



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians And Gays

PFLAG WEAVER

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

June, 2003

Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and friends, through *support*, to cope with an adverse society; *education*, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and *advocacy*, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.



PFLAG provides the opportunity for confidential dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.



NATIONAL WEB SITE
www.pflag.org



DALLAS WEB SITE
www.pflagdallas.org



PFLAG/Dallas

(Newsletter and all correspondence)
P.O. Box 111148 • Carrollton, TX 75011

972/77 PFLAG
(972/777-3524)

PFLAG/Dallas Co-presidents:

Donna Akin – 972/443-1422
pflagdonna@yahoo.com
Pat Smith – 214/538-2574
psmith@pflagdallas.org
Newsletter Phone/Fax
972/418-1898
newsletter@pflagdallas.org

Newsletter Deadline:

June 12, 2003
by mail, fax or e-mail

Next Meeting

June 12, 2003

Second Thursday, 7-9:30 p.m.
Midway Hills Christian Church
11001 Midway Road, Dallas

Santorum is all talk, not much listening

A meeting with parents of gay children is brusque

by Melina Waldo

As the parent of a gay son, I visit Washington occasionally to lobby Congress on equal rights. But nothing prepared me for the heated meeting I had with Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) recently.

Our son came out as gay during his freshman year at Penn State. Learning that he was gay was as unexpected as it was disturbing to my husband and me.

Worried about his future and afraid of losing our close relationship with him, fortunately I found a group called Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. PFLAG is a wonderful organization of caring people with whom I could discuss my fears, and learn from gay people the reality of their lives.

PFLAG's annual "lobby days" encourage our members to go to Washington to meet with our representatives. On one of these annual trips, I had an encounter with on Capitol Hill with a clergyman who loudly interrupted me and pushed me as I was being interviewed by a reporter.

My son told me at the time: "You're their worst nightmare, Mom!" He explained that the last thing the Far Right wants people to see is a mother speaking up for her gay child.

That minister is old by now and Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond are retired; but lest we advocates of equal rights for our gay loved ones grow complacent, along comes Santorum to take up the torch.

What was to have been a routine visit to Washington took on an unexpected urgency when Santorum, in an Associated Press interview discussing the upcoming Supreme Court review of the Texas sodomy law, compared our gay and lesbian children to criminals, linking the rights of homosexuals to pedophiles, polygamists and people who commit incest.

Such false and inflammatory remarks from one so high in our government could not go unanswered. Fran Kirschner, president of PFLAG Philadelphia, through great persistence obtained an appointment with the senator.

Fran; her husband, Allen; my husband, Dick, and I set out for Washington on the morning of May 1. We hoped to appeal to Santorum on a parent-to-parent basis, not to discuss policy, especially because we were told we would have only 10 minutes.

How to express the hurt to our families, the fears about our children's safety, and the contributions of gay and lesbian Americans?

We spoke for a few minutes with his aide – who, by the way, could teach his boss something about respect and manners – and then the senator strode in. In my heart at that moment were every gay person who ever told me his or her story, every injustice against gay people known to me, and of course, my own dear son.

As a shorthand way of putting a human face on the issue for him, I placed in front of Santorum a photo of my son and me at my 60th birthday celebration, and something else, which I described as one of my most precious possessions. He barely gave them a glance.

We tried valiantly to make him see the connection between his awful remarks and damage to our families. Hateful words give permission to those who would harm our loved ones.

We talked about our children; he lectured us on the nonexistence of the right to privacy. We said he was elected to represent all the people of the commonwealth; he talked about his duty to uphold the Constitution (his version).

I objected to his interpretation of the right to privacy, insisting that most legal scholars did not agree with him. I told him the law can distinguish consensual acts between two adults expressing their love for one another and incest. He told me that he was a lawyer, implying, of course, that I am not.

He was arrogant, belligerent, argumentative and condescending. His vigorous defense of himself stretched the meeting to a half hour or more.

See Santorum, page 3

Our church & the sexuality studies

With these two articles, *The Lutheran* offers the first in a series of reports that will explore the thoughts and actions of ELCA members and leaders regarding the sexuality studies called for by the 2001 Churchwide Assembly.

Voting members at the Indianapolis session moved to speed up consideration of gay and lesbian issues in the ELCA, which have been matters of concern in the 65 synods for several years. They called for the development of a study document on homosexuality by 2005, complete with proposals for action by that assembly, which would lead to decisions about blessing same-gender unions and allowing gays and lesbians in committed relationships on ELCA ministry rosters. They also authorized the development of a social statement on human sexuality. (*The Lutheran*, October 2001, pages 16-17, www.thelutheran.org/0110/page16c.html).

