



crossbeams

A publication of the Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples Alliance, Inc.
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www.gladalliance.org

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Hart Challenge contribution very successful

In early 2003, Sharon and Tom Hart of Richards, Texas pledged up to \$5,000 as a match for each dollar contributed by the various O&A ministries recognized by GLAD Alliance. The Reverend Sharon Hart is the leader of GLAD Alliance's Open & Affirming Ministry Team and was recently elected to complete an unexpired term on the GLAD Alliance Council.

During the summer, the challenge was issued to O&A congregations and other O&A ministries. Subsequently, the date for receipt of contributions was extended to December 15 and, as a result of the generous gift by Sharon and Tom, GLAD Alliance's treasury was enriched by \$9,821 – \$4,821 from O&A congregations and ministries, and \$5,000 from the Harts.

The 18 O&A ministries meeting the challenge:

- First Christian Church, Honolulu, HI
- Southside Christian Church, Southbend, IN
- Rock Bridge Christian Church, Columbia, MO
- Illinois Disciples Foundation, Champaign, IL
- National City Christian Church, Washington, DC
- Saint Andrew Christian Church, Olathe, KS
- Findlay Street Christian Church, Seattle, WA
- University Christian Church, San Diego, CA
- Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY
- Chalice Christian Church, San Carlos, CA
- United Christian Church, Levittown, PA
- University Church, Chicago, IL
- First Christian Church, Stockton, CA
- University Christian Church, Berkeley, CA
- Memorial Christian Church, Ann Arbor, MI
- First Christian Church, Boulder, CO
- Compton Heights Christian Church, St. Louis, MO
- Fireside Christian Church, Denver, CO

GLAD Alliance greatly appreciates the generosity of Sharon and Tom Hart and each of these O&A ministries.

GLAD Alliance Banquet prayers written by Rev. Pamela Webb GLAD Alliance Chaplain

Invocation

Eternal God and Intimate Friend, we gather this evening as those who have known your embracing love in many highs and lows of our lives. You have blessed us by your Spirit with the gift of gaydar, which reveals to us an amazing community of faith even before we find our voices and break the silence which separates us from one another and your beloved church.

Be with us this evening and spread the light of your grace which fills the darkness with radiant courage, blotting out all fear and evil.

Inspire us as we fellowship around these tables, blessed with your good gifts of food to nourish and sustain our journey.

Inspire us as we celebrate silence broken by individuals and congregations who have responded to your call.

Inspire us as we hear words of challenge and encouragement by one whose journey has been in our hearts and for whom we have offered our prayers.

May all we do this evening proclaim the truth of your all inclusive love, so that spiritual violence inflicted upon your beloved children may cease in our denomination and in faith communities around the world. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our lover and lover of the world. Amen.

Benediction

Let us come out of our individual and congregational closets to become God's messengers of hope in a hurting and violent world. Let us:

Break the silence
Speak the truth
Encourage the weak

GLAD ALLIANCE COUNCIL MEMBERS

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OUR MINISTRY TEAMS

Discernment Ministry Team
Leader: Mark Covey and Karen Barr
Council Liaison: Lisa Haley

Open and Affirming Ministry Team
Leader: Sharon Hart
Council Liaison: Pam Webb

Strategic Action Ministry Team
Leader: James "Bo" Crowe
Council Liaison: David Nickell

Support and Advocacy Ministry Team
Leader: Vacant
Council Liaison: Steve Kindle

OUR MINISTRY SUPPORT TEAMS

Communications
Leader: Steve Kindle
Council Liaison: Dennis Sanders

Development and Finance
Leader: Randy Palmer
Council Liaison: Mark Johnston

Human Resources and Nominating
Leader: David Downing
Council Liaison: Nelson Gomez

Your Membership

Your membership status is listed on your mailing label. If you're listed as a nonmember or your membership expiration date seems wrong, this could be because a membership form did not accompany your last donation. Please e-mail glad@gladalliance.org to correct this. Otherwise, we'd be happy to receive your membership donation to update your memberships status.

Our Vision

Called by God, GLAD Alliance is a sacred community. Led by the Spirit, we are a prophetic voice and a living resource, present with our gifts to the world.

Our Mission

The mission of GLAD Alliance is to be a safe and faithful place for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Affirming community.

Relying on Holy Spirit, we speak truth to power, advocating for inclusivity, diversity, and justice in all manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Committed to transformation, through education, witness, and strategic action, we offer ourselves as a visible presence in solidarity with those marginalized within the Church.

We stand boldly within the church to proclaim and embody the gracious call to ministry for the whole people of God.



