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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. 1, No. 12

March, 1983

YOU ARE THE CHURCH!

by Gary Norton

In November and December of 1982 we, the congregation (members and friends) of MCC- Harrisburg made two major decisions. One was to hire Rev. Pat Lichty as part time pastor and the second was to adopt a budget of \$9,900.00 to pay her salary and benefits as well as necessary expenses to continue as a church.

This budget is essentially a bare bones budget and does not rely on fund raisers to help meet expenses. The \$825.00 projected income for each month is broken down with a reliance on \$750.00 of that amount to come from the tithes and offerings. That is a very conservative figure considering the financial prowess of this particular congregation.

The income from tithes for the five Sunday month of January was \$573.30. Some of this shortage was made up for by the gay skate party. Average attendance in Jan. was 22.2 as compared to 28.5 in Nov. All of that isn't too bad and one can even try to rationalize for the even lower figures for the first two Sundays in Feb. (attendances of 16 and 12 and incomes of \$35.00 and \$60.00) People may have missed Super Bowl Sunday (we only had one womyn in church!) and then we just had that terrible 24 in. blizzard of '83. Even so Rev. Pat Lichty in spite of snow and hours of delay and lay over made it to the Sunday night service all the way from New York City!

What is really bothersome is the change in attitude after the Pastor had been hired. The church had been going great balls of fire through November, perhaps because we felt that we had to go it on our own. After Rev. Lichty had been hired you could feel the air as everyone

breathed a sigh of relief. Perhaps it was everyones thinking that we had a pastor now and could take a break, after all Pat would do it when she got here. Everything would be alright when Pat got here, wouldn't it?

By the time this is published Rev. Lichty and her family will be here. They will have made one of the biggest changes a family can make. The sacrifice that will be made to come here and be a part of our family is great. The adjustments will be hard and time consuming. It is the responsibility of the congregation of Metropolitan Community Church of Harrisburg to help them with that adjustment. Our love and support is absolutely essential. As members of the Body of Christ God has promised that as we love and care for each other God will bless us all. You see it should not be that everything will be alright when our Pastor arrives but that everything is alright before they come. It should all be right, RIGHT NOW!! God made it clear in I Cor. 12:24-26. It says " But God has adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" RSV

Each one of us as a member of this body must perform their function. A few cannot carry the load. Burdens that are shared are light. May each one of us examine our life and ask God if we are doing our part in this Body of our Saviour and King. What a BLESSING we will share when we do our part for God and the Church!!!

Lethal AIDS

by Arthur C. Runyan, II

I've been reading a lot about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) lately, and I have to admit that most of the stuff that has come out so far is pretty scary.

In the interest of keeping all the faithful well informed, I will try to condense all I have read for you. Information is the only weapon we have to date to fight this thing.

About 3 years ago doctors began to notice a much-greater-than-normal incidence of Kaposi's Sarcoma, a very rare form of skin cancer among gay men. This particular form of cancer tends to be swift and lethal. Most patients who get it die within six months. Rumors about the "Gay Cancer" began to spread. Fundamentalist leaders took notice.

Since that time, it has been ascertained that the cancer was actually an effect of a much deeper cause. For some reason, the immunological system of certain gay men was breaking down completely, leaving them vulnerable to a host of diseases, not the least of which was Kaposi's Sarcoma and some equal lethal forms of pneumonia.

A lot of speculation went (and is still going) around as to the reason that the immunological systems were breaking down. At first, there seemed to be a link with poppers, but far too many patients who had never used poppers showed up to allow for that possibility. Then the breakdown seemed to be linked with drug or alcohol abuse. But lately there have been patients who do not abuse those things. The cause is still unclear.

One thing is certain: there are 4 different groups of people that are affected by AIDS. 1) Haitian immigrants; 2) Heroin and other injected drug users; 3) Hemophiliacs and others who require blood transfusions; and 4) Homosexual men.

The fundamentalists would like to have us believe that AIDS is actually the wrath of God being visited on us for our sinful lives. Doctors are more inclined to believe that it is a virus.

Apparently there is a virus that affects our immunological system by making it ineffective. This virus is spread in two major media: blood and semen.

The way to catch the virus, then, is from the blood of an infected person (either from sharing a needle with them or from a transfusion) or from injecting their semen either orally, anally, or vaginally. AIDS has shown up in infants of infected mothers.

