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Church battles gay ordination



NORTHWEST

(AP) — Central Presbyterian Church's ordination of two homosexuals as deacons will be challenged in a trial in San Francisco before the Presbyterian Synod of the Pacific.

The trial on Jan. 25 arises from a Portland church's official challenge to the ordination almost two years ago of Heather Boonstra, 25, an administrator at the University, and George Link, 68, divorced and retired.

Leaders of the Eugene church are fighting to protect the ordination of Boonstra and Link in defiance of official Presbyterian church policy, which prohibits the ordination of avowed, practicing homosexuals.

Hope Presbyterian Church in Portland said in its challenge that Central's actions are "in rebellion against the Word of God."

Larry Trogen, pastor at Hope, read about Central's action in a gay newsletter he says was mailed to his church office.

Aghast at what he considered to be an unholy act, Trogen took the matter to his church board, which voted unanimously to challenge Central's ordinations of Boonstra and Link.

Hope has asked the synod's judicial commission to make Central annul the ordinations, publicly repent and teach traditional Scriptural law as it relates to homosexuality.

"They need to know the truth of God, how He hates sin and doesn't wink at it," Trogen said. "The Bible teaches very strongly that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

No Presbyterian church has even challenged

another for having ordained homosexuals as deacons, synod executive Philip Young said in San Francisco.

In the Presbyterian faith, church members must be ordained to serve in the volunteer position of elder or deacon. Elders serve on a church's board of directors; deacons help serve Communion and perform other acts of assistance such as visiting the sick and transporting people to church.

Boonstra and Link acknowledged in separate letters in March 1991 to the church board that they are homosexual — one week before they were to be considered for ordination as deacons.

"For me and others at Central, this is a real justice issue," Boonstra said in a recent interview. "I want to have the full privileges of (church) membership...."

The debate has at times been emotionally draining, Boonstra said. She remembers, for example, the respected church elder who expressed concern at one church meeting about having homosexuals around children at Sunday school.

"That's very hurtful and absurd and difficult to listen to," she said. Nonetheless, Boonstra said she's rarely questioned her decision to stay with the church. "I don't feel I have much choice," she said. "I'm simply being who I am."

For his part, Link said he's convinced that his sexual orientation and the church battle in which he now finds himself are part of God's plan.

"I've finally stopped questioning God and have begun thanking Him for making me the special person that I am," he said. "I rejoice in His decision to use me as an instrument for justice, to challenge this thing that is so unfair to so many Christians."

Boy hurt in sled mishap

SALEM (AP) — A 13-year-old boy was hospitalized Sunday after a sledding accident at Silver Falls State Park near Salem.

Brad Stubenrauch was flown by helicopter to University Hospital in Portland, to be treated for a head injury. He was listed in fair condition.

Mark Chambers, the director of Friends of Silver Falls, a non-profit group that operates an interpretive center at the park, said he heard that people were sledding on a hill while others were walking up it.

Chambers said a father and son were sliding downhill on an inner tube, and the father yelled for three pedestrians to get out of the way, but apparently they didn't hear him.

The tube went into a spin and the boy's head struck a pedestrian's leg. The pedestrian was not seriously hurt.

"Tubing is dangerous," Chambers said. "People don't realize they're out of control. The biggest danger is running into people down there."

Police seek throat-cutting armed thief

NORTH BEND (AP) — A gun shop robber slashed two throats before fleeing with a loaded shotgun and a machine pistol Monday morning.

Police were searching for the man who cut the throats of Stephen R. McMullen, 45, and Gerald W. Weist before robbing the Ammo Bunker of a loaded shotgun and an Uzi machine pistol, police said.

McMullen was in fair condition and Weist was in good condition after surgery.



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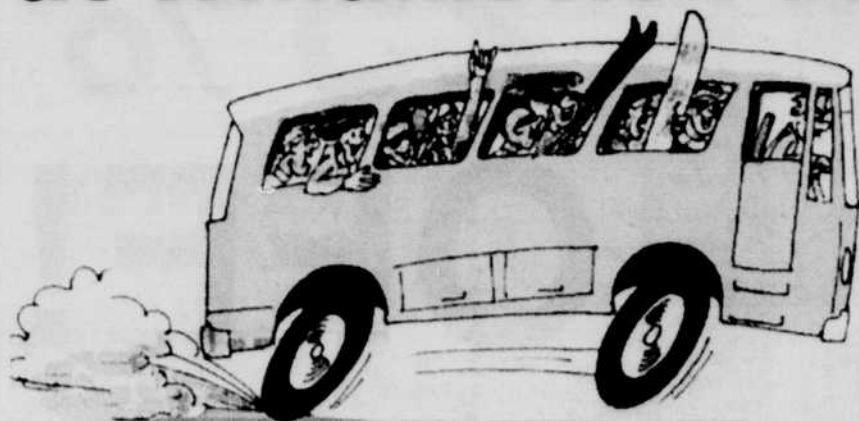
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