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since 1983

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday before the first and third Friday for the next issue. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

The **display advertising** deadline is the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue.

**Classified ads** must be received at the **just out** office by 3 pm the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue, along with payment. Ads will not be taken over the telephone.

**Ad policy.** No sexually exploitative advertising will be accepted. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising.

**Subscriptions to just out** are available for \$17.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$30 for 12 issues.

A copy of **just out** is available for \$2. Advertising rates are available on request.

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# steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, at 2400 NE Broadway, sports a new coat of paint just in time for its 20th anniversary celebration, slated for the weekend of Jan. 19. The paint job was phase one of the building's planned \$450,000 renovation.

## guest editorial

# A wake-up call

*I've been hearing stories of violence, and it's been keeping me awake at night*

by Teri Ventura

**R**ecently, while spending a casual, social evening with some friends, someone said of another woman we know, "How can everyone just let her get away with beating her lover?"

I was shocked, not so much by the saddening reminder that battering occurs in the lesbian community, but rather, that everyone else present knew about it and knew of others who knew about it. And each of them spoke of other cases they knew about. According to many people I've spoken with since, these instances are "open secrets" in our community.

I haven't been able to sleep well since that evening. I get into bed, lay my head on the pillow and close my eyes. I try to relax. I can't. I try to resist the image that forces itself on me through tightly closed lids, but my closed eyes can't stop the picture from materializing. It crystallizes—I see a woman's sweet face, bruised, cut, bloody and broken; her left eye is swollen closed from the latest beating by another woman. One who loves her—her lover.

I don't know the woman who lives behind that face, but I am haunted by her image.

I know that many, probably most, other lesbians care deeply about battering and want it to end. We work in women's shelters. We know. We care. We work hard to end violence against women. But I'm noticing that somehow, when we are confronted with it face to bruised face, as it is practiced against women we know, by women we know—our neighbors, our friends, our leaders—oftentimes we do not intervene effectively to interrupt and stop the abuse.

I want to make it very clear here that I am not in any way minimizing men's violence against women. Nor do I mean to

discount the very real and ugly problem of gay men battering gay men. I am, however, specifically focused in this discussion on lesbians beating lesbians, and the particular challenges and barriers that that issue poses in the lesbian community which may be inhibiting our ability to think clearly and act decisively.

Women are being hurt by other women, and we aren't doing everything we can to help them. Is it because their batterers are well known to us? Is it because we mistakenly believe that all woman-on-woman violence is mutual? Are we keeping a secret in a misguided attempt to protect ourselves from a seemingly greater evil—the police, the radical right? How is it that so many of us know of instances of lesbian abuse and do nothing about it? I am not being judgmental of those of us, myself included, who have failed to act. This is a difficult, ugly issue to deal with in a world that seems to offer far too many difficult, ugly issues for my attention. I have decided to make this issue a priority. I don't claim to have all the answers. I do hope this will open a community dialogue about lesbian battering and lead to a comprehensive plan to end battering.

*Get involved. Contact Bradley-Angle House at (503) 282-9940, TTY 281-3540. If you have been beaten or abused by your lover, or think you may be, call now. If you have beaten or abused your lover, do whatever you have to do to stop it. Get help. Bradley-Angle House is sponsoring a workshop, to be held from 2 to 5 pm Sunday, Jan. 7, at Portland State University, that is designed to give participants a chance to collaborate in formulating a community response to domestic violence. See related article on page 12.*

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