A 13-member task force headed by James M. Childs Jr. is leading this work, under the banner "Journey Together Faithfully" (www.elca.org/faithfuljourney). Their first study guide was sent in August to all ELCA congregations. It is based on the ELCA's "A Message on Sexuality: Some Common Convictions." Childs is on leave from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, where he is professor of theology and ethics and director of academic development.

In addition to reporting on the task force meetings, *The Lutheran* will cover activity relating to the studies through conversations with members of congregations that study the task force materials and discussions with individuals whose lives are touched by the issues. The magazine also will present divergent perspectives from theologians and ethicists on relevant questions. We begin with these two essays [one last month and this one] that raise the foundational question of why the church should — or shouldn't — pursue the mandated studies.

It's faithful to consider controversial issues

by Herbert W. Chilstrom and Lowell O. Erdahl

We thank God that Christians from the beginning had the wisdom and courage to take a new look at controversial issues. In the light of their relationship with Christ, they began to think and act in more life-giving ways.

It was difficult and controversial, for example, for those first Jewish Christians to welcome uncircumcised Gentiles into fellowship and to abandon adherence to dietary laws they had obeyed from childhood.

We are grateful that their assembly (Acts 15) took a new look and decided that it wasn't necessary for us Gentiles to, in effect, become Jews before becoming Christians.

Although it now seems that we were blind for centuries to our prejudice, Christians compelled by the injustice and oppression of slavery took a new look at texts telling slaves to obey their masters, changed their minds and became abolitionists.

Grace-centered interpreters have enabled most of us to see divorce and later marriage as sometimes appropriate, even for clergy.

Thirty years ago our Lutheran churches, in keeping with Jesus' teaching that religious rules are to serve people instead of people serving the rules (Mark 2:23-28), took a new look at restrictions for ordained ministry that kept women from being pastors. Our standards, we decided, should enable ministry, not hinder it. We began to ordain women, and their life-giving ministry now affirms

our wisdom.

We believe the witness of gay and lesbian Christians who desire gracious welcome and full participation in the life of our church compels us once again to take a new look.

Twenty-five years ago we, like many heterosexuals, believed everyone is sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex. Then we began to meet gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ who asked us to listen to their stories. The more we listened, the more we questioned our assumptions about homosexuality. They told us that their sexual orientation, like ours, wasn't chosen but given and discovered, often early in life.

These new friends didn't fit the stereotypes that had dominated our thinking. They confessed Jesus Christ and were responsible in their behavior. They abhorred the thought that anyone, gay or heterosexual, would ever abuse another person, especially a child. We got to know Christians in same-gender relationships that were as deep and committed as those in faithful heterosexual marriages.

The impact of their Christian testimony forced us to take a new, long look at the Bible. We knew there are only a few passages that say anything directly about same-sex activity and that they are all negative.

Some will say this should have settled the matter for us. But we kept on looking, listening and studying. We learned about pagan same-sex behavior in biblical times and began to wonder, "Are these lustful, abusive acts those that the biblical writers condemn?" Such sinful behavior, we agreed, should certainly be condemned.

But then we went on to ask, "What does the Bible say about homosexuality as we understand it today, as a given, discovered orientation of attraction toward people of the same gender?" And "What does the Bible say about people who live in faithful, committed same-gender relationships?"

We searched Scripture and discovered that the Bible says nothing about either one. The more we studied and the more we listened to gay and lesbian Christians, the more we became convinced that the biblical texts dealt with sinful, irresponsible, domineering behavior. To use them to condemn these Christian friends is an incorrect, hurtful misapplication of Scripture.

What we saw in our growing circle of gay and lesbian friends was something far different from the sinful sex rightly condemned in the Bible. Many refrained from any intimate sexual relationships. Some entered relationships that were caring, committed and enduring.

We learned to know families of gay and lesbian people. We felt their pain and sorrow as they saw loved ones drift away from congregations that voiced condemnation. "Love the sinner but hate the sin," said many well-meaning Christians, without realizing that this conveys rejection to people who long for mutual life-fulfillment with another human being.

A mother told of her and her husband's love for their gay son. She also wrote about their anger and sorrow when reading in *The Lutheran* "hate-filled letters which said, in essence, that homosexual people have no place in our church." She told of her son's baptism and remembered the words, "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ." She observed that she had not seen a footnote saying, "But if you discover ... that your sexual orientation is homosexual, your membership in the body of Christ is null and void."

See *The Lutheran* on page 3

PRIZM and Town East Mall

by Jordan Carter

On May 2, members of the youth group (PRIZM!) youth outreach were meeting in the food court at the Town East Mall in Mesquite. Security showed up, and inquired as to our activities. We explained that we're an outreach group for rural GLBTQ youth [meeting] in local area malls, which provide a safe and anonymous environment.

