



EVANGELICALS CONCERNED

CHRISTIAN R & B

BY RENEE TAYLOR

I have always wondered if it would be possible to find a body of Christians who were not plagued by racism and bigotry. It certainly had not been my experience growing up. I'd been raised in the Baptist church where homophobia was alive and well. Though I never adhered to it, there was no escaping its dogma. Racism seemed to hover everywhere. As if it were not enough to have to encounter it at school, in restaurants, department stores, banks, and other places of business, confronting it in churches was the ultimate contradiction.

An example of racism occurred when I was in the third grade. My mother reluctantly allowed me to visit a church with two of my friends who were white. She knew the denomination that my friends belonged to would not welcome an African American child – or adult for that matter. And she was right. The racism in that church was very noticeable with no one showing me the love of God. When they passed the offering plate, parishioners watched closely to make sure I didn't take any money. I saw someone carefully wipe their hand after they handled the plate I had touched. Of the numerous churches I have worshiped in, I can count on one hand the number of congregations where racism, homophobia and other forms of bigotry were not apparent. Over time, I began to feel that I might never find that holy place where everyone was loved and accepted simply because they were sisters and brothers in Christ. Was I asking too much?

At 15 I walked away from the church, but not God. I returned to the church four years later and had a powerful born again experience. I was soon introduced to a local chapter of a national Christian women's organization. Although I was one of only two women of color, the other being a Latina, I was excited about the prospect of the fellowship with other believers. It wasn't long before I moved quickly up the leadership ladder. The women seemed to accept and respect me in each position I filled. One day near the end of my term as vice-president, the selection committee phoned me and said that they believed God had called me to be president. I was overwhelmed and honored and scared all at

the same time. Having been well groomed in the reality of racism, my first thought was, "How will the fellowship feel about having an African American woman as their president?" I prayed about the appointment and felt God giving me the green light, so I accepted. My appointment caused a split in the fellowship and many women left. However, God was watching over the fellowship and me. He brought more women into the fellowship than had left and the ministry flourished. This group was not exactly what I had been praying for where acceptance was concerned.

During my leadership of the fellowship, I completed a school of ministry, received my ministerial license, and went on staff at my church. It was a church that was somewhat multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. My pastors and the majority of the congregation were white, but I felt welcomed. The members were warm and loving toward me – until I was faced with divorce.

I sought help from my pastor, who did not provide me with the spiritual support I so desperately needed. My divorce labeled me a "fallen woman". The only choices I had were to either step down or be removed from leadership. I chose to step down and withdrew from ministry, which devastated me. The lack of Christian love I experienced showed me that their love was a conditional love, and I questioned whether I would ever encounter unconditional Christian love.

That experience left me untrusting of those claiming to be children of God. I could not understand how they could abandon me in my hour of need. I was in a daze. I had no idea where to turn. For a while I didn't attend church at all. I felt like the Samaritan woman at the well before meeting Jesus. She had been ostracized and excommunicated from society – alone and unloved. I floated aimlessly from church to church, unable to trust the care of my fragile heart to anyone.

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NEXT time: Coming Out at Church

BOARD UPDATE

BY JILL YEOMAN

The ECWR Board had an enjoyable and productive spring meeting in surprisingly sunny Seattle April 25-27. Over the past year, the Board meetings have tended to grow in length because there is so much to discuss regarding new opportunities to sustain and grow the ministry of ECWR.

Several of the board members arrived in Seattle on Thursday and attended the DirECTION Northwest's weekly meeting. We were once again reminded of the blessing of EC and the richness of fellowship with other GLBT Christians.

