

Denominations Stall on Gay Question

This summer, two Christian denominations, the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church, considered proposals by study groups that the denominations significantly alter their official stances on homosexuality. Both denominations fell short of coming down on the side of greater acceptance of gay men and lesbians; rather, both decided to further study the issues. Although disappointed in the outcomes, gay and lesbian church activists in both denominations feel hopeful about their future.

Episcopal Gays Hang On

Joan Marshall, Asheville activist and Episcopal deacon of All Souls Parish, attended the Episcopal Church's General Convention in Phoenix in July. Marshall told *Community Connections* that the Church "withstood all efforts to move it backwards." For Integrity, the gay and lesbian Episcopal group, things could have gone better, but they also could have gone worse.

Marshall said that among the heartening things was that the Convention

voted down the motion to censure Bishop Ronald Haines for ordaining openly lesbian Elizabeth Carl as a priest. During discussion of the motion, two bishops stood and said that if the House of Bishops was going to censure Bishop Ronald Haines, it would have to censure them, as well, because they had ordained priests they knew were gay and not celibate. The Convention voted to leave it up to each bishop to decide whom to ordain.

Another positive aspect Marshall mentioned was that Integrity "gained friends and further respect" during the convention. She reported that 35-40 Integrity members were present and visible at the Convention. Marshall described Integrity delegates as "the alive people at this convention." At the end of one particularly discouraging session, Marshall asked Integrity members "Why do you hang on at this Church and keep taking all this abuse? The answer: 'Because we feel called.'"

Another positive of the convention, Marshall said, was the formation of a network of Episcopal parents of lesbians and gay men. The network will push the

Church for greater acceptance of their children, Marshall reported.

The Convention called for three more years of monitored study of the gay question, "this time with some teeth," said Marshall. Dioceses will have to periodically report that they are actually performing the required studies. Marshall said that in the last three-year study period, less than a third of the dioceses participated.

Marshall said that she sensed a recognition at the convention among the delegates that, with regard to full acceptance of lesbian and gay Episcopalians, "the train has left the station, and the Church must get on board." Barbara Harris, a black bishop who is the only female bishop in the Episcopal Church, spoke to the issue when she addressed the Convention. "When the Church loves those it finds hard to love, it will discover they are loving themselves, as well," Harris said.

Presbyterians Vote to Study

In their annual meeting, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church rejected the idea that gay men and lesbians be welcomed and be allowed to serve as clergy. These had been the suggestions of the reports of their special 17-member committee on human sexuality. However, gay and lesbian Presbyterians were encouraged by the General Assembly's resolution to study the report for two years. The General Assembly is the primary governing body and highest authority of the Presbyterian Church. ▽





SALGA has been in the media a lot this summer, including articles in the *Asheville Citizen*, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, and *Green Line*. Some of SALGA's recent achievements are highlighted in this issue of *Community Connections*, as well (see pages 1 and 5).

Visibility, including media presence and participation in parades and marches, is of utmost importance to our goal of achieving equal human rights for gay men and lesbians. As Peter Kendrick remarked, we march "so they can't possibly forget we're here."

When the Board of Directors met on July 16, SALGA had just received the plaque for its 1990 Applause Award for the category "Most Significant Political Contribution by an Individual or Organization." SALGA also received \$37 in donations from Applause Award voters.

The main topic of the August meeting will be political action. We need to develop strategies for local and state levels. Come to the meeting and bring a friend! The meeting will be Sunday, August 4, at the Unitarian Universalist Church (lower level), 1 Edwin Place, corner of Charlotte Street, Asheville, NC. We will begin the meeting promptly at 5:30 PM. We will have potluck, so please bring a covered dish to share, and drinks for yourself. To help our environment we ask that you bring your own plates and eating utensils. ▽





All Souls Parish in Biltmore
welcomes Gays and Lesbians
Eucharist - Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

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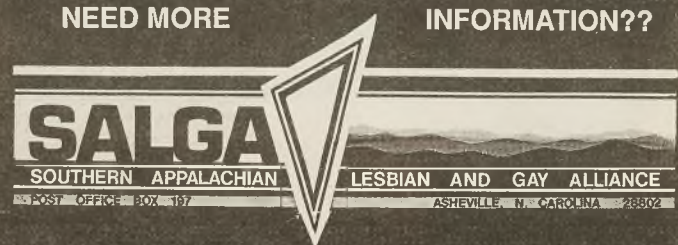
We'll challenge your mind, lift your spirit, warm your heart & engage your hands.

The Unitarian Universalist Church

254-6001
Sunday Services at 11:00 Charlotte Street at Edwin Place

NEED MORE

INFORMATION??



PLEASE JOIN SALGA IN '91
AS WE BREAK NEW GROUND FOR
LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS IN WNC,
THE STATE, AND THE NATION.

Don't Miss These Coming Events

- September 14: Lesbian and Gay Video Festival, Green Door
- September 27: Washington Sisters, Lipinsky Auditorium, UNCA
- SOON, and with short notice: *Tongues Untied*, Marlon Riggs' award-winning documentary on gay black men. See p. 7.

CALL 254-0292