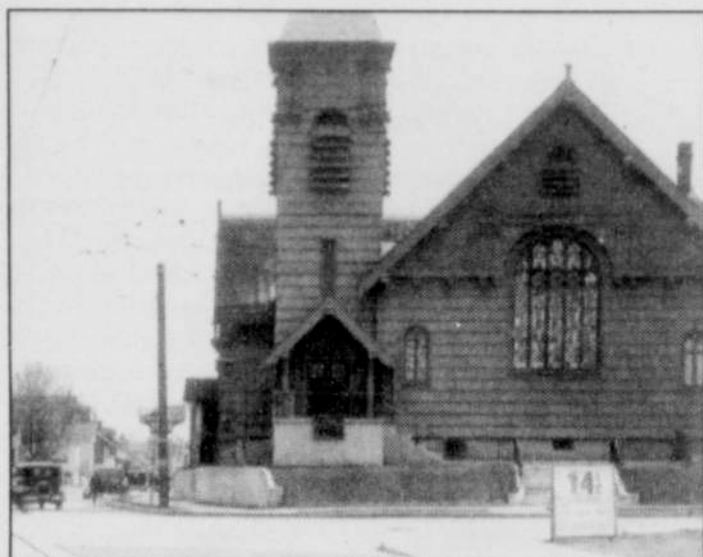
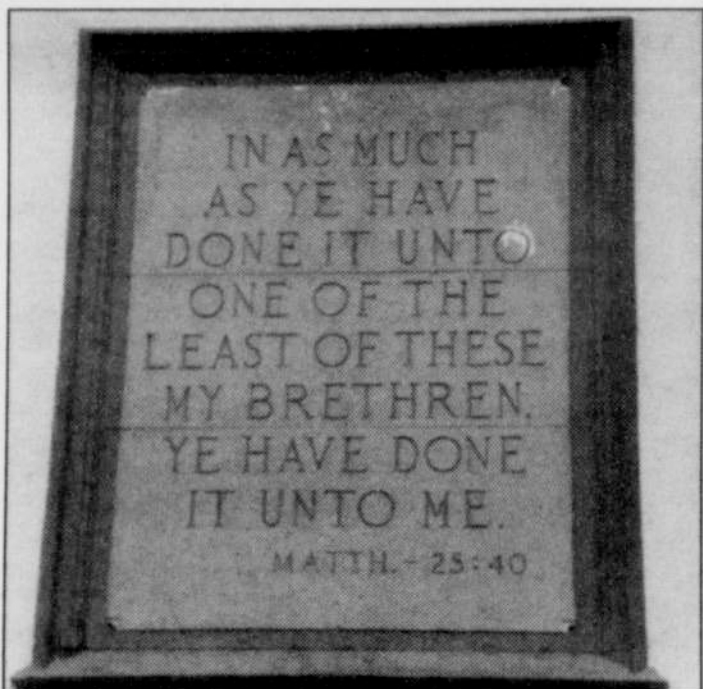
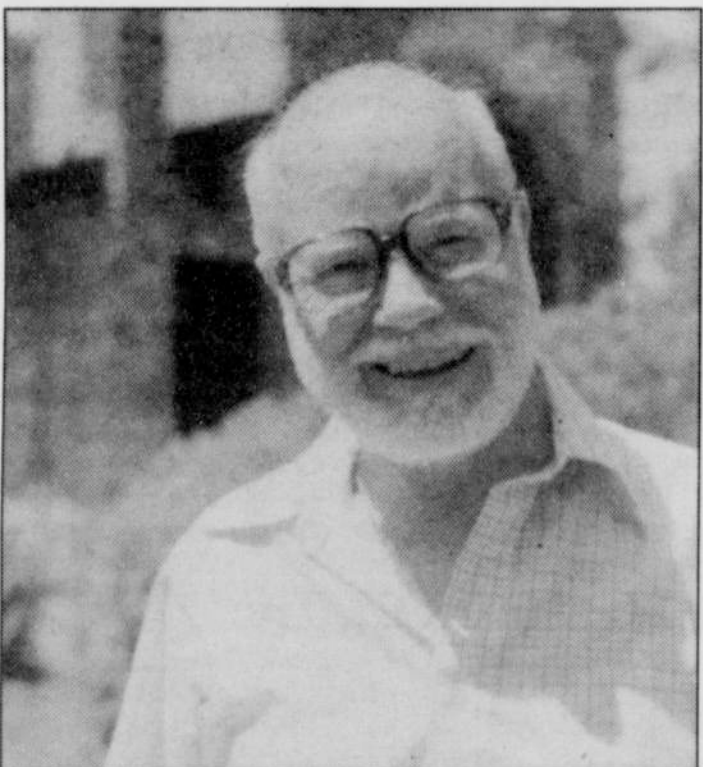




