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MCC Charlotte's new home at 1825 Eastway Drive (inset: Rev. Mick Hinson)

MCC Charlotte sets move-in date

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—On June 27, Rev. Mick Hinson was finally able to officially deliver the news his congregation at the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte had been waiting months to hear: the move-in date for their new church home.

Currently, services are held on the third floor of the Varnadore Building on Independence Blvd. Barring any unforeseen complications, members will hold their first regular worship service in their own space on November 28. Rev. Hinson noted that the date was specifically chosen for its ecclesiastical significance. "The service will be held on the first Sunday of Advent which is all about looking forward to the future and expectations of a wonderful time to come."

The new church, situated on approximately three and a half acres at 1825 Eastway Drive,

currently houses Eastway Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ congregation that built the structure in 1963. They have purchased land in the University area and are preparing to begin construction on a new facility.

Members of MCC Charlotte's Building Finance Committee thought they had secured a move-in date in August, but those plans fell through with the unexpected announcement that Rev. Bruce Jones, the pastor of Eastway Christian, intended to step down later in the year to lead another church in Rock Hill, SC.

"I believe Rev. Jones' decision to leave threw [the Eastway congregation] a curve," said Finance Committee Chair Jim Yarbrough. "Therefore, they had to regroup and reevaluate their own transition to their new facility. With that, they decided they wanted to wait until November to vacate the building."

Once MCC Charlotte takes possession of
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Bill outlawing job discrimination reintroduced in Congress

WASHINGTON, DC—A bipartisan assembly of lawmakers re-introduced the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) on June 24. Congressional leadership should move to allow Senate and House votes on the bill that would protect gay and lesbian workers from job bias in all 50 states, according to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

"Congress has the power to end a major injustice that still haunts this country," said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. "It is perfectly legal to fire gay, lesbian or bisexual people in this country simply because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Most Americans find that abhorrent, and support this effort to outlaw job discrimination against gay people."

If passed, ENDA would extend federal employment protections currently based on race, religion, gender, national origin, age and disability to sexual orientation. The bill would prohibit employers, employment agencies and labor unions from using an individual's sexual orientation as the basis for employment decisions, such as hiring, firing, promotion or compensation. ENDA would not, however, cover small businesses with fewer than 15 employees. There is also an exemption for the military and religious organizations, including educational institutions substantially controlled or supported by religious organizations. To boost the measure's chance of passage, lawmakers have rewritten the bill to explicitly prohibit preferential treatment, such as hiring to meet quotas or designing affirmative action standards to make up for past discrimination.

ENDA's opponents have successfully fought it in three previous Congresses on the grounds that it would extend special protections to gays.

"ENDA will achieve equal rights — not special rights — for gays and lesbians," said Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT), one of the bill's cosponsors. He plans to pass the bill out of his Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and then try to force consideration by the Senate.

But opponents aren't buying the argument that the bill won't confer special rights. Robert H. Knight of the conservative Family Research Council said sexual orientation shouldn't be a category that receives federal protection from job discrimination because it involves behavior. Other specially protected categories, such as race, gender and disability, do not.

Vice President Al Gore, campaigning in Los Angeles at a gay and lesbian center, voiced support for the legislation. "It does not confer any special rights, but it does outlaw the kind of discrimination that has become all too common in our society," he said.

First introduced in 1994, ENDA came within one vote of Senate passage in 1996. Major corporations that already have their own non-discrimination policies support the bill. Eleven states currently have laws prohibiting discrimination, North and South Carolina not among them.

This year, the bill was introduced in the Senate by Jeffords and Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), and in the House by Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA) and
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Rulings give conflicting results

by Garry M. Buseck
Special to Q-Notes

BOSTON—In a 4-2 decision, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled June 29 that a woman, identified as E.O., is a parent of the son she and her former partner jointly raised.

L.M., the biological mother, had urged the court to sever all contact between the child and E.O. because E.O. is not a biological or adoptive parent, and because no law in Massachusetts specifically allows contact in these circumstances. In its landmark decision, the SJC recognized a non-biological parent to be a de facto parent where she had participated in the decision to have a child and the raising of the child with her former partner.

