

# More Light

A Quarterly Publication of  
**MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS**

*Celebrating 30 years of contributions to the ongoing  
reformation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
1974-2004*

# Update

**Volume 25, Number 2  
Spring 2005**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Adee Report	2
Call for Articles	2
SW Regional Conference	3
Eily Marlow Ordained	3
Life Beyond the Comma	4
Pacific Chapter Forms	5
Shall "G-6.0106B" Be Stricken?	6
First More Light Church in SC	6
MLP Board is Busy	7
Spirituality Corner	7

**For up to the minute news  
visit us at**

**[www.mlp.org](http://www.mlp.org)**

**Deadline for the Summer issue is June 1**

### Don't be caught unaware **Could This Be Your Last Update?**

If you sent in a renewal membership contribution earlier this year, you can safely ignore any 'membership expired' notice on this Update's mailing label. Otherwise, please send in your renewal now. Thanks for your tax-deductible donation of \$50, or whatever you can afford (which may be more as well as less!).

## **"Realizing the Dream: Sojourning Together"**

*Regional MLP Conferences in 2005!*

**Vikki Dearing**

Because the next General Assembly won't convene until June 2006, this is a perfect time to hold regional More Light Conferences across the nation, rather than holding a single national conference. Regional conferences will provide a great setting for community building and can also be the start of grassroots organizing as we head toward General Assembly. And because travel will be shorter and less expensive, more people should be able to participate in More Light activities.

We've come a long way

### **Special Stoles Displays for More Light Sunday, June 5th**

The Shower of Stoles Project would like to help you invite some important friends to be a part of your congregation's "Open House, Open Dialogue" on More Light Sunday, June 5. As many congregations as possible are encouraged to have one or two dozen stoles from TSOSP's collection on display that weekend. Each stole contains the story of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person who has been active in the life and leadership of the church; together they provide a powerful witness to the hundreds of faithful LGBT folk whose gifts for service have been denied by the Presbyterian Church.

toward realizing our dream of the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but there is still a ways to go. It is good to

**National MLP Leadership Conference: May 20-22 in Kansas City. Led by Eunice and Dick Poethig. Check [www.mlp.org](http://www.mlp.org) for details.**

remember that we are not alone and that this journey for

justice is moving us ever forward in realizing our dream. That's why we are suggesting a common theme for the regional conferences—"Realizing the Dream: Sojourning Together."

To make the planning and organizing of regional conferences easier, the Conferences, Retreats and Events Committee has put together a Conference Planning Guide. The Guide is filled with ideas, forms, and examples for everything from registration and budgeting to worship and programming.

The MLP Board hopes that five to seven regional conferences will be planned. Already, several regional conferences have been announced:

- October 21-23—Louisville
- November 4-6—Southwest (Ghost Ranch Santa Fe - see page 3)
- November 11-13—Pittsburgh

There is plenty of time for your MLP chapter or church to plan a regional conference! To get an electronic or hard copy of the Guide, ask questions, or to start the planning process, contact:

Vikki Dearing  
MLP Board Member  
(phone) 405.751.2443  
[dearbunt@aol.com](mailto:dearbunt@aol.com)

For more information contact Martha Juillerat, National Program Director, e-mail [stolesproject@earthlink.net](mailto:stolesproject@earthlink.net), or visit the website at [www.showerofstoles.org](http://www.showerofstoles.org).

*Faith is not just something one seizes in uneasy times; faith is a natural thing, like discovering one's hands and feet.*

# Discovering Our Hands and Feet

As Bear Ride and I drove around L.A. last week, Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" radio show had us laughing and nearly crying—touching our souls, stretching our hearts, and challenging our minds. In the segment which was a tribute to St. Catherine's College, St. Paul, he quoted the teaching of the Mother Superior saying, "Faith is not just something one seizes in uneasy times; faith is a natural thing, like discovering one's hands and feet."

There is no question that much of these times are uneasy, particularly for LGBT persons, with the continuing debate over our humanity, creation as children of God, sincerity of our faith, our place in church and society, equal recognition of our loving relationships, and our building of families. At the same time, remarkable progress has been made toward equality. Change is at hand, and as I travel our church this becomes increasingly clear to me.

