

First Congregation "open and affirming"

The city's second-oldest church has decided officially to become an "open and affirming" congregation which invites all people to join regardless of sexual orientation. The members of First Congregational Church took the action at its January 26, 1992 annual meeting. Members voted overwhelmingly in favor of the resolution. "Nowhere in the Ten Commandments or in the teachings of Jesus Christ is homosexuality even mentioned," said the Rev. John M. Rogers, Senior Minister of First Congregational Church. "If it was important enough to be prohibited by moral sanction, it surely would have been mentioned there." Rogers adds, "First Congregational Church began in 1851—the same year Portland was founded as a city—and it has long been open to members regardless of sexual persuasion. In light of the growing atmosphere of persecution of gay men and lesbians that is highlighted by the Oregon Citizens Alliance's petition drive to remove their minority status, the church felt it was important to publicly declare its long-standing position."

RELIGION

Dignity/Portland forced out

In December 1991 the pastor at St. Francis of Assisi Parish notified Dignity/Portland that the archbishop of Portland, William Levada, would no longer allow Dignity to meet at St. Francis. In dialogue with the archbishop, Dignity was informed that they could no longer worship at St. Francis; they could not have their own Sunday

liturgy; and they must assimilate into a regularly scheduled parish liturgy. St. Philip Neri Parish, a welcoming and reconciling congregation, invited Dignity to join their worship. Dignity decided to retain their identity by holding a weekly liturgy on Friday evenings at 7:30 pm at St. Philip Neri Parish in the upstairs of the Old Church/Parish Center, located at southeast 16th and Division.

National Council of Churches dialogues with UFMCC

"I am pleased and encouraged that the National Council of Churches is continuing to dialogue with us, despite pressure to break off relations," said the Rev. Elder Troy Perry, founder and moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, after the NCC General Board received a report on the dialogue. The report marks the 10-year anniversary of the UFMCC's application for membership in the NCC. Controversy arose because the UFMCC affirms lesbian and gay people, and the application was never approved. In the report, the NCC admits for the first time that "the issue of homosexuality appears to be firmly entrenched within the lives of many (NCC) member communions."

Second Stone

Welcoming churches total 225

There are now over 225 local churches in the United States and Canada that have made a public declaration that they welcome lesbians and gay men—15 percent more than a year ago, reports the Reconciling Congregation Program.

The programs represented at the meeting and their number of churches are More Light (Presby-

terian)-46; Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ)-63; Reconciling Congregations (United Methodist)-49; Reconciled-in-Christ (Lutheran)-69; Supportive (Brethren/Mennonite)-new.

Second Stone

Eastern Oregon Episcopal HIV/AIDS work started

On Dec. 1, 1991 (World AIDS Day), the HIV/AIDS Task Force of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon was formalized. The task force consists of lay, clergy and HIV positive people and is funded through the diocese. The goals of the task force include educational workshops throughout the rural parishes of eastern Oregon, and helping to set up local referral lists of services available for people affected by HIV disease. As a first sign and step towards support and solidarity, a diocese's banner entitled "For All Living With HIV/AIDS" has been created and is moving from church to church. The task force has also applied for membership in the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition based in Washington, D.C.

National Catholic symposium

"Lesbian and Gay People and Catholicism: The State of the Question" is the title of the third national symposium put on by New Ways Ministry. The symposium is designed for Catholic Church leadership. Nationally known speakers such as John Boswell, author of *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*; Thomas Gumbleton; and Rosemary Radford Ruether will be presenting. The symposium is being held in Chicago from March 27 to 29. For more information contact New Ways Ministry, 4012 29th Street, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712.

McMinnville Baptists support gays

The First Baptist Church in McMinnville has started a lesbian and gay support group for lesbians and gay men, family and friends and to provide support for people with HIV disease and AIDS. Pastor Bernie Turner has been supportive of lesbians and gays from his pulpit for some time, reports one member of the church. There are several families with gay children in the congregation.

Clout gathers

Members of Christian Lesbians Out Together (CLOUT) had their first nationwide conference, "A CLOUT of Witnesses." It's been one year since 10 women met in New York to discuss what it means to be out of the closet and be a Christian. Within three months of that initial meeting, CLOUT had been formed and 113 women from 14 denominations had already signed a Statement of Commitment. CLOUT was conceived as an intercultural, multiracial, solidarity coalition of "out" lesbian Christians. Its primary purpose is to empower lesbian Christians and to challenge the churches to which members belong. The CLOUT Statement of Commitment calls on lesbian Christians to come out of the closet, whenever and wherever possible, and to help empower and celebrate one another in taking this courageous step. CLOUT emphasizes the development of justice-based theologies and spiritual resources that grow from the lesbian Christian experience and the exploration of new understandings of sexuality and commitment and encourages networking with organizations of other marginalized women and men.

Compiled by Matthew Nelson, an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ

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