

Q Notes

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Published Every Two Weeks On Recycled Paper • Volume 12, Number 1 • May 31, 1997 • FREE

MCC Charlotte leader is forced to resign

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Effective Friday, May 23, Rev. V. Randy Votsch stepped down from his position as Interim Pastoral Leader of the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte (MCCC) an affiliated church of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC). This move was mandated by the Gulf Lower Atlantic District (GLAD) committee. His resignation follows several years of uneasiness between Rev. Votsch and the church's board of directors, stemming from financial improprieties involving misuse of MCCC credit cards in 1995.

At the Sunday, May 25 morning church service, board member Judy Ridenhour made the following announcement to the congregation: "First of all, today is a day of change for MCC Charlotte. Some of you have heard the news, some of you are probably going 'What in the world is going on?' On Thursday evening, the board was called to a meeting with the district committee and Randy also. And at that time, we were notified that their approval had been removed for Randy as Senior Pastoral Leader. And it went effective Friday, May 23rd. And after that meeting, we were instructed to carry on. We have spoken with Randy, been with Randy, and he wants everyone to know he loves you very much, that he is going to be okay, and that he asks us to go on. He stressed that with his whole heart — to go on with what God has called this church to do."

Pastoral leaders of UFMCC-affiliated churches are not ordained ministers by the church itself but are approved to serve by a committee from the church's district. In 1995, although credentialed by three other denominations, Rev. Votsch was deemed ineligible to apply for ordination with UFMCC due to his misuse of MCCC credit cards. Instead, he was given the title "Interim Pastoral Leader." The procedure for ordination involves an investigation and an interview. Due to the financial concerns, Rev. Votsch was not allowed to ap-

ply for ordination until spring 1997. When he applied, the process stopped at the investigational level and he was told his interview would be postponed until November. Approximately three weeks later, the six-member GLAD committee voted unanimously to "disapprove" Rev. Votsch's position as Interim Pastoral Leader.

GLAD District Coordinator Jay Neely could not be reached for comment and MCCC board of directors member John Whitesell said an official statement from the board would be issued, but was not received at press time. When asked why Rev. Votsch was not approved as Pastoral Leader, he said, "I have no comment." A telephone call placed by Q-Notes to Rev. Votsch was not returned by deadline.

Whitesell said the board of directors will act as a search committee for a new pastor, bringing on additional members from the congregation. Again, at press time, it had not been decided who would conduct services in the interim. However, Whitesell stated that the church has an Assistant Pastoral Leader (Jill Johnson) and several members of the congregation are qualified to lead services.

This is the second time the religious leader of MCCC has left the church with little or no explanation. Rev. Lynn Guerra resigned in February 1992 stating, "...I have spent over nine years here in Charlotte building a home for God. My work here is finished."

On Sunday, June 1, MCCC will host a reception from 5:00-7:00pm to honor Rev. Votsch, his ministry, and his five-year leadership. Rev. Votsch indicated that he would answer all questions at that time. MCC Charlotte is located at 4037 E. Independence Blvd., 3rd floor. ▼



Rev. V. Randy Votsch

Fairy flies to association board

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

PHILADELPHIA—Charlotte travel agent Beverly McIntyre was elected to the board of the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) during its recent 14th Annual Convention. In cruising to victory, McIntyre, perhaps better known as The Pink Fairy, received the most votes of any director in the group's history — despite the fact that she was a late entry in the race.

The organization, which unanimously voted to change its name from the International Gay Travel Association at the May 8-11 gathering, is comprised of individual and corporate members who work in the travel- or convention-related fields. Membership in IGLTA indicates an affiliate's desire to serve the booming gay and lesbian travel market.

McIntyre, who has four children (two of whom are gay), is the current president of the

Charlotte Business Guild, a networking organization for gay/supportive business owners and executives, and started Pink Fairy Travel in January '95. The agency's memorable name is based on a comic character she has portrayed at a variety of venues and at performances with One Voice, Charlotte's gay and lesbian chorus.

McIntyre told Q-Notes that her selection was a promotional step in the right direction for the Queen City. "I feel that this should bring even more attention to Charlotte, but in a very positive way, rather than the negative one from the County Commissioners."

Five additional board members chosen at the convention were from Montreal, Canada; Cologne, Germany; Munich, Germany; Philadelphia and Dallas.