It was clear in Tucson, in the living room of Sylvia Thorson-Smith and Mike Smith's home as the Luminarias de Cristo MLP Chapter watched and discussed the film, "All God's Children," resulting in a conversation on how we live this out in our local churches. That evening clergy and lay leaders committed themselves to make real the welcome of LGBT persons, saying emphatically, *it is time*.

It was clear in Baton Rouge, with the lay leaders and pastors of University Presbyterian Church asking all the right questions on how to live out their welcoming mission statement. The pastors, Patti Snyder and Clint Mitchell, created a

remarkable discernment and study experience within their officers' retreat that continued the next day in worship. The hospitality of this congregation is open, warm, and generous. Returning to preach at the church that I worshiped in when I was in graduate school at Louisiana State University was a grace-filled coming home.

It was clear in Los Angeles as I looked into the faces of students, older persons, parents and children of a half dozen racial-ethnic backgrounds and communities while speaking and then serving Communion at United University Church. Susan Craig, serving in her ninth year as pastor, has inspired this strong campus church at the University of Southern California to take seriously the song she has taught them, "All Are Welcome." This More Light church and rainbow congregation embodies this through its worship, campus ministry, the Peace Center (with its director, Bear Ride), and other justice and community missions.

It was clear in Pasadena when 37 people from six area churches gathered at the home of Bear Ride and Susan Craig for the founding of the new Pacific Presbytery MLP Chapter, inspired by MLP's Victory 2006 campaign and the Vigil for Justice. Susan Craig and Erin Swenson offered a reprise of their brilliant program from G.A., "More Light on Bisexuality and Transgender."

With each field outreach trip, I see more and more people who believe in the best of our church, our reformed theology and tradition. Increasingly, I recognize that faith is a



natural thing, like discovering my own hands and feet. It is like breathing now; not just something I had clung to in tough moments. I am forever indebted to a More Light Church, Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, and the larger More Light Movement, that helped me rediscover my faith after I came out as a gay man. Within this journey that started for me in 1991, I have rediscovered my heart; integrated my faith, spirituality, and sexuality; and come back to church.

Special thanks to those of you who work day in, day out, to tear down the walls of prejudice and discrimination and build bridges so that everyone can discover the loving embrace of the God who created them. My prayer for our church is that individually and collectively we will rediscover our faith, hands and feet by recognizing the sacred worth of all God's children.

**Michael J. Adee, M.Div., Ph.D.,**  
National Field Organizer, may be contacted directly at michaeladee@aol.com.

WANTED

**The More Light Update seeks brief news stories on More Light congregations, chapters, personalities, issues, and activities.** News stories begin with a sentence highlighting what the story is about, such as "Jesus attacks the self-righteous," then offers details of who, when, where, what, why. Please be economical with language, 100-350 words for news stories; commentaries up to 450 words. Include writer identification and contact information. E-mail to MoreLightEditor@aol.com or mail to Chris Glaser, 991 Berne St. SE, Atlanta, GA 30316. Questions? Phone Chris at 404/622-4222. **We are also seeking photos and graphics**, which may be mailed to Chris at the above address or e-mailed to our designer, Erin Swenson, at erin@erinswen.com. Please identify the persons and event depicted.

**PLEASE NOTE NEW DEADLINES for quarterly issues:**  
**Summer, June 1; Fall, September 1; Winter, December 1, Spring, March 1.**  
**Thank you!**

## Southwest Regional MLP Conference & Retreat Nov. 4-6

"Realizing the Dream-Sojourning Together" will be held November 4-6, 2005 at the Ghost Ranch Conference Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The program will include worship, Bible study, workshops, grassroots activist training, recreation, and play. The gathering is part of the National MLP "Vigil for Justice" leading up to

the Birmingham General Assembly in 2006.

Vikki Dearing, MLP Board member from Oklahoma City, is MLP's Conference and Programming Committee Chair, and will serve as a consultant to the local retreat planning team. Doug Calderwood, Northern New Mexico MLP Chapter Steering Committee

member, is the local liaison for this retreat. Kenny Davis, MLP Board member and pastor from San Antonio, will create special worship experiences for the gathering.

Plan to arrive in Albuquerque by 3 p.m., or Santa Fe by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 4, with departure after lunch together on Sunday, November 6. Check [www.mlp.org](http://www.mlp.org) for details as they become available.