Long before MCC bought the old "Church of Good Tidings" in 1977, the arts and crafts building was a landmark.



A stone tablet is set into the Southeast Ninth Avenue side of Centenary-Wilbur United Methodist Church, where MCC met in 1976 and 1977. It became La Luna and is now refitted as Pine Street Studios.



Jim Glycer brought a Presbyterian background to MCC as its third senior minister. He will return for anniversary events.

A Curious and Peculiar People

Metropolitan Community Church of Portland celebrates 30 years

by Dave Kohl

For social and religious reasons, gay and lesbian Christians began meeting in Portland as early as 1968. A group reportedly met in the Parker Chapel at the old YMCA on Southwest Taylor Street and Sixth Avenue. Not much else is known of them, who they were, who led them or whose idea it was.



The Early Years of Religious Organizing

After the Rev. Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles, a congregation soon emerged in San Francisco. They sent "missionary" the Rev. Ken Jones to start a group in Portland. It first met at Centenary-Wilbur United Methodist Church, the building later known to most Portlanders as La Luna or Pine Street Theater.

Neil Hutchins of the Second Foundation helped make arrangements, and the first service was held Oct. 24, 1971. The church was supported by the Second Foundation through ads and articles in *The Fountain*. KBOO-FM interviewed the pastor and programmed talk shows on homosexuality. Jones turned the group over to the Rev. Fred Sferazzo from the Los Angeles MCC in March 1972. By July, the group had stopped meeting. It would be about a year before another attempt to start an MCC in Portland would materialize.

Independently, the Rev. Rodney Page of the Portland Greater Council of Churches proposed a conference on "religion and the homosexual" for September 1972, to be held at Augustana Lutheran Church, but someone higher up put the kibosh on plans, and the meeting never happened.

Seattle's MCC congregation nurtured a former Lutheran minister, the Rev. Ken Adams, who decided to venture into Portland to start an MCC here. He arrived with plans for a 200-member church and had several Seattle women lined up to help recruit members.

By this time, the Second Foundation had rented a former Italian restaurant above the Other Inn Tavern on Southeast Alder Street, just west of the renowned gay hot spot Dahl & Penne's. The church first met there

May 13, 1973, and continued to grow successfully until the foundation lost its lease in July. Services then moved to Holy Rosary Catholic Church on Northeast Clackamas Street. Both the Catholics and gay Catholics of MCC were uncomfortable meeting there, and the church moved to First Methodist Church on Southwest 18th Avenue later that July.

In October, the Second Foundation rented the Pythian Building (the Crown Ballroom), and the MCC congregation moved there as part of an effort to fill the whole building with gay organizations. One of those was Mildred's Palace. The foundation lost the lease, and in December 1973, Jones hung up a sign reading, "MCC No Longer Meets."

Not to be daunted, about 15 survivors of the group formed Portland Community Church in January 1974. Under the Rev. Frank Fortenberry, they first met in the Melody Ballroom on Southeast Alder and later that year moved to Centenary-Wilbur, where the first MCC had begun. After about a year of worshipping as a small group led by three lay people, it was decided to approach the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and once again try to become an MCC in Portland.

