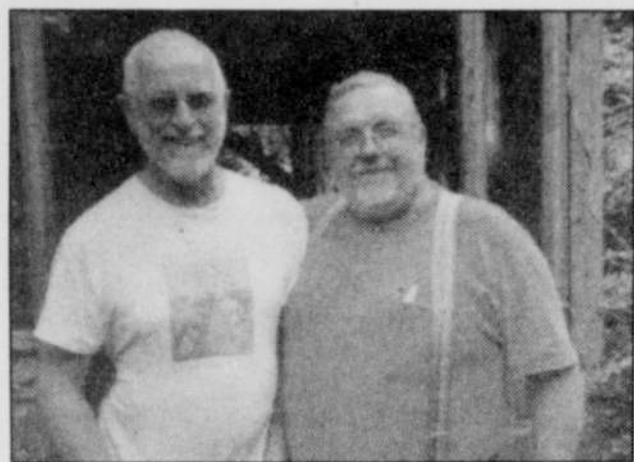




Lloyd Porter and Don Howse met at MCC's chartering service in January 1977. Still together, they can't forget their anniversary.



Austin Amerine celebrates his first Portland Pride.



Today's MCC membership numbers almost 300 souls of every age and sexual orientation.

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AIDS was claiming friends and members.

Then in December, the church nearly burned when an errant candle ignited the wood framing of the large stained glass window. An alert passerby phoned 911, and the building was damaged only on the western end. Jimmy Bryant's open heart design from the AIDS vigil became the centerpiece in a new stained glass window, designed and made by Portland glass artist David Schlicker and installed in time for the May 1989 Northwest District Conference.

In 1992, Measure 9 was designed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance to declare homosexuality perverse. Wilson challenged the congregation to get involved in the larger arena of campaigns, rallies and fund raising. He became the public face of the church, so much so that the church office was vandalized and the church mailing list taken. Anonymous phone threats followed. This unnerved several members who needed to keep their identity private. Even though the measure was defeated, discontent within MCC and a sharp decline in membership precipitated Wilson's resignation in early 1993.



Outward Growth

The Rev. Dennis Chappell served a short term as senior pastor but resigned after six months in 1994. The Rev. Roy Cole then arrived from MCC in Reno, Nev., and energized the congregation with plans for physical

changes in the building and a strong commitment to spiritual growth and empowerment. A capital campaign from 1995 to 1998 paid for a new roof and paint job but could not muster the finances to remodel the inadequate bathrooms and below-code kitchen.

The congregation voted to take over Esther's Pantry when there was a possibility of it closing in 2000. Esther's then moved to its present location at Northeast 28th Avenue, five blocks east of MCC.

Organizational changes were also made. The church became involved with Rainbow Youth, a program begun by the Urban League. That group eventually merged into the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center.

In the spirit of gratitude for community leaders, Cole asked activist mother Ann Shepherd if the church could give out an award at a fund-raising dinner named for her and her deceased husband, Bill. Along with Rita and Charles Knapp, the Shepherds had organized what became Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in the 1970s. Cole then gave the first Ann and Bill Shepherd Award to Ann Shepherd! The Shepherd Award is given annually by the church to recognize significant community leaders. The recipient in 2005 was Basic Rights Oregon leader Roey Thorpe.

Another significant development in 2000 was the admission of MCC into Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Rodney Page, who first spoke with Amerine about MCC membership in the Greater Portland Council of Churches and EMO in 1976, negotiated with the 17 member denominations to arrive at a unanimous vote to accept MCC into full membership. Wilson and Cole in particular had worked for years as nonvoting committee members with the group. Their reputation and solid discipleship paid off. The bonus was that EMO only accepts denominations. Therefore, the entire UFMCC became recognized. UFMCC is also now a full member of the World Council of Churches.

Cole resigned to pursue his desire to become an Episcopal priest in 2001. The Rev. Mike Nicklaus helped fill the gap until the Rev. Glenna Shepherd arrived in February 2003. Although she has been at MCC just three years, several monumental events have boosted the energy level at the church. Two new worship experiences have developed: Elevation on Sunday evenings and a Taizé-type meditation service one Wednesday a month. Attendance has risen with the addition of 30 people in the most recent membership class, including five baptisms. Sunday school attendance has tripled. Shepherd is most pleased with the developing spiritual life of the membership. A new assistant minister, the Rev. Wes Mullins, will be joining the staff in February with a focus on youth ministry.

Physically, the church building is undergoing the most major renovation in its 95-year history. Inadequate bathrooms and the woebegone kitchen are being totally replumbed and expanded. Since late November, the building has been without running water, and two Honey Buckets greet visitors on the Broadway sidewalks. Local businesses have generously shared their flushable toilets with church members and participants at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Five furnaces have replaced the behemoth oil burner. And newly configured back stairs will guarantee safer quick exit in case of emergency. The congregation is proud to be rebuilding its home and its mission.



The Historian's Journey

In the fall of 2004, I began volunteering in the office at MCC one day a week. It's a busy place most of the time, between planning services, helping AA people find their meetings, folks waiting for counseling, out-of-town

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