Ghost Ranch Santa Fe

## Another Lesbian Minister Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Milwaukee Presbytery, one of the 173 presbyteries of our 2.3-million-member denomination, voted 104-20 on February 22 to approve the ordination of Eily Marlow, M.Div., a life-long Presbyterian, and also an MLP Board member. Marlow is one of a few openly lesbian candidates to be approved for ordination since the 1978 ban on the ordination of so-called "self-affirming, practicing homosexuals."

Scholarship and the Higgins Scholarship for Outstanding Presbyterian Seminarians. Eily has a strong record of service to the church, including the position of program assistant to the PC(USA) Louisville staff and the Presbyterian U.N. office. She is Associate Chaplain and Program Assistant for the Lilly Project at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

and with her in campus ministry at Macalester College. It is a joy to watch her ministry with and to students at Macalester. There can be no question, Eily is a gift to the Presbyterian Church (USA), as she is to Macalester College and More Light Presbyterians."

Elisabeth (Eily) Marlow is a member of Southminster Presbyterian Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin, where she was ordained April 10. She graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary in 2002, having been the recipient of the Thomas Mackie

"This decision by the Presbytery of Milwaukee gives hope to those of us working for the full embrace of LGBT persons and their families in the life of our church," glowed MLP National Field Organizer Michael Adee. "I have worked with Eily when she was a theological student at McCormick,

"We celebrate with Eily this opening of the door to one more qualified candidate," said MLP Co-Moderator Erin Swenson. "We thank God for Eily's ministry at Macalester College and for her work as a board member of MLP. We pray that the gifts for ministry of more and more LGBT people will be welcomed in our denomination."



The Reverend Eily Marlow

## MLP Helps Provide Scholarships for LGBT Seminarian Retreat June 23-26

Through the generous support of More Light Presbyterians, Presbyterian Welcome, Covenant Network, That All May Freely Serve-National, and That All May Freely Serve-Chicago, significant and full scholarships are available for a Presbyterian LGBT Inquirers and Candidates Retreat scheduled for June 23-26, 2005. Recent candidates are organizing the gathering of as many as two dozen participants at a beautiful retreat center in northern New

Jersey. According to the Rev. Mieke Vandersall, executive director of Presbyterian Welcome, "This will be a great opportunity for them to learn more about one another's journeys, recharge, learn about necessary legal and spiritual choices, worship, discuss critical decisions, and more." All LGBT inquirers and candidates, regardless of how "closeted" or "out" they are, are invited to join. Details at: [www.presbyterianwelcome.org/LGBTincareretreat.htm](http://www.presbyterianwelcome.org/LGBTincareretreat.htm)

*For the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in January, sixty Atlanta-area black clergy and academics signed a letter to the late civil rights leader about divisions in the black community, published in several newspapers, which included this excerpt:*

The dominant views on sex, sexuality, and gender in the Black Church are undermining community, diminishing the faith, and leading many to abandon churches out of sheer moral frustration and exhaustion. Our churches have been slow to embrace gender equality. They have largely spoken only opposition and condemnation to same gender loving people and have been unable to proclaim a sexually liberating and redemptive word. Some black churches have concluded it is in their best institutional interest to participate in "special rights" polemics against this so-called "immoral humanity." As black clergy we offer here a more hope-filled perspective. In the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, we the undersigned clergy extend the divine invitation of human wholeness, healing, and affirmation to "whosoever" (John 3:16). In the best of the Black Church tradition we say, "Whosoever will, let her or him come."... Martin, on your day we vow to take a stand to love all black people. We vow to accept and to honor all regardless of their gender, class, age, or sexuality, for we all are the children of God.

# Erin Swenson Honored with 2005 Lazarus Award

*...the Lazarus Project  
is our denomination's  
first official ministry  
of reconciliation  
between the church  
and the LGBT  
community*

Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson, More Light Presbyterian Co-Moderator, received the 2005 Lazarus Project Award on February 26, 2005 during the Lazarus annual dinner in Pasadena, California. Founded in 1977 at the initiation of the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, the Lazarus Project is our denomination's first official ministry of reconciliation between the church and the LGBT community. The award was established in 1985 to recognize individuals who contribute to such reconciliation. Rev. Susan Craig, pastor of United University Church in Los Angeles, introduced Erin. MLP and UUC hosted two tables to cheer Erin on. What follow are excerpts.

## Introduction from Susan Halcomb Craig

Presbyterians are fond of saying we're Reformed and always reforming; but tonight we're being trans-formed and trans-forming! How fortunate we are that the wonderful Erin Swenson's here to lead us, trans-actors and trans-gressors alike! And that the Lazarus Board had the far-sighted and faithful vision to make tonight happen. Thank you.