From Friday afternoon to Sunday morning we discussed and deliberated many topics including:

- Reviewing of the job description for the recently approved part-time Conference Coordinator
- Brainstorming future direction/possibilities for local groups
- Planning for location and theme of ConnECTION 2004 (25 year "Reunion" ConnECTION at Chapman University in Orange, CA – July 28-Aug 1)
- ConnECTION 2003 update from Ladonna Everett
- Website update from Ladonna Everett and Jill Yeomans
- Diversity Committee update from Tracy Fletcher – we are very excited about the topics the Diversity Committee will be presenting at ConnECTION 2003
- Don Frye updated us on thECable and we discussed the Cable as part of EC's future strategy – clarification was made that thECable is a magazine style publication, not a newsletter.

Through the many hours of discussion, the Board made key decisions that support ECWR strategies. They included:

- Purchase hand-held radios to facilitate communication between ConnECTION coordinator and volunteers
- Purchase digital recorders to be used at ConnECTION to digitally capture keynote addresses and workshops. CDs will be available with full audio from ConnECTION
- Purchase video compression software in order to publish EC marketing video on website and other media
- Purchase ad space from Google to increase ECWR.org visibility when searching for "gay and Christian" topics on the Internet
- Approval of teleconferencing services in order for board members to effectively communicate between board meetings when dialog between three or more people is important

We ended the board meeting feeling good about our progress, encouraged by each other, and excited about ECWR's near term plans and future strategies. Just as there is much work for the Board to tackle, there continues to be many GLBT Christians from all walks of life that desperately need the experience of God's love and grace. This is why EC's ministry is still necessary and why the board continues to serve. On behalf of the board I thank you for your prayers, time, and financial gifts that make this life-changing ministry a reality. We thank God for the members and chapters of EC who provide this safety zone for spiritual and sexual reconciliation. Never forget your journey and the truth that set you free. ■

Jill is ECWR Vice President and member of EC Houston.



ThECable is the quarterly magazine of Evangelicals Concerned Western Region (ECWR), an affirming fellowship of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered Christians and their supporters.

ThECable is published quarterly – March, June, September and December by Evangelicals Concerned Western Region (ECWR). You can contact us by mail at

PO Box 19734, Seattle, WA 98109-6734, by phone at 206.621.8960, or by email at ecwr@ecwr.org. ThECable subscriptions are available upon request at no cost and current issues can be read on-line at www.ecwr.org.

ThECable is a magazine style publication and unsolicited submissions of issue oriented articles and stories of personal Christian faith journeys are welcomed. Letters to the editor, local chapter announcements and other news items must be submitted by the first day of February, May, August and November. ECWR reserves the right to select and edit all submissions as necessary. Articles appearing in thECable do

not necessarily reflect the Statement of Faith or beliefs of ECWR.

To contact the Editor, please send correspondence to the ECWR office in Seattle, WA or email to fryemister@msn.com.

"What is the mark of the Christian? To love one another, even as Christ also loved us."

-Basil of Caesarea

IDEAS TO GROW YOUR GROUP

BY PATRICK MIRE

My last article explored the mechanics of establishing a local group. This time I'd like to discuss two different topics- growing a group and demographic diversities.

Once a group has been organized and regular meeting times and places have been established, what's next? Getting people to come to the group is essential for both its survival and appeal to others. Outreach for your local group depends greatly on your local community. Cities with large, organized gay communities provide various opportunities to publish a group's name, contact number and meeting times in a local calendar, often for free. These are frequently offered within local gay publications as a community service to their readership.

List your contact information within the Gay and Lesbian Yellow pages, the Gay and Lesbian community center, the various coffee houses, restaurants, and even bars (no- really?)- any local establishments where you might spur an interest. Or start a website of your own. The possibilities are innumerable!

However, smaller towns with no defined GLBT community might mean depending upon word of mouth or locally supportive establishments, churches, and publications. In either case, printing flyers or business cards with safe contact information (information that does not compromise anyone's personal safety) and distributed or posted locally reaches a broader audience. Or consider advertising in publications catering to the more 'broad-minded' community-at-large beyond the GLBT community. Either way, being prepared for possible negative responses from any venue, including dealing with them, is prudent.

