

guests, clerical stuff and more. I came to realize what a vital place MCC is and that we have lost some significant members to AIDS and old age. MCC hadn't gathered much archival material, so I soon realized that some oral history was in order. I volunteered as a committee of one to put down as much history of the church's past as I could gather.

Naive idea.

Longtime members such as Bill Barry, Chuck Harvey, Dave Dishman, Betty Nelson and Dan Brown helped provide contact information for former members and pastors. We gathered about 20 "alumni" for the 29th anniversary service in January 2005, a good beginning at finding lost friends.

Soon, I realized MCC could not be isolated from the greater Portland sexual minorities community, and I began interviewing significant people in the larger community. This has been a wonderful and awesome experience. So many people worked together across lines of interest and political orientation; so many individuals have been leaders in more than one organization; so many business owners have also been community leaders and benefactors; and so many are, fortunately, still living in the Portland area. One interview leads to another and to multiple suggestions for further research.

Coupled with the interviews, I have been learning about the major collecting work done by a little-recognized group called Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest. Tom Cook, the group's first leader, wrote several significantly helpful summaries of gay Portland history. The group has also collected old copies of various gay and alternative newspapers from Portland, Eugene and Salem. These and a marvelous collection of donated papers and photos are now housed with the Oregon Historical Society and readily available for serious research.

When I began, I thought we'd put out a 20-page home-printed folder for the 30th anniversary. In its final form, it is 448 pages, replete with 700 photos and a 30-page appendix about Portland gay venues and organizations and some helpful maps. It is an earnest start at documenting the role of the church in the development of Portland's sexual minorities community and will be of interest to anyone curious about the city's queer past.

The book titled *A Curious and Peculiar People* will be in print by the end of this month, most likely in time for the anniversary events. Again, the Portland community has shown its commitment to projects of this kind: Publisher, printer and publicist have all donated their services at below cost. Sponsors have contributed enough funds so that sales will benefit the MCC renovation project. Books will be available at local independent booksellers as well as at the church.



Events to Celebrate

Thirty years is a long time for most businesses to survive. It's even more of a landmark for a volunteer organization, and a very significant amount of time for a gay religious group. So the upcoming 30th anniversary of MCC is a major milestone.

Always looking for an excuse to celebrate and gather with friends, the church is hosting a weekend party Jan. 27 to 29. Longtime members of Portland's sexual minorities community will want to come and rekindle friendships and meet visiting dignitaries. People newer to the scene should take advantage of the moment to see, meet and hear words from leaders of the 1970s gay revolution.

Most honored guest for the weekend is the Rev. Troy Perry. He began gath-

ering gay Christians to worship in 1968 in his house in Los Angeles. The movement quickly grew into the UFMCC, today numbering about 50,000 members in 300 congregations in 19 countries. Perry became an activist for the cause of gay liberation and human rights, leading marches, going on hunger strikes and fasts, serving on national boards and authoring three books. His best-known writing is *The Lord Is My Shepherd, and He Knows I'm Gay*.

Five of the senior ministers from MCC history will be returning to Portland for a reception Jan. 27. MCC's second pastor, Don Borbe, will be there. Glycer, now 87, who pastored the church from 1981 to 1983, will return from California. Cole, pastor from 1994 to 2001, will be visiting from New York. Berry, pastor in 1983 and 1984, has plans to return to Portland, but health issues might prevent her visit. Shepherd will be hosting.

Two former ministers have passed away. Founding minister and larger-than-life persona Amerine died in 1998. He led the congregation from 1976 to 1979. Sixth pastor Chappell died a few years after his time of service from 1993 to 1994.

Local dignitaries will also be honored at a reception Jan. 27. Sometime during the weekend, the Shepherd Award will be presented to a community leader.

After the reception will be a free concert by Sanctuary back at the church. Members of the public who cannot join the reception are most welcome at the concert. Music director Steven Couch, several soloists and the MCC choir have been in rehearsal for two months in preparation.

Jan. 28 is set aside as a history celebration, with short oral memories from a dozen current or past members, including Sister Paula Nielsen. Perry will reminisce about his connections with Portland and MCC, and a PowerPoint presentation will supplement his comments, showing the growth of the Portland congregation and its community connections with AIDS, politics and same-sex marriage. Copies of the church's 30-year history book will be for sale.