So let's imagine a contemporary Jesus, whose dear friend has been entombed for, oh say, four days. Imagine this Jesus summoning community members to remove the boulder blocking the tomb's entrance, and calling loudly, "Eric, come out!" And then the miracle: divine power being what it will be, it's Erin who comes forth: Erin, re-created, rebirthed and new; Erin, for whom coming out and coming into herself was truly resurrectional.

Many of us already know dear Erin—and all of us have her bio tucked into our evening programs. So we know that after 23 years of ordained service in the Presbyterian Church, Erin became the first known mainstream Protestant minister to transition from male to female while retaining her ordained status in the denomination. Erin is accomplished as theologian and psychotherapist; as Ph.D. author and educator; as More Light Presbyterians' Co-Moderator and counselor; as a parent and devoted family member, wise woman and friend. You can tell she's the T in my BLTG sandwich, that's for sure!—and you can Google her for the rest!

## Life Beyond the Comma by Erin K. Swenson

Thank you. There is no way that any one person can be so honored, and this award is clearly for all those who are bridge-builders. ...

It was one of those phone calls you put off as long as possible, yet there I was in the basement apartment in our home actually pressing the buttons on the phone. A moment later I was talking with the chair of Greater Atlanta Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Lloyd.

This is Eric Swenson. You probably don't know me, but I am a minister member of the presbytery, a pastoral counselor. I'm calling to inquire how one goes about changing their name on the roll of presbytery."

"Sure I know you," came the reply. "Well, it's really not too hard. You just need to send a letter to the committee stating the name you want changed, and we take it from there."

"I see."

"By the way, what are you wanting to change your name to?"

"Uhhh, Erin Katrina Swenson."

"Why would you want to change your name to that?"

"I am actually changing my gender expression to female, and thought that this would be a better name."

Silence.

After an awkward pause, he responded, "I see. I'm going to have to get back to you on that"

This happened in 1995, as I

"As the motion came to the floor, one of my colleagues rose...to explain...that this move would set a precedent for the entire denomination, perhaps for all of Protestantism. He argued that the church's acceptance of people who had changed gender had never been established. I didn't know it at the time, but it *had* been done before."

was in the midst of rearranging my life from one lived in the masculine key to one lived in the feminine, and the "church piece" was the one I had dreaded the most. The phone call led to a letter in which I was required to outline just exactly what this process was,

and what I intended regarding my ordination. The Committee on Ministry was up to the task, and gathered a list of reading materials, listened to experts, and finally interviewed me before recommending to the presbytery in June 1995 that my name be changed without changing my status as an ordained minister in good standing.

The presbytery wasn't buying it, however. As the motion came to the floor, one of my colleagues rose to make a substitute. He wanted the request sent back to the committee for further study—you know, the Presbyterian

version of the "deep six." He went on to explain that there had been no other Presbyterian minister who had made such a change, and that this move would set a precedent for the entire denomination, perhaps for all of Protestantism. He argued that the church's acceptance of people who had changed gender had never been established.

I didn't know it at the time, but it HAD been done before. When the Bible study for the 215th General Assembly arrived in my mailbox a couple of years ago, I dutifully read the assigned passages. The theme of the G.A. was "A House of Prayer for all Peoples" and the study was of Isaiah 56.

If you follow the lectionary, you will be reading Isaiah 56:1, 6-8. That's verse one, jumping to verse six. Commas are often used in lectionary readings to skip parts of a passage that add little to the meaning. But there are also times when the comma is used in other ways, and it so happens that this comma bears fully on the perspective of my colleague who believed that my predicament in the church is novel.

Funny thing about commas, though—pesky little things that can change the whole meaning of a statement. A recent book on punctuation by Lynne Truss made the best seller list on the strength of a comma. In fact the title of the book was from a now famous joke:

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air. "Why?" asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder. "I'm a panda," he says, at the door. "Look it up." The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation. "Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves." [*Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. 2003, Gotham Books.]

By adding one little comma, our cute bear is turned into a hungry and impatient potential executioner. It might be argued that our comma, the one in the Revised Common Lectionary, doesn't really change the meaning of the prophecy. I would like you to judge for yourself. Here's the part of Isaiah 56 that is hidden in the comma:

"Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, 'The LORD will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."...