This begs the next question- whom do we seek - ONLY Christians, ONLY the GLBT community, or ANYONE seeking answers?

First, consider the mission statement of ECWR- to offer a 'safe place' for those struggling with GLBT issues to reconcile their faith with their sexuality. That said, the nature and personality of the core group must be considered- e.g. - safety issues such as opposite sex issues, or straight vs. GLBT issues. Is the group composed of men and women, both straight and GLBT Christians, or able to minister to non-Christians as well as struggling Christians? What does it mean to minister to non-Christians, spiritual seekers, or those professing different faiths? What is the difference between evangelism (introducing someone to Jesus), discipleship (learning to be a Christ follower) and providing a witness to our Christian faith (living out and explaining what we believe as Christians)?

While we are commissioned to spread the Good News of Christ, I believe that we are to do so with love, compassion, and respect- the very same things that we ask of our own conservative Christian community who believe that we are misguided as GLBT Christians. I also believe that the Lord brings people of all persuasions to our groups to teach us about them, about ourselves and about our own faith. By this we learn and understand our difference and similarities that the Lord created all under one roof- the Creator's roof, not ours.

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LEAD AND SHEEPFOLDS

BY DON FRYE

The Gallup Organization released poll results on May 14 announcing that the public views William Bennett's gambling as morally acceptable. This should be good news for the former secretary of education and drug czar, and a leading proponent of family values and author of numerous books on virtue (see the full report at www.gallup.com). But the Gallup poll raised a very interesting issue on the public's perception between what is morally acceptable and what is legal.

Moral acceptability is based on societal norms influenced by personal belief and religious precepts. What is considered legal is based on legislative action by government and supported by the community at large. But what happens when what I consider to be morally acceptable is considered illegal or what is legal opposes my moral beliefs? This is the precarious tension that we have to live with both within the church and the world.

For Christians, whether GLBT or straight, living the Christian life is not merely a matter of following a moral code or keeping the laws of the land. St. Benedict challenged those wanting to join his community by looking at two images – lead and sheepfolds. Benedict compared lead to gold. Lead looks and feels strong, but it is very pliable and soft. Lead cannot be relied on when times demand it. However, gold is tried in the furnace where it is made strong and pure.

The second comparison describes two sheepfolds, my own and God's. Esther de Waal describes them in her book *A Life-Giving Way*, "A sheepfold, if I build it for myself, suggests a safe haven into which I can settle comfortably, penned up in my own self-chosen world, finding a moral reason for doing whatever strikes my fancy. If, however, I choose to be in the Lord's sheepfold, then I must listen to the voice of the shepherd rather than my own voice (pp 19-20)."

As a Christ follower, I cannot minimize life in Christ to merely keeping the "rules" or living a morally acceptable life. If all it takes to be a Christian is to follow all of the rules, then Jesus died in vain. First and foremost, Jesus came into our world so that we would be reconciled to God and our sins forgiven.

Secondly, I am reminded of the advice of my interim priest when asked how can we determine what is morally acceptable or life giving in our Christian life? His response was simple and profound – "Whatever draws you and others closer to God and helps you to become more Christlike is good and morally acceptable. Whatever would alienate you and others from God or dehumanizes you and others is sin."

It is the love of Jesus, not the rules that should define our morality and spirituality. "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34,35). ■

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to be a Christian
is to follow all
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ConnEction 2003 July 31 – August 1 University of California San Diego

WHAT IS ConnEction? Each year Evangelicals Concerned Western Region sponsors ConnEction, a two-day women's retreat and four day conference attended by over 250 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Christians and their supporters. This year's conference will be held on the beautiful University of California San Diego campus. **THE DETAILS** – Where can I get **all** the information? **To Register online** and learn more about ConnEction 2003, visit our web site at www.ecwr.org OR **Contact ECWR** by email at ecwr@ecwr.org or phone **206.621.8960** and request a conference

Women's
Retreat
July 30 & 31
Cost is only
\$25 to attend
ConnEction
2003
July 31 &
Aug. 1
Early
Registration
ends July 1.
Save \$30

Women's Retreat - July 30 & 31

Bad Girls of the Bible: Challenging Culture and Living Justly presented by **Dr. Susan Shaw,**



Director of Women Studies at Oregon State University.

