



crossbeams

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

Issue #53 August 2004

www.gladalliance.org glad@gladalliance.org

How do we put affirmation in 'Open & Affirming'?

by Rev. Terry Zimmerman, Pastor ▼ First Christian Church ▼ Boulder, Colorado

It has been nearly six years since our congregation, with a unanimous vote, declared itself to be an Open & Affirming congregation. So what! It takes more than a vote, more than a declaration, more than words to be what we claim to be.

Words are important though. Our designation as a DOC church, a Churches Uniting in Christ congregation, and as O & A are all spelled out in our order of worship each week, our stationery, business cards and newspaper advertising, and we are conscious of using inclusive terms such as spouse and partner in place of husband or wife. Couples are always addressed as such when recognizing special events in their lives or times of bereavement. But we try to do more.

Our church has representation on the local Interfaith AIDS Coalition, PFLAG Board, and our minister is a "charter member" of the Colorado Clergy for Equality in Marriage: about 100 ministers and rabbis who advocate gay marriage.

We participate in Boulder County AIDS Project walks, candlelight vigils and remembrance services, support local efforts to include homosexuality as a normative orientation in our school district's health curriculum, and Boulder Pride! Is that enough?

Our Pastor is a "card carrying" member of GLAD, attended both WOW Conferences [ecumenical meetings of folks from welcoming congregation programs such as O & A, New Light, and Reconciling churches], and GLBT and Advocates Retreats sponsored by the local UCC Conference. We promote such weekend opportunities, plus GLAD events, plus local workshops etc. And ...?

And our Youth Director, Music Director, and one of our choral accompanists -- all paid staff -- are openly gay/lesbian. So?

So we try to provide a warm and loving faith

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ANOTHER CONGREGATION PROCLAIMS O & A COMMITMENT:

First Christian Church, Las Cruces, New Mexico, becomes 61st Disciples O & A Congregation/Ministry

On February 22, 2004, by congregational vote, First Christian Church, Las Cruces, New Mexico, became the 61st O & A Congregation/Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The resolution adopted by the congregation states that after a process of discernment, the congregation

declares "... to all the world that we are an open and affirming congregation and will work to make this church a place where everyone will feel that he/she is welcome and affirmed, regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. By our diversity we are given greater strength and a greater

awareness of God's creation." This statement is now a part of their weekly ad in the Sun-News as well as their congregational brochures. Reverend Dennis Knotts, pastor of First Christian since August 2001, believes that

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Name(s)

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**I am interested in being part
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Please contact me regarding
participation in the:

- Discernment Ministry
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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

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Leader: Vacant

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[As of press time, the new
council had not met to
determine council
responsibilities and
team liaison positions.]

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community for all people, just
as our O & A statement says
we will. This last effort is the
most important one and,
perhaps, the most difficult.
There is a fine line between
making someone feel truly
welcomed and accepted and
feeling conspicuous, and
everyone draws that line for
themselves in different places.
All gay-friendly communities of
faith are struggling with this
issue.

Faith communities have been
the source of unnecessary
pain and sadness for many
people, and we need to prove
our credibility when we state
we are welcoming. It takes
persistence to regain trust.

Again, we are trying. And as
we try, we are constantly
finding new opportunities to
communicate and reiterate
that our understanding of the
gospel message is Good
News for ALL people. The
blessings far exceed the
efforts!

Did you know? You can join or
renew your membership on
our website

www.gladalliance.org

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FCC would have become O & A in 1999 if the former pastor had not left due to unforeseen circumstances. However, in Reverend Knotts' interview, the Search Committee was pleased to learn of his open and affirming beliefs. Since that time the congregation has been blessed by the presence of a woman who joined the congregation and later asked Reverend Knotts to preside at a commitment/blessing service for her and her partner in the church. The Board gave its wholehearted support, and the woman is presently serving as a deacon.

First Christian also became a nesting congregation for Holy Family Parish, an Ecumenical Catholic Community that is O & A, having several gay and lesbian members, as well as a priest who is gay. Reverend Knotts reports that the congregation's lay leadership decided that it was time to put into word what was already occurring in deed while he was away on retreat. The congregational leadership planned a four-to-five week information blitz that included articles in the newsletter, Sunday School and Women's group discussions, Bible Study, and a series of three sermons on the issue of inclusion. There was very little resistance to adopting the O & A resolution, and, as Reverend Knotts states, "... we have received nothing but positive affirmation from some very unusual and surprising sources."

When asked whether members of the queer community have flocked to their doors, Reverend Knotts is quick to respond, "No!" But he goes on to say, "Will they? In time, I think so, as the word gets out and we continue to model being an open and affirming congregation."

Please join your O & A Ministry Team in giving thanks to God for the gift of one more O & A congregation among Disciples who will make known God's justice and love for all persons.

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.

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.

Your Membership

Your membership status is listed on your mailing label. If your status appears incorrect, please e-mail glad@gladalliance.org to correct this. Otherwise, we'd be happy to receive your membership contribution to update your membership status.

O & A Prayer Calendar for September and October

The O & A Ministry Team invites O & A Congregations and all GLAD members to pray for these designated O & A Congregations each Sunday. If you would like to send a copy of your prayer to the individual congregation as an encouragement for their ministry, please communicate directly with that congregation via the address found on the GLAD website. Please inform the Ministry Team of any corrections that need to be made to this list through shart@gladalliance.org.

September 5

Findlay Street Christian Church, Seattle, WA
Amherst Community Church (UCC-Disciples), Snyder, NY

September 12

Berkeley-Richmond Intercity Ministry (BRIM), Berkeley, CA
University Christian Church (UCC-Disciples), Chicago, IL

September 19

Ecclesia (Ecumenical ministry serving mid-Michigan), East Lansing, MI
FaithWorks Community (Disciples of Christ-United Church of Christ-
Mennonite-United Methodist-Presbyterian) Kansas City, KS

September 26

First Christian Church, San Jose, CA

October 3

Memorial Christian Church, Ann Arbor, MI
Guild House (UCC-Disciples), Campus Ministry of the University of
Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

October 10

Pulaski Heights Christian Church, Little Rock, AR
Irving Park Christian Church, Chicago, IL

October 17

Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY
University Christian Church, Berkley, CA

October 24

Southside Christian Church, South Bend, IN
Raynor Park Christian Church, Sunnyvale, CA

October 31

University Christian Church, Seattle, WA
First Christian Church, Alameda, CA

DES MOINES EVENT REVISITED**GLAD Members Explore Justice and Spirituality**

Many thanks to everyone who made the Des Moines GLAD Event such a success. 'Spiritual Justice / Just Spirituality' was the theme of the weekend, and our leaders Steven Baines and Nancy Brink did an excellent job leading us through scripture and song as well as a "Coming Out Labyrinth," time for centering prayer, and some bawdy poetry from Hafiz, a 13th century Persian poet. For more information about the

event see the links on the GLAD website, www.gladalliance.org, to an article from *DisciplesWorld*, and a copy of the remarks made by Jonathan Wilson at our banquet.