For us—ones so clearly left out, removed from the places of worship and community—these words are life-giving. Every TG gathering I have read this to has been filled with amazement and tears of joy. How have we as the church become a community where these people, so honored by God that they would have a place and name better than sons and daughters, are stuffed behind a damned comma? ...

Our denominational resources continue to be devoid of any distinctively transgender materials for pastoral care. When the word *transgender* is brought to the floor of our General Assembly, commissioners still rise to question what that really means. And our own statements about ordination standards and marriage speak exclusively to humanity lived in the binary identities of *male* or *female*. There is no room for people like me, whose identities cannot be so easily categorized.

So there is much work to do beyond the comma. And I thank God that you and people like you make it possible to carry on.



At the 2005 Lazarus Banquet (L-R) Rev. Donn Crail, former Lazarus Executive Director honored for his service, Rev. Erin Swenson, 2005 Lazarus Award winner, and Rev. Dale Kraai, Chair of the Lazarus Board of Directors.

## New Pacific Presbytery MLP Chapter Formed

Thirty-seven people gathered Sunday afternoon, February 27, at the home of Bear Ride and Susan Craig in Pasadena, California, for the founding of a new Pacific Presbytery MLP Chapter. Lay leaders, church staff, and clergy from six Presbyterian churches in the region came together in an event capitalizing on the momentum of Erin Swenson's receiving the Lazarus Award the evening before.

The Revs. Bear Ride, Susan Craig, Lisa Bove, Ann Hayman and Dan Smith are the local leaders who called for the chapter's formation. The three More Light Presbyterian

Churches in southern California that were represented were West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, Baldwin Park Presbyterian Church, and United University Church, Los Angeles. Michael Adey, National Field Organizer, and Bear Ride, MLP Board member, led the process of the founding.

Solid organizing on progressive and LGBT-concerns has a long history within this presbytery and region, which sponsored the first LGBT ministry (the Lazarus Project) and hosted the first gathering of More Light churches. MLP's "Vigil for Justice" and the "Victory 2006"

campaigns are encouraging such local organizing efforts as we prepare for the Birmingham G.A. in 2006.

A special feature of this kick-off celebration was a reprise of the wildly-successful educational program presented at an earlier G.A., "More Light on Bisexuality and Transgender," by Susan Craig and Erin Swenson. Even after Erin's prayer of blessing for this new MLP chapter and a benediction, the roundtable conversations and questions continued for nearly two more hours.

*Solid organizing on progressive and LGBT-concerns has a long history within this presbytery and region...*

*The Presbytery of Winnebago voted on February 19 to receive the proposed overture for study and action.*

# "SHALL G-6.0106B BE STRICKEN?"

## Under Study: A Proposed Amendment to the 217th General Assembly (2006)

The Presbytery of Winnebago voted on February 19 to receive the following proposed overture for study and action. The vote of 26 to 11 initiated a proposed timeline for final consideration by the November meeting of this year. The presbytery will meet twice before in May and September. Subsequently, on February 28, the Session of First Presbyterian Church in Wausau voted 12-2 to support this overture and communicate its action to the presbytery.

Proposed overture not yet acted upon by the presbytery:

The Presbytery of Winnebago respectfully overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) to:

Provide authoritative interpretation that interpretive statements by the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the 119th

General Assembly (1979) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and all subsequent affirmations thereof, concerning ordained service of homosexual church members, have no further force or effect; and

Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-6.0106 b be stricken?

Rationale

As part of its 1978 judgment that homosexual members should not be ordained, the church also declared that "There can be no place within the Christian faith for the . . . fear that is called homophobia" and that "Homosexual persons who sincerely affirm 'Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior' . . . should not be excluded from membership." Further, it called upon

Presbyterians "to reject in their own lives . . . the sin of homophobia, which drives homosexual persons away from Christ and the church." (The Church and Homosexuality, UPCUSA 1978.) The Book of Order stipulates that "An active member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church, including the right . . . to hold office (G-5.0202) and that the church "shall give full expression to the rich diversity within its membership . . ." (G-4.0403). The continued practice of barring gays and lesbians from ordination is in direct conflict with the call to avoid homophobia and with our understanding of what membership means and represents.