Eve, Tamar, Delilah--we've heard the stories about how "bad" they were. But is that all there is to the story? Digging deeper, we find that these (and other) "bad girls of the Bible" often showed courage, boldness, determination, and independence. From them, we may be able to learn something about standing against social expectations and oppression.

COST - \$25 per person. Thanks to a special challenge grant, the Women's Retreat has been substantially subsidized. You are encouraged to come and invite a friend!

Connection 2003 – July 31 - August 1

This year's theme is ReConnEction – "All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did on the cross. God has given us the task of reconciling people to Him." 2 Corinthians 5: 18,19 (NLT)

When we are REconnEcted to the One who made us, we are changed. A sense of newness permeates our lives. This year we encourage you to come to receive and give at the same time. We have planned ConnEction 2003 to be your personal pit stop, as well as, a place for you to help others make their first steps back home to God.

The conference schedule itself has been streamlined so you can reconnect with old friends, make new friends, and contemplate on what you experience in a workshop, general sessions or family group.

Keynote Speakers



Not Knowing the Half of It: Confessions of A Wandering Jew
Alex Haiken

Alex was born and raised in New York City where he was raised in a typical Reform Jewish household. He attended Hebrew school as a young boy and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. Alex came out relatively early and lived as an openly gay man until his sexuality was put "on hold" after he came to faith in Christ in a powerful conversion that radically transformed his life.

He knows of no greater pleasure than to help other gay people who have had a personal encounter with the Savior as put together a committed spirituality together with their sexuality. Alex attends The City Church in New York City and works as a Project Manager in Information Technology.



Coming Out Ahead
Dr. Ralph Blair

Dr. Ralph Blair, founder of Evangelicals Concerned, Inc., has outspokenly supported the integration of evangelical Christian faith and homosexuality since the mid-1960's. A psychotherapist in New York City, Ralph has consistently and articulately promoted the acceptance of and justice for gay men and lesbian women.

Ralph founded Evangelicals Concerned, Inc. in 1976. He has edited EC's two national quarterlies, Review and Record, for over 24 years. He currently serves as a private consultant to leaders of a variety of national gay/lesbian and AIDS organizations.



The Spaciousness of Reconciliation
Patricia Ellen Burgin

Patricia Ellen Burgin left international university ministry in 1993. She has since worked with thousands of individual's and small groups as a pastoral counselor and marriage and family therapist at Presbyterian Counseling Service in Seattle. Patricia holds master degrees in theology and applied behavioral science, she continues to write and speak on a more limited basis from her home in Seattle. She is a competitive rower, and President of Interlochen Rowing Club in Seattle.

Workshops

For further information on the workshops and presenters, visit the ConnEction web site at www.ecwr.org

- **Newcomers 101**
- **Our Powerful Stories**
- **In a Dry and Weary Land: Spiritual Survival in the Deserts of Life**

- **Healing From Spiritual Abuse**
- **Shouting for Joy and Singing the Blues: A study of joy, hope and depression in the book of Philippians.**
- **Ex-Gay? The Good, the Bad, and (mostly) the Ugly**
- **"Positively HIV" (And Those Who Love Them)**
- **There's a "T" in My Alphabet Soup! Now What?**

Cost 

All costs include Room and Meals. ECWR members received a discount for ConnECTION. Join or renew your \$24 membership today online at www.ecwr.org and save on registration costs. If you have special dietary needs or need physical assistance, please make sure you communicate this when you register.

