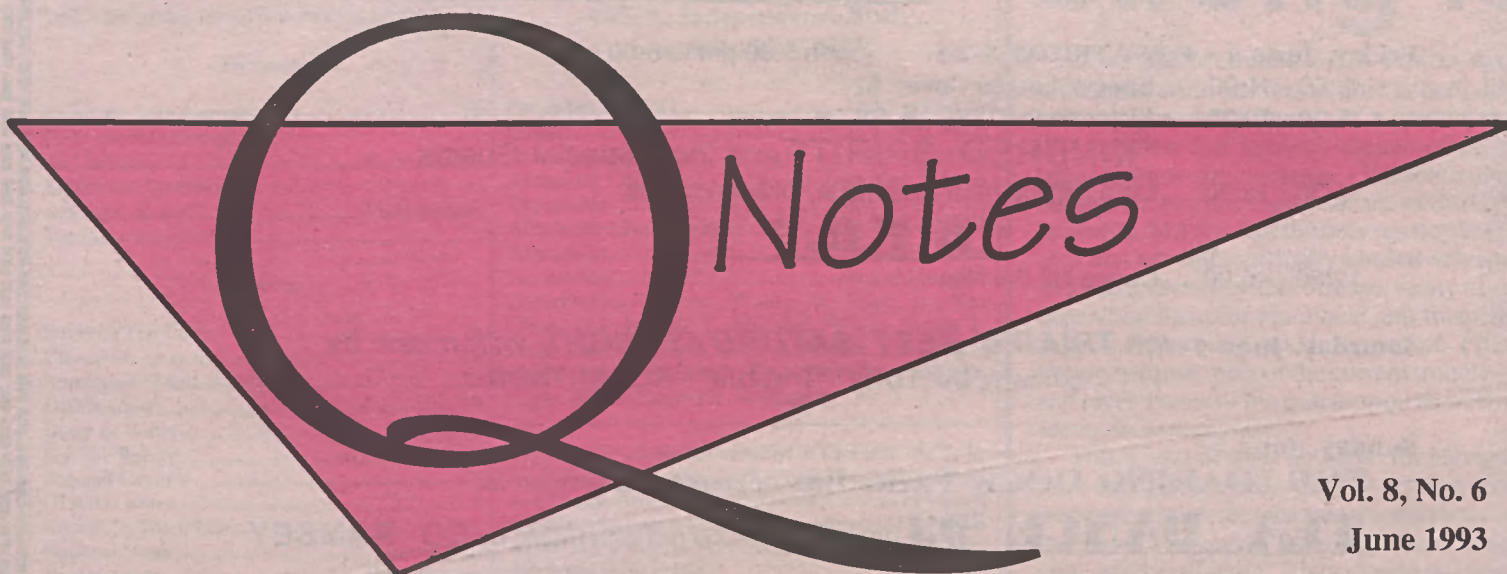


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NC church council welcomes MCCs

by Brent L. Pack
Q-Notes Staff

GREENSBORO—In a landmark decision, the North Carolina Council of Churches voted overwhelmingly to receive into membership the Gulf Lower Atlantic District (GLAD) of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) at its May 5 House of Delegates meeting in Greensboro, NC.

Although opposition to the acceptance of GLAD made a plea to have the vote delayed to a later meeting, the proponents pushed the vote through the house making the North Carolina Council of Churches the first such ecumenical body to accept the UFMCC for representation.

Although it may seem ironic for North Carolina, the buckle of the Bible Belt, to so readily accept the UFMCC, Rev. Collins Kilburn, Executive Director of the Council, relates, "The vote was somewhat surprising, but the NC Council has a long history of pioneering in the areas of social controversy. The NC Council was one of the first in the South to become interracial."

The push for acceptance began in the fall of 1992 when GLAD submitted its membership application to the Executive Board. The application was approved by the Council's Executive Board in December. The Board then recommended approval to the House of Delegates. Following careful discussion, a motion to delay action for study and dialogue was defeated by a vote of 39 to 30. After further discussion, the motion to receive GLAD into membership passed with 50 in favor, 15 opposed and 7 abstaining.

Although much of the discussion concentrated on UFMCC's ministry to the gay and lesbian population, proponents emphasized that membership in the ecumenical body is not based upon agreement on moral questions, but upon faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior. Rev. Kilburn commented on the vote by saying that he was not sure the proponents of acceptance of GLAD were settled on whether homosexuality is right or wrong, but their rationale seemed to be that in spite of differences over practices, all churches, including UFMCC, are united by a shared faith in Jesus Christ.

Both the Council and the Metropolitan

Community Churches in North Carolina are waiting to see the effects on the Council and on the individual churches. However, most MCC pastors are voicing hope for the new association. Rev. Bob Galloway, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Asheville, expresses, "Involvement with the Council should help individual churches start building common coalitions with other churches to work on joint projects which help all communities." Although many opponents are expecting negative results, Galloway responds, "Any move towards a sense of unity, whether in the religious or social area, is a positive one. So much more can be accomplished when people work together, rather than apart."

Not only will the MCCs which comprise GLAD benefit from the new union, but the Council also expects to be impacted. Rev. Kilburn verbalized his hope for the Council, "I hope the gifts MCC possesses, specifically identification and work with a group of people that are discriminated against and victimized often by violent crimes, will help members of the Council cross denominational lines to gain empathy for helping the oppressed and

to promote solidarity and unity."