Many thanks to Randy, David, Bo, Sharon, and others, as well as Steven, Nancy and Jonathan, for a job well done.

At the Event, the Alliance elected Patricia Case and Tonja Gerardy members to the

Alliance Council. You can read more about them in the last *Crossbeams*, also available on the website. Team Leaders also presented reports to the Alliance. You can read their reports elsewhere in this *Crossbeams*.

The Council will soon be selecting a new Council Moderator and Team Liaisons. Keep an eye on the website for more information.

RETURNING TO DRAKE**Personal Reflections on the GLAD Event**

▼ *By Philip Ewoldsen*

So how was the GLAD event in Des Moines?

Wonderful! It was partially a nostalgic trip back in time for me. I graduated from Drake in '68. But much better was seeing old friends and making new ones. People are somehow always at the center of important events and touching experiences.

The coming out labyrinth was the most powerful part of the whole event for me. It was a time of remembering, thanking, redefining, rediscovering God's

message of love and acceptance, and a call to responsibility (... it's a powerful thing to actually hold the world in your hand and feel God's call).

I really appreciated the way the scriptures were used by our two resource people -- linking spiritually and justice together (just as the theme had promised), and giving all of us new insights and perspectives.

Other highlights included a short and well organized business meeting and a great

banquet with good friends, good food, wonderful music, and an incredible speaker who reminded us once again that even in the pain of some of life's experiences we can still stand tall and triumphant. If you weren't there you missed an incredible experience - if you were there you know exactly what I'm talking about. Now, start planning for Portland next summer -- hope to see you there.

A 'Thank You' Note . . . I just wanted to make sure that you and the GLAD Alliance Council know how grateful I am for your assistance in making my participation possible at the 'Spiritual Justice / Just Spirituality' GLAD Event this last weekend. Without your help, I would not have been able to travel to Des Moines.

And that would have indeed been a GREAT loss on my part. This was one of the most valuable retreats I have ever had the privilege to attend.

The time I spent with you all provided me the much needed spiritual nourishment and encouragement for my justice work ahead. The gifts Nancy and Steven shared so

generously with us provided me many valuable new tools that better equip me for my journey. I am pleased to have made many new friends, and I look forward to the work we will do together.

Until we meet again, peace be with you! Your friend in Christ, Angi

GLAD-PSWR Chapter to hold Biennial Meeting

▼ *by David Downing, GLAD-PSWR Moderator*

The Pacific Southwest Region's GLAD Chapter will hold their biennial meeting during the Regional Assembly, to be held October 21–23, 2004. The gathering will be at the Torrey Pines Christian Church in La Jolla, California. GLAD-PSWR has recently become a much stronger organization, hosting an annual gathering, along with co-sponsoring a retreat with the United Church of Christ GLBT Coalition.

The organization will become an "official" group during the business meeting to be held during the Assembly. They will vote on a new "Design and Covenant" that describes the purpose and organization of the Chapter. A second document that will be voted on will be a "Status Report" which describes the relationship of the GLAD-PSWR Chapter with the Region. The Church in Society Committee of the Region initiated the Chapter. The "Status Report" calls for the organization to have an ongoing relationship with that body. The report also calls for the Chapter to consider seeking "Fellowship Group" status within the next three to five years, which would automatically place a member of

GLAD-PSWR on the Regional Board. The organization will also hold their first official election under the new "Design and Covenant." The nominating committee has met and is ready to present a slate of new rotating officers.

The current Steering Committee that has been in existence for two years includes: David Downing, Chair; Gwen Gutierrez, Secretary; Tom Nevarez, Treasurer; and Don Colhour, Larry Hixon, Gordon Shepherd, and Bruce Indermill as Members-at-Large. Bruce also serves as the liaison between the Disciples and the United Church of Christ. Steve Kindle, a member of the GLAD Alliance Council, serves as an ex-officio member, with vote.

The Pacific Southwest Region currently has six officially "Open and Affirming" congregations, with one congregation in the process of considering the possibility. Another six congregations have not officially taken a vote, but are "Open," two of them having called openly gay ministers.

GLAD-PSWR seeks to be a resource to individuals, congregations, and the Region.

Joint UCC/Disciple Retreat in Pacific Southwest Region

On May 14-16 of this year, a total of about twenty GLBT folk from the UCC and the DOC gathered at the Disciples' Loch Leven Christian Camp and Conference Center for fellowship and fun around the theme, *"The Gifts We Bring."*

The event began on Friday evening at 7 p.m. with an icebreaker/craft project. Each person was given a large potato and pointed to a table laden with fabric swatches, beads, eyes, colored pipe cleaners, scissors, hot glue guns, toothpicks, and other odds and ends. Amidst groans ("I'm not creative") and glee ("Oh, wow, FASHION

time!"), individuals began creating their alter egos. (One attendee was a psychotherapist; so the group had to acknowledge the deeper meaning of the project.) In no time, the fireplace mantle was lined with festive potatoes. Those in attendance took turns introducing their "spud" and detailing what it represented in their lives.

On Saturday morning, Rev. Jane Quandt, Senior Minister, First Congregational Church, UCC, Riverside, led the attendees through exercises designed to help those present to become aware of each

one's individual gifts, and discover ways those gifts could be put to use in the world. Jane's expertise, coupled with the cooperative attitudes of the attendees, led to many new insights and a lot of encouragement.