Early Registration – received by July 1
 Members - \$295 Non-Members - \$325

Registration after July 1
 Members - \$325 Non-Member - \$355

Scholarships 

To Donate - If you would like to help others attend, please send your donations through your local chapter or contact the ECWR Regional Office by email ecwr@ecwr.org or call 206.621.8960.

To apply for a Scholarship – Contact your local EC Chapter or contact the ECWR Regional Office using the email and phone number above.

Day Passes – are available at the Conference office for Friday and Saturday at \$75 a day (meals included).

Transportation 

Everyone is encouraged to fly into San Diego International Airport / Lindbergh Field. Transportation to UCSD will **not**

be provided – you will receive information in your registration confirmation on transportation to the conference site.

Saturday Event – August 2 at 7:30 pm

RESTORATION: Coming Home To God is an evening of restoration and healing for those of us who have been bruised and wounded by past church experiences. Join us in the **Don Powell Theatre** located on the San Diego State Campus. The night will include uplifting music, personal stories and Jeremy Marks



Guest Speaker - Jeremy Marks

Jeremy Marks is director of Courage UK, formerly an ex- gay ministry founded in 1988, based near London, England. After about ten years, Jeremy had become so appalled at the “fruit” of the ex-gay ethos, which left many people in despair (some even giving up their faith), that he spent much time in prayer questioning the whole future direction of the ministry. After much heart searching, he concluded that to be faithful to the gospel message he needed to disown the ex-gay ethos altogether and embrace all gay people with the unconditional love of Christ, laying aside all agendas for “change” to a socially acceptable norm. This began a whole new ministry to gay & lesbian people, which has since drawn a great many folk to find or rediscover their faith and hope in Christ. Though gay himself, Jeremy & his wife Bren remain committed to one another and to a gay-affirming ministry approach.

FOR MORE DETAILS AND INFORMATION ON CONNECTION 2003 go to ECWR's web site at www.ecwr.org.



FAMILY FUNDAMENTALS NATIONAL BROADCAST OUTREACH EVENT

Evangelicals Concerned Western Region, along with PFLAG and other GLBT groups, will be supporting POV's national broadcast of the award-winning documentary Family Fundamentals, an official selection of the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. The film was screened to wide approval at last year's ConnECTION at Chapman University.

In his new feature documentary, Family Fundamentals, filmmaker Arthur Dong (Licensed to Kill, Coming Out Under Fire) continues his quest to understand American contempt for homosexuality and its effects on family, culture and the nation's political landscape. Armed with a digital camera, Dong takes viewers into the private, and sometimes very public lives, of three conservative Christian families with gay and lesbian children. He asks:

What happens when parents believe that their own kids represent the very element that will lead to the destruction of the human race?

Among the film's profiles are: a Pentecostal church leader– with both a lesbian daughter and a gay grandson– who founded a Christian ministry for parents with children who have "become homosexual"; the gay son of a Mormon bishop in rural Utah; and Brian Bennett, the gay former chief of staff to conservative (and Catholic) Congressman Bob Dornan (R-California), who once regarded Bennett as a son.

ECWR encourages local chapters to use this broadcast as an outreach event. Family Fundamentals national broadcast has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 26 (check local listings for time and PBS station). Local chapters may want to videotape the broadcast and use it at a later date. Outreach event ideas and promotional materials will be available on the ECWR web site by June 20 – included will be a flyer, print ad, and invitation for local chapters to download and use.

Check the ECWR web-site for outreach promo ideas and materials available June 20

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Eventually, I moved 400 miles away in hopes of getting a fresh start.

Although deeply wounded, I was still determined to find the Christian community I dreamed of belonging to. I found what I thought was a progressive and accepting congregation. The fellowship was ethnically and culturally diverse, including a large constituency of gay people, which made membership in that church seem promising. Before long I settled in and my ministry was once again in full swing. I gained the trust of the parishioners as well as the pastoral staff. There was one glaring gap though - there were no women in leadership. There were five pastors and a senior pastor, all of whom were male. Among them was one token Latino pastor, who was a "recovered" gay man. Translation: He had been gay, but had seen the error of his ways, had repented, and was now living a pure asexual life in Christ. Obviously there was something terribly wrong with this picture.

