



Celebration Week 2004

Lunch Focuses on Faith

By Renan Snowden

Celebration Week's second brown bag lunch focused on the intersection of LGBTIQ identities and faith. Led by LGBTQ Office Graduate Intern Avery Cook, the panel discussion with two campus ministers focused on how allies can work to provide support for their LGBTIQ friends and loved ones in a religious setting. Cook said that she wanted to create an "honest and respectful dialogue" between the audience and the panelists. Throughout the discussion, Father Phillip Leach of the Newman Catholic Student Center Parish and Jan Rivero, a Methodist minister from the Wesley Foundation, answered difficult and thought-provoking questions on the intersection of sexuality and spirituality.

Touching on issues of acceptance of LGBTIQ persons within their respective churches, Rivero said that her church has been divided over the issue. While the United Methodist "Book of Discipline"

affirms all people as having "sacred worth," the United Methodist church also forbids the ordination of gay, bisexual or lesbian ministers. She said that fear has fueled many of the divisions about homosexuality for her church.

Father Phillip, as he likes to be called, said that his parish faced similar problems with contradictory ideas contained in Scripture. He said that while it is easy for most Catholics to accept that after Adam's fall, God became like human beings in all but sin, they are more reluctant to understand God as fully human. Father Phillip asked those present to imagine Jesus going to the bathroom. "Why does this bother us?" he asked. Father Phillip said it makes us uncomfortable to realize that Jesus is capable of doing ordinary things. Once people see God as more like themselves, Father Phillip argues, they will better understand Biblical meaning from the overall tenor of the Bible rather than

focusing on specific verses which do not value all of humanity.

Also discussed were ways that religious texts have been used to condemn LGBTIQ persons. Father Phillip said he emphasized tolerance, especially of people with whom he does not agree. While he does not think being gay is wrong, he acknowledged that many Catholics would disagree with him. He does not want to change their opinion, but wants to respect it as a difference, just as he hopes they would do for him.

Rivero added, "transformation seldom comes in judgment, it comes from love." Drawing on her experience having a lesbian stepdaughter, Rivero notes that she encourages people to acknowledge the LGBTIQ people in their lives and to affirm their worth. While many might deny it or be ignorant of it, most people do know LGBTIQ people from work, school or church and should begin to see

continued on page 7

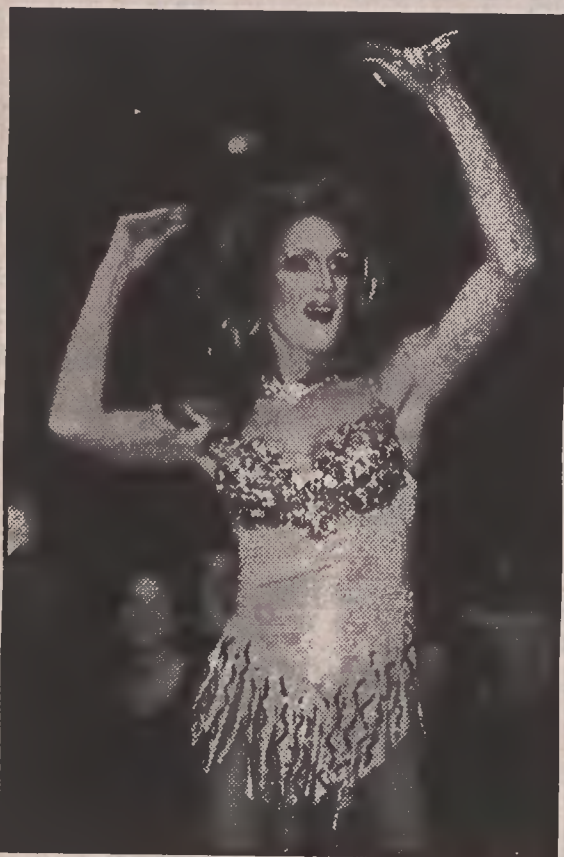


Photo by Michael Jerch

Lauren Scott, a drag queen from Greenville, N.C., solicits crowd participation.


"Drag" from page 4

appreciation of the show-stopping performance.

Adding a serious note to the evening, the Cuntry Kings, a local drag king troupe, focused its performances on issues of civil rights and sexual violence. In one act the troupe re-enacted scenes of pro- and anti-LGBTIQ rights protestors clashing. On a projection screen beside the performers were parallel images from the black and LGBTIQ civil rights movements. The final image projected the line, "This is a question of love," to remind everyone of the relevance of the LGBTIQ rights movement.

This year's Student Body President Matt Tepper was in attendance and said that he had never been to a drag show before but wanted to see what it was all about.

Sophomore Alex Ferrando, who organized the drag show, was pleased with the diversity of the crowd. "It showed that straight people are just as likely to come to these events as LGBTIQ individuals are," he said. The show is estimated to have raised \$1,800.

While the drag show was a first for many in attendance, it certainly won't be their last. 

Staff Writer and junior Renan Snowden, a political science major and women's studies minor from Washington, D.C., can be contacted at lambda@unc.edu.

"It showed that straight people are just as likely to come to these events as LGBTIQ individuals are."

-Alex Ferrando, "Curious" organizer