



crossbeams

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www.gladalliance.org

GLAD in Mid-America Region

This report about the activities of our O&A churches and GLAD members in Missouri recently came to us from Judi Linville, member and an elder at Compton Heights Christian Church, St. Louis, MO.

Mid-America Discernment Process Removes Barrier to Ordination for LGBT Candidates

Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn Foster, member of the Mid-America Commission on Ministry, reports that in October of 2005, the Mid-America Commission on Ministry engaged in the discernment process using the "Listening to the Spirit" curriculum.

In January 2006 the Commission voted to delete the policy language prohibiting the ordination of gay and lesbian people, and to apply the same criteria for fitness for ministry to all candidates. In August, this change was received by the Council of Areas, and this Regional Assembly, on October 14, received the change with applause.

O&A Presence at the Mid-America Regional Assembly

Also at the Mid-America Regional Assembly, the region's two Open & Affirming congregations jointly sponsored an information table at the Oct. 13-14 regional assembly held in St. Charles, MO.

Volunteers from Compton Heights Christian Church in St. Louis and Rock Bridge Christian

Church in Columbia, MO, set up the display, answered questions and encouraged assembly delegates to take brochures about GLAD, O&A ministries, the discernment process, and facts about homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender issues. Several seminary students from Eden Theological Seminary (UCC) in St. Louis were quite interested in the display and even volunteered to help us staff it.

Conversations with people who stopped by revealed that lay people in our churches are often involved in GLBT issues in their communities; one member of a Disciples church in a fairly conservative community has been instrumental in founding a gay-straight alliance at a local community college. The "You Don't Have to be Gay to be GLAD" buttons were a solid hit. Our never-empty bowl of rainbow lifesaver candy (regular and sugar-free) helped draw people into conversation as well. Several visitors took copies of the Covenant of Inclusion with them.

Our churches will continue to sponsor an informative display at future regional assemblies, and Compton Heights members plan to have displays at future Southeast Gateway Area events. Also, June 2007 will be Compton's fifth year to participate in the St. Louis PrideFest with a booth featuring free bottled water and information about our Open and Affirming ministry.

You can see pictures of the Mid-America displays and people involved at news.gladalliance.org.

Strategic Action Ministry Team Works to Set Agenda and Build Team

The newly appointed co-leaders of the Strategic Action Ministry Team have begun to set an agenda for the future work of the team. Co-leaders Rev. Margeaux May of Indianapolis, IN, and Rev. Allen Harris of Cleveland, OH, are working to build the team and set the vision for the team.

Margeaux and Allen have been working to identify the needs of LGBT persons in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which the Strategic Action Ministry Team can address and to outline strategies for meeting these needs. Currently, these initiatives and strategies, still in the planning stages, include:

- To seek full inclusion of bisexual and transgender members in GLAD itself, in GLAD's Strategic Action Ministry Team, and in Strategic Action Ministry Team initiatives; to seek great gender, racial, and ethnic diversity within GLAD; and to work with allied justice organizations for full inclusion of bisexual and transgender as well as lesbian and gay members.
- To address the bullying in public schools of LGBT youth and call the church no longer to remain silent.
- To call the church to speak the gospel of love and inclusion to Christian parents who turn their LGBT children away from their homes.

- To address ordination issues for LGBT persons in the Christian church, ensuring that ordination is open for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. To begin, the team proposes to identify which regions show most potential for open ordination and concentrate efforts there. One proposed strategy is to work to place allies in key positions on regional commissions on the ministry.
- To research the inequities of the insurance and pension provisions of the Christian Church and formulate a strategy to address any inequities found.
- To explore collaboration with The Disciples Peace Fellowship (DPF) and The Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN) in our efforts for full LGBT inclusion.
- To explore alliances with racial and ethnic constituency groups within the Christian Church. This may include National Convocation (African American ministries), North American Pacific Asian Disciples, Obra Hispana (Hispanic ministries), and others.
- To explore how our members are involved in local and state LGBT coalitions and local politics. The Strategic Action Ministry Team believes that there is nothing quite so influential as faith-based LGBT groups and allies advocating for our rights locally. To begin work in this direction, the team will explore working with GLAD's Support and Advocacy Ministry Team to establish more local GLAD chapters. The team believes that there is great potential in exploring and developing this realm.

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- To evaluate thoroughly our present "State of Liberation" within the Christian Church and report, along with recommendations for actions.
- To work with the teams and chapters of GLAD and offer direction, leadership, and support to achieve GLAD's vision of a just, inclusive church.

This is not a final list, nor a complete list. Allen and Margeaux are working to build the team, a team of people who may have the time, energy, and inspiration to work on one or more of these issues, or who may help the team to see other needs.

If you have any comments for the team, suggestions for initiatives or strategies, and especially if you have an interest in being a member of the team - or if you just want more information about how the ministry teams operate and where you might fit in - send an e-mail to glad@gladalliance.org.

Saving Money

To reduce our Crossbeams budget for next year and spend the money where it's needed, we are going to mail the paper version of Crossbeams only upon request starting January 2007.

You will still be able to download and print the paper version to distribute to your congregation, office, family and friends.

You will continue to receive the paper version if we do not have your e-mail address or if you contact us and request the paper version. You can make that request to crossbeams@gladalliance.org, to our PO Box, or by calling Mark Johnston at 617 536 8185.