The church had a ministry geared to reach gay people. It was designed to help individuals recover their souls, change their evil ways and leave the "gay lifestyle." The ministry's goal was for the "recovered" to meet a partner of the opposite sex suitable for marriage and live happily ever after. This did not sit well with me. But rather than leave the church, I decided to stay and fight for change. My struggle for gender equality and racial representation was initially met with strong opposition from the pastors. Pressure came from other strong women of faith in the church, including the wife of the senior pastor. The church leaders began to examine the possibility of allowing women to serve in areas leadership. The results were similar in regards to racial equality in leadership. They eventually agreed to allow changes in both areas to take place, but they made the requirements so stringent that it was virtually impossible for anyone to meet them. The battle continued until the leaders finally made it possible for women and people of color to lead in the fellowship.

The gay issue was different. They were unwilling to budge from their position. They were adamant that gay people could not enter the kingdom of heaven. Every fiber in my being was against their position and I fought it until my career required that I relocate out of town.

In my new location, I didn't have a church home and I desired Christian fellowship. Eventually, I was introduced to Evangelicals Concerned by way of an EC Bible study in my area. But before I was willing to attend, I had an intense and lengthy conversation with the local contact. The first thing I wanted to know was if the study was ethnically diverse. The white woman on the other end of the telephone seemed to think it was, so I agreed to check it out. This happened immediately after ConnECtion, so they were really excited about what they had just experienced. I was anxious to attend ConnECtion and did the following year. I was apprehensive about going because again, I wasn't sure if I would be the only African American there with whom I could identify. And if not, my next question would be whether or not I would be accepted.

My excitement and curiosity got me there in spite of my concerns. I was accustomed to being in an environment where I was either the only person of color, or one of a handful. Such was the case at my first ConnECtion. Although most people were friendly, there were those who appeared uncomfortable around me. I did encounter some racism and bigotry, which will be present inside and outside of Christianity. However, I also met new friends among this ecumenical body of believers who truly loved the same Lord, and desired to earnestly serve Him with all their hearts, as was my desire. I found a group of people, many whom were working toward spiritual reconciliation with their sexual orientation like I was. I also found a fellowship of Christians who were willing to take an honest look at their own racism and bigotry and deal honestly with it. This was a rare find. This is what keeps me coming back to ConnECtion year after year, Christians seeking to honestly be like Jesus. When you have located a place where you can feel safe to be fully who you are without ridicule or condemnation, and know that you are loved regardless, you have caught a glimpse of God's kingdom. ■

Renee moved back to Northern California 2 years ago and is a member-at-large of the Monterey EC group. Currently, she is a social worker in the Bay area and a Ph.D. candidate.

I AM MUCH BIGGER THAN YOUR FEAR

BY JAMES B. LIN

I don't know why it surprises me that my way of relating to God often mirrors the way I handle my other intimate relationships. Lately, I've discovered that the men I date are much more accepting of me than I am of myself, and my fear of their rejection is greater than any real risk of their criticism or non-acceptance. It's a lesson that feels familiar, because I learned it when I was first coming out and struggling as a gay man to stick with God, when God had no intention of ever letting me go.

In a way, God was my first boyfriend, my first love. I had lots of crushes and infatuations as a teenager, but God was the only one who loved me back. I had a hard time accepting that

love. Twenty years ago, I used to worry that he was going to leave me because of my emotional and erotic connections to men. I was obsessed with my fatal imperfection as a Christian and my imaginary infidelity in my relationship with God.