Lunch was followed by a workshop led by Rev. Steve Kindle, a Disciple Minister, who serves as the Executive Director of "Clergy United." His workshop was on the theme of *"Jesus' View of the (Gay) Family,"* subtitled *"Is the 'Nuclear Family,' a very recent ordering of family, really the*

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biblical model?" Those present learned that Jesus' view of the family was very different from the "Dad/Mom/2.5 children" model that currently rules the conservative airwaves. Based on the story of Jesus and the Centurion, the leader even proposed that there is a strong probability that Jesus even accepted, as status quo, one type of homosexual relationship.

Jeff DeVore, a member of the UCC, and the Chair of the Planning Team for the Retreat, led a Heart Circle, during which people were free to talk as they

chose, and all other members listened. People shared their personal stories, some tears were shed, and all were encouraged by the opportunity to talk, to be listened to, and to be accepted and affirmed.

After dinner, our Keynoter, Jane Quandt, again led the group through an exercise dealing with how new direction can be gained from some wounds we have received. This was followed by a talent show with stand-up comedy, story telling, and a rendition of "Happy Birthday" sung backwards.

On Sunday morning the day began with an eight o'clock communion service led by our

Keynoter, following which everyone shared in a delicious brunch, said good-byes, and left Loch Leven. The lives of those who shared in the event were deeply touched. The participants learned some things about themselves, some hurts were healed, and everyone had shared in fun and fellowship together!

The Retreat is an annual event, sponsored by the Southern California UCC Coalition and GLAD-PSWR (Pacific South West Region of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ).

ONE MOTHER'S VIEW

A 'Letter to the Editor' as timely today as when it was written

[Ed. Note: The following letter was found on the web. I have been unable to verify its authenticity, as an e-mail to the White River Junction Valley News was not returned. However, given the current discussion about same-sex marriage, this letter about Civil Unions in Vermont remains timely.]

by Sharon Underwood

Sunday, April 30, 2000

from the Valley News (White River Junction, VT / Hanover, NH)

As the mother of a gay son, I've seen firsthand how cruel and misguided people can be.

Many letters have been sent to the Valley News concerning the homosexual menace in Vermont. I am the mother of a gay son and I've taken enough from you good people.

I'm tired of your foolish rhetoric about the "homosexual agenda" and your allegations that accepting homosexuality is the same thing as advocating sex with children. You are cruel and ignorant. You have been robbing me of the joys of motherhood ever since my children were tiny.

My firstborn son started suffering at the hands of the moral little thugs from your moral, upright families from the time he was in the first grade. He was physically and verbally abused from first grade straight through high school because he was perceived to be gay.

He never professed to be gay or had any association with anything gay, but he had the misfortune not to walk or have gestures like the other boys. He was called "fag" incessantly, starting when he was 6.

"You use religion to abdicate your responsibility to be thinking human beings. There are vast numbers of religious people who find your attitudes repugnant. God is not for the privileged majority, and God knows my son has committed no sin."

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In high school, while your children were doing what kids that age should be doing, mine labored over a suicide note, drafting and redrafting it to be sure his family knew how much he loved them. My sobbing 17-year-old tore the heart out of me as he choked out that he just couldn't bear to continue living any longer, that he didn't want to be gay and that he couldn't face a life without dignity.

You have the audacity to talk about protecting families and children from the homosexual menace, while you yourselves tear apart families and drive children to despair. I don't know why my son is gay, but I do know that God didn't put him, and millions like him, on this Earth to give you someone to abuse. God gave you brains so that you could think, and it's about time you started doing that.

At the core of all your misguided beliefs is the belief that this could never happen to you, that there is some kind of subculture out there that people have chosen to join. The fact is that if it can happen to my family, it can happen to yours, and you won't get to choose. Whether it is genetic or whether something occurs during a critical time of fetal development, I don't know. I can only tell you with an absolute certainty that it is inborn.

If you want to tout your own morality, you'd best come up with something more substantive than your

heterosexuality. You did nothing to earn it; it was given to you. If you disagree, I would be interested in hearing your story, because my own heterosexuality was a blessing I received with no effort whatsoever on my part. It is so woven into the very soul of me that nothing could ever change it. For those of you who reduce sexual orientation to a simple choice, a character issue, a bad habit or something that can be changed by a 10-step program, I'm puzzled. Are you saying that your own sexual orientation is nothing more than something you have chosen, that you could change it at will? If that's not the case, then why would you suggest that someone else can?

A popular theme in your letters is that Vermont has been infiltrated by outsiders. Both sides of my family have lived in Vermont for generations. I am heart and soul a Vermonter, so I'll thank you to stop saying that you are speaking for "true Vermonters."

You invoke the memory of the brave people who have fought on the battlefield for this great country, saying that they didn't give their lives so that the "homosexual agenda" could tear down the principles they died defending. My 83-year-old father fought in some of the most horrific battles of World War II, was wounded and awarded the Purple Heart.

He shakes his head in sadness at the life his grandson has had to live. He says he fought alongside homosexuals in those battles, that they did their part and bothered no one.

One of his best friends in the service was gay, and he never knew it until the end, and when he did find out, it mattered not at all. That wasn't the measure of the man.

You religious folk just can't bear the thought that as my son emerges from the hell that was his childhood he might like to find a lifelong companion and have a measure of happiness. It offends your sensibilities that he should request the right to visit that companion in the hospital, to make medical decisions for him or to benefit from tax laws governing inheritance.

"How dare he?" you say. These outrageous requests would threaten the very existence of your family, would undermine the sanctity of marriage.

You use religion to abdicate your responsibility to be thinking human beings. There are vast numbers of religious people who find your attitudes repugnant. God is not for the privileged majority, and God knows my son has committed no sin.

The deep-thinking author of a letter to the April 12 Valley News who lectures about homosexual sin and tells us about "those of us who have been blessed with the benefits of a religious upbringing" asks: "What ever happened to the idea of striving ... to be better human beings than we are?"

Indeed, sir, what ever happened to that?

Open and Affirming Ministry Team Retreat

▼ *by Christy Newton*

The Open and Affirming Ministry Team, a GLAD ministry team committed to the transformation of congregations, met for retreat April 20-23, at the Lazy H Ranch near Richards, Texas, home of **Sharon and Tom Hart**. Team members present included **Sharon Hart, Ben Bohren, Christy Newton, Casey Williams, Gilbert Jones, Pam Webb, and Ann Canady**. Team members **Rachel Frey** and **Kerry Armstrong** were present for one planning session via conference call. Sharon, O & A Team Leader, provided strong, efficient, and organized leadership, as well as lavish hospitality, all of which enabled a productive and enjoyable planning retreat.