There is no known cure for AIDS. Once you've got it, you've got it for life--and that life may not last long. There are treatments for many of the diseases you might catch, but the underlying cause remains untreatable at this time.

The only sure-fire way to avoid AIDS is multi-fold: don't share a needle, don't receive transfusions, don't be a Haitian, and don't have sex!

While one cannot avoid being a Haitian or receiving a blood transfusion, we certainly can control our drug and sex lives. Unless you have diabetes, there really is no reason to go sticking needles in your skin. Most folks agree with this, so I won't belabor it. If you are in the habit of self injection of recreational drugs, there are several competent substance abuse counselors and agencies in both Lancaster and Harrisburg to help you. Check the blue pages of the phone book or call the church.

As far as sex goes, the best alternative to celibacy I know is an exclusive relationship with one other sex partner (a.k.a. "lover" or "spouse.") If you absolutely, positively have a need for promiscuity, moderation is the watchword. The more you know about your sex partners, the safer you will be. If you are only satisfied by endless nights of anonymous sex, then you really are courting danger. (And I suspect that if you engage in endless nights of anonymous sex, you aren't being satisfied by it, anyway.)

How ironic that a little virus can inflict on us what Jerry Falwell was unable to -- straight morality!

I must mention that the virus theory is not yet proven, but it does explain most of phenomena thus far observed.

GAYRAP FINALLY
BEGINS IN
LANCASTER!

After some delay and disappointment, GayRap is finally scheduled to begin in Lancaster. GayRap is a rap group for Lesbians and gay men; it is an opportunity to meet and get to know new people for those unaccustomed to, unwelcome in, or uncomfortable in the bar/bookstore scene.

Our first meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 10 in Emerson Hall at the Unitarian Center, 538 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster.

The plan is for the group to meet every two weeks for planned discussion as well as free form discussion on any topics that might be on the minds of the participants. A convenient day, time, and meeting place will also be considered at the first meeting.

Originally we had planned to kick this whole program off with much hoopla and the showing of the film, "Word Is Out" in order to draw a large initial crowd. However, the public library put the kibosh on that idea by refusing to verify our reservation of the film until 2 days before the projected date. The film, therefore, has been rescheduled for May 5.

A collection will be taken to pay for the room rental. MCC-Lancaster has agreed to subsidize the collection to meet the required amount up to a point, but after the first few meetings, the group will be expected to support itself.

Its success, then, depends on your support. We feel that this is a valuable ministry to the gay and lesbian community of Lancaster. If you agree, show your support by being there on March 10th. GayRap will be what you make it!

LENT IN
LANCASTER

The emphasis for Lent in the Lancaster Study Group will be on Stewardship this year. In his sermon on the first Sunday of Lent, Art Runyan challenged the congregation to stand on the promise of God.

Specifically he mentioned the promise God makes to God's people in Malachi 3:10, "Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple, so that there will be plenty of food there. Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things."

"This is not meant that you should bring 10% of all you earn into the church as a get-rich-quick scheme," explained Arthur, "but rather that the tired old excuse that you cannot afford to give to God what God requests of you is no longer valid (for that matter, it never was)."

Members and friends of MCC-Lancaster are being challenged to set aside 10% of their gross income for God's work either in the Lancaster church or in charities of their own choosing. In addition, all participants in worship services are being asked to consider bringing two items of non-perishable food each week as an offering to the Lancaster County Council of Churches Food Bank.

This should net about 30 cans and/or boxes of food each week. It is estimated that this will feed 2 or three families a week.

"As far as the tithe (10%) of gross income goes," Arthur said, "I think that a lot of people are going to be in for a big surprise. It is truly miraculous how much money you have left when you set aside God's portion first, and it is amazing how little you have left when you don't!"

IT'S GAY * SKATE #


\$2. ADV. TICKET
\$3. AT DOOR

TUES. MAR. 22 / GOLD SKATE
7:30 PM / MIDDLETOWN

MCC-Harrisburg recently ordered copies of the new hymnal HYMNS FOR THE FAMILY OF GOD. It is hoped that the new books will arrive in time to be used for the Easter services. Those members and friends attending the Feb. 13th service choose the dark green covers and decided to have the church name engraved in gold on the front. If anyone would like to make donations toward the purchase of one of these hymnals as a memorial or honorarium the cost of each book is \$9.00 which includes the engraving. Approximately 25 hymnals have been ordered thru Cokesbury Bookstore at the Point, however additional books will be ordered as additional donations are received.

