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MCC is a Christian Church with a special ministry to the gay & lesbian community.



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

April 1984

Vol. 3 No. 1

Unlikely Prophets

by Rev. Pat Lichty

Many people find MCC confusing when they first come. One of the reasons is that MCC is confusing. Other denominations have spent at least a century or two working out exactly what they believe and what they do and why. We are 15 years old and still trying to figure out what the questions are.

But a more important reason for what often appears as confusion is the vision we share. That vision is one where all people are welcome and valued, where power is shared, and, specifically, one where God can be heard through each person. (God is known for choosing unlikely prophets - how can one know who will be next? How can one be sure that person who is rejected is not the one God has chosen?)

Because we are committed to hearing what God might be saying to us today it sometimes seems as though we don't know where we are going. That can make people nervous and uncomfortable. We like destinations. But the truth of the matter is that I, at least, don't really know where this denomination is going. I don't even think about it very much. All that I know is that we have some clues as to what we can be doing right now. The amazing and liberating part of this is that once you give up trying to figure out where things are going you are free to enjoy the journey.

This is not to say that the journey is not often chaotic, or sometimes painful. It is not easy to walk into an MCC service and find that people use inclusive language, that

other people disagree with what you have been taught, and that you are worshipping with people you don't necessarily approve of, and that perhaps, worst of all, you are asked to really care about people you don't even want to know. Sometimes I wonder how anyone ever survives their first service.

Sometimes people come back because they think that with some changes we could be a decent real church that they would like, and that they are the ones to help us. And sometimes they are right! But most often, people come back because we touch something in them, because through us they have seen a new face of God, and because they want to share the vision we have.

But people come back - as I did years ago - because they are willing to be challenged, and to
Con't on page 2

Editors To Do Dramatic Evening

The editors of Freedom and Keystone will be painting pictures with words on Saturday night, March 31st at 7:30 pm at the Friends Meeting House. Laurie, Colin and Carolyn will share de lightful poems about colors, manners, pain, laughter and drama. Included in the program will be some Shakespeare sonnets and soliloquies, some Jewish humor, some song lyrics and a Byron poem.

All that and more for you. A free will offering will be taken to benefit Keystone and Freedom after the performance. Come and git some culture!

be changed. Often people come back because they think that with a few minor changes in us we could be a decent real church - and that they are the ones to help us. Sometimes they are right! Other times they get discouraged with our persistence and go away. But most often, people come back because we have touched something in them, because they have seen a new face of God through us, and because they want to share our vision.

But it always takes time for each of us to learn that to be going somewhere is just that - to be going there, and that the way we use to get there has a lot to do with where we are going. It takes time for us to learn that we can enjoy the process of going along in faith, that if we hear God along the way we don't have to know exactly what the destination is. It takes time to learn to relax and to take care of what can be done now, today, and this month, and to let God take care of what happens next year.

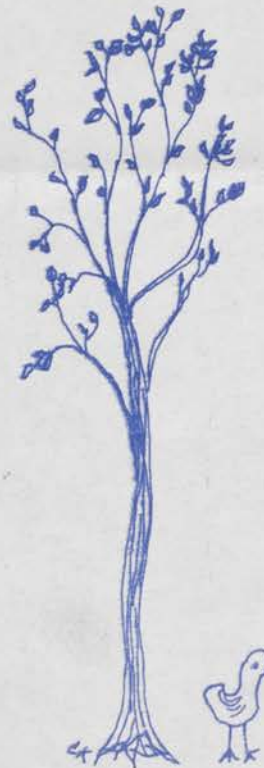
None of us knows the final implications of using inclusive language. None of us knows what will happen to a denomination that refuses to make rules for sexual behavior binding on all its members. Nobody can be sure what will happen to a denomination that includes the total theological diversity of all of Christianity - and continues to look for flexibility in doctrine. What will come of all of this? We really don't know. But we do believe that God called us to do these things. And we trust that God will continue to lead us.

