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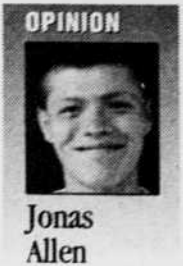
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PERSPECTIVES

Respect is golden rule of Christianity

Many Christian groups show their faith by welcoming both gay and heterosexual believers



Jonas Allen

And the Final Jeopardy answer is: Aretha Franklin never knew this smash hit could get so lost in American politics. The question is: What is "R-E-S-P-E-C-T"? For the general public, respect is a give-and-take thing. But when the topic of homosexuality comes up in legal circles, respect is often forsaken for arguments of whether equal opportunity laws for homosexuals translate into special rights.

Oregon and Colorado are at the forefront of this issue, but other states are not far behind. The most recent anti-homosexual proposal was passed nearly three weeks ago in Maine, where voters repealed a state law protecting gays and lesbians from employment discrimination. According to The Associated Press, Christian conservatives hailed the vote as an "important victory for people of faith" and a sign that Americans would no longer tolerate seemingly immoral behavior and special rights for homosexuals.

Last time I checked, Christianity was still based on the Golden Rule — treating others with respect. How is it, then, that some nationwide Christian groups can treat certain citizens with such disrespect and tarnish the value they hold so dear?

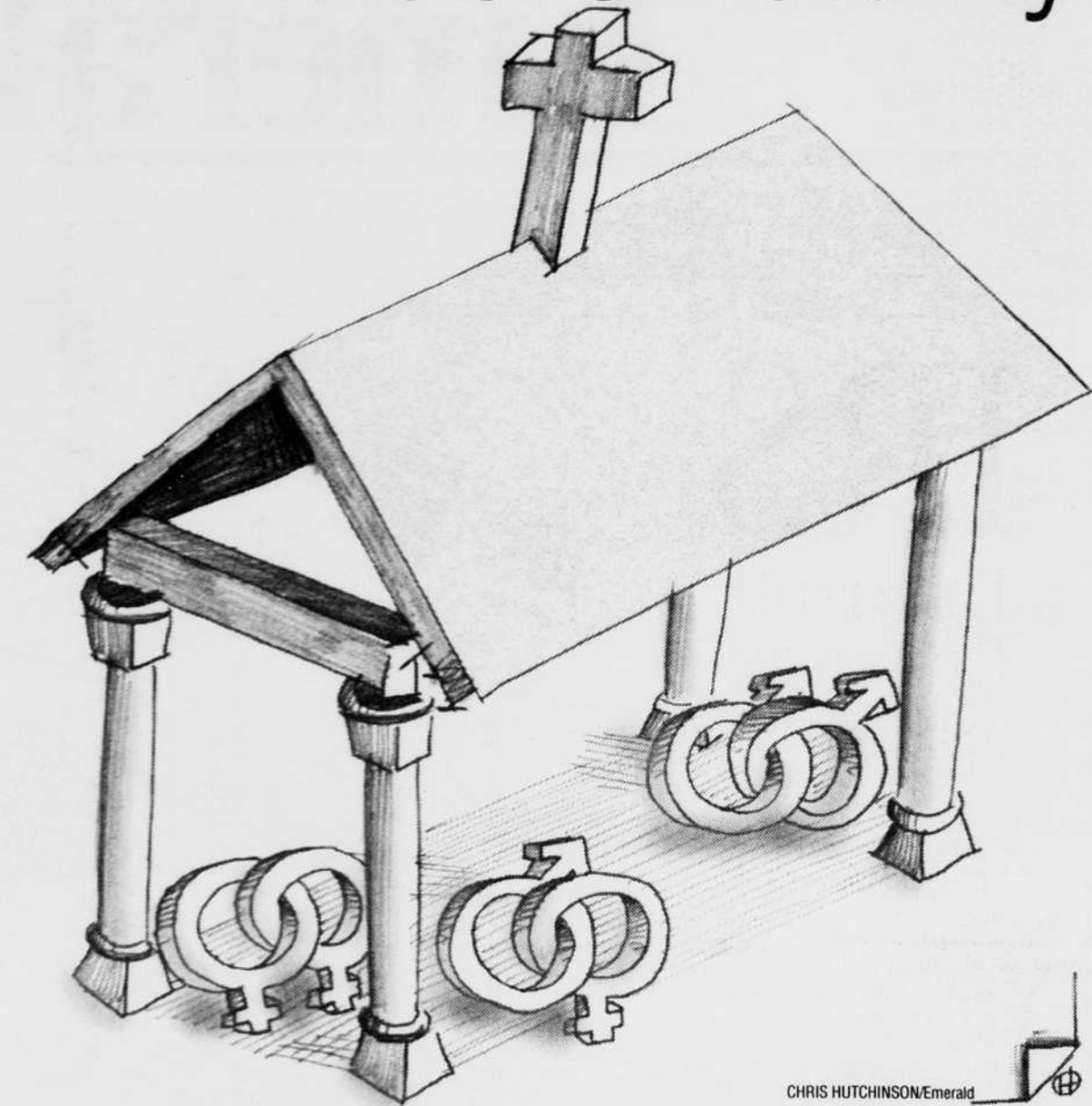
The Christian Coalition, a national religious organization, helped fund the campaign to repeal the gay rights bill, which only passed by a 3 percent margin. The coalition's views are not that different from local Citizens Alliance groups, who feel homosexuality is wrong and that practicing homosexuals must denounce their lifestyle and "accept Christ."

