

NRLR responds to increase in gifts to the United Church of Christ after controversial support of same-sex marriage

WASHINGTON, March 20 — National Religious Leadership Roundtable members responded today to the announcement by the United Church of Christ (UCC) that gifts to its denomination have increased by more than \$1.2 million in 2007 since its controversial resolution in support of same-sex marriage.

*Statement by the Rev. Ruth Garwood
National Religious Leadership Roundtable*

“Prophets abound. Every church that extends a welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities speaks prophetically to the community inside and outside the church, sending a clear message that God’s inclusive love is for everyone.

“Prophecy brings development. The discernment process about becoming welcoming involves Bible study, education about sexual orientation and gender identity, storytelling and theological examination. They translate their beliefs about God’s love into the actions of welcoming God’s people into their churches.

“Prophecy brings blessings. Prospective church members look for welcoming churches and connect that welcome to progressive positions on other issues. Welcoming LGBT people is often a signal to prospective members that the church is progressive in other ways as well. These churches attract not only LGBT people, but also allies who are looking for an inclusive environment in which to raise their children. Once on a path of inclusion, churches also begin to examine their actions on other issues, expanding their understanding of the implications of the diversity of race, gender, economic class and physical ability.

“Prophecy brings confidence. Some congregations decide to offer their welcome, even with concerns

about potential losses of membership or financial support. ‘What will people think? Who will be alienated? Won’t we lose members?’ Most churches find that they gain much more than they lose. In the United Church of Christ, welcoming congregations are among the most vital in our denomination.

“Having found that welcoming LGBT people brings new life to their community life, many of the churches respond to events outside of the church, taking their theological convictions to schools where bullying is a problem, to workplaces that would fire LGBT people, to local and state elections where ballot issues of LGBT equality are on the ballot.

“When churches accept risk and still step out into courage, they discover new joys in their life together.

“The United Church of Christ has taken public prophetic stands that are controversial and the denomination thrives. In 2005, when the General Synod passed a resolution supporting marriage equality, some people predicted the precipitous decline of the church. In 2007, however, church members affirmed their commitment to the shared ministries of the UCC tangibly: by increasing their financial support of the UCC.”

The Rev. Ruth Garwood is the executive director of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.

Authenticity



I was deeply moved at our last meeting, by Ashley and Ryan’s account of their lives as they transitioned from the gender they had been raised to the one they know is genuine for them. I can get touched by a lot of things, but this wouldn’t let me go.

And then I realized that we were in the Lenten season and I had been thinking a lot about Jesus and what it must have been like once he realized what it would mean if he remained true to himself. Jesus refused to pretend he was anything other than what he was.

When given the opportunity to deny the claims about him he did not. He maintained his truth. We all know what courage that takes. There are many examples from history of the tragedy that can result when people tell the truth to and about those who have an investment in maintaining the status quo. It is easier for some of us to live authentic lives than for others. Those for whom telling the truth will mean pain and suffering for others have a particularly difficult road to walk. I believe that those who decide to live authentic lives will, at some point, have a “resurrection” experience. As Paul puts it, “...the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

My prayer for all of us is that we have the courage to live authentically in order to make space for the new life that awaits us.

Nancy Erickson

Calendar of Events

MAY

Workplace Discrimination / Bullying Bill / Death Penalty / Election Law / Affirmative Action

On May 18, Plymouth Pride Fellowship is honored to host a panel of state Senators! Joining us for a discussion on how the legislature works, recent bills passed, and of course how we can best communicate with our own representatives in the Unicameral. Joining us will be Senators Nantkes, Schimek, Preister, Kruse, and our own congregation member Senator Bill Avery. The night starts with potluck at 5:30, with the panel following at 6:00.

Bring your questions! If you’d like to research the Unicameral, visit: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/web/public/home>

Gallery 9 featured exhibit: Debi Smith
"My art is a celebration of womanhood, courage, diversity and empowerment. I believe that tolerance is not the answer for most of humankind's problems. We need to infuse a new way of thinking and behaving in order to have a rebirthing which I believe most of us innately crave."



Opening reception: June 6th @ 7-10pm
 Host: Debi Smith

Exhibit

Start Time:

Wednesday, June 4, 2008 at 10:00am

End Time:

Sunday, June 29, 2008 at 5:00pm

Location:

Gallery 9

City/Town:

Lincoln, NE

Solo Exhibit by Debi Smith

Wombionic revisited: a perspective of the power of womanhood.

<http://www.debismithart.net/Page295.htm>

Volunteer Opportunities!

NEBRASKA AIDS PROJECT

Volunteers are deeply involved in the work of Nebraska AIDS Project at all levels. From the Board of Directors to the front lines of HIV prevention and AIDS services, people from the community donate time, skills, expertise, and labor to the fight against AIDS. In 2000, the value of Nebraska AIDS Project volunteer services was nearly a quarter-million dollars!

For many people, an unstructured volunteer experience is best-suited to the busy demands of life. Attending fundraising events that benefit Nebraska AIDS Project, making financial gifts, and pressing for greater HIV/AIDS awareness in your community are great ways to show your support without big commitments in time, training, or reporting.

Program Volunteers participate in structured experiences working closely with Nebraska AIDS Project staff on direct-services, special projects, clerical support and data entry, development, training, focus groups, planning, and practicums. Program Volunteers may accept individual assignments or work as part of a team, and usually commit to a one-year period of service.

To get more information about volunteer opportunities or to apply, go to: http://www.nap.org/nap_volunteers4.html

NEBRASKA CASA

Over 1600 Children in Nebraska are on a waiting list for a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Volunteer!

A CASA is a trained, citizen volunteer appointed by the Juvenile Court to ensure that the needs and interests of abused and neglected children are being met. CASAs are assigned to dependent children who are under the Juvenile Court jurisdiction and are assigned at the discretion of the Juvenile Court.

REQUIREMENTS OF A CASA:

- Make a commitment to serve as a CASA for a minimum of one year
- Be 21 years of age (some exceptions allowed for students)
- Be willing to donate approximately 6-10 hours per month
- Attend training sessions and review all training material provided by the CASA program
- Maintain strict confidentiality
- Maintain objectivity and professionalism in dealing with children, parents, and all other parties involved with the case
- Possess written and verbal skills

To apply, go to: <http://www.nebraskacasa.org/main.asp?id=5>

JUNE

June Picnic! Look for an announcement soon about the Plymouth-Pride Fellowship picnic to be held in June! Don't miss fun in the sun . . .



Would you like to submit something for the newsletter? Send news items, personal stories, and photos to Fred at: Spin369@hotmail.com.



ACTIVITIES