News Notes

TRIANGLE HOMOPHOBIC MAILINGS

About 300 people gathered on the UNC-CH campus on Oct. 24 for a rally and candle-light vigil to protest a pre-election wave of hate mail aimed in part at gay admin-istrators and faculty on the campus. The rally followed a concert by feminist singer Holly Near.

A group calling itself the "Triangle Educators for Christ" sent a letter to 81 educators at N.C. Central University, N.C. State University, and UNC-CH, calling on them to remove from "bookshelves, text-books and teachings" the writings of such "crazed homosexuals" as Homer, Sappho, Horace, Shakespeare, Satre, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Another letter, mailed about ten days after the first, was sent to Dr. William Friday, president of the UNC system and to some 29 deans, department heads, and faculty members. This second letter, signed by "Southern Christians for Helms" threatened to publish a list of supposedly gay and lesbian faculty and demanded that all university employees be given lie detector tests. The letter praised the efforts of Senator Jesse Helms and Landmark editor Bob Windsor for launching a campaign to "end this endless filth that is draining the sap from the moral fiber of our youth."

Friday denounced the letter at an Oct. 19 meeting of the university's Board of Governors, saying the university must be "assertive to the rights of faculty members to be free of abuse." He said he had turned the letter over to the State Bureau of Investigation.

Dr. Doris Betts, chair of the UNC-CH Faculty Council, also made a statement to the Council denouncing the letters.

Claude Allen, sole spokesperson for the Helms campaign, also denounced the second letter and said he suspected it was part of "a cruel hoax" to hurt the Helms campaign.

among straights! Dehumanization is degrading in ANY sexual orientation! (That is the message of the Sodom and Gomorrah story.) But I do believe straights bear a special responsibility. Just as blacks used to be labeled shiftless by whites who made sure there would be no reward for their diligence; so straights call gays promiscuous while denying support and public opportunities for stable, commitment relationsips!

So enough of these fixed certainties and self-righteous proclamations! "If," says William Sloane Coffin of Riverside Church, "what we think is right and wrong divides still further the human family, then there must be something wrong with what we think is right." Enough of this cruelty, hatred, insensitivity, and punitive legislation toward gay people! I have always thought of the biblical authors as people who were involved in stretching their horizons—let us not now narrow ours. It has been said that a mind once stretched by a new idea can never return to its former shape. If that is so, then let us this morning gladly listen, learn, read, reflect, meditate, and pray—none of this is easy—until with the Apostle Peter's conviction we can make a similar confession: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every sexual orientation anyone who believes in God and who does what is right is acceptable to God."

What St. Augustine called the obligation of the preacher, I have always thought is the obligation of every one of us: "To teach what is right, to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of that task, to rouse the careless and to conciliate the hostile."

May we HERE, be granted success in THIS ministry of reconciliation in THIS community!

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This sermon is based largely on the following resources:

1. Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramsey Mollenkott, Is the Homosexual my Neighbor?, Harper & Row

2. John L. McNeill, The Church and the Homosexual, The Church and the Homosexual, Sheed, Andrews & McMeel

3. Gerre Goodman, George Lakey, Judy Lashof, Erike Thorne, No Turning Back: Lesbian and Gay Liberation for the '80s, New Society Publishers

4. "Christiantiy and Crisis," issues of April 4, May 30, and June 13, 1977.

5. William Sloane Coffin, Jr, "Homosexuality"

6. "The Christian Ministry," March 1979 issue.