One of my favorite stories is the one in Genesis 12 when God called Abram and Sarai and told them to leave their home and relatives and country and all that they knew because God wanted to take them to a new land. They didn't know where they were going, but they did know that God was with them. I think I know how they felt!



Thanks, Ed, for the ink. Without his generosity, we'd be reading this in black and white. Ed is a former Board member for MCC/Harrisburg. The next time you see Ed thank him for the Eastery purple in Freedom this month.

Please keep Freedom in the RED, BLUE, GREEN, etc. with a check to MCC/Harrisburg for \$10 and designated "for ink". Then all Spring and Summer we'll be in COLOR. Thank you.



FREEDOM

Vol. 3 No. 1
April, 1984

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.

*** EVERYONE ***

WELCOME!!!!

COME MEET AND GREET

WITH

BARBRA GITTINGS

**LISTEN AND TALK ABOUT
HER 26 YEARS OF
INVOLVEMENT WITH
THE GAY MOVEMENT**

**WHEN: THURSDAY MAY 10
7:30 P.M.**

**WHERE: 538 W CHESTNUT ST.
UNITARIAN CENTER
LANCASTER, PA.**

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Comment - the editor

Thinking is a process that I enjoy. I cannot imagine anyone challenging that statement verbally, and yet challenges are rampant. I witness so many people, both gay and straight, living lies about homosexuality.

One attitude about sexuality is that of "get all you can get". And it sounds wonderful ... but thoughtless. Casual sex maintains the fantasies surrounding sex. To get to know one's sex partner removes the ability to fantasize and continue to be what one "assumes" gay men are (or straight men, or lesbians, or straight women). Basically, gay men probably lead the pack for that failure. The evidence is overwhelming. Due to a buying of social expectations for men, men in general seem to fulfill the creation of the shallowest relationships.

I recognize in myself the difficulties of "getting to know" another man. And I have stopped myself and said, "Get to know him, that's what you've wanted and now you're suddenly too busy, too scared, too anything"! I have witnessed too many people saying, "This is what I want". I watched it appear for them and a hurried excuse produced to put away the possibility of their "dream".

Is it a fear that we will no longer be what "gay" is defined to be? And does "other's" definition of the word matter to us? We are unique individuals. We need to celebrate that uniqueness.

Unfortunately, that celebration very often occurs to maintain a stagnant individual (e.g. An "Oh,-that's-just-the-way-I-am" alibi) Even though the person's problems are bountiful, the problems are minimized and the individual goes on with the way he "is" and the problems multiply.

I know the difficulties of growth. I have become accustomed to being spoon-fed with the world that surrounds us seeking constantly to make it so easy that to think is unnecessary. But growth remains essential to find ourselves and the only escape from the pressures to conform and be made "acceptable" from advertisers and

others is to think.

The greatest acceptance on earth is within ourselves. There are lots of hurdles that we must cross in arriving there and each one demands thought. That thinking that defeats the value of other's prejudices and/or manipulations that strive to offer us a strand of acceptance for conforming or doing whatever to merit that acceptance.

Leonard Matlovich, recently spoke in Philadelphia and emphasized the importance of self-acceptance and of dispelling ignorant myths about homosexuality. One of the most truth-filled quotes I have ever heard in regard to prejudice, he spoke:

"PREJUDICE ISN'T A HATRED OF OTHERS, BUT OF SELF; TO HAVE OTHERS TO LOOK DOWN UPON AND FEEL SOME IMITATION OF PERSONAL RESPECT."

Mr. Matlovich shared his former prejudices against gays as well as any other minority in reach. He now recognizes the masked self-hatred in those prejudice-filled years. He started to think and thinking ... broke light.

There is an advertisement that usually airs during college football games for the Black colleges & universities requesting financial support. Their slogan is incredibly true: "A Mind IS A Terrible Thing To Waste".

I do hope that as gay people, we are not afraid of "WHAT" we might find out. As gay people we know the realities of bucking a culture that tells us how things are for us. We are the living evidence that they are wrong. If we fail to think and act, then they will continue to tell us the realities of our existence; something they don't even think about.