Two major developments emerged from the retreat. First, the “Breaking Silence” workshop that the O & A Team presented at the 2003 GLAD Pre-Assembly Event was adapted and further developed, making it as user-friendly as possible. The workshop—renamed *The Sounds of Silence*—will be available to congregations as a resource for starting and/or continuing the O & A and/or discernment processes.

Secondly, the O & A Team envisioned and started planning a training event for members of O & A congregations. The theme of the training event will be *Breathing Life. . . Creating Empowering Uniting*. Its purpose is to empower O & A congregations to be “living resources” in

their regions, to connect these congregations with one another in a type of support network, and to equip these congregations to be transformed in their ministry and to transform other congregations in their regions. The O & A Team, along with the generous help of **Randy Palmer**—GLAD Development and Finance Team Leader, is planning to apply for a Gill Foundation grant to help finance the event. Tentatively, the event is being planned for October 2005 in Las Vegas. Please watch for more detailed and definite information.

In addition, the O & A Team reviewed and affirmed the Team’s mission and vision statements; suggested ways to update the O & A packets sent to congregations and ways to make the packets easier for congregations to use; discussed the meaning and reality of being a “living resource” in congregations, regions, and the denomination as a whole; and collated, folded, addressed, and stamped the Spring 2004 edition of Crossbeams. Through all the work, conversation, fellowship, worship, and sharing good food and drink, the O & A Team bonded and became even more committed to the task of inviting and welcoming ALL of God’s children to the Table.

GLAD Receives Bequest from Chicago's Irving Park Christian Church

GLAD recently received a letter from Irving Park Christian Church in Chicago informing us that we are one of the beneficiaries of a bequest from the congregation. The congregation has sold its building and is continuing it’s life with a weekly Bible study and a monthly worship service. The congregation has been very involved in food programs for the homeless. The proceeds of the sale have been invested with the Christian Church Foundation and the Board of Church Extension. The bulk of the income from these investments is designated to New Church Development and the congregation’s Irving Park Disciples Hunger Ministry. GLAD will be receiving approximately \$200 per year from this bequest.

Did you know? Crossbeams is available on our website. You can:

- Print copies for your church or GLAD chapter
 - Print copies for a booth at a Pride event or a retreat
- and-
- Save us a dollar by telling us not to mail you a paper copy .

Just e-mail us at Crossbeams@gladalliance.org and we’ll notify you when the next Crossbeams is available online.

THE BRIDES WORE BLACK

Getting Married in Portland, Oregon

The brides wore black. All four of them and for practicality 's sake. After all, it was March 5, 2004, Portland, Oregon, where you could lean on the wind. They called it rain, but it stung our faces like ice crystals. Never mind. These were not your everyday brides, dreaming the details for their perfect weddings. We had been together for six years, the other couple for the better part of twenty-five years.

We met fourteen years ago in the choir at Findlay Street Christian Church and six years ago became a committed couple. We were strategizing a trip to San Francisco until we heard the morning news Wednesday, March 3rd, that Multnomah County, Oregon was offering marriage licenses to same-sex partners. We knew we needed to move quickly through the open window of opportunity which could close as quickly as it opened. The chance might never come again in our lifetimes..

We drove south to Portland on Thursday evening, and slept a few hours to rise before six. Armed with folding chairs, a book for each, and back-packed provisions, we trekked to the Office of Public Records. We arrived at 7 a.m. to join the line of more than one hundred couples already waiting in the foul weather. In the line, the atmosphere was warm, cozy, anticipatory bliss and wonderment. In addition to the locals were many who had made long journeys. Close behind us were the cute white linen trouser and silk shirt-clad boys who had driven 18 hours non-stop from southern California. They, too, had bypassed San Francisco when the license appointments stretched into five-week waits. They wisely seized the Portland moment; the San Francisco option evaporated quickly.

As we waited in line with the smiling couples including many with children, it seemed the whole town turned out to greet us. Passers by waved, tossed flowers, honked horns, and turned thumbs up. We laughed off the occasional scowlers who tossed Bible verses like curses to the undaunted crowd. "You're going to hell!" they growled and we smiled back, "We'll hold the door open for you!"

As we chatted with the couple next to us we found we had much in common. One grew up

near our current home, the other shared an alma mater with one of us....and all of us were Catholics in Recovery seeking deeper spiritual experiences. We all found ours that day! After discussing the marriage services offered by diverse clergy at a downtown Portland site, we admitted having arranged to have a private ceremony performed by our dear friend, Susan, who is a United Church of Christ minister. Soon our new friends asked if our clergy friend might officiate for them also. Our phoned inquiry was enthusiastically affirmed.

Several hours later, we danced away from a now-longer line with our marriage license in hand and plans to reconvene later that day for our wedding. En route to Susan's Hood River home, we visited a jeweler to purchase matrimonial hardware. Soon we gathered in Susan's living room prepared with flowers, candles, and a luxurious view of the Columbia River. That majestic river offered an apt metaphor for the joining of our lives in love: Strong, unwavering in purpose and undeterred by obstacles, ever beginning, never ending. As Susan offered prayers, her husband, David, offered himself as Best Guy. Tears streamed down six faces as we shared a vision to last for our lifetimes.

This civil sacrament became a profound spiritual experience for us who daily have demonstrated devotion to each other, commitment to social change, and service to humankind in our various careers. Just like Real People, we got to be real... um, er... spouses...as we had had to designate each couple's bride and groom as we applied for our respective marriage licenses. Barbara, older and more "butch" than 50-year-old MaryAnne, would not be a 68-year-old first time bride after all.

We agree eloping is an ideal way for experienced adults to marry. We saved ourselves stress of selecting attendants, purchasing finery to be worn once and preserved forever, rehearsals, worries about including and excluding the right people on the guest list. It all came down to two women

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committed to each other for all the right reasons, seeking official recognition and registration of a deep love which has existed for years. Why did we, and so many couples like us, rush to Oregon to get married? In the stark light of reason, nothing much has changed. We are as we were: Committed, living each day in love. But in the broader picture, maybe this is no longer enough. Maybe it's time for the next civil rights movement.