The work of the North Carolina Council of Churches in such areas as social justice, peace making, controversial social issues, criminal justice reform, poverty and families, children's rights, and farm worker safety and health seems to blend easily with the UFMCC which was formed in 1968 as a special Christian ministry for gays, lesbians and bisexuals who had been rejected and discriminated against by their own churches and society.

The UFMCC which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year has previously been working to promote the same ideas that the Council holds as its general purposes: to give witness to unity in faith; to proclaim that all are one in Jesus Christ; and to seek and to grow together in unity.

At best, the union of two organizations that have similar purposes and a committed belief in Jesus Christ will be mutually beneficial. In the words of Rev. Kilburn, "The presence of this new church on the Council will give both old and new council members a new opportunity for discovering a new perspective of the Gospel."

NCCGLE reports surge in hate crimes

by Darryl R. Williams
Special to Q-Notes

RALEIGH—In 1992, 104 hate crimes were reported in North Carolina, representing a 70 percent increase from the 61 cases reported in 1991. In addition, 474 other anti-gay offenses were documented by the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE), according to its annual report *Homophobia and Human Rights in North Carolina*. NCCGLE released the report during a press conference on May 4 in Raleigh. The press conference was attended by NCCGLE coordinator Ann Burlein, Sherri Zann Rosenthal, Jimmy Creech and Anita Hodgkiss.

Anti-gay offenses documented by NCCGLE included murder, assault, kidnap-

ping, robbery, arson and arrests connected to the crime against nature law among others (see box for details). Of the 578 total offenses, 104 constituted "hate crimes" under guidelines in the Federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act.

While the numbers are high, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) estimates that 80 percent of anti-gay offenses remain unreported, according to Ann Burlein, NCCGLE coordinator. The primary reasons for underreporting are that victims fear that police will be unresponsive at best and they might lose friends, family, employment and health insurance if their sexual orientation became known.

Although the increase in hate crimes is alarming, Burlein believes that it should be

viewed in perspective.

"In a strange way, the increase is not just a story of victimization," she said. "It's a story of increased visibility, strength, and support for the lesbian and gay community. It's a testament to our strength in North Carolina."

Burlein added that 1992 was a year of breakthroughs, where lesbians, gay men, and people with AIDS played increasingly visible public roles in politics, churches and schools. Many of the anti-gay offenses, she said, were backlashes directly related to community visibility.

"Our pronounced and open participation in national politics and local communities was met by a climate of anti-gay intimidation

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NC Pride PAC Director resigns

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CARRBORO, NC—Effective June 1, 1993, Michael Nelson has resigned from his position as Executive Director of the North Carolina Pride PAC, a statewide Political Action Committee working for gay and lesbian equality on both the state and local levels.

Nelson has been an employee of the PAC since January, 1992 and told *Q-Notes* that his reason for leaving was "because it's time for me to move on to other projects." Nelson tendered his resignation at a PAC board meeting held on Sunday, May 16.

Nelson said he had made the decision to resign early in the week of May 10. During that week, Nelson wrote (and released to the media) an opinion/editorial piece and a letter which would have in essence "outed" one of North Carolina's closeted legislators. During the board meeting of May 16, Nelson agreed not to discuss that matter while he remained an employee of the Pride PAC.

Prior to the May 16 meeting, two PAC board members contacted *Q-Notes* to discuss Nelson's article. Both spoke highly of the legislator who Nelson alleged actively worked to defeat the recent attempt in the North Carolina General Assembly to amend the crime against nature (CAN) law. As reported in last month's *Q-Notes*, the amendment failed to pass. They stated that the legislator in question has an exemplary voting record on all legislation having an impact on AIDS and/

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New controversy at AIDS project

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Metrolina AIDS Project is attempting to recover from several May incidents which mired the embattled AIDS service agency in controversy, both real and rumored.

The first round was touched off when Mike Averbuch announced his decision to resign as MAP Executive Director on May 15.

Harking back to the departure of the previous Director, John Conley, stories of "firing" and "forced resignation" began to circulate throughout Charlotte's gay and AIDS-affected communities immediately.

However, this turned out not to be the case as the agency's Board of Directors, and Averbuch himself, confirmed the official news that Averbuch was enrolling in the Counseling program at UNC-Charlotte to obtain a Master's Degree. As further proof, Board Secretary Mary Hopper noted that Averbuch will keep his current position until September 1. She said that if the situation had involved a forced removal, the Executive Director's job would have been vacated quickly.

The second, and more damaging, situation then followed on the heels of Averbuch's decision.

In November, as part of a routine agency review, the United Way contracted Charlotte

counselor Dr. Virginia Lewis to compile an assessment of Metrolina AIDS Project in all aspects other than fiscal.

The United Way's agreement with Dr. Lewis was for one hundred hours of work on the evaluation. But, in order to present a thorough study, she ended up donating between 200-300 additional hours to the job.

Dr. Lewis interviewed some board members, all staff and many clients of MAP, spent time observing day-to-day operations at the office and poured over a multitude of written documents to arrive at her conclusions.

In March, Dr. Lewis presented her report to the MAP Executive Committee, and later

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