GLAD Alliance Membership Covenant

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

E-Mail _____

Phone (_____) _____

Annual Membership Covenants

- \$35 Individual
- \$60 Couple
- \$15 Student/Low Income
- I am able to make the following additional contribution:
___ \$1,000 ___ \$500 ___ \$250 ___ \$125
___ \$75 ___ \$50 ___ \$25 Other \$ _____
Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

I am interested in being part of a Ministry Team.

Please contact me regarding participation in the:

- Discernment Ministry Team
- Open & Affirming Ministry Team
- Strategic Action Ministry Team
- Support and Advocacy Ministry Team
- Communications Ministry Support Team
- Development and Finance Ministry Support Team
- Human Resources and Nominating Ministry Support Team

Please send this form along with your check made payable to GLAD Alliance, Inc. to:

GLAD Alliance, PO Box 44400, Indianapolis IN 46244

New initiative taken at the annual leadership retreat

The GLAD Council and Ministry Team Leaders gathered at the Lazy H Ranch, home of **Tom and Sharon Hart** outside of Richards, Texas, for GLAD's annual leadership retreat at the beginning of February. The council has been working for three years to get our Ministry Teams up and running, and we are excited to see that, for the first time, all of our teams have solid leadership and are on the move. We especially welcome several new team leaders who were present at the meeting. The **Rev. Dr. Bo Crowe** of Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City is taking the helm of our Strategic Action Ministry Team and working with council member **David Nickell**. **Karen Barr** of Springfield, VA, and **Mark Covey** of Cambridge, MA, were there to begin their leadership of the Discernment Ministry Team along with council member **Lisa Haley**. Mark, Karen, and Bo all shared with us their solid vision for their teams and are working to build up their team membership.

Also at the retreat were **Randy Palmer**, Development & Finance Team Leader, who helped us budget and shared his strong vision for funding the Alliance as well as attracting new membership. The council also appointed **Rev. Sharon Hart** to fill the council position vacated by the resignation of Virginia Greeley. Sharon has been the team leader for our Open & Affirming Ministry Team for over two years. Along with council member **Rev. Pam Webb**, Sharon will continue working with the O&A Team, and now brings her insight and wisdom to the work of the whole council. **David Nickell** was appointed Vice Moderator of the Alliance. David, from Oklahoma City, OK, has been serving on the council for four years, and we look forward to his experience and energy in that position.

Rev. Steve Kindle of Camarillo, CA, shared with us his commitment to our Support & Advocacy Ministry Team and the Communications Ministry Support Team, and **Nelson Gomez** of The Bronx, NY, shared his work with the Human Resources & Nominating Ministry Support Team.

Rev. Dr. Mark Johnston, Alliance Moderator, led the meeting with his call for new initiative, not, as you might think, new tasks. Our Vision and our Mission, written in Kansas City three years ago, remain the focus of our work. But Mark called the leadership to renew their commitment by taking new initiative. Indeed, our Ministry Team structure calls upon all GLAD members to renew their commitment and take initiative to join in the work of the Alliance. While all of our teams need support, those that are most in need of team members are the Discernment Ministry Team,

Churches that welcome gays are growing

by Rev. Vaughn Beckman*

The Christian church has had an ongoing struggle with homosexuality. However, during the past quarter-century we have seen amazing advancements. First, a careful and serious hermeneutic of biblical passages pertaining to "homosexuals" has begun. Second, advancements in psychology and science have shown that sexual orientation is more a result of nature than previously thought. Third, we have humanized those in the gay community realizing that many are sitting in our pews, working in our congregations and even preaching from our pulpits. Fourth, many denominations are struggling with the decision on whether to include gays and lesbians as members, on ordaining them, and on performing "same sex" unions and marriages.

Amid this struggle, one truth emerges: The gay community is establishing a greater presence in our churches.

In 1968, Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church, the first denomination born from within the gay community. In 1969 the Roman Catholic group Dignity started, being the first gay-lesbian organization within a major denomination. Since those days, supportive groups have developed in every denomination. Even the evangelicals have come on board through Evangelicals Concerned. The most recent group to join is GALA (Gay and Lesbian Acceptance) of the Community of Christ.

Congregations that openly affirm the gay community are on the rise, numbering more than 2,000 now compared with 1,000 in 2001. Many churches, though officially deciding not to declare themselves "welcoming," have made statements of support. According to Emily Eastwood, executive director of the Lutheran welcoming program, Reconciling in Christ (RIC), "The process of education and dialogue on whether or not a given church will welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members often transforms that church from a congregation to a community of faith."

Because of the growth of the welcoming church movement, denominational program leaders decided to launch the first major joint gathering. In 2000 the "Witness Our Welcome" conference drew more than 1,000 in attendance. This event brought together the diversity, the breadth and the power of the welcoming church movement.