Further adding to the music ministry at Harrisburg will be the addition of a electric piano to be used in the worship services. God has also seen fit to bring to the church several gifted pianists and future plans for a regular special music ministry are in the fire. Completing this months music outreach are the plans for the Gospel Concert to be held at the YWCA on Market St. on April 15th at 7:30 PM. The Scripture verse adopted for this Month is taken from Psm. 89:1a- I WILL SING OF THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE FOREVER... AMEN AND AMEN!

BROTHERS & SISTERS

IN CHRIST

Sometimes I wonder if we really can live our own lives or does someone else wants to direct our course? As Brothers and Sisters of Christ, we are often pushed around by Christians concerning our Sexuality so much so that we tend to run away from Churches & God all together. Well enough of this; its time to fight back at our transgressors & stand firm in our commitment to God. I have heard the children of God crying in the wilderness & turning to false idols to worship meaning drugs, sex, money, power etc. These things won't get you into heaven. I suggest that you look people in the eyes. If there is love, they won't stand between you and God. Rather they may share in your commitment with God. If not I suggest that you seek others who will.

AL

MCC-Lancaster along with MCC-Hbg. and the Williamsport Parish Extension will be hosting a visit from the Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, founder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Rev. Perry will be in Harrisburg on the evening of April 13th, 1983.

This visit is part of a fund-raising campaign to get the remaining funds needed for the T.V. special "GOD, GAYS, AND THE GOSPEL-THIS IS OUR STORY". It is expected to be aired nationwide for the first time during Gay Pride Week in June.

A number of advanced fund raisers are being planned for the area. Check the calendar and watch for further details on these events. The exact time and location for Rev. Perrys' visit will be announced in the April issue of FREEDOM.

CIRCUS TO BENEFIT GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS

Imagine. . . 18,000 gays in Madison Square Garden all at the same glorious time. This alone is worth the price of admission. Add to this the excitement of the circus and the opportunity to help in the fight against AIDS (see article, p. 2), and you come up with a tremendous happening.

Yes, on Saturday April 30, the circus at Madison Square Garden will benefit all of us. Tickets are on sale for \$10, \$15, and \$25. Profits will go to the Gay Men's Health Crisis.

Tickets are available by phone at 212-807-7517. They can also be purchased by mail from GMHC, Box 274, 132 W. 24th St., NY, NY 10011. Pay checks to: GMHC.

Plans are being made for a bus trip from Lancaster to this event. Anyone interested should call the Gay/Lesbian Help Line (397-0691) and leave their name and phone number. Someone will return your call. Sources say that Dignity/Central Pennsylvania is planning a bus from Harrisburg. Interested persons may contact them directly.

Make your plans and get your tickets now!

FROM THE SPIRIT
(Interpreted by Dale Shelly)

Things aren't what they should be. Somehow things got out of hand, and I find myself living out an act in the biggest play ever conceived. Not quite myself, being in disgust over the turn of events in my life. Maybe if I had it my way we could just turn it off and there would be peace.

Now in the still I think back on how I could hate the world's existence so much. But even now I wonder if the few good memories are really worth all the trouble we go through. Then Jesus says, "Hey! Where would we be, giving in to the opponent?"

I wasn't there when he created him or can I direct to knowledge of creation. And so I play on, not always singing my own tunes, seems like I can't win. But I believe Jesus and there will be a victory and not just a victory but a happy ending. Seems to me most people don't believe there will be a happy ending for me. Good enough too, to leave well enough alone. Me in heaven and them in hell forever, well maybe for you, but not for me.

Everyone is going where I am going-- sooner or later. Yea! Sooner or later, I like that better. That means a happy ending for me sooner than you think and for you later than you know. I'm not going to celebrate someone's damnation forever in eternal torture. I know many think I'll suffer it, just for not believing it. Well, merciful God! I haven't been alive that long. Give me more time to do things wrong. Isn't that my just reward. Maybe I could beat it to death.