At this time the head of security for the mall (a representative for Valor security services) arrived. He informed us that we were in violation of the mall's code of conduct. The first infraction was that we had a sign-in sheet for the attending members we had invited; this was construed as soliciting signatures. We removed the clipboard so as not to cause a problem.

We were then informed that the display of the gay pride flag on the table was offensive to patrons and would have to be removed, also that some of the attending persons were wearing clothing (PFLAG T-shirts) that could be deemed as offensive and would have to be removed. We then removed the pride flag and the offending articles and put them in handbags and such so as to no longer be on display.

The security head then informed us that our behavior was inappropriate and he was calling the police if the offending items were not completely removed from the premises, so we had them taken to our cars.

At this time we were told that we would still not be allowed to stay on the premises because of another violation of the code of conduct, that being that we were not allowed to be in groups larger than four persons and that if we did not comply we would be arrested for criminal trespassing. So after realizing that there could be no positive outcome in this ordeal we decided to vacate the premises. Please note, I understand that we were on private property and as such we were maintaining the best manners and decorum which a gay teen sensibility may possess.

My problem here is derived from the following. First, we all bought dinner in the food court so as not to just be taking up space – there were many people around who did not. Second, after removing the offending items, we were still not allowed to remain unmolested. The third problem is that the items of clothing and stickers along with the rainbow streamers adorning some of our clothing is for sale in several of the shops in the mall itself.

In the copy of the code of conduct given to me it expressly state, that religious groups were not bound by this article of the code of conduct; hence, if we were Moonie cultists there would not be a problem. Unfortunately, we are not as well respected, being not only teenagers but also gay.

Then lastly we were being forcefully asked to leave because we were in groups larger than four. So by this logic would a family of five be asked to split up? Would a group of shoppers be told to disband because of their number? Doesn't the Bill of Rights maintain a clause for peaceful assembly? Again, I understand that this is private property and they may devise a code of conduct to regulate the behavior of their customers.

A code of conduct is well and good as long as it is applied indiscriminately, and herein lies our problem. We complied with each article with which we were accused of violating, each time being rebuffed and having another reason for our removal being thrust upon us. After all of this I can only come to one conclusion: that we were considered undesirable.

Most of the time I believe that we live in an enlightened society,

unfortunately the actions of the management of Town East Mall have severely challenged me. My problem stems from the most basic fact that the management wants my money, but would prefer to treat me as a second-class citizen. Why don't I just sit in the back of the bus and think about this some more...

Thank you for all of your support!



Santorum from page 1

He blamed the media for the uproar: He was misquoted, misunderstood, taken out of context. I wondered what had become of the virtue of taking responsibility for one's words and deeds that conservatives love to preach to others.

I found in him the perfect incarnation of the closed mind. And, yes, as reported, he did trip over a chair in his haste to leave the meeting.

The story, I believe, has implications far beyond the gay community and its supporters, numerous though we are. Santorum and others like him have a view of our beloved country at odds with what the vast majority of Americans want.

The irony of our having just waged a war for the freedom of Iraqis as we lose our rights at home should not escape our notice. I believe Santorum and his far-right supporters oppose civil rights for gay citizens. The question for all Americans is: Who's next?

Oh, and that most precious possession I tried to get the senator to look at? It was a birthday card from my son that showed a child drawing a heart in the sand. It reads: "Before I could spell it, before I could say it, I loved you, Mom."

I served as a regional director of PFLAG on the national level with Melina Waldo from Pennsylvania. I am proud to forward her account of their meeting.

Martha England



The Lutheran from page 2

Changing our minds concerning homosexuality has been a long, difficult and reluctant journey. We don't assume that all who take part in the ELCA sexuality study will experience change of mind. But we believe we all have more to learn. Therefore, we challenge everyone in our church to take this venture seriously.

Take a new look! Explore the literature from one end of the spectrum to the other. Listen to biblical scholars. And invite gay and lesbian Christians to be part of your journey. Listen to their witness. Invite them to speak at your church. Get to know them as friends, fellow believers and co-workers in the church's mission.

Above all, let us pray that the Spirit of God will be our Guide, Helper and Teacher. We respectfully disagree on many things in the church. But we are bound together in one faith, by one Lord, and through one gospel that announces grace for all.

This is the second of two parts. Our thanks to Bill Smith for suggesting this article for your newsletter.



Put this on your refrigerator ...

Upcoming programs at PFLAG/Dallas: June – Father's Day; July – Walt Whitman; August – SMU Allies Group; September – Pat Silva and her son David who started the Gay Alliance at Highland Park High School; October – Roger Wedell and DGLA; November – Thanksgiving Pizza Party; annual membership meeting and election of officers.

If you have suggestions for speakers or topics for our monthly meetings, tell Pat Smith, 214/538-2574.

Page Four

Hey, Puddin's –

Happy Summer Solstice! And Happy Father's Day to all of you PFLAG dads!

