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be minister to a new congregation, Pikes Peak MCC in Colorado Springs, Colo. Home of the U.S. Air Force Academy and the world-renowned Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs may well prove a challenge worthy of the Tennessee-raised cleric's talents.

Mullins' experiences dealing with homophobia and the challenges facing any gay pastor began with many years as a member of the conservative Church of Christ. He was finishing seminary at Abilene Christian University when authorities discovered (or paid attention to) the fact that he was gay. Mullins didn't lie down and play dead. He transferred to Brite Divinity School, an affiliate of Texas Christian University, receiving his graduate degree in 2005.

By this time, he had not only discovered his future denomination but was pastoring at Exodus MCC in Abilene, where he worked for almost three years before being drawn to the Rose City by former MCC Portland pastor Glenna Shepherd.

"I knew Glenna," Mullins said, "and wanted to work with her." In February 2006, he took on the new youth ministry, Elevation, a Sunday evening service that was drawing a congregation of fewer than 10 at the time. Mullins leaves a solid 55- to 60-person Elevation attendance.

He has also been responsible for the Children's Ministry, including Unvacation Bible School, with events for the entire family and parenting classes, and has strengthened the church multimedia complex, used in both Elevation and regular Sunday morning services.

After Shepherd left, Mullins became de facto pastoral leader while a congregation committee searched for, and called, an interim pastor, the Rev. Ron La Rocque. Mullins committed himself "to stay and help the church grieve the loss" of Shepherd.

For Mullins, however, it's time to strengthen another church needing his kind of skills, this time as Pikes Peak's senior pastor. The Colorado parish has been without a permanent clerical leader for two years. A "nontraditionalist," he is "ready to go somewhere new and different." He plans to continue pastoring, hoping to eventually "meet 'the' person and live happily ever after."

Mullins' family, still in Tennessee, is looking forward to having him a lot closer to home. As for his Portland community, many are disappointed to lose their assistant pastor, who has "absolutely loved this town."

"I will miss Portland for a very, very long time," said Mullins.

Mullins' final Portland sermons will be preached May 11, Mother's Day, at MCC Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway. For more information call 503-281-8868.



MARTY DAVIS

County Employee Named Public Health Hero

Multnomah County public health heroes were honored April 10 at a ceremony with Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury.

Among those being honored were Matthew Lashua, a policy and constituent relations adviser with County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey. Part of his priorities at the county include work with queer issues and sustainability.

Lashua, who is gay, founded the county's response to National LGBT Health Awareness Week through the development of the LGBTQ Meaningful Care Conference planning committee. The committee has grown during the past three years to

Multnomah County employee Matthew Lashua was honored as a "public health hero" for his creation of the LGBTQ Meaningful Care Conference.

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