Remember at the Last Supper when Jesus announces that one of the disciples will betray him. Each of the disciples ask, "Is it I, Lord?" until Judas asks, "Is it I, Lord?" and Jesus says, "You have said it." When reading this story during Easter I used to subconsciously fear that I was like Judas, betrayer making Jesus die and go away. For the first twenty-five years of my life, I was sure my betrayal was in the form of homosexual desire.

This is what keeps me coming back to ConnECtion year after year, Christians seeking to honestly be like Jesus.

In traditional Chinese family culture, there are very fluid boundaries around the distinction between individual family members. The stereotypical modern process in the U.S. of becoming an adult independent of one's parents, either through rebellion or some other form of separation, is a very contested concept in my family. For me, coming out as a gay man inherently involved my parents and brother – in some ways, they would be forced to come out as well, because whoever I become, whatever I do viscerally reflects on the whole family. Because of that, my fear of rejection was trebled by the sense of direct responsibility for my family's well-being as well as my own.

One of the sad aspects of living in that kind of fear while in an intimate relationship is that my relationships didn't get very intimate: my head was so filled with anxious thoughts that I couldn't hear what the other people were saying. With my family, I ended communicating. With God, I asked so many questions, made so many pleas, that there wasn't any space for a response. I used to make one-sided negotiations. They went like this: "God, I promise to be good and asexual if you will love me," or, "God, I'm so sorry that I didn't keep my last promise, but I promise to do better next time so that you can stay with me."

In those negotiations, I imagined God across the table from me always disappointed. I went through high school and college on a continuing search to find the solution for homosexuality. Was it Bible study? I enlisted my church, friends and campus fellowship to help me develop a theological grounding for my faith. Was it prayer? I prayed earnestly for help. But all that time I held God captive in a box of my relational anxiety and insecurity. I thought I was praying to God, but I was really just talking to my fear. I started to read books about gay people in the church -- John Boswell, Brian McNaught, and Chris Glaser. But I couldn't take that first step of faith, the step that would allow God to rule in my life as more than a theological construct.

That's why I was so stunned when I went to my first service at the Metropolitan Community Church in Boston, and God spoke through the static of my anxiety in a simple voice. It wasn't anything that was being said in the service itself. It was just God's voice saying, "Stop your worry! I am much bigger than your fear, bigger than your being gay, or not. What I want from you is for you to come with me, walk with me, be with me." God spoke, and I finally heard him. And in that moment, I was filled with gratitude and stopped treating God like a suspicious lover and experienced God as the loving parent who waits with open arms, always hoping, always waiting for me to come home to where I am loved.

Through my first ConnEction seven years ago I discov-

ered more proof of God's love for me. In ECWR, I found role models and inspiration in the lives of hundreds of lesbians and gay men (and one extraordinary transgendered woman), each discovering God's presence and love as we reconciled our sexuality and spirituality. A few years after my first ConnEction, my mom attended a ConnEction, in order to better understand what it means to be gay and love Jesus. Surprisingly she attended not just as my mom, but as an individual: she arrived early and attended the women's retreat by herself. Like me, she found tremendous inspiration and support in getting to know so many queer people of faith. And for me, as a good Chinese son, seeing my mother accept the reality of gay Christians was an important part of my own process of self-acceptance, part of my ongoing work in understanding really just how high and wide God's love for me is.

The process of applying God's "reality check" to my other relationships has been slow, often impeded by my resistance in accepting that both God and the men I am learning to love can love me as I am. When I listen to my fears, I begin to think of all the ways that God and my boyfriend shouldn't stick with me. I find myself, like Martha in the story from Luke 10, trying to keep Jesus in my life by cleaning house, making dinner, being a good host. My inner Martha is obsessed with perfection, convinced that life is something to be made, not lived. I work to please, to be worthy, to cover up my belief that only by my usefulness am I made acceptable.