Who ever said homosexuals hadn't already "accepted Christ"?

Roy Cole, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, leads a congregation of nearly 200 worshippers every Sunday. With few exceptions, those in attendance are homosexuals. Pastor Cole claims these services are very similar, if not identical, to the ceremonies practiced by the Christian conservatives so opposed to homosexual activity.

"These Christian groups are focused on homosexuality as the cornerstone of all that is wrong in American society... [yet] we have straight people who attend because they find a sense of community here they might not find elsewhere," he said.

Metropolitan Community Church worshippers are just as embracing outside of church; numerous members volunteer at various AIDS/HIV support organizations and homeless shelters. Members even "adopt" homeless



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

teens over the holidays and see that they are well cared for.

So how, exactly, is the homosexual community destroying the social order esteemed so highly by the Christian Coalition?

True, it would be a stereotype to say all gays and lesbians are saints, but to say they are all sinners is an abnormality as well. Christian conservatives would have us believe otherwise.

Pastor Cole concedes there are about seven verses in the Bible referring to homosexuality as unacceptable, which is a large part of the Christian Coalition's argument that homosexuality is wrong.

"But the Bible says many things. The Bible clearly teaches that slavery is part of society, but Americans went

to civil war to fight slavery itself," he notes.

Instead of outdated teachings, what these groups should really get from the Bible is the idea of respect. Respect for one another, respect for diversity and respect for love.

Respect for love is most important because within it lie the answers to cooperation. Yet religious conservatives cringe at the thought of gay marriages. They argue the purpose of marriage is procreation. But did those very people marry out of love or an instinctual drive to continue the species? Most likely the former.

Cole said marriage is "not necessarily reflective of the commitment people make to one another," claiming his church performs six to eight marriages

a year, although many other members have just as deep a commitment to their partner. Unfortunately, the commitment of some Christians to others seems rather shallow.

"The time has come for both sides to... come to a healing process," reads a newsletter supported by First Presbyterian Church in Portland. The letter is wrong. There is only one side.

Now is the time for Christians to finally unite under the blanket of respect their religious founder preached. The road to higher ground is not necessarily straight.

Jonas Allen is a columnist for the Emerald. His work appears on alternate Fridays. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Push for safe sex

In Barry Williams' recent letter (ODE, Feb. 25), he exposed his lack of separation of the term homosexuality from that of homosexual sex. Envisioning anyone's sexual practice, much less a sexual practice different from your own, is disconcerting on many levels. In that, I hear Williams and his concerns. However, his physiological arguments for the purpose of gendered anatomy looked over many important and valid arguments on the issue.

If the argument is that there is something somehow innate or natural about heterosexual sex, or that there are "wrong" places and "wrong ways" to have sex, is safe sex included? Certainly,

Williams realizes that safe sex does indeed prevent the spread of unwanted viruses. Williams, who said "homosexual behavior is unhealthy and results in 1 to 2 percent of the population having 29 percent of Hepatitis A," seems to blame homosexuals for causing almost a third of their population for having hepatitis. Yet those numbers don't seem accurate and aren't referenced. And if indeed Williams intends to blame homosexuals for the spread of this disease, shouldn't he instead be targeting unprotected sex?

In current America, most sex is not "successful" in producing offspring. Most of the time, that isn't even a goal of sexual inter-

course. Williams is making an irresponsible statement that implies safe sex is unnatural. I invite him to explain this logic more carefully. The argument that homosexual sex is an abomination of the physiologically productive origins of sexual intercourse could too quickly be paralleled to sex that does not prevent offspring but is between male and female partners. The use of contraceptives, condoms or other "unnatural" devices, in my opinion, remains a very responsible practice.

When sex gets dangerous and disturbing, it is a very, very unsafe issue. I hear Williams' fear and concern for the demise of the nation, but I think his scapegoats are

poorly chosen. His target of "unnatural" (implying non-propagation oriented) sex falls very heavily on the campus community. That community, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, is unfairly targeted.

Christina Thompson
 Biochemistry

All sides solicited

In response to Juliana Coons' comment about the University community not "really hearing" Donta Graham-Preston's story (ODE, March 3), I would like to remind Coons (and the University community) that Graham-Preston has had ample opportunity to give his version of this so-called story. Not only did both he

and the two survivors participate in open hearings, both Graham-Preston and the survivors have had the chance to express themselves in the Emerald, The Register-Guard, the Oregon Commentator and I suppose in any other public publication. So why haven't we heard Graham-Preston's side of the story? I don't know; maybe someone should ask him. Maybe he won't "decline to comment" this time. The fact the survivors are willing to make their side of the story public shows courage and strength, something we cannot say has been exhibited by the accused himself.

Gerrie Bay Hall
 History / French