Speaking of parents, I want to talk about PFLAG moms and dads. They are a special group. I said in a previous newsletter that it takes a lot of guts to come to PFLAG. And it takes even more guts to be an activist. Nobody defends their children like PFLAG parents! We are lucky to have them!

The ignorance of some politicians never ceases to amaze me. Once again we are being attacked for being lesbian or gay. The senseless arguments these morons offer against GLBT people are downright pathetic. It is cruel the way they insult a whole group of people. It's abuse. But we have power as voters to keep these abusers out of office.

PFLAG recently sponsored a Lobby Day in Austin and Washington, D.C. PFLAG moms and dads from all over the country were at the nation's capital showing pictures and telling stories of their families, proving again that we are normal families. In Austin, Texas, people argued against a proposed House bill that would take away foster children from single parents – specifically lesbian and gay foster parents. That bill was not about helping children. Seems obvious to me that the child is the one who suffers here. These so-called public servants are abusing foster children. How stupid is that? It's not about the child. It's about power. These "public servants" are the ones with the hidden agenda. Activists speak up against this kind of abuse.

PFLAG is not a lesbian or gay organization. It's parents and friends understanding and supporting their GLBT loved ones. Some of our members become strong activists. It's not a requirement for membership. It's just that some people get a fiery passion in them and they have to speak out. Nobody speaks out better than a parent fighting injustice to their child!

Judy Shepard speaks all over the country on GLBT equal rights. Her son was murdered for being gay. His murderers claimed that their religion told them it was okay to kill gays. She has an idiot from Kansas (who claims he is a reverend) who follows her all over the country and harasses her. He and his inbred clan had the nerve to insult her son during his funeral! But she still speaks out. She has that fire in her that won't be extinguished. Now more than ever we need people who have that fire in them. That passion for equal rights. Anyone can be a biological mother or father. It takes a lot more to be a parent. And it takes even more to be an activist.

Everyone can stop cruel words. Everyone can speak up. Everyone can find no humor in jokes that insult GLBT people. Judy Shepard's recent message at the University of North Texas was for GLBT people to, "be out all day, every day." Just being out all day every day is being an activist. Parents who acknowledge they have a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered child are activists. Activists speak up and educate an uneducated public who believe the messages of hate proclaimed by "Christians" and their puppet politicians.

Activists fight for equal rights. Not special rights. There is nothing special about being treated like the human beings that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered are. Activists get mad, frustrated and fed up. They get a fire inside that cannot be squelched by fear. Activists come in all forms, from quiet to loud and in-your-face.

Anyone can be an activist. All it takes is a little passion and a lot of love. Whatever form you take, we need you. Now more than

ever we need people to step up and educate. That foster parent House bill is proof that there is a lot of educating that still needs to be done.

I encourage all of you to become whatever kind of activist that suits you. Maybe you're quiet. Maybe you're loud. Maybe you are subtle. Or you can be out. Whatever kind you are – be it! Get fired up! Get out and educate! It'd be a great way to start your summer vacation!

I want to tell you a little about Marian Kearns. She was a big activist for PFLAG/Dallas. She had that fiery passion. She never could understand what all the fuss was about with someone being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. With her sharp wit and feisty personality, she helped get our chapter where it is today. We miss you, Marian. You will always be a part of PFLAG/Dallas.

Pat Smith

Co-president

Dear Mom,

Over the past few years, God has richly blessed me with true joy. I do not hope to understand all that He allows in my life, but I know that I must remain pliable clay in His hands.

My heart was nearly so hardened that I was too brittle to accept what He had for me. This book is the story of one who could not accept the path God had for him. Mom, many were the nights when my story came oh, so close to ending like Bobby's.

I do not know why God intended me to be gay. I do know, however, that in word and deed He loves and accepts me just as I am. He has a plan for my life and uses me to reach others with His love. I can think of no honor so high, no joy so full nor any purpose so fulfilling.

I know my being gay must be difficult for you; it took me 15 years of struggling before I accepted what God intended for me instead of wishing I were either dead or straight. I choose to live for my Lord, my first love.

I do not know if this story will help you understand my being gay, but it certainly tells parts of my journey.

I love you, Mom. I would like to share my life with you. I hope you learn to share your life, what is really going on with YOU, too!
August, 1999

Love,
Mark

This inscription appeared on the frontispiece of a new book in our library, "Prayers for Bobby."

To stretch our book dollars, our intrepid librarian, Jeffery Weber, occasionally buys used books. This was a used book. We don't even know what city it came from.

We can hope that the message was heeded, the lesson learned, and the book no longer needed.

But I'm not very optimistic about that.

Ladye

Wanna have some fun?

Help plan and present our PFLAG
National meeting in October!