

The modest American Legion Hall on Salem's Lilac Lane seemed an unlikely venue for this "extraordinary service of ordination," but the enthusiasm inside could have rivaled the Crystal Cathedral.

Many present were members of Sweet Spirit Metropolitan Community Church as well as volunteers from the Capitol Forum, LifeLine AIDS Project and other service groups. They were crammed into this single room May 16 to watch as one of their own, Patricia Jackson, was ordained into MCC's professional clergy. The real miracle was that she was able to sit upright in her wheelchair and participate in the moving ceremony.

Jackson, who has been a tireless worker in Marion County AIDS programs, is fighting cancer and has been told her condition is terminal. However, fighting against difficult odds is something she does extremely well.

Longtime friend Chuck Harvey, former MCC Northwest District coordinator, has kept in close contact with Jackson during the ordeal. "Even though she's come to terms with the terminal nature of her cancer," he said, "she still is willing to confound the doctors and eagerly serve the GLBT community in a pastoral capacity."

Jackson was recently hospitalized and considered close to death. Instead, she recovered enough to come home to her partner of more than 35 years, Mary Albert.

Both women are retired. Jackson worked as a cook and "unofficial counselor" at the Marion County Court School, and Albert was a house counselor at Fairview Training Center until the school closed. They now have a greenhouse and market floral products throughout the Salem area and at Portland Saturday Market.

SWEET SPIRIT

Cancer-stricken lesbian ordained as minister in Salem

by Patricia L. MacAodha



Patricia Jackson (left) and Mary Albert founded Sweet Spirit Metropolitan Community Church

Jackson is well-loved in Salem community groups but is best recognized for her involvement with the Imperial Court of the Willamette Empire, where she served as Empress V, and with Sweet Spirit MCC, which she and Albert founded. Jackson also served as treasurer, clerk and lay delegate to denominational and regional conferences.

A small congregation, Sweet Spirit spent

several years searching for a pastor. For much of that period, Jackson served as lay pastor and interim pastoral leader.

During her stint as lay pastor, she was unexpectedly thrown into an intense leadership position when the homophobic hatred of 1992's Measure 9 battle resulted in a Salem house fire that killed a gay man and a lesbian. Anger was widespread throughout the area, and a rally was held despite fears that a riot might break out in response to the deaths. Although she had never spoken at a protest before, this grandmotherly, sweet-faced lady stepped to the microphone and pleaded with the crowd to resist being drawn into the violence.

Cloaked with the voice of reason and her strong faith, Jackson helped turn the potential mob into an assembly of committed activists.

Those who know her were not at all surprised she could have that kind of impact. Nor were they surprised when the deathbed ordination instead became a gathering of enthusiastic friends and supporters, with a delighted Jackson wheeling about and conversing.

"Ordination is a 'setting aside' of people who wish to pursue professional ministry," Harvey said. "They have demonstrated by experience and setting an example...in other words, a person who 'walks their talk.'"

This step normally follows extended university and seminary training, but denominational leaders took into account Jackson's years of service and sent an authorization to MCC Portland's senior pastor, the Rev. Glenna Shepherd, asking her to conduct the ceremony.

"Upon receiving the rite of ordination," wrote the Rev. Jim Mitulski from MCC headquarters, "Ms. Jackson will be a fully ordained minister in good standing in Metropolitan Community Churches."

As the service began, MCC Sweet Spirit's pastor, the Rev. Ken Kerr, read the full declaration. Clergy shared stories about the impact Jackson has had in service to her community and church. Shepherd performed an examination, asking Jackson about her commitment to pastoral ministry. A blessing followed in which hands were laid on Jackson.

After everyone in attendance read a prayer, Shepherd made the official pronouncement of Jackson's clergy status and presented her to the gathering as "the Rev. Patricia Jackson." This was greeted with a standing ovation and cheering from the audience, which included Jackson's three children, Brenda of Hillsboro, Richard of Portland and Debbie of Louisiana.

"It was only the prayers of the people that brought me here today," Jackson said, adding with a twinkle in her eye, "I'm going to have to go home and think about this!"

PATRICIA L. MACAODHA is a Portland free-lance writer. E-mail her at patmac31@juno.com.

The Original

BEAD FAIRE

From Vintage to Contemporary Beads

BALI SILVER ANTIQUE
CZECH GLASS GEMSTONE
LAMPWORK AND ONE OF A KIND

Something for every BEAD-A-HOLIC!

OREGON CONVENTION CENTER
Exhibit Hall E 777 MLK Jr. Blvd
JULY 16, 17, 18

<p>Bead Faire Hours: Fri: Noon-7pm Sat: 10am-6pm Sun: 10am-5pm</p>	<p>FREE HOURLY DOORPRIZES Classes and Demonstrations Over 50 Exhibitors Widest Variety for the best selection MILLIONS OF BEADS</p>	<p>GENERAL ADMISSION \$5 WEEKEND PASS</p> <p>CLIP & BRING THIS AD TO RECEIVE A \$1.00 DISCOUNT OFF ONE GENERAL ADMISSION</p>
---	---	---

Sponsored by GFI Productions 503-252-8300 info@gemfaire.com www.gemfaire.com

3161 SW Fairmount • \$629,950

CLOSE IN CITY RETREAT

Provocative executive home in one of Portland's premier neighborhoods. Stylish, high quality remodel with designer colors and flair. Big windows and decks let the outside in. Easy care landscaping providing a quiet retreat with water features and unique lighting for enjoyment and quiet meditation. Enjoy the nature and lifestyle around the Council Crest/Fairmount area and sunset views. The open, great room floor plan is perfect for entertaining with a gourmet's kitchen including granite counters and sub zero refrigerator. If you want a close-in city retreat that is comfortable, stylish and a great entertainer, this is the one for you.

MLS # 4041186 • TG 626/D/3

Windermere
 John & Melody Hatch, Brokers
 6443 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy
 Portland, OR 97221
 Ph: 503-497-5178 • Fx: 503-220-1131
 Email: john@hatchhomes.com
www.HatchHomes.com