If the Oregon Supreme Court finds, as many legal analysts believe it must, that to deny gays and lesbians the right to marry is discriminatory and that we must be granted equal rights and protection under the Oregon Constitution, then the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution comes into play. Under Full Faith and Credit, every state in the union will be obligated to recognize these marriages.

But there is always the threat of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would be a travesty. This profound document exists to protect and preserve the rights of the federation's citizens, and to limit the federal government's powers to interfere. What rights are more basic than life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? And are we not citizens of the federation?

A Wedding to Remember

▼ *by Casey Williams*

On Friday, February 13, I received a call at 6:00 am from my friend Tammy telling me that she and her partner were rushing to City Hall to get married. Legally married, at least until it was stopped. My partner Beth and I left that day for a Valentine's weekend vacation, but the topic of marriage followed. Beth and I were speechless as we watched the news and heard about the huge amount of people flocking to City Hall to make a public declaration that they have every right to be married as anyone else.

Throughout the week we continued to watch the news and listen to all of the arguments in favor and against the weddings, and we still couldn't believe that this was happening. Wednesday night we decided to take a big step and join in with the thousands who were getting married. Our friends dropped us off at City Hall at 7:15 a.m. on Thursday, and by 9:30 we were told to go home because they already had over 200 people inside. The once joyous and energetic crowd now fell silent. Some hugged each other in support, several cried. Slowly, couples left heavy hearted, but determined to try again. Beth and I were one of those couples.

Even more determined, I woke up at 3:00 a.m. on Friday morning, jumped on BART at 4:30 and arrived at City Hall at 5. Arriving with a hopeful heart, it nevertheless sank as I saw the massive crowd already waiting. I took a deep breath and quickly took my place in line determined to not leave until closing time at 4:00 p.m. Because of work obligations Beth couldn't be there until 3:00 p.m. As I waited in line I got to know a few of the couples in front of me. Two couples were getting married for their 20th anniversary, one couple from Vermont and the other from Kansas. The air was thick with anticipation as we waited because we all knew that today would be the day that the decision would be made to either stop the marriages or allow them to go on.

As we waited in the cold, drizzling rain, anxious, a man walked by with donuts. We asked where he was in the line and he said that he was married on Thursday but came back to wait with all of us and give any emotional support. I was so taken aback; it amazed me to see the amount of support people were giving us. By 7:00 am, the protestors arrived. At first it was only one, but soon grew. The crowd was not about to let the protestors bring their spirits down. People laughed, and one group began to sing, "Jesus Loves Me" and "Going to the Chapel." The vast majority of the wedding crowd ignored the protestors. By 8:00 the protestors were made to move opposite of the crowd, and by 9:00 I had finally made my way inside City Hall where the line made its way into its bowels. Once we arrived inside the mood seemed to lighten, that is until the volunteers came out and told

Wedding: continued on page 19

Reports from the Annual Meeting

These are the reports that were presented to the GLAD Alliance Membership at the Event in Des Moines, IA on July 10, 2004.

Moderator's Report

Mark Johnston

It is with a sigh of relief and a (very small) twinge of wistful sentiment that I write this last report of my term on the Council and my time as Council Moderator. My term on the Council has taken me to a comfortable retreat center in the hills of Alamo, California, a conference center in Chicago that was, shall we say, less than first class, and most recently, the comfortable home and gracious hospitality of Tom and Sharon Hart. Council meetings, both in person and via conference call, have included agreements and disagreements, stepped on toes and corrected misunderstandings, but always struggled with how best to live our vision and mission as GLAD.

When I joined the Council, under the leadership of Jeff Zimmerman, the concept of Ministry Teams was just starting to be fleshed out. At the Council Leadership retreat in Alamo, California, in 2000 the teams were first outlined. Our hope was to give the Alliance back to its members; to transform the Alliance from an organization run by a small overworked group to an organization empowering its members for the work of the Alliance.

I believe that these teams are fulfilling that promise. We have spent the past four years living into that hope, modifying the definitions of the teams, seeking team leadership and members, discerning vision for the teams as well as mundane details of process and procedure.

Almost all of our teams are very successful. Our Open and Affirming Team, which had a head start as a program of the Alliance well before it was a team, under the leadership of

Allen Harris, John Payne, and now of Sharon Hart, is strong and vibrant. Our Development and Finance Team, led by Randy Palmer, is making sure that we stay on our budget and providing oversight of our money management. Our Discernment Team, led by Karen Barr and Mark Covey, has developed vision and has begun making its presence felt in the church. Our Human Resource and Nominating Team is in contact with the membership and providing valuable help developing leadership in the Alliance. Our Strategic Action Team is getting off the ground and developing membership and vision.

Yet we still lack in two areas. We continue to struggle in terms of communication. Over the past four years *Crossbeams* has not been published regularly, and often the members of the Alliance have not been aware of what we were doing. At the last Council leadership retreat, a renewed commitment was made to improved communication. We have already published *Crossbeams* three times this year, and yet we hit another roadblock when Steve Kindle, council liaison to the Communications Team, resigned from the council for health reasons. Currently, we need leadership for the Communications Ministry Support Team.

Another Team that has never come together is the Support and Advocacy Team. This team needs leadership and vision.

The Alliance has changed during my time as Moderator. The vision of our teams has grown and expanded. Members have become involved as team leaders and team members, providing energy and accomplishing the mission of the Alliance with new energy. The financial footing of the Alliance is better than ever.

And yes, there are things that have fallen through the cracks during the past couple of years. *Crossbeams* has not had a regular publication schedule. Our contact with the church has not been as direct or frequent as some members would hope for. GLAD's support of it's own members has been thin. If I have erred by not attending personally to these tasks, it was in the hope that our teams would grow into these responsibilities.

I believe that we are on the right path, that our growth and our energy and our vision belongs to the members. And I believe that it is up to the members of the Alliance, to you, to prove me right.

As you read the following team reports, I invite you to listen for those things which catch your attention and attract your energy, and find the place where you too can help GLAD embody its vision and mission.

Ministry Team Leader Reports

Discernment

Team Leaders: Karen Barr and Mark Covey

Present with our gifts, we offer ourselves as a visible presence.

The Discernment Ministry Team provides encouragement and resources for churches working with the denomination's discernment process on the place of lesbian and gay persons in the church. We are a ministry of GLAD to our denomination and our congregations.

