

General Gayety

by Leslie Robinson . Contributing Writer

Religious rebels

Here in 2008, it's old news that mainline Protestant denominations are struggling internally over homosexuality. But the big gay news item of the year, the California Supreme Court's decision to overturn a ban on same-sex marriage, has ratcheted up the conflict within at least one denomination.

The United Methodist Church is lately looking more untied than united.

A story in *The Los Angeles Times* described how "scores" of Methodist ministers in California have conducted or plan to conduct same-sex weddings, in open disregard of church rules.

In other words; Methodist ministers are making matrimonial mischief. Miscreants are misbehaving by marrying members, making a mockery of Methodist mandates. Mercy.

The denomination's "Book of Discipline" lives up to its austere name, at least where gayness is concerned. It maintains that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. So "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches."

However, the book also says "certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for homosexual persons."

We won't marry you. But, we will support



your right to breathe oxygen.

While the United Methodist Church's international governing body reaffirmed the book's language on gay-

ness last spring, soon afterwards California's two governing bodies took a different view, declaring support for the state Supreme Court's ruling.

The Southern California Methodist leaders officially recognized the need for clergy and congregations to make marriage available to everybody. Hold on to your hymnal, Bertha, it's a Methodist mutiny!

The Northern Californians praised 82 retired pastors who signed a resolution offering to perform gay weddings on behalf of ministers who fear doing it themselves.

"We are willing to put our professions on the line because this is so central to our ministry," said retired minister Don Fado, 74. He might lose financial benefits and his clerical credentials, but his conscience will be spick-and-span.

The active ministers performing gay marriage ceremonies risk losing their jobs and clerical credentials. All so their church will live up to its slogan: "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors."

It's a surprising slogan, given the Methodist view of gayness. At present a more accurate one would be "Open hearts with cardiovascular issues. Open minds between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Open doors with a bouncer lurking behind them."

"I'm tired of being part of a church that lacks integrity," said the Rev. Janet Gollery

McKeithen, who plans to perform gay weddings in the months ahead. "I love my church, and I don't want to leave it. But I can't be part of a church that is willing to portray a God that is so hateful. I would rather be forced out."

We'll see if she is, along with all the pastors rebelling against church rules. We'll also see whether the change in California state law hastens a change in church law. And, whether other mainline denominations find them-

Rhodes-Wickett of Claremont United Methodist Church. Two men, together 40 years, had been members of her congregation for 22 years. She didn't want them to go elsewhere to marry.

She and a retired deacon co-officiated the ceremony, held at a complex for retired clergy so as not to break the rule about gay unions in churches. Rhodes-Wickett led the Lord's Prayer and provided the homily, but didn't pronounce the men married, in order to avoid



Although some Methodist ministers are breaking the Book of Discipline to bless same-sex unions, the denomination is holding fast to its traditional stands. Soulforce, an interfaith organization working to combat religious prejudice, gathered for their own 10 year anniversary, conference and direct action in Ft. Worth, Texas, at the same time as the United Methodists convention. Photo Credit: Soulforce

selves in the same dilemma or will it be just the Methodists in California who don boardshorts and surf a wave of defiance?

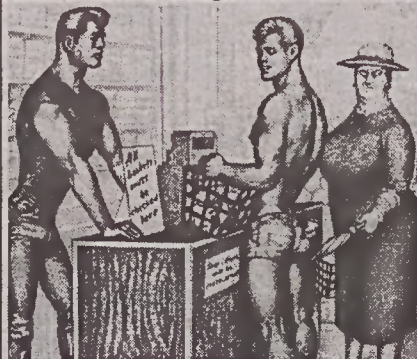
Then there's the sort of compromise approach recently taken by the Rev. Sharon

discipline. The deacon did that and signed the marriage license.

Completely understandable. But gymnastics are for young people. ■

info: LesRobinson@aol.com . www.GeneralGayety.com

We buy interesting & worthwhile used books & Compact Discs.



Books Do Furnish A Room
1809 W Markham Avenue • 286-1076
(Between 9th & Broad) Durham

HOUSE OF AFRICA

If you can't get to Africa... then let Africa come to you.



1215 Thomas Avenue
off Central Avenue between
Pecan and The Plaza
Charlotte, NC
704-376-6160

Hours:
Mon. - Sat. 11 am - 8 pm

For more African Art:
Safari International
1504 Central Avenue
704-376-6116

The House of Africa/Pape's Art Gallery offers the area's largest selection of African art including:

lion and zebra skins, statues, exquisite art, antique and contemporary masks, clothing, jewelry and herbal medicines



KEELEE J. MACPHEE, M.D.

**SPECIALIZING IN
MALE, FEMALE AND
TRANSGENDER
RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE
FACE, BODY
AND
BREAST.**

RENAISSANCE

Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, PA

KEELEE J. MACPHEE, M.D.
919.341.0915
REX MEDICAL PLAZA
RALEIGH, NC

RALEIGH'S ONLY
FEMALE PLASTIC SURGEON

www.renaissanceNC.com



Blowing Rock

INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

Specializing In NC Mountain Property

Scott P. MacIntosh

Owner/Broker

Toll Free: 1-866-795-7337

Mobile: 828-310-1236

Scott@brips.com

WWW.BRIPS.COM

