesus was sent to live for us, to die for us, and to be raised from the dead that we may be free from the law of sin and death.

This is our freedom--God's love for us. This is our heritage--to be children of the living God. This is our mission--to spread the Good News that the love of God in Jesus is free for any and all who would accept it.

Scripture says that we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free. Enjoy your Freedom!

--Arthur C. Runyan, II

On Sunday, September 19, the Lancaster congregation voted to petition the Board of Home Missions for study group status. This is in line with discussion and goals set during summer planning sessions.

If this petition is approved, MCC Lancaster will no longer be a parish of Harrisburg. Instead it will become an independent congregation within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

However, the umbilical cord would not be entirely severed. Some activities would continue to be joint efforts, such as the combined ministry throughout the state and the production and distribution of this publication.

WEEKLY SERVICES

MCC Lancaster is happy to announce the increase in worship services to every Sunday. The services will continue to be held at the Unitarian Center of Lancaster, on West Chestnut Street. The time will continue to be 5:00 pm for now. Depending on a possible change in the Harrisburg schedule, the time may be moved up to 4:30 pm.

The expanded schedule will include a pot luck supper Sunday, mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Art Runyan will continue to preach two Sundays a month.

It will be the responsibility of the worship committee, composed of Don Mowrer and Al Johnson, to develop programs for other Sundays. They would appreciate your help in this planning.

LEPERS

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0

7:30 PM.

POT LUCK
HALLOWEEN
PARTY



a covered dish
& a costume
& yer set.

We are not lepers and we shouldn't let The Family Protection Act make us lepers, but that's what you and I will become if ever this act is passed.

Remember the histories of the agressors and the oppressed:

- 1) The Romans and the Jews
- 2) The colonists and the slaves
- 3) The Turks and the Armenians
- 4) The White people and the Indians.

If this act is passed we will again be under the yoke of oppression with the loss of the precious little freedom that we enjoy as American citizens. The Family Protection Act is pending in both houses of Congress right now and most of the Community--both gay and straight--have never heard of it. Believe me, it will affect us terribly if passed. I know that many of you think that your life isn't in the hands of Congress, but please note that they make (and break) laws that involve us. Some of the clauses in the act state that no person who is Gay (or even states that a Gay life style is okay) will be able to receive any Federal funds from such programs as Social Security, welfare, veteran's aid or student assistance. I know that this is not supposed to happen in America, but neither was the imprisonment of Blacks, Japanese, or other people who had to fight against their aggressors. We must fight against this act which has many more clauses that space does not permit me to mention. Please don't let us become lepers, outcast from our society, looked on as being different. I know in my heart that in God's sight all people are created in God's image whether Black or White, Gay or Straight, Young or Old, Male or Female, we must all spread God's truth and we must warn everyone of the lie of The Family Protection Act.

A. Fred Johnson

ed. note: For more information on the Family Protection Act and what you can do about it, contact the Gay Rights National Lobby. Their address is:

GRNL
 P.O. Box 1892
 Washington, DC 20013
 (202) 546-1801

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- September 29 — MCC-Harrisburg Benefit at Shadows, 704 N. 3rd St., Hbg. 9:00pm – 2:00am
- October 3 — Fellowship Sunday! On this day, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches celebrates its 14th birthday. Come and celebrate with us! There will be special worship in both churches.
- October 3 — Flea Market at Harrisburg Drive-In. 8:30am – 4:00pm
- October 3 — Congregational Meeting following worship service in Harrisburg at the Friends Meeting House.
- October 4 — Men's Rap Group, Friends Meeting House in Harrisburg, 6th & Herr Sts., 7:00pm
- October 7 — Board of Directors Meeting, 1623 Green St., Hbg., 6:30pm
- October 10 — Culmination of Fellowship Week in Harrisburg. Bring a friend, somebody new, or bring yourself if you have never been before! Big doings!
- October 10 — Williamsport Outreach meets at 1:00. See article elsewhere in FREEDOM
- October 11 — Special Meeting of the Lancaster Congregation to ready our application to the Board of Home Missions for Study Group Status. Everyone's help is needed. Please be at Art & Al's house by 7:30pm.
- October 15-17 — District Conference in Pittsburgh. Registration is due now!
- October 22 — FREEDOM DEADLINE! All copy for the November issue of FREEDOM **must** be in Lancaster by 6:00pm today.
- October 24 — Celebration of the 2nd Anniversary of the Lancaster Congregation. 5:00pm, Lancaster Unitarian Center, 538 W. Chestnut Street, Lancaster.
- October 28 — FREEDOM Folding and Stuffing Party in Harrisburg. Call Gary at 238-3746 for details.
- October 29-31 — International Third World Conference for Lesbians and Gay Men in Washington, D.C.
- October 30 — Pot Luck Halloween Party at Darlene Rickabaugh's home, 2224 Walnut Street in Harrisburg at 7:30pm. Go around to the front and up the stairs. . . apt. #2. Costumes optional (and hoped for) but not necessary.
- October 31 — Love Feast in Lancaster, 5:00pm Unitarian Center.
- November 11 — Gay Skate co-sponsored by MCC-Harrisburg and Dignity/Central PA. 7:00-10:00pm at the Gold Skate in Middletown. Tickets are \$2.00 in advance and \$3.00 at the door. Call 238-3746 or 234-7560 for more information.
- July 11-17, 1983 — UFMCC General Conference in Toronto, Canada

WORSHIP SCHEDULES

Harrisburg:

Sunday Evenings
Friends Meeting House
6th & Herr Streets
Harrisburg, Pa.
7:00 p.m.

Lancaster:

Sunday Evenings
Unitarian Center of Lancaster
538 W. Chestnut Street
Lancaster, Pa.
5:00 p.m.

GAY SWITCHBOARD OF HARRISBURG

234-0328

6:00 to 10:00 pm
Monday – Friday
Your gay connection
in Harrisburg!

LANCASTER GAY/LESBIAN HELP LINE

397-0691

Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, and Sunday
6:30 to 9:30 pm

*Have a problem?
We can help.*

FREEDOM

Vol. 1, No. 7

FREEDOM is the newsletter of the Metropolitan Community Churches in Harrisburg and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It is published monthly and mailed from Harrisburg on the Monday prior to the first Sunday of the month.

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Manuscripts submitted for publication should be typed, single-spaced, with a column width of no more than 3 1/4 inches (19 1/2 picas). Manuscripts will not be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included. Manuscripts should bear the name of the author.

The views expressed in the articles are those of the writers and not necessarily those of MCC-Lancaster, MCC-Harrisburg, or the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Publication of the name of any person, business, or organization should not be construed as indicative of the sexual orientation or ideological stance of that person, business, or organization.

The Metropolitan Community Church is an ecumenical, Christian church for all people with a special ministry to the lesbian and gay community.

Assisting with this issue were:
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