The Discernment Team started out last July without a team or team leadership. Happily, at the General Assembly in October, Mark Covey and Karen Barr indicated their willingness to co-lead this team. We had a beginning! After a period of brainstorming with council liaison, Lisa Haley, we set about building a new team.

At the present time, the team members are:

Mark Covey, Massachusetts (Team Leader); Karen Barr, Virginia (Team Leader); Lisa Haley, California (Council Liaison); Dana Bainbridge, Nebraska; Richard Daetwiler, Colorado; Nelson Gomez, New York; Robina Ingram-Rich, Oregon; Jan Mackenzie, Alabama; Lorena Murray, North Carolina; Denise Rogers, Indiana; Jennifer Straub, Kentucky; Sonny Whitehead, Ohio

We are now beginning to vision about how best to serve GLAD Alliance and our denomination. We have begun collecting affirmations from congregations that have gone through the

discernment process. We hope to use these statements to promote the process, encouraging other congregations to participate. We have looked into obtaining a grant to create a video for distribution to Disciples congregations. That is one of our future goals. Seeing a need, we decided to focus our energy this spring on creating a brochure. This would be something that could be available for information displays at assemblies (regional as well as general) and sent to interested persons/congregations. We anticipate that it will be completed in time for the GLAD event in July and available for use after that. We are continuing to collect ideas on distribution – women's and men's events, elders training, other leadership events, etc.

In addition, our team is:

- On the exhibitor list for SESSIONS 2004 and will be cooperating with CBP for that exhibit.
- Still looking at how we can partner with another group to promote the discernment process in the denomination.
- Looking at plans to be a presence at regional assemblies.
- Working on ways to coordinate with other ministry teams and how we are going to be in contact with regional ministers. We would like to know who is using the material and encourage local and regional churches to get started.

The Discernment Ministry Team has found a renewed sense of purpose within GLAD and our denomination. We are excited about the possibilities of opening people up to the discernment process. We feel God's guidance as we find new opportunities to serve and witness.

Open and Affirming

From Pamela Webb, O & A Council Liaison

The Open and Affirming Ministry Team, a GLAD ministry team committed to the transformation of congregations, met for retreat April 20-23, at the Lazy H Ranch near Richards, Texas, home of Sharon and Tom Hart. Team members present included Sharon Hart, Ben Bohren, Christy Newton, Casey Williams, Gilbert Jones, Pam Webb, and Ann Canady. Team members Rachel Frey and Kerry Armstrong were present for one planning session via conference call. Sharon Hart, O & A Team Leader, provided strong, efficient, and organized leadership, as well as lavish hospitality, all of which enabled a productive and enjoyable planning retreat.

Two major developments emerged from the retreat. First, the "Breaking Silence" workshop that the O & A Team presented at the 2003 GLAD Pre-Assembly Event was adapted and further developed, making it as user-friendly as possible. The workshop, renamed *The Sounds of Silence*, will be available to congregations as a resource for starting and/or continuing the O & A and/or discernment processes.

Secondly, the O & A Team envisioned and started planning a training event for members of O & A congregations. The theme of the training event will be *Breathing Life ... Creating Empowering Uniting*. Its purpose is to empower O & A congregations to be "living resources" in their regions, to connect these congregations with one another in a type of support network, and to equip these congregations to be transformed in their ministry and to transform other congregations in their regions. The O & A Team, along with the generous help of Randy Palmer, Development and Finance Team Leader, is planning to apply for a Gill Foundation grant to help finance the event. Tentatively, the event is being planned for October 2005 in Las Vegas. Please watch for more detailed and definite information.

In addition, the O & A Team reviewed and

affirmed the Team's mission and vision statements; suggested ways to update the O & A packets sent to congregations and ways to make the packets easier for congregations to use; discussed the meaning and reality of being a "living resource" in congregations, regions, and the denomination as a whole; and collated, folded, addressed, and stamped the Spring 2004 edition of Crossbeams. Through all the work, conversation, fellowship, worship, and sharing good food and drink, the O & A Team bonded and became even more committed to the task of inviting and welcoming ALL of God's children to the Table.

From Sharon Hart, O & A Team Leader

The O & A Ministry Team presently has 12 members: Kerry Armstrong (Westfield, IN), Vaughn Beckman (our representative on the Board of the Institute for Welcoming Resources, living in Stockton, CA), Ben Bohren (Orange, CA), Ann Canady (Denver, CO), Jo Cobos (Phoenix, AZ), Rachel Frey (Avon, IN), Sharon Hart (chair of the Team living in Richards, TX), Gilbert Jones (Silver Spring, MD), Christy Newton (Russellville, AR), Jeff Taylor (Billings, MT), Casey Williams (seminarian at PSR in Berkeley, CA), and Pam Webb (GLAD Council liaison who lives in Mentor, OH). The O & A Ministry Team meets annually for a planning retreat as well as maintaining its ministry through Team conference calls and email communication.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Crossbeams*, you will find a summary of the Team's April, 2004, retreat at the Harts' ranch in Texas. Our Team works hard, plays well, and grows spiritually each time we gather in retreat. We are nourished by God's liberating Presence and the love we share for the community of faith we know as Disciples. We are challenged by the vision/mission that God has set before us; we are determined to be faithful to God as we work to fulfill our vision/mission:

O&A Ministry Team Vision Statement

We, the Open & Affirming Ministry Team, are a living resource, committed to the transformation of congregations through a process of discerning, proclaiming, and embodying a faith which embraces and affirms all persons.

O&A Ministry Team Mission

- To nurture congregations in the process of becoming Open & Affirming
- To unite Open & Affirming congregations in advancing their missions
- To communicate and promote the Open & Affirming vision throughout the three manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): general, regional, congregational
- To interact and network with other Welcoming organizations/ministries

We are excited about the potential uses of the new *Sounds of Silence* workshop, a tool for congregations beginning to explore the inclusion of all people in the life and ministry of their faith community. Our Team is committed to staying current in our use of language and in our theological grounding in queer (gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, questioning, intersex, interested) studies so that we continue to grow as “living resources” to our O & A congregations and the wider church.

