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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.

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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

guest editorial

Not only members benefit

For 20 years, Portlanders have had a place to worship that unabashedly honors and respects their sexual orientation

by Donna Red Wing

It was Halloween night. They had shaved parts of my head. The procedure which had cauterized an artery in my brain and capped it with a bit of platinum was over. The MRI was done.

The next morning I would face brain surgery. I was terrified. And very medicated. A friend dropped by and laughed when I said that the Rev. Roy Cole would be offering communion. I was astonished and said, "Damn it, it is my immortal soul, after all." "Immortal soul" is a phrase I had never uttered before. It was the thing that my Catholic friends in grade school had worried about whenever we were about to do something we shouldn't.

Roy Cole did visit me on Halloween night. He offered communion to all of us there; to my partner, Sumitra, and to my son, Julian, and to all of the Christians and Jews, pagans, agnostics and atheists who were there that night to wish me well. His communion prayer was loving, optimistic and inclusive. He spent the next day, all day, with my family and friends, through the grueling eight-and-a-half-hour surgery. And he, and his congregation, prayed for my recovery. He was both a friend and a pastor.

I am not a member of the Metropolitan Community Church. I try to attend Christmas Eve services there because I love the carols and the candles. I try to attend community celebrations and World AIDS Day services. I do not need to be a member to participate. I do not need to be a member to feel included. I do not need to be a member to understand and appreciate the fact

that MCC Portland is an integral part of our larger gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. I don't need to be a member to feel pride each time my bus zooms past the newly painted and renovated church. I don't need to be a member to use the meeting rooms with other activists as we cook up strategies and responses. I don't need to be a member to stop by after an election or a tragedy to meet with friends and allies. I don't need to be a member to call Reverend Cole about my spiritual concerns.

I don't need to be a member to take from this church the pieces I need. I do, however, have a responsibility to MCC Portland. It is my responsibility to contribute to its financial well-being and to offer my resources and networks. It is also my responsibility to think about, appreciate and forward MCC's place in our community.

MCC Portland is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Think about that. For 20 years, Portlanders have had a place to worship that unabashedly honors and respects their sexual orientation, that affirms their spirituality, and is a relevant voice in the community. And now that place sparkles on the corner of Northeast 24th Avenue and Broadway.

I enthusiastically join in the celebration of MCC Portland as it commemorates this milestone. I hope you will join me.

See related story on page 11 for a listing of events to be held during MCC Portland's 20th anniversary weekend celebration, Jan. 19-Jan. 21.

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