For more information on the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association or to make travel arrangements, call Pink Fairy Travel at (704) 332-5545 or 1-800-243-3477. ▼



Pride PAC tracks bills in Assembly

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—M.K. Cullen works NC's General Assembly on behalf of NC Pride PAC for Lesbian and Gay Equality, the state's gay-rights political organization. She moves confidently through the maze of hallways, meeting rooms and offices that make up the legislative complex in Raleigh. Between meetings, she can be seen conferring with other progressive lobbyists, checking vote counts, explaining some technical aspect of the legislative process, button-holing someone to make a point, all while proudly wearing a prominent name tag that says clearly who she works for.

Cullen always seems to know what's about to happen when she arrives for one committee meeting and what's likely to happen in the several other meetings that she will attend on any given day. And that isn't easy. NC's legislature is considering more proposals this year affecting lesbians and gay men than at any other time in history.

May 1 was an important date on the legislative calendar, the day that a policy bill had to clear either the full House or Senate to stay alive. Some of the gay-related bills dropped out on that day because neither body had passed them. But several others are still being debated. Presented here is the scorecard so far, based on a recent NC Pride PAC update.

Gone but not forgotten

Bills that did not meet the May 1 "cross-over" deadline and are dead for this session include Sexual Privacy at Home, SB 1050, introduced by Sen. Eleanor Kinnaird of Orange County. It would have reformed the state's so-called Crimes Against Nature law to exempt sexual acts by consenting adults performed at home.

Ethnic Intimidation Act Changes, HB 1065, was introduced by Rep. Paul Luebke of Durham, and would have added sexual orientation and gender identity to the current Ethnic Intimidation Act which makes it a felony to assault someone because of these characteristics. Both bills were supported by NC Pride PAC.

Parental Rights and Child Protection Act, HB 1085, would make it illegal to give any materials to a minor child that "suggests, recommends, condones or advocates, explicitly or implicitly, engaging in any of the following:

...unnatural sex acts, alternate lifestyles, or any other form of sexual activity outside the bonds of matrimony between a lawfully married man and woman...." After a heated debate, the bill was defeated in committee. Pride PAC opposed the bill strongly.

Still in the running

A number of bills are still alive with the potential to have a significant impact on the GLBT community.

Orange County is trying to add sexual orientation to its existing human relations ordinance in the Orange Omnibus Act, SB 632/HB 758, sponsored by Sens. Eleanor Kinnaird and Howard Lee and Reps. Verla Insko and Joe Hackney of Orange County. It has been referred to House and Senate committees for further consideration.

Domestic Violence Changes, SB 627/HB 929, would give a "household member," including gay men and lesbians, the right to get a restraining order from a court if he or she is in an abusive relationship. It was introduced by Sen. Brad Miller of Wake County. It has passed both the House and the Senate. But at press time, an effort was underway to remove homosexual partners as household members covered by the law.

Military Job Recruiters, HB 628, passed the House 94-19 and has been sent to the Senate Higher Education Committee. It would force state institutions of higher education to allow military recruiters to operate on university campuses. The law schools of UNC-Chapel Hill and Duke University currently deny access to recruiters for the military Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps because of the military's policy of discriminating against gay people.

To help train activists generally and focus attention on the work that needs to be done in the final weeks of the legislation session, Pride PAC will hold its first Activist Training workshop in conjunction with the Pride '97 weekend in Carrboro, June 6-8. The workshop will be held Friday, June 6 from 12 to 4pm, followed by a reception. The cost, including materials, lunch and the reception, is \$10. The agenda includes strategy, recruitment and leadership development and lobbying. For more information, contact NC Pride PAC for Lesbian and Gay Equality, PO Box 28768 Raleigh, NC 27611-8768; (919) 829-0343; e-mail: ncpridepac@aol.com. ▼

Despite the myths, lesbians are vulnerable to AIDS

by Randi M. Bearden
Special to Q-Notes

This past April, I was in Greenville, SC to vacation, visit my children and grandchildren, scout out employment and living arrangements and participate in the annual South Carolina Pride March. As the coordinator of an HIV/AIDS education and prevention program, the reality of this disease and its impact upon every race, gender and sexual orientation is something that I deal with on a daily basis. With this in mind, while I was home, I spoke with some of my friends regarding HIV. The first thing that was said to me when I raised this topic was,

"We don't get AIDS; we're lesbians." Sadly, this is the perception of most lesbians that I have encountered. Quite frankly, there was a time when I too subscribed to the same errant thinking.

The fact is that lesbians *do* get HIV. Recently, I was in California for the National Conference on Women and HIV. The conference gave scholarships to over 400 HIV-positive/AIDS-infected women to attend. And while I do know lesbians who have AIDS, it was quite another matter to encounter at one time so many of the 400 who identified as lesbians and were

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Issue Milestones...

- Eleven-year publishing anniversary.
- One-year of biweekly distribution.
- The annual North Carolina Pride Issue.