The O & A Ministry Team is committed to expanding the ethnic and geographical diversity of our membership so that our witness is strengthened among all the constituencies that make up the body of Christ known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are grateful to learn that many of the Disciples new church starts are beginning their ministries as Open & Affirming. At present, there are 60 Open & Affirming congregations/ministries among Disciples (only one Region has declared itself O & A). We believe that growth in the number of O & A congregations/ministries will be greatly enhanced if our O & A congregations/ministries become “living resources” among the congregations of their Region.

A new challenge for our Team is addressing how an O & A congregation maintains that vision when a new pastor is called to serve in their midst who is not open and affirming. We have recently had to remove a congregation from our list because of this situation. This experience has strengthened our resolve to be in closer communication with our O & A congregations and their search committees as they seek pastoral leadership.

The Covenant of Inclusion ministry of GLAD (led by Pam Webb) is one way we are in touch with Disciples clergy who are personally open and affirming, but may not be serving an open and affirming congregation. The steady growth in the number of Disciples clergy who are open and affirming continues to be a hopeful sign.

The O & A Ministry Team is committed to working closely with the Discernment Ministry Team so that we are complementing one another's ministries and building upon each other's energy and resources. God continues to call us all to stand in faith together so that Disciples are transformed. We want to not only be known as an anti-racist denomination, we also want to be an Open & Affirming denomination.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this Ministry Team, please contact the Reverend Sharon T. Hart, chair, O & A Ministry Team at shart@gladalliance.org or call her at 936/294-9666.

Strategic Action

Team Leader: Bo Crowe

The charge of the Strategic Action Team is to provide a prophetic voice that will hold the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) accountable for its attitudes, policies, and actions toward open and affirming issues. We began formation of this team at last year's General Assembly in Charlotte, where we were inspired by the energy around its mission. Our plan is to solidify the team at our Summer Event, and raise that prophetic voice with even more verve and passion.

This past spring, David Nickell, our council liaison, and "Bo" Crowe, co-chair of the team, represented GLAD Alliance at a meeting of the National Religious Leaders Roundtable, an interfaith group that focuses on gender orientation issues. The meeting was held in Boston, and was timed to coincide with a Massachusetts Constitutional Convention held in response to the court decision opening marriage to all people as of May 17, 2004. The NRLR used public meetings and candlelight vigils in support of the court's ruling.

In the coming months, we plan to speak to several issues in the life of our denomination: fostering recognition of the link between open and affirming issues and ethnic/racial issues, and finding ways to address them together; speaking to the marriage rights issue, and encouraging our churches and our pastors to take a stand for justice in this crucial area; and seeking ways to gain and apply leverage on the ordination issue in our regions

If you have an interest in being a part of this vital ministry team, there is certainly a place for you. In addition to team members, we need a co-chair to help provide leadership and coordination.

Support and Advocacy

The Council has struggled to find leadership for the Support and Advocacy Ministry team since its inception. The intended task of the Team is to care for and nurture our community, providing pastoral care, encouraging networking, and providing resources to GLAD's ministries. This is our ministry to our members.

Ministry Support Team Leader Reports

Communications

The Communications Team has struggled to find leadership over the past couple of years. Due to the importance of this task, the Council has variously taken the task upon themselves and depended on members who helped for short periods of time. For example, our last *Crossbeams* was put together by the Council and folded, stamped, and mailed by the O&A Team at their leadership retreat. Our last over-and-above campaign mailing was assembled by the members of Hope Church in Roslindale, MA. A recent accomplishment in the area of communications: we have moved our web and e-mail hosting so that we have more direct control over these resources and reduced our costs by 90%. The Council has agreed to an aggressive schedule of publishing *Crossbeams* every two months, and has made that happen for the past six months. However, with the resignation of the

Communications Team Council Liaison Steve Kindle that schedule is in jeopardy.

This team is responsible for publishing *Crossbeams*, communicating our activities to the church, and advertising our ministry to the church.

Development and Finance

Team Leader: Randy Palmer

- Implemented revised cash handling, contribution acknowledgment, accounting and information processing practices to assure timely deposit of checks, timely acknowledgment of contributions (including information needed to support tax deductions), the ability to provide regular financial statements to leadership and regular updating of information in the membership, contributor and mailing list database.
- Developed and implemented a plan for 2004 to seek renewal of memberships that expired during 2000 through 2003 and memberships expiring during 2004; to permit online contributions through the GLAD website with payment by credit card; to encourage larger contributions by those able to make such contributions; to encourage regular contributions by O&A Ministries; and to support grant proposals by other Ministry Teams.
- Supported the Leadership Teams through the process of adopting a balanced budget for 2004.
- Assisted the Event Planning Team by coordinating physical, insurance, and local arrangements, and handling registrations for the 2004 GLAD Alliance Event.

Human Resources and Nominating

Team Leader: David Downing

The HRN Ministry Support Team has two major responsibilities. The first responsibility is to seek to become familiar enough with the GLAD Alliance membership so that we can help match "people resources" to the various Ministry Teams of the GLAD Alliance organization. Through actions targeted, this enables us to help the

GLAD Council to better invest themselves in the work of GLAD by having the names of resource persons who might work within the various Ministry Teams of the Council. The second responsibility is to serve as the Nominating Committee to secure the person who will be nominated each year to the GLAD Council.

Within the past several years we have initiated a plan by which we seek to make personal contact through e-mail, letter, or phone call with as many of the GLAD Membership as we can. Over the past three years we have been in contact with over half of the membership. We hope that this will encourage persons to become more active leaders wherever they are living as well as to become more active in the various Ministry Teams. To that end, we have provided the Ministry Team leaders the names of persons who have expressed an interest in serving some way on a specific Ministry Team. Each year our Team Members assume responsibility for contacting from seven to fourteen members of GLAD. This year we have accepted the invitation of the Development and Finance Ministry Team to help contact those who have not renewed their memberships. As those names are given to us, we make those contacts, urging them to consider bringing their membership up to date. At the same time, we talk with them about where they might have an interest in serving within the GLAD structure.

One of the difficulties and challenges is that many times the addresses, phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses are out of date. We hope that by constantly working on this project we can help GLAD to have an updated mailing list, with corrected information.

As a Nominating body, we seek to take a look at all of the criteria that we can (age, gender, sexual orientation, race, clergy, laity, geographical relationship, etc.) in order to create a strong and diverse Council. Each year we request, through *Crossbeams*, the names of those who might have an interest or who might be potential candidates for us to consider as Council members. At the current time we have an ongoing list of over twenty names that have been suggested. Our challenge is to match the current needs and criteria with those names that we have as being interested and available, and then to select the best possible persons to fill the

upcoming vacancies.