This time it worked. The Rev. Austin Amerine agreed to lead the group, which numbered about 12. He had left the Assemblies of God ministry and had become a businessman with Colonial Penn Insurance in San Francisco. His love of music had drawn him to the MCC there, and through the efforts of Perry in Los Angeles, he agreed to move to Portland. When two Portlanders drove to San Francisco to help move his household goods, they created quite a scene, dropping items from the truck. The reverend simply got out of the truck and started playing the piano and singing hymns, full voice. People applauded from the sidewalks.

Amerine was an experienced church builder. His first service was held Jan. 6, 1976. He schmoozed with wealthy folks and invited them to join the board of the fledgling church. They provided the financial stability needed by the group. Members were excited and hung up posters and fliers in several gay bars and bathhouses. Within a year, the group had grown to 60 members and qualified to be a chartered congregation of the UFMCC.



Typical after-church potlucks have always been essential.



Founding pastor Austin Amerine is surrounded by Bill Barry and his chauffeur, Andrew Dixon.

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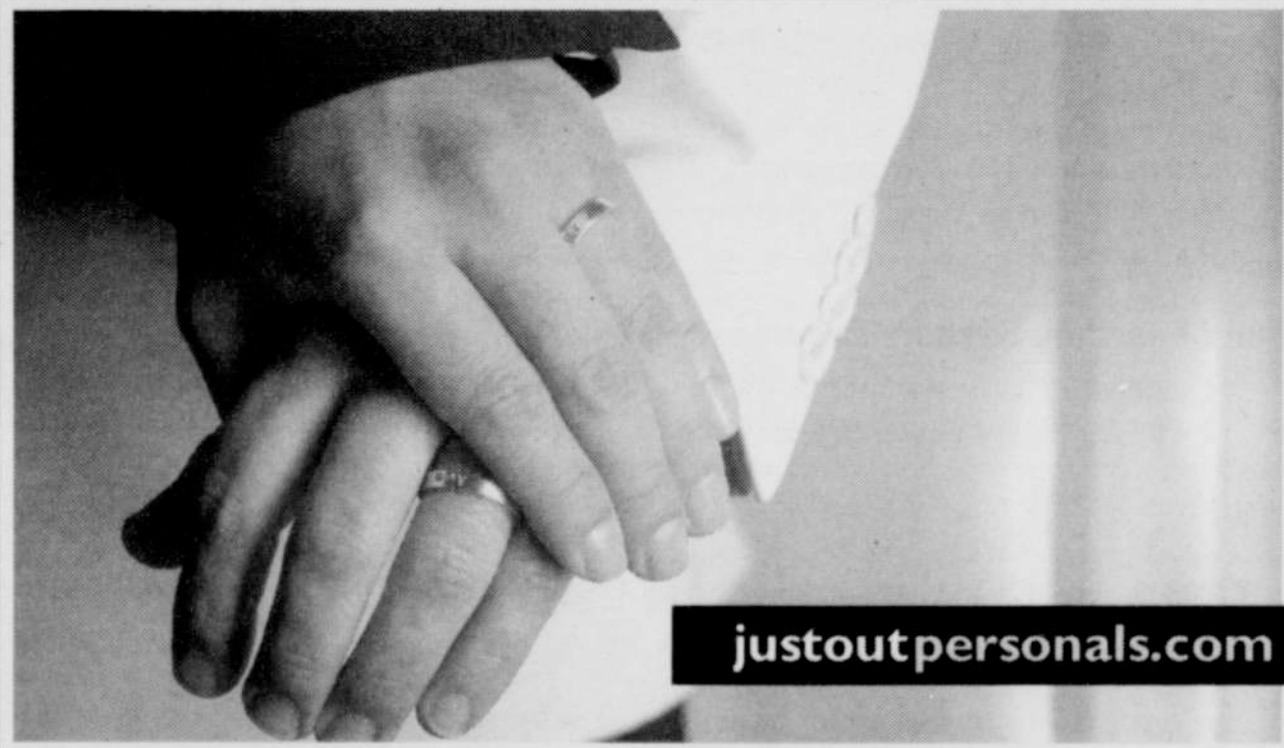
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