



Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays NSW Inc.

(Incorporating Western Sydney)

July 2008 Newsletter

The next meeting of PFLAG NSW Inc.(Incorporating Western Sydney) will be held on **Wednesday 23rd July, 2008 at 7.30 pm** – We meet at the Conference Room, Wesley Lodge Motel, Cnr. Hawkesbury & Queens Roads, Westmead. **Important change: car entry is only from Hawkesbury Rd via a boom gate. Please use key entry number “1111”.** This code is allocated only on PFLAG meeting nights. The Wesley Lodge is very close to Westmead Hospital and Train station.

For Information contact: Judy on (02) 9869 1454 Postal Address: PO Box 3751, Marsfield NSW 2122. Email: jr_brown@bigpond.net.au

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President's Report

*“Different gifts, yet we are one, one in our world,
Each of us uniquely made; different yet the same.
Celebrate our differences working together:
Needing each one's special gifts to make the body whole.”*

(The chorus, adapted from “Different Gifts” by Maggie Russell in As One Voice, sung at the Gay and Lesbian Interfaith Service on June 18.)

Ray and I and Sue and Les attended this Dulwich Hill service, which was hosted by “Acceptance Sydney” with the assistance of a grant from Marrickville Council. It celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the first Mardi Gras march and sought to build a gay friendly interfaith community. The religious groups represented included Catholic Acceptance, Dayenu (Jewish), MCC Good Shepherd, MCC Petersham and the Uniting Network NSW/ACT.

Unfortunately, the positive atmosphere generated by this service was marred by the news that the Catholic Church had instructed the Jesuit youth group MAGiS to cancel the forum “Living a Christian Commitment: Different Sexualities Among Catholic Youth”, planned for July 16 at St. Aloysius. Whilst this was devastating news to Acceptance Sydney, they and allied GLBT support groups have not lost hope and will proceed with the forum at the University of Technology, Sydney.

I think that the following quotes from Martin Luther King are very pertinent to our cause:

- *“Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.”*
- *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”*

The cancellation of the forum has attracted much media attention after a front page story in the Sydney Star Observer on June 26. The SSO website is www.ssonet.com.au. Comments can also be accessed on the ABC Radio website.

Our thanks to Matthew Vaughan from ACON, our guest speaker for our June family meeting, who provided much needed information and helpful advice, much appreciated by the families present. I hope to see many of you at our July Meeting. Remember Rudy's adage: “When you don't need PFLAG anymore, that's when PFLAG needs YOU to help others.” **Judy**

Website:-www.pflagaustralia.org.au-Email editor@pflagaustralia.org.au

Meeting held 4th Wednesday of each month

COMING OUT by Matt Vaughan- Sydney Star Observer (3/07/08)



I remember when I first told my mum and dad that I was gay, my dad took it really well and, once she stopped crying, mum took it really well too. I remember my mum's words: "I suppose there were a few signs. You were the only seven-year-old boy I knew who wanted a hair dryer." Parents can react in different ways. We all hope that they will react well, but we fear that they could react badly. We have all heard experiences of parents not being supportive for one reason or another. These stories can range from

believing that "it's just a phase" to telling their child they need to leave the family home.

I consider myself lucky – I'm glad my parents took it well.

Coming out wasn't an easy thing for me to do, even though I had been out on the gay scene for a few years and had quite