

Idaho churches raising a strong voice

A number of old-line denominations signed a joint statement opposing the Oregon Citizens Alliance spreading its hate into Idaho.

The statement reads: "Some of the greatest injustices and worst crimes in history were promoted with slogans that seemed reasonable at the time. 'No special rights' is a slogan in that category. The Oregon Citizens Alliance used that slogan in the last general election in their state, and now the Idaho Citizens Alliance is using it to introduce its initiative to limit the rights of gays and lesbians. The motivation behind it is no different from the motivation behind 'ethnic

RELIGION

cleansing' in the former Yugoslavia and 'the final solution' in Nazi Germany. One group of citizens is singled out and judged unfit for full participation in society and declared less human than the rest of us. In the case of the initiative being introduced in Idaho, it is, as before in history, clearly a violation of the constitutional right to equal protection under the law and the fundamental human right to live without fear and with freedom to pursue the fulfillment of life. We strongly support the position which Governor Andrus and Attorney General Echolaw have taken, and we appeal to you not to sign the initiative if given an opportunity and to speak in

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opposition to it whenever you can." The statement was signed by the hierarchy of the Methodist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches in Idaho.

In a separate statement, the Bishop of the Lutheran church of Washington and Idaho, states, "It is my judgment that this is a civil-rights issue and one which all of us need to consider very carefully. Regardless of what our opinion might be about homosexuality and its rightness or wrongness, homosexual people are people and have the same need for protection under the law as any of us... I want you to know that my position is to advocate for human rights, and that I intend to oppose any measure that discriminates against any person."

Japanese American Church much more

The Epworth United Methodist Church celebrated its 100th anniversary last month. Japanese immigrant men in the 1880s were confronted by racism, and limited by a lack of English. Most worked as contract laborers in logging camps and railroad construction, hardly places to earn a fortune in the menial or laboring jobs they were allowed to perform. At least 100 Japanese people were in the Northwest in February 1893 when the Rev. Teikichi Kawabe, a Methodist circuit preacher, opened the Japanese Methodist Mis-

sion in Portland to serve as a center of evangelism for the region. "It was a place where people could go and feel safe when there was a great deal of hostility," says the Rev. Gary Oba, the current pastor. "They could speak their language and eat their own food. It was a place for weddings and funerals."

Today, the church continues to serve as a community center for Japanese-language classes, meetings and special events of organizations, such as the Japanese American Citizens League, the Asian American Pacific Alliance, the Anti-Bigotry Coalition and Shigin Group, which practices an ancient Japanese musical singing form. Many church members are on the boards of these groups as well. Just as it was in earlier generations, Epworth continues to be more than a church.

Pagan festival

The Aquarian Tabernacle Church presents its Spring Mysteries Festival. This year's festival features renowned Irish Wiccan authors, Priestess and Priest Janet and Stewart Farrar. The festival runs April 8-11 and is Seattle's oldest and longest continuing pagan festival. Although the mythology remains constant, the experience is different for everyone each time. People regularly travel from Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Arizona, and Canada. Included is a rite of passage for the younger or newer members of the community. This festival cycle was developed along the same lines the ancient Greeks intended, with initiation rites marking passages from one stage of life to another. The rites are constructed to have real and personal meanings, to help people live in paganism on a daily basis with integrity and appreciation, experiencing the wonder and joy of everyday life. Other activities include the Pagan Talent Show, the Fashion Show, lots of traditional music, a myriad of workshops, discussions, readings, rituals, celebrations and shrines. Music and magic will continue through the entire event.

Dignity retreat

Dignity-Portland, the Catholic lesbian and gay organization, is hosting its annual retreat April 30 through May 2. "Walking the Road to Emmaus: A Time for Hospitality, Healing and Hope" is this year's theme. The retreat, held at Nestucca Wildlife Sanctuary, on the Oregon coast, will explore the meaning of Luke's well-known Gospel story and its related themes. The weekend promises to be thought-provoking and intensely spiritual, as well as being a break from the material world.

HIV/AIDS prayer support

The Franciscan Formation House in Portland has announced the beginning of a prayer support group for persons affected by HIV or AIDS. "Our gift is a safe, warm and inviting atmosphere of prayer where God's loving kindness, care and acceptance can be realized." Each week, interested persons gather for one hour of shared prayer. Guided by the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, the prayer is not elaborate but simple and heartfelt. The prayer services meet each Thursday evening from 7:30-8:30 pm. The location is the Franciscan Formation House, 827 NE Alberta St. in Portland.

MCC Portland activities

The Metropolitan Community Church of Portland hosted the Northwest District Leadership Conference with 60 people attending from Washington, Idaho, Utah, California, and Oregon. The Rev. Paul Tucher of Texas conducted a two-day workshop on the Meta Church concept to promote church growth. The Rev. Tom Bigelow, the Northwest District coordinator, preached at the Sunday service.

MCC Portland also hosted Dr. Rev. Buddy Truluck, scholar, author and talk-show guest. Dr. Truluck offers workshops on what the Bible says about homosexuality, including "The Bible as Your Friend," "The Bible as a Weapon for Love and Justice," and "Recovery from Bible Phobia."