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), a 20-year-old public interest legal organization focused on GLBT and HIV/AIDS issues, represented E.O. on appeal, together with trial attorney, E. Oliver Fowlkes of Fowlkes, Jacoby & Kaplan in Boston. According to GLAD attorney Mary Bonauto, who argued along with Fowlkes before the SJC, "This is a victory for the child, now four years, who has now been spared the devastation of losing one of the two parents he has known his whole life. It also puts Massachusetts on record as saying that 'the family that must be accorded respect in this case is the family formed by the plaintiff, the defendant and the child.' For too long, the courthouse door was slammed shut to families not related by the traditional markers of birth, marriage and adoption. It has now been cracked open to those people who can

show that they are de facto parents."

Attorney Fowlkes added, "We now look forward to going to court on the real issues, namely what custody and visitation and support arrangement is in the child's best interests."

E.O. added, "My son frequently asked me, 'Mommy, when will the judge let us be together?' Today I celebrate that the court recognized the bonds of love and will allow me to pursue contact with my son. My son knows that I am one of the parents who brought him into the world, and teaches him to sing, read, and to believe that good things usually happen. Today's decision affirms these lessons."

The women in the case had been in a committed lesbian relationship for 13 1/2 years. They did everything they could legally to signify their commitment to each other as "life partners." Their son was born in 1995. L.M. was the birth mother and E.O. cut the umbilical cord. They named the boy after E.O.'s grandfather and held a baby naming ceremony for him with both sides of their families participating. They signed many legal documents and even a detailed co-parenting agreement before and after the baby was born. They cared jointly for their son in every way until the couple separated in May 1998, when the boy was three and a half years old.

After the couple separated, L.M. refused E.O. any contact with their son. E.O. was awarded temporary visitation by Judge John P. Cronin of the Probate and Family Court. A Single Justice of the Appeals Court reversed the temporary visitation order. E.O. then appealed

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Nazi papers hold meaning for gays

by Rev. Dr. Mel White
Special to Q-Notes

On June 26, the Huntington Library in Pasadena, CA announced the first public exhibition of the Nuremberg papers. Signed by Adolf Hitler himself, the original documents have been on file since they were donated by General George Patton in 1945. Hitler instituted these laws to guarantee the "racial purity" of his Third Reich. They redefined the role of Jews in Germany and opened the doors to Holocaust.

"I felt like I was viewing the first draft of the death warrant that led to the demise of one-third of world Jewry," said Dr. Uri Herscher. "Once deportation began," added UCLA professor Saul Friedlander, "these laws determined who would live and who would die."

The four primary paragraphs were published in the *Los Angeles Times*. I was stunned by their familiarity. The minute they are on display, my partner Gary and I will be there to see them. I hope I won't embarrass him with involuntary tears. We should publish them in every GLBT paper in the country with the warning: It could happen again!

Paragraph 1: Ended the right of Jews to marry freely. Sounds like a reason to work even harder to defeat anti-gay marriage laws.

Paragraph 2: Ended the right of Jews to have sexual intercourse freely. Sounds like a reason to continue our efforts to rescind sodomy laws.

Paragraph 3: Ended the right of Jews to employee or be employed freely. Sounds like a reason to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

Paragraph 4: Ended the right of Jews to display/serve the nation's flag freely. Sounds like a

reason to seek that promised executive order from President Clinton to completely end the ban on gays in the military.

While we've been celebrating all our hard-earned victories the past few weeks (and we deserve the time to celebrate), we need to remember that Berlin in the 1930s was the most gay-friendly city in the world. How quickly life as cabaret became a nightmare of suffering and death.

Too many of us believe our adversaries are fools who are only using us to raise funds and mobilize volunteers. In fact, they are sincere believers, determined to end our rights.

Too many of us think that it is *not* important for us to contribute time and money to help continue our struggle for equal rights. In fact, any one of our primary adversaries raises more money every month in part to end those rights than our entire community raises in a year to preserve and protect them.

Too many of us think the danger is passed and that time is on the side of justice. In fact, Dr. Martin Luther King made it very clear: "Time is on the side of injustice."

Even if Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson and the others look like extremists who are losing power, their anti-homosexual rhetoric is reaching critical mass in the homes and churches of our childhood. Let these documents remind us that it could happen again. Our "Nuremberg Laws" are in place or on the ballot. All it would take is for you or for me to do nothing. ▼

[Rev. White is a 1997 recipient of the ACLU's National Civil Liberties Award and the author of *Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*.]

