

Presbyterian church withholds funds

One of the largest and richest Presbyterian churches in the country has flexed its financial muscle in a fight to prevent practicing gays and lesbians from becoming ministers.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, Calif., announced Sunday that it would withhold its \$300,000-a-year funding to a regional synod, one of eight in the country, until the synod drops its support of a gay and lesbian advocacy group called the Lazarus Project.

The project is a West Hollywood Presbyterian ministry that advocates gay and lesbian ministers, church officials said.

"We cannot endorse homosexual and lesbian practices

as a God-ordained lifestyle," said the Rev. John A. Huffman, senior pastor of St. Andrew's.

The issue of gay and lesbian ministers in the Presbyterian Church has been smoldering for years. In 1987, the church's General Assembly ruled that homosexuality is a sin, said Huffman, who helped write the policy. Practicing gays and lesbians were banned from becoming ministers.

That policy is now in danger of being overturned, however.

Huffman called his church's action, endorsed by all 27 members of its ruling session, a signal that Presbyterians do not want the policy overturned.

Tom Berg, Orange County Register

Presbyterian church hires Spahr as evangelist

Downtown United Presbyterian Church of Rochester, New York, countered its denomination's rejection of its call to Janie Spahr as a pastor by hiring her for a new mission project. Under the project, "That All May Freely Serve,"

Spahr will speak with Presbyterian groups around the country regarding ordination of lesbians and gay men. She has not been scheduled to speak in the Portland area during the three-month project. The project is intended to put pressure on the Presbyterian Church's June 1993 General Assembly to change official policy on ordination of lesbians and gay men.

New Jewish Agenda

New Jewish Agenda has identified the top organizational priorities for 1993-94: black/Jewish relations; family structure; response to the religious right; Latino/Jewish relations and gay and lesbian outreach. Development of new leadership was also identified as being of major importance.

Secondarily, New Jewish Agenda will focus this year on advancing progressive Jewish values in the Jewish community through working on issues of anti-Semitism and diversity.

Spirit Journeys

A unique program of outdoor adventure travel for gay men, Spirit Journeys offers a series of trips in the United States and Mexico. The seven different gay Spirit Journeys are about the joy and playfulness of brotherhood and the adventure of travel to powerful places where mystery and beauty abound. It is also about rediscovering the deep self, a relationship with nature and honoring the unique gifts and collective gay heritage that stretches back to the dawn of humanity. David Frechter, whose company is headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has arranged personal growth seminars, spiritual retreats, and outdoor adventure journeys within the U.S., Mexico, and Europe. Other staff include Douglas Conwell, director of the national program "Earth Walk," and Steven Berlyn, a licensed psychotherapist and group facilitator of healing arts, AIDS education and gay men's issues.

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

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