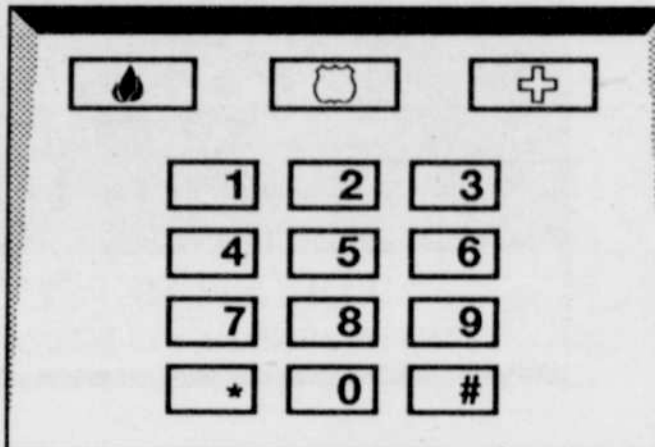
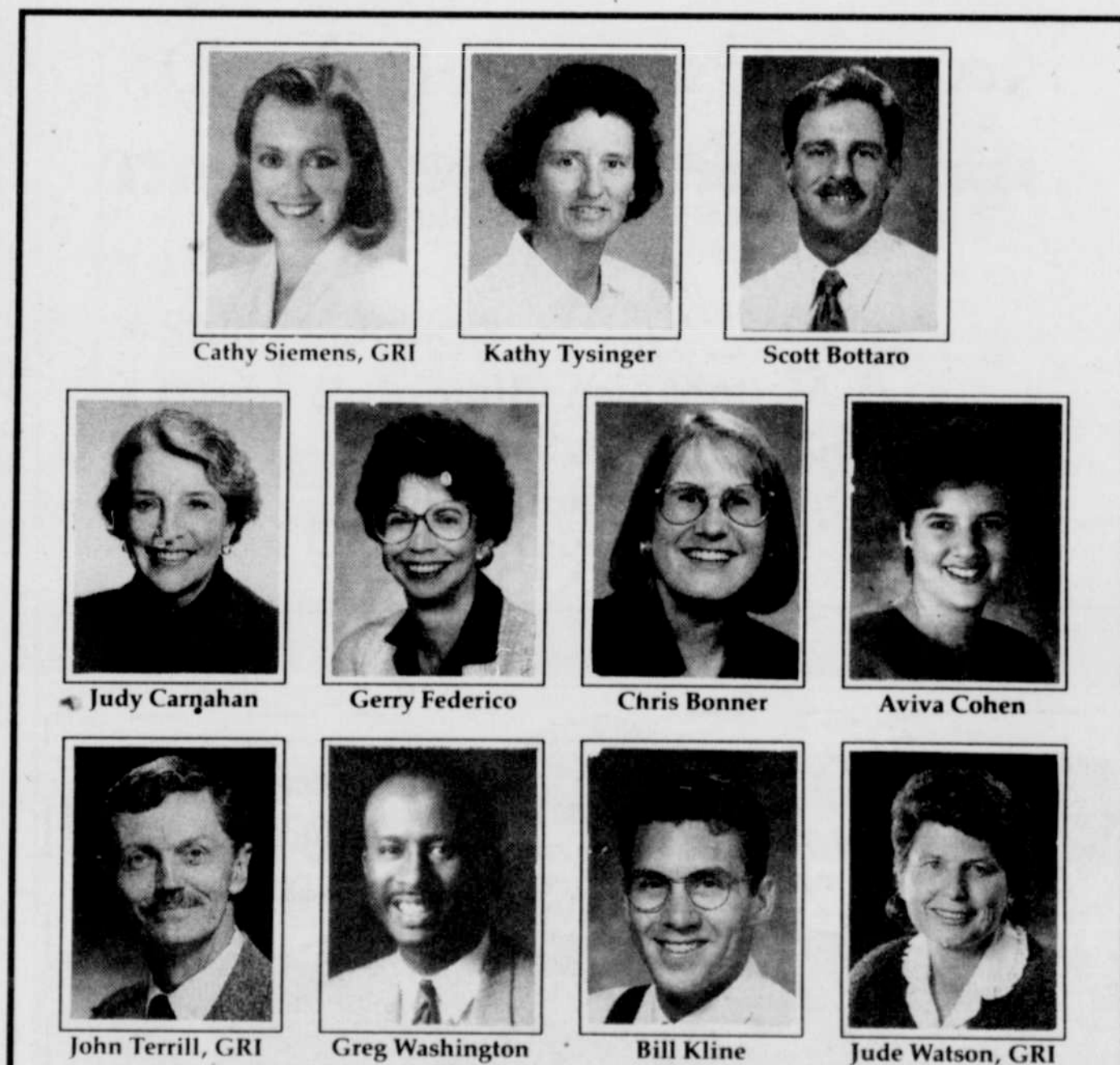
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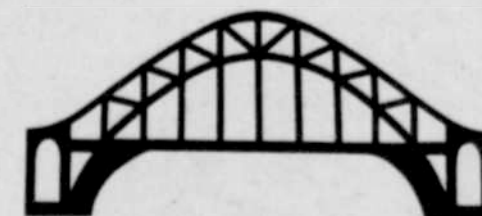
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