A larger and more comprehensive conference, WOW 2003, was held in August at the University of Penn.

Good news from the Discernment Ministry Team!

We are pleased to have Mark Covey and Karen Barr as cochairs of this newly reorganized Team. Mark is from Cambridge, Massachusetts and Karen is from Springfield, Virginia. We are exploring ways to encourage congregations and other manifestations of the church to enter the discernment process, and ways to provide support that will help get them started. Several people have stepped forward and said they want to be a part of this ministry. If you feel the call to assist congregations in this way, please e-mail Karen (kazb40@hotmail.com) or Mark (Mark_Covey@ksg05.harvard.edu).

We were all encouraged to hear former General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, speak strongly about the importance of the discernment process in his State of the Church Address at General Assembly. Our team is committed to keeping this issue before our congregations, regional ministers and general church. The “Listening to the Spirit” materials are available from Cokesbury and Christian Board of Publications.

O & A Ministry Team leads afternoon workshop at Pre-Assembly event

What do forty people with bags of rocks, slimy creatures, artificial flowers, bright colored yarn, scissors, construction paper, paper plate masks, and bright colored balloons have in common? We are reflecting on how God is leading us in “Breaking Silence” around the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning persons in the life and ministry of Disciples congregations. We laugh, we ponder the Word of God, we share our stories, we cry in sadness and in joy, we joke and play, we sing, we present our creative offerings of hope, and we eat together at the Table prepared by God for our ever-deepening fellowship with the One who created us and with one another. This is what we attendees have in common: we are encouraged and hope-full as we return home with the refreshing memory of our experience of “Breaking Silence” together.

When asked what was most helpful in this pre-Assembly event, one participant noted, “Being reminded that grounding in scripture encourages risk taking.” Others stated that the most helpful part of the afternoon was “hearing each other’s stories” and “interacting with other Disciples who are working to break the silence.” In response to the question, “What did you learn?” participants observed “how much love our community has to give and receive,” “each of us brings amazing gifts,” and “we need to hear each voice, each variation on the theme.” Some were encouraged that “change can happen,” and realized that “making intentional time for personal sharing is critical and vital” to breaking silence.

Participants also offered constructive suggestions how to improve the workshop which the O & A Team greatly appreciate and will incorporate as they prepare the materials for wider use in congregations.

Cash handling, contribution acknowledgement, accounting and information processing practices revised

No longer will you have to wait for months for the check you sent to GLAD Alliance to clear the bank and enable you to fully reconcile your account. As a result of revised practices implemented in October, your check will be deposited by GLAD approximately one week after it is received. In addition, membership contributions and other contributions will be promptly acknowledged, including the information you will need to support an income tax deduction. Other changes include implementation of an accounting system that will provide GLAD’s leadership with monthly financial statements and procedures that will assure that member addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and contributions are updated in the GLAD database on a current basis.

Youth and young adults challenge GLAD leadership

For those of us who have been members of GLAD Alliance for some time, the idea that “we are all getting older,” was made loud and clear during this General Assembly. Our GLBTQ youth and young adults challenge us to broaden our ministry to make us more youth and young adult friendly. Comments heard from youth/young adults: “It seems there are just a bunch of old people hanging out at the booth,” “Are young people welcome at the hospitality suite?” “What are you doing to make sure that we young people can get ordained when we get through seminary?” are a wake-up call to be more inclusive of our young people. We are challenged to ensure that the sacred community of our Vision, and the inclusive community of our Mission, are embodied by GLAD Alliance, and that youth and young adults are included as an integral part of our outreach, our membership, our teams, and our leadership.

It is exciting that young adults are joining our existing Ministry Teams as a result of their attendance and inclusion at General Assembly, but we need to answer this challenge in other tangible ways. God is on the move— will we keep up?

Open & Affirming Ministry Team: “Breaking Silence” at General Assembly

O & A Booth, a Source of Hope and Encouragement
Our Team was wrapped in the presence of the great cloud of witnesses found in the 50 stoles from the Shower of Stoles project that hung around the booth. These stoles tell the stories of those glbtq persons from ours and other faith traditions whose ministries have not been received within their communities of faith. (Information on the Shower of Stoles Project can be found on their website at www.showerofstoles.org.) The O & A Ministry Team is a living resource for the church, and our booth provided materials that encouraged and challenged our community of faith to move into a new place of justice and love by affirming and welcoming the gifts and graces of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning persons into the life and ministry of our Disciples congregations.