Oh, death--isn't that never living? That must be what hell is. Being punished to death and then burning in it.

*Easter Morn, Apr. 3 - 6:30 AM
Front & Hamilton Sts. Hsbg.*



*Sunrise Service &
Breakfast (Friend's)*

continued from p. 2

There will be a fundraiser for AIDS research in New York in the near future. Please see the article elsewhere in FREEDOM explaining the details.

Until a cure is found (or, better yet, a vaccine) one thing is for sure: gay men who want to live long are going to have to drastically alter their sexual habits.

One final note: the vast majority of AIDS cases among gay men are located in New York City and San Francisco. However, the top ten cities for AIDS also includes Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. Cases have been reported in the Lehigh Valley, apparently imported from New York. I do not know of any cases in Lancaster or Harrisburg, but that does not mean there aren't any. Still, those of us in the small cities in central Pennsylvania have a lot less to worry about than do those in the big cities. But, considering the high mobility of our community and the number of folks who like to spend weekends in the big cities, our advantage is only one of time.

If anyone has information on AIDS that they would like to share with our community, please send it to FREEDOM. I'll keep you posted as things develop.

Coming

**APRIL
13
WED.**

*Rev. Troy
Perry to
Harrisburg*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- MARCH 5** — Pot Luck Supper — Harrisburg. Meet Rev. Pat Lichty and family at the Friends Meeting House; 6:00 p.m.
- MARCH 6** — Williamsport Parish Extension meets in Williamsport, 1:00 p.m. Location TBA. Info: 238-3746 or 323-7099
- MARCH 9** — GayRap begins in Lancaster. A rap group for lesbians and gay men of all ages. Emerson Hall, Unitarian Center, 7:00 p.m. Info: 392-2729 or 397-0691.
- MARCH 13** — Induction of new members, MCC-Lancaster. During worship. Planning meeting for the Lancaster congregation following worship. Come & help us pick a pastor!
- MARCH 19** — Spaghetti Dinner in Harrisburg, FMH, 6-9:00. Advance fund raiser for the Troy Perry visit. Suggested donation — \$3.00 for adults.
- MARCH 22** — Gay Skate at the Gold Skate in Middletown. 7:30-10:00 p.m. \$2.00 in advance; \$3.00 at the door. TV benefit!
- MARCH 27** — Palm Sunday Seder Supper — Dignity/Central PA; First United Methodist Church, 256 Boas, Hbg. 4:00 p.m. No pork or shellfish please
- Special Lancaster Love Feast, Unitarian Center, 5:00 p.m.
- APRIL 1** — Good Friday Service, MCC-Harrisburg at the FMH, 7:00 p.m.
- APRIL 3** — 6:30 a.m. — Sunrise Service, MCC-Harrisburg. Along the River near Front and Hamilton. Breakfast follows at the Friends Meeting House of Harrisburg.
- 1:00 p.m. — Easter Service — Williamsport Parish Extension
- 5:00 p.m. — Easter Service — MCC-Lancaster at Unitarian Center
- 7:00 p.m. — Easter Service — MCC-Harrisburg at Friends Meeting House
- APRIL 13** — Rev. Elder TROY D. PERRY visit to Harrisburg. This fund raiser for the TV special, "God, Gays, and the Gospel: This is Our Story" is hosted by MCC-Harrisburg, MCC-Lancaster, and the Williamsport Parish Extension. Watch for details in the next FREEDOM.
- APRIL 15** — Gospel concert with Rev. Delores P. Berry and others at the Harrisburg YWCA on Market Street, Hbg. Sponsored by MCC-Harrisburg; 7:30 p.m.
- APRIL 30** — Circus for AIDS benefit, New York City. See article elsewhere for details.
- MAY 5** — *WORD IS OUT*, the film, is sponsored by MCC-Lancaster at the Unitarian Center in Founders Hall. 8:00 p.m.
- MAY 21-22** — Mid-Atlantic District Conference hosted by MCC-Nova, Fairfax, Virginia. Plan to attend!

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH...

- MONDAYS** — 7:00 p.m. Men's Rap Group, Friends Meeting House of Harrisburg
- TUESDAYS** — 7:30 p.m. Evangelicals Concerned Bible Study, 1318 Penn St., Harrisburg

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

FREEDOM

Vol. 1, No. 12
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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.