The HRN Ministry Support Team has been growing in the past several years and has taken on more tasks. We could still use a few more persons on the Team to help with the contact of GLAD members. A slightly smaller group, as determined by the Council, accomplishes the actual nominating.

We are currently seeking to determine how best to assume some of the new responsibilities given to us by other Teams who have asked for our help in some way as we make contact with the GLAD membership. Our desire is to be in a personal and supportive relationship with as many of the GLAD members as we can so that we get to know them well enough to help them get more involved with the GLAD Ministry Teams. How do you do that without being seen as just someone who is calling to ask for more money or pushing too hard to become more active than a person wants to be? We struggle with those kinds of questions as we plan for the future. The bottom line of what we hope to do is to help prepare GLAD *members* to become GLAD *leaders!* We hope that this will carry over into their own personal communities where they live and work as well as becoming active in the work and ministry of GLAD, whether it is on a Ministry Team, the GLAD Council, or just in ongoing support for the gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual issues and causes.

The Team is currently composed of David Downing (Chair), Wayne Bennett, Gene Brink, Tonya Gerardy, Nelson Gomez (liaison from the GLAD Council), Dick Miller, Laurie Rudel, and Gordon Shepherd.

CONNECTIONS

By Melvin Wilk

*Professor of English at Simpson College
Indianola, Iowa*



I like the kind of man my father was,
dark, stocky and strong.
In his thick fingers a steering wheel
was a flimsy toy;
power flowed from him to the car.
Dad lived aloof under his own roof
in his own territory.

When longing tugs my sleepless soul,
I get in my car and drive at the top
of my filial limits.
zooming between dark fields,
soaring in my four-wheel firmament,
alone, but attached now to power by just
one finger and my immortal right foot.

I roar over the dark dirt roads,
head bowed, alert for signs,
my heart accelerating,
convinced that out there
somewhere is a guy in my corner,
a man for me.



REPRINTED FROM THE
NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB
OF DES MOINES, IOWA

Immersed in Sloppy Theology

QUOTE EXCERPTED FROM AN ESSAY

by Jonathan Wilson

PRESIDENT
FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB
DES MOINES, IOWA
& A PRESENTER AT THE
2004 GLAD EVENT

"... Daily we are subjected unquestioningly to some pretty sloppy theology. It happens in church and out of it. Weekly it comes from clergy supposedly trained in theology who invite us to worship, at the same time, a just God and a merciful God. God can't be both. Either God is just and everyone gets exactly what they deserve, or God is merciful and folks get something decidedly better than they have any right to expect. Reliable guidance in how to gain the mercy and avoid the justice fails to reach the people in the pew. So most folks content themselves to seek mercy for themselves and pray that others get God's justice. Some opt for intellectual numbness and adopt a blind faith in a schizophrenic, unpredictable God expressed through ritual inertia. They find comfort in conformity and in a hidden plan underlying random events. Still others go away spiritually frustrated and confused or, as an act of integrity or disgust, just go away.

REPRINTED FROM
First Friday News & Views
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB
JULY 2004

Wedding: continued from page 11

us that just because we were inside did not mean that we would be married. They could only guarantee 50 couples, and then they would give out ten tickets at a time. Our little group quickly did the math and realized that we would be the fourth set of ten to get tickets. Despite the news, the crowd took a deep breath and we were determined to see it through.

While I waited in the main area for four hours, I had plenty of time to look around me. I noticed that there were huge pictures hanging on the wall. At first I noticed pictures from the early 1900's that showed the growth of City Hall as it was being built. Soon after I noticed the other pictures. One showed a group of African Americans in front of City Hall with a sign that said, "America cannot ignore her citizens." Another showed women in the 20's marching in front of City Hall. It suddenly hit me that I am now a part of the history of this building. I smiled to myself thinking about the time when there might be pictures of the thousands of queer people standing in line just to get married hanging in City Hall.

Jumping ahead in time, our line finally rounded the corner and we were finally at the last stretch. We could literally see the light at the end of the tunnel. Many of us were relaxing on the floor when TV crews arrived. We all kept holding our breath, and one of the gentlemen in line said nervously that they might be here to film our reactions if the judges ruling came back that there would not be any more marriages. Luckily, the word never came, and we kept waiting.

At 1:30, the volunteers passed out 10 tickets, and I was number 12. I watched with joy as the couples in front of me hugged each other and took pictures showing their tickets. By 2:00 the volunteers handed out 5 more tickets. When I finally got my ticket everyone around me gave me hugs and tried to calm my fears that Beth would make it here on time. By 2:30, it was my turn in line, but no Beth. For the next 45 minutes

of anxiously waiting for her, I had so many City Hall staff come up to me trying to reassure me that Beth would make it in time.

At 3:15 volunteers saw Beth and ushered her down the hall. It was such a wonderful sight -- Beth coming down the hallway with a dozen roses and a big smile. The next 30 minutes was a blur. After signing the paperwork, we were escorted back down the hallway past cheering crowds to the middle of City Hall where our ceremony would take place. While in line, the man who would be performing our ceremony came up and introduced himself and asked our names.

Next, we walked up the stairs in the middle of City Hall and began the ceremony. While I don't remember what exactly was said, I will never forget the feeling. I remember looking into Beth's smiling face and then glanced over at my friend Tammy, who was taking pictures. Her gaze was fixed on Beth and was mouthing the word "breathe." I then realized how red Beth's face was and how nervous we both were. I then realized that having the ceremony on the steps might not have been a good idea. Beth and I did not have rings to exchange, so we instead exchanged kisses. What stands out most in my mind in the ceremony, and probably will forever, is the way Beth looked and how happy we were to be a part of something special in this world.

As we walked out the door, more people cheered and clapped for us and several people walked up to us with congratulations. Even if the worst happens and our marriage is not legal anymore, I will always remember the day that Beth and I participated in history. I will also never forget the stories I heard, the friendships I made, and the joy Beth and I experienced with the thousands of other couples who are finally showing the world what they already know -- they are a family. It was definitely a marriage to remember.

[Ed.Note: Casey is a member of GLAD's Open & Affirming Ministry Team.]

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crossbeams



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