-Colin Kreitzer
reprinted from GSH
newsletter June, 1981

What the Bible Really Says: Part II

by Frank Lang

When the subject of homosexuality is raised in connection with the Bible, the discussion of Sodom is usually imminent. This event from Biblical history (Genesis 19:1-29 ff) is one which is commonly misinterpreted as a proof text of God's unconditional hatred of and vengeance towards homosexuals. However, if one simply reads the text, they will see a very different event than what is commonly presented. There is so much that could be said, but there are a few major points that bear remembering:

* ALL the men in the city were present (vs 4). If all of the men were homosexuals, there would have been Sodom after one generation. Even Lot's sons-in-law were there (vs 14). Therefore, heterosexuals were a part of this crowd of men. If this incident had been meant to show God's condemnation of Sodom due to homosexuality, then the group would have been exclusively homosexual.

* The intent of the attack was violent humiliation (gang rape) not sexual pleasure. Therefore the punishment Sodom suffered was not because of homosexuality, not was it because of this incident alone: much had been done before this that had displeased God but we are not told the specifics. Note that Lot offered his daughters (vs 8). If this had been a group of men looking for homosexual pleasure, Lot would have had no reason to offer his daughters, but he recognized the intent or significance of the request. In concurrent literature, there is evidence that most cultures practised a similar act of defense for their cities. The city was a political/cultural unit responsible for protecting itself. If strangers entered the city gates, they could be instrumental in the overthrow of that city by outside forces. Therefore one technique the men of a city used to debase and divest strangers of power was gang rape. It was for this purpose that the men of Sodom gathered before Lot's house. It was an act of

violence intended to humiliate and disgrace the strangers. It was NOT an act rising from homosexual orientation or influenced by the sexual desires of those involved.



* A very sound principle of hermeneutics (the interpretation of scripture) is to use other scripture to help shed light on difficult or unclear passages. If all of the references to the Sodom incident are explored, it can be clearly seen that Sodom's fate was not a result of homosexuality. One of the best explanatory texts is Ezekiel 16:49-50. This passage lists the sins of Sodom

cont. on p.5

**LANCASTER
GAY/LESBIAN
HELP LINE**

397-0691

Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, and Sunday
6:30 to 9:30 p.m.



**GAY
SWITCHBOARD
OF HARRISBURG**

234-0328

Monday thru
Friday
6:00 to 10:00 p.m.



in order to show the wickedness of the nation of Israel compared to the notorious Sodom. Please note what is mentioned (arrogant, overfed and unconcerned, they did not help the poor and needy, they did detestable things, and they were haughty) and what is not mentioned (no specific mention of homosexuality). If the events which occurred at Sodom were meant to be a key proof text of God's condemnation of homosexuals, then why isn't homosexuality specifically mentioned? Also Jesus' reference to Sodom in Luke 10:8-12 (immediately preceding the parable of the Good Samaritan) points to Sodom's severe inhospitality and rejection of God's messengers (and message), not homosexuality. Therefore, Genesis 19:1-29 cannot be used to suggest God's unconditional wrath against homosexuality.

A final point which most people either ignore or neglect is an incident that is recounted in Judges 19. It is an incident precisely parallel to what occurred at Sodom, only it involves an Israelite town and the actions of the Benjaminite men of that city in response to the presence of a visitor. The social function of gang rape and the insignificance of sexual orientation is highlighted in this account which provides a very helpful glimpse into the social/cultural/religious dynamics applicable to the Sodom event. Sodom's sin was gross inhospitality, misuse of others, greed, selfishness, etc. (see Ezekiel 16:49-50) not a need for emotional and physical intimacy with those of the same sex.

Much more could be explored concerning the details of the Sodom passage in scripture. However, in consideration of the above points: what the passage actually says and what other passages add to our understanding of the Sodom incident, it is clear that Genesis 19:1-29ff cannot be used legitimately as a weapon to support the unscriptural attitude and belief that homosexual orientation is wrong and condemned by God.

