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north & south CAROLINA



Notes

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Q-Living: Lawrence v. Texas, two years later



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ONLINE Q.POLL

Do you think gays and lesbians face a greater chance of violent attacks now, as opposed to 10 years ago?
yes no

Next Issue: People & Their Pets

United Church of Christ vandalized after leadership gives OK to gay marriage

Following same-sex marriage support, UCC in Middlebrook, Va. set on fire by Donald Miller

ATLANTA — Meeting in the Georgia capital city July 4, the United Church of Christ's rule-making body overwhelmingly endorsed same-sex marriage, making it the largest Christian denomination to date to do so.

Most individuals in the 1.3 million-member UCC congregation are supportive of the resolution. Some non-members in the small town of Middlebrook, Va., weren't so happy with the pronouncement. So much so, that they were driven to vandalize St. John's Reformed United Church of Christ in the early morning hours of Saturday, July 9.

According to a report from the *Staunton News-Leader*, a groundskeeper discovered the fire still smoldering when he stopped by early Saturday to cut the lawn. The outside of the building was spray-painted with anti-gay graffiti and a declaration that UCC members were "sinners."

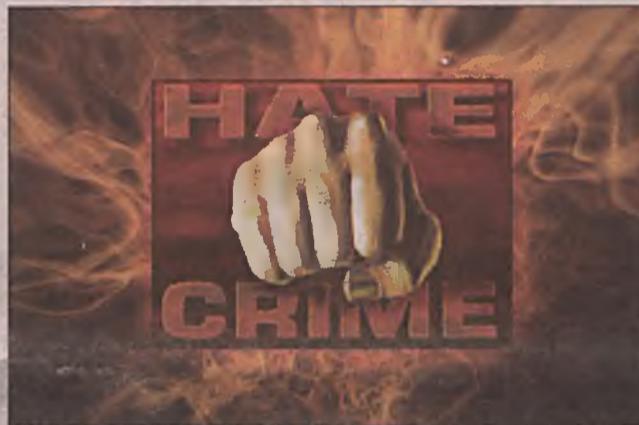
Vandals apparently set fire to a pile of hymnals in the church sanctuary, causing damage to pews and the choir loft.

By the time the fire was discovered, it had burned itself out. Damage to the building was extensive enough, however, that Sunday services were held in tents on the church lawn.

In a press release from the United Church

of Christ, The Rev. John H. Thomas, the UCC's general minister and president, responded to the incident.

"My heart goes out to the people of St. John's UCC in Middlebrook," Thomas said. "The violation of sacred space is traumatic for a congregation, particularly when a message of hate targets a church's efforts to reach out in the spirit of Christ's love to all people."



"I knew that the decision of our General Synod on July 4 to affirm marriage equality for same-gender couples would be controversial both within and beyond the church," he said. "It saddens me to realize that, for a few, disagreement has moved to acts of violence."

Despite the attack on the church, Garnett Phibbs, a member of UCC in Charlotte (and a former pastor with the Congregational

Church, which evolved into the United Church of Christ) is still happy about UCC's support for same-sex marriage.

"I was amazed that we got an 80 percent vote out of 900 delegates from the meeting in Atlanta," said Phibbs. "I believe the church did the right thing."

Even though Phibbs is elated with the church's decision, he feels there's still a long way to go before same-sex marriage finds broader acceptance. "It's like how the church once reacted to slavery, it might take another 25-50 years before other churches will accept change."

Traditionally strong in New England, the liberal denomination has long been supportive of gays and lesbians. In North and South Carolina there are more than 100 UCC ministries.

Last year UCC was slammed for an ad campaign featuring a gay couple, among others, being excluded from a church. CBS and NBC rejected the 30-second ads.

The same-sex resolution, which specified that bisexual and transgender persons merit the same support and protections as gays and lesbians, was submitted by conferences from Southern California and Nevada.

According to the UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns, about 1,000 clergy or seminarians in UCC are gay.

Canada passes gay marriage nationwide

Canada becomes third country in world, first in the Americas to recognize same-sex marriages



'We're a nation of minorities and in a nation of minorities you don't cherry-pick rights.' — PM Paul Martin

Supported by most members of the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, the legislation passed easily, making Canada only the third country in the world, after the Netherlands and Belgium, to officially recognize same-sex marriage.

The "vote is about the Charter of Rights," said Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin. "We're a nation of minorities and in a nation of minorities you don't cherry-pick rights."

The government has moved over the last few months to appease critics both

see **NORTHERN** on 4

Spain approves gay marriages

Thousands of gays ready to marry

Spain's lower house of parliament has voted in favor of allowing gay couples to marry and adopt children. The controversial decision overrules an earlier rejection of the bill by the upper house, the Senate.

The bill should be law by press time, making Spain Europe's third nation after the Netherlands and Belgium to allow same-sex marriages.



Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero: 'We are expanding opportunities for the happiness of our neighbors, our work colleagues, our friends, our relatives.'

see **GAY** on 4