Jan. 29 worship services will feature Perry. His delivery and message are both unforgettable. Special service music is also planned. A casual brunch will end the festivities. 10

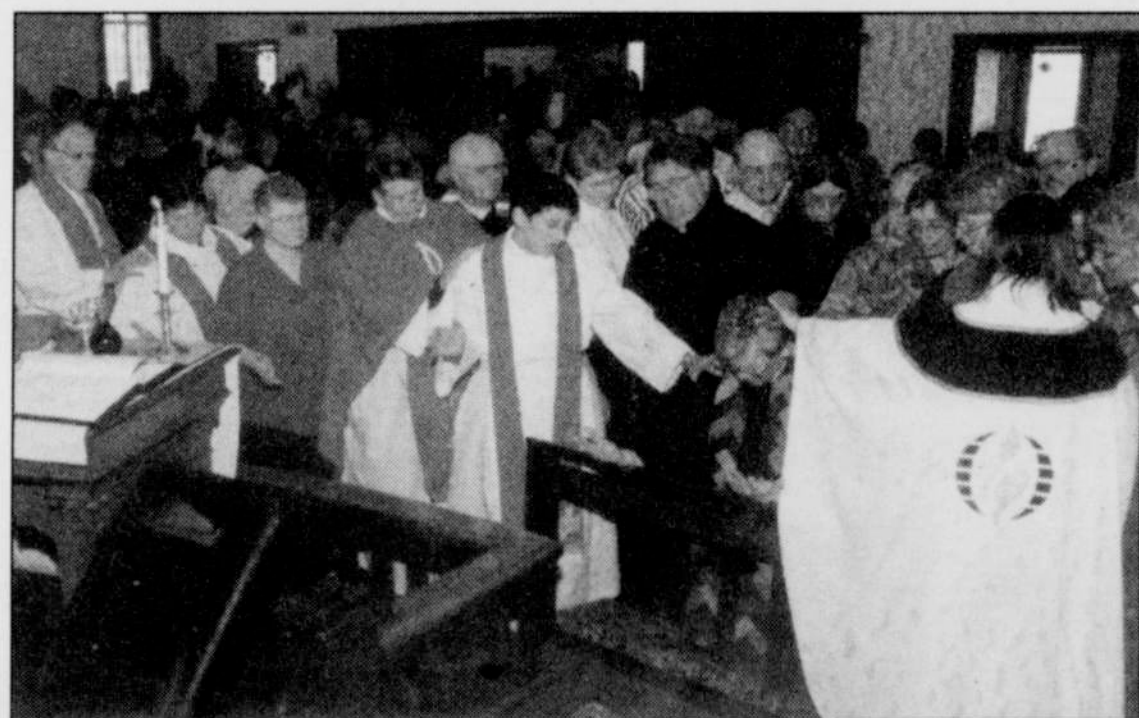
Portland historian DAVE KOHL has arranged a display of "artifacts" from the past, which will be on view Jan. 28 at MCC.



The Rev. Don Borbe (front row, center), who still lives in the Portland area, is shown here with early founding members.



The Rev. Glenna Shepherd arrived in 2003 and has added a new vitality and encouraged individual spiritual growth and maturity.



Eleven guest ministers participated in the Rev. Glenna Shepherd's installation service. All members were invited to "lay on hands" as part of her blessing.

don valerio, md

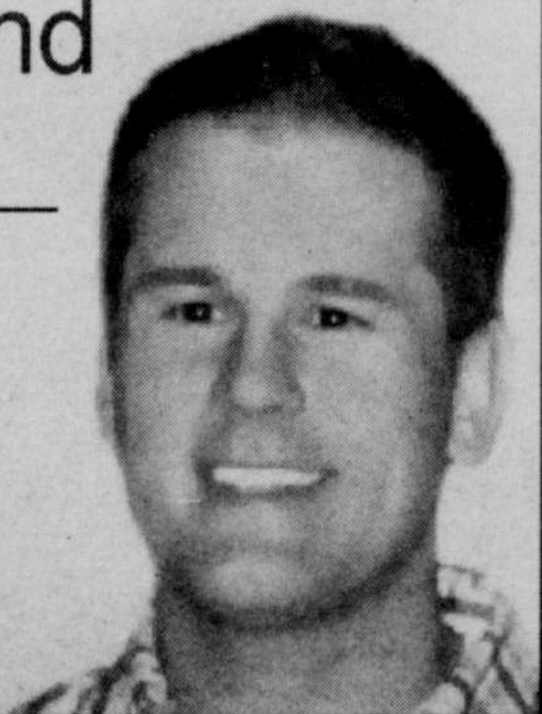
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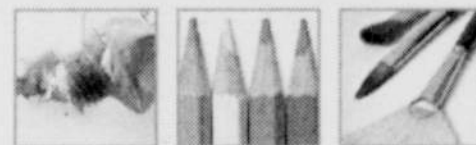
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