Too often we shy away from unfamiliar or uncomfortable topics. This is only natural. And the Bible has been a source of extreme dis-

comfort for most gays due largely to misuse and misunderstanding. Yet we must be able to redress these scriptural misconceptions with legitimate explanations, appropriate reasoning, and valid interpretative processes. This will not be easy, nor will it be rapidly accepted; but we have a responsibility not only to ourselves, but also to the countless numbers of men and women who face the abysmal struggles of self-acceptance, self-awareness, and self-love. God does not hate gays; God does not condemn gays; and the Bible gives no support for such a view.

Part III in May.

A Thanks for the Specs.

The glasses continue to come in for our shipment to "New Eyes" in late May or early June. Please remember to bring those old discarded glasses to your worship service. People in each church will contact Colin Kreitzer (232-5674) with your contributions. A letter of thanks arrived in early March for all of you:

Dear Friend:

Your most recent and generous contribution to our organization will go a long way in furthering our work to help poor visioned needy people on a global scale.

Contributions are recognized by the Tres. Dept. as allowable tax deductions, the value to be set by you, the donor, or your appraiser.

Without people like you, we would be unable to disburse used glasses abroad or new glasses to the impoverished in the United States.

Your effort and time spent to collect old glasses, jewelry, silver or scraps of precious metal for New Eyes is really appreciated. Please extend our thanks to all those who cooperate with you in this project.

Gratefully Yours,
Mrs. Hazel Chedister

New Eyes
549 Millburn Av.
Short Hills, N. Jers. 07078

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Harrisburg Church

- Mar. 31 - "Go fly a Kite" pot luck picnic. City Island, 1pm. Saturday.
31 - The Editors Read. FMH. 7:30pm. Free (Contributions accepted to benefit Freedom and Keystone)
- Apr. 6 - Black & White Men Together pot luck. FMH. 7pm, Friday.
14 - Movie Matinee, meet FMH for car pooling, 12:45pm.
15 - Palm Sunday Pot Luck, 5:30pm.
19 - Lavender Letter Roller Skating Party at the Gold Skate on Rt. 230 in Middletown. Tickets \$3 plus skate rental. 7:30 to 10 pm. Mcc people welcome.
20 - Good FRIDAY Service. FMH, 7pm.
22 - Resurrection Celebration, 6AM. Front & Hamilton Sts. for the Sunrise Service, followed by the Fellowship Breakfast at Anne & Nancy's.
28 - Saturday Nite Game Nite. Nancy & Anne's. 7pm. For directions ph. 737-5570.
- May 19 - A Rabbit in the Rain, Freedom benefit. Admission FREE. Contributions accepted to assist the work of this newsletter. FMH. 8pm. Saturday nite.

flea market ahead

Harrisburg Church is collecting for the Spring Flea Markets. Contributions? Please call Brenda or Shari (234-8036) for drop off locations.

Lancaster Church

- Apr 5 - Gay Rap - Panel Discussion with professional councillors. 7:30pm. UC.
12 - SWIM Party - Outdoor World, Circle M Ranch. 7:30pm For more info. 392-2729.
19 - Gay Rap goes Roller Skating w/Lavendar Letter (see Apr. 19 Harrisburg Church above)



The new artist prize went to Culture Club, the British group led by the androgynous Boy George. "Thank you America," Boy George said via satellite from London. "You've got taste, style, and you know a good drag queen when you see one." He accepted the award wearing full feminine stage makeup, woman's dress and braided, ribboned hair.

Deadline for May issue: April 20th.

WORSHIP SCHEDULES

Harrisburg:

Sunday Evenings
Friends Meeting House
6th & Herr Streets
Harrisburg, Pa.
7:00 p.m.
232-7040

Lancaster:

Sunday Evenings
Unitarian Center of Lancaster
538 W. Chestnut Street
Lancaster, Pa.
5:00 p.m.
392-2729

Williamsport:

1st ^{and 3rd} Sunday of the Month
YWCA - 815 W. 4th Street
1:00 p.m.
717-238-3746 for info.