In conversations with lay and clergy alike, we offered encouragement that their congregations too could become O & A by responding to the movement of God’s Spirit within them. God is on the move, the question for us as Disciples is whether we will be able to keep up! Some visitors to the booth reported they felt their congregation would never become O & A, while others, especially many clergy, were eager to “get started” in the process. We have 34 requests for O & A resource packets representing congregations in Virginia, Ohio, Texas, Georgia, Iowa, Colorado, Kentucky, Washington, Oregon, Michigan, Missouri, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, California, New Mexico, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Ontario, Canada. We praise God for the gift of the expanding fellowship of O & A congregations; and we praise God for all the potential congregations being raised up! We will continue to support all of these congregations with our prayers and presence.

Currently, we have **sixty** O & A congregations/ministries in our denomination! And the really good news is this: Several of our *2020 Vision* new church starts are beginning their congregational life as O & A!

O & A Ministry Team welcomes new members

It is with great joy that the O & A Ministry Team welcomes the following new members: Casey Williams (Berkeley, CA), Gilbert Jones (Washington, DC), Jeff Taylor (Billings, MT), and Kerry Armstrong (Indianapolis, IN). Continuing Team Members are Ann Canady (Denver, CO), Ben Bohren (Long Beach, CA), Rachel Frey (Avon, IN), Christy Newton (Russellville, AR), Job Cobos (Phoenix, AZ), and Pam Webb, GLAD Council liaison (Euclid, OH) and Vaughn Beckman (Stockton, CA), who serves as Council liaison to The Institute for Welcoming Resources.

Eleven new O & A congregations receive certificates at GLAD Alliance banquet

In the two years since our last General Assembly, eleven congregations have declared themselves Open & Affirming. Two of these congregations, Hope Church (Boston, MA) and New Covenant Christian Church (Houston, TX) are new church starts. The other congregations receiving certificates are: Saint Andrew Christian Church, Arlington, TX; Church of the Foothills, Santa Ana, CA; Pilgrim Christian Church, Brookfield, WI; Hollywood-Beverly Christian Church, Hollywood, CA; United Christian Church of Renton, Renton, WA; National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.; Edenside Christian Church, Louisville, KY; Central Christian Church, Bradenton, FL; and North Side Christian Church, Omaha, NE.

We praise God for the gift of the ministry of each of these congregations and pray that their presence within their Regions will be an encouragement and challenge to other congregations in their areas to enter the O & A process.

Disciples clergy continue to endorse the Covenant of Inclusion

The Covenant of Inclusion invites clergy to express publicly their endorsement of the “Open & Affirming” movement, even though their congregation may not be Open & Affirming presently. Clergy who sign the Covenant make a personal commitment to provide “Open & Affirming” pastoral care; to proclaim this call within the wider church; and to join in a supportive “O & A” community where clergy can learn from one another.

Clergy attending the General Assembly picked up Covenant of Inclusion brochures and are returning them to the GLAD Alliance so that their names will be added to the growing list of clergy who are committing themselves to publicly display their Covenant of Inclusion certificates in their offices and participate in the Covenant of Inclusion listserv. Signing the Covenant of Inclusion is yet another way that members of the body of Christ are expressing God’s welcome for all people into the fellowship of love we call the church.

For more information on the
Covenant of Inclusion

visit our website at
www.gladalliance.org/coi.

Leadership retreat continued....

the Strategic Action Ministry Team, the Support and Advocacy Ministry Team and the Communications Ministry Support Team. If you have interest in any of these teams, you can e-mail glad@gladalliance.org.

We are all looking forward to a year of good work furthering the mission of the Alliance.

Crossbeams is published bimonthly beginning in January. The next issue will be for May/June, 2004. Deadline for article submission is April 1, 2004. Send your items to the editor:
Rev. Steven Kindle
revkindle@msn.com

Welcoming churches continued....

The welcoming church movement continues to evolve. In 2001, leaders from close to a dozen welcoming programs organized an ecumenical group entitled, The Institute of Welcoming Resources. The purpose of this group is to unite and unify the resources needed to make the welcoming programs successful. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning persons have never given up their place in the pews or in the pulpit. They envision a new day when all will be truly welcomed and affirmed.

*This article first appeared in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*

The Rev. Vaughn Beckman is acting minister at the First Christian Church of Stockton, CA, a recent member of the GLAD Alliance council, and a board member of the Institute for Welcoming Resources

GLAD Alliance Event 2004
Mark your calendar!
Plan now to attend the 2004 GLAD Alliance Event, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, July 8 - 11.
More details to follow.



Called by God,
GLAD Alliance is a sacred community.
Led by the Spirit,
we are a prophetic voice
and a living resource,
present with our gifts to the world.

GLAD Alliance, Inc.
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Indianapolis, IN 46244-0400

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