Eventually, I stop and listen, experiencing what it is like to be appreciated without effort, to be loved for who I am and not what I do. Inside me I also see Martha's sister Mary, just sitting in Jesus' presence, content to be near, simply to be. My inner Mary knows how to listen, ignoring Martha's worry, and experiencing gratitude for the gift of being loved. ■

James Lin is a member of the ECWR Diversity Committee and serves on the Board of Directors. He lives in San Francisco Bay Area.



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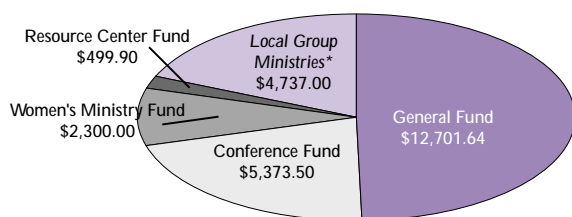
If we truly believe in the message of Christ, we are freed of any need to force change upon those around us, allowing the Spirit to convict and transform their hearts. God has asked us to sow of the seeds of the Gospel and we trust in the Lord to do all the rest. ■

Patrick is ECWR Board secretary and member of EC Houston.

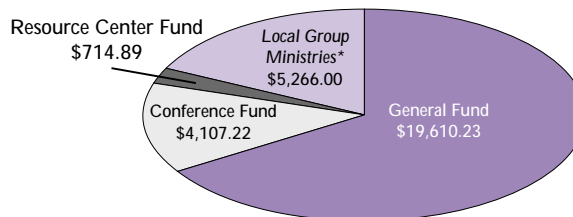


Treasurer's Report — Financial Report as of May 15, 2003

Income = \$25,612.04



Expense = \$29,698.34



*Donations designated for Local groups

For me, coming out as a gay man inherently involved my parents and brother – in some ways, they would be forced to come out as well...

EC INC PRESENTS PREACHING FESTIVAL WITH DR. ROY CLEMENTS SEPTEMBER 26-28

The foremost figures of the 18th century evangelical revival personified the two-fold heritage of American evangelicalism – Puritanism and Pietism. They were both born in 1703 – John Wesley, on June 28th, at the Epworth rectory, in old England and Jonathan Edwards, on October 5th, at the East Windsor parsonage, in New England.

In celebration of the 300th anniversaries of their births and lasting influence of their labors, Evangelicals Concerned is sponsoring a 3-day Festival of Preaching, featuring Dr. Roy Clements, world-renowned expositor from London. Dr. Clements will preach four sermons rooted in the evangelical emphases of Edwards and Wesley.

The festival will be held in Ocean Grove, NJ and you can register for the conference at www.ecinc.org. Space is limited so sign up early. The conference begins on Friday and concludes on Saturday. Besides the four preaching services, there will be a 300th Birthday Party on Saturday night and a service of Holy Communion on Sunday morning.

ECWR CALENDAR

Women's Retreat

University of California— San Diego
San Diego, CA July 30-31

ConnEction 2003

University of California
San Diego, San Diego, CA
July 31-August 3

EC Preaching Festival

with Dr. Roy Clements
Ocean Grove, NJ September 26-28

ConnEction 2004

25th Anniversary Conference
Chapman University
Orange, CA July 28-August 1

Join or Renew as an ECWR Member today! Receive these benefits:

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Your \$24 membership helps support ECWR in starting local groups, train local group leaders, maintain the ECWR web site and the Resource Center Sponsor ConnEction each year. Mail your \$24 to ECWR PO Box 19734; Seattle, WA 98109-9675 OR pay online using your Visa or MasterCard at www.ecwr.org.

CONNECT with a Group

Come find a safe place for GLBT evangelical Christians to deal with issues of reconciliation and integration of your spirituality and sexuality. For up-to-date listings of EC groups or information on starting an EC group, contact the ECWR Regional Office 206.621.8960 or visit our website at ecwr@ecwr.org.

Take this list with you when you travel and visit other EC chapters .

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