**Stephen Hamilton Wright, First Presbyterian Church, Wausau, Wisconsin**

## First More Light Church in South Carolina

On March 2, the Session of the North Anderson Community Church, Presbyterian, of Anderson, South Carolina, voted unanimously to become a More Light Church, the first in the state. This was the congregation featured in the Covenant Network video/DVD that grieved the loss of their popular pastor to the UCC, the Rev. Susie Smith, when she came out as a lesbian.

installed their new pastor, the Rev. Jake Young, who is a leader in the Witherspoon Society, the social justice network that helped birth the earlier incarnations of what is now MLP. The Rev. Erin Swenson, MLP's national Co-Moderator, represented MLP at both the worship and the installation, giving the charge to both the pastor and the congregation. *More Light Update* editor and elder Chris Glaser was invited by Rev. Young to deliver the sermon during the installation.

"Your thoughtful discernment and study process has been respectful of your church leadership and congregation."

NACCP says of itself: ALL ARE WELCOME regardless of race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or any other characteristic. What we are about: progressive Christian theology; caring about each other and our community; inclusiveness. We are working toward: loving and respecting all God's children; social justice; sharing God's resources; protecting our planet. Contact information: Rev. Jake Young, Pastor, North Anderson Community Church, Presbyterian, 4200 Liberty Highway, Anderson, SC 29621-2321; 864/225-3575; [www.northanderson.presbychurch.net](http://www.northanderson.presbychurch.net)

On Sunday, March 6, the congregation celebrated becoming a More Light church in morning worship with leadership provided by its LGBT members. That afternoon, with balloons still afloat from the earlier celebration, Foothills Presbytery

"Please know of our heartfelt congratulations in your recent decision to affiliate, identify, minister, and witness as a More Light Presbyterian Church," MLP Co-Moderators Donna Riley and Erin Swenson said in a joint statement.



*Members of the North Anderson Community Church worked hard at General Assembly to find a new pastor... and succeeded! The shirts read "R-U-R New Pastor?"*

## Adee Serves as Northwest "Circuit Rider"

MLP National Field Organizer Michael Adee recently took a nine-day and six-city swing through Oregon with the help of a team from the Cascades Presbytery MLP Chapter. The outreach to churches, clergy groups, campus ministries, and the LGBT community covered the cities of Portland, Beaverton, Milwaukie, Medford, Corvallis, and Eugene. The activities included preaching, teaching Bible studies, offering Christian education classes on ordination, marriage equality, and pastoral care, resourcing clergy groups, and consulting with church leaders and congregations who are in a More Light discernment process. He led a pre-presbytery meeting workshop and helped staff an MLP resource table there. In Medford, Adee and Chris Jackson joined the Rev. Tara Wilkins,

Executive Director of the Community of Welcoming Congregations of Portland, for an organizing meeting to support and expand welcoming congregations in southern Oregon.

One of the perks of the trip for Michael was having fresh salmon often, but he claims to have had nothing to do with the eruption of Mount St. Helen's during his visit. (We'll see what *The Layman* has to say about that!) He especially thanked key local MLP leaders and supporters in the area, including Chris and Beverly Jackson, Michael Sandemeyer (Chris and Michael are co-moderators of the Cascades MLP chapter), Donald "Perk" and Carol Ann Purkey, Ben Dake, Janet Stang, Peg Pfab, Jim Peterson, Dave Dornack and Barbara Campbell. This serves as an example of grass roots organizing at its best.

Photo by Evan Silversstein

## Busy Agenda for MLP Winter Board Meeting

The National MLP Board of Directors held its winter board meeting and working retreat February 18-21 at the Presbyterian-operated Ghost Ranch Conference Center, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The board consists of 15 volunteers who are clergy, elders, seminarians, and other leaders in our church who come from both More Light churches and regional, college, and seminary MLP chapters. The current board hails from 13 states: California, Washington, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Michigan, Georgia, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North

Carolina. They are: Donna Riley and Erin Swenson, Co-Moderators, who convened the meeting; Bear Ride, Lindsay Thompson, Heather Reichgott, Bruce Hahne, Mike Smith, Kenny Davis, Vikki Dearing, Eily Marlow, Chuck Booker-Hirsch, Susan DeGeorge, Jack Cover, Rob Cummings, and Marco Grimaldo.

After an opening worship led by the Northern New Mexico MLP Chapter, the national board held a focus group with members of that chapter, reflecting MLP's primary identity as a national grassroots organization. Priorities for the overall meeting included: Vigil for Justice; Victory 2006 presbytery organizing for the 2006 General

Assembly; Regional MLP Conferences/Retreats for 2005; the Leadership Training Conference in May 20-22 in Kansas City; More Light Sunday June 5 with the theme "Open House, Open Dialogue"; Coming Out for More Light in conjunction with National Coming Out Day, October 11; creation of new educational resources; board nominations; fundraising, development, and the annual budget; MLP Partners' program for chapter and church development; spiritual direction and nurture.

For future meetings, if you have recommendations, counsel, ideas, input, or questions you would like the board to receive, please send them to michaeladee@aol.com or call (505) 820-7082, the National Field Office in Santa Fe.

*After an opening worship led by the Northern New Mexico MLP Chapter, the national board held a focus group with members of that chapter, reflecting MLP's primary identity as a national grassroots organization.*

### Spirituality Corner

## What Does Resurrection Mean?

On Palm Sunday I caught the last hour of "The Truman Show," a film on which I commented before on these pages many years ago. At the time, I explained how deeply I identified with the protagonist (well-played by Jim Carrey), who is unwittingly trapped by a role he did not choose. Unbeknownst to him, he is the center of a television program that follows his life from birth 24/7. He lives on an island in the largest studio ever created, and all the people in his life are carefully scripted actors, a reality show in which the only real thing is Truman himself, thus "true man."

As it did before, the movie moved me to tears, because I recognized my own entrapment in the role I play with the church as well as society at large: "avowed practicing homosexual." Many of you will identify with the confinement of this tomb-category in which we're placed so that the church may rest in peace. Just as Truman is vaguely aware something isn't quite right, we are aware that this isn't the way things should be. "The Creator," the producer of the television program, justifies himself against critics, saying, "People live with the reality

that is presented to them." This echoes the present position of the PC(USA): "Therefore, it appears that what is really important is not what homosexuality is, but what we believe about it." (1978 G.A. minutes, UPCUSA, and 1979 G.A. minutes, PCUSA.)

When, after enormous difficulty, Truman finally crashes a boat against the false horizon painted on a wall of the studio and finds a door through which to exit, there is a collective sigh of relief among those in his worldwide following watching their television sets. In his liberation, Truman fulfills the dream of Everyman.

That Sunday morning I had announced to my small interfaith community here in Atlanta that on Easter I would be speaking on "What Does Resurrection Mean?" But now I had my opening. I was seeing the Resurrection from inside the tomb. Truman did not accept the reality presented to him and chose another reality. That is the meaning of Resurrection to me at this time.

When we left our mother's wombs, we, in a sense, rejected

that reality for a greater one. When we were baptized and confirmed, we rejected mere physical reality to embrace a spiritual reality. When we left our closets, we rejected a "reality" that denied our reality, our true selves.

Jesus rejected the religious and political "reality" of his time to embrace and proclaim a new reality: the commonwealth of God. And God rejected the reality of human inhumanity in the Crucifixion to reveal the reality of Resurrection and redemption. The Holy Spirit rejected the reality of spiritual exclusivity to baptize "outsiders." In turn, this led early Christians—and later ones—to reject the reality they were presented to live "as if" the commonwealth of God were already here. My prayer in Eastertide is that I may do this more, and that more of us may do so, especially within the church.

*Chris Glaser, Editor, More Light Update*



*I was seeing the Resurrection from inside the tomb...*

## More Light Presbyterians

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*For all ministers, elders, deacons,  
members, friends, and governing bodies  
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

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## JOIN US IN MINISTRY...

Individual and corporate membership in More Light Presbyterians is open to any member, congregation, or governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that supports our mission to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church.

We invite you to join or renew your membership at this time, or make a contribution, using the enclosed envelope. Returning the form will be understood as your affirmation of MLP's mission. Individual membership is \$50 per year, or whatever a member can afford.

If you are not already participating in a local or regional MLP chapter or congregation and wish more information on how to connect with MLP or organize in your area, please contact our National Field Organizer through his contact information on the left.

The MLP Board would like to receive your input. Our board is structured by committees: Communications, Development, Membership, Nurture, Education,



Conferences, Human Resources, and Legislative Affairs. We welcome the service of non-board members on these committees. Contact the committee chair (below) to get involved with the work of More Light Presbyterians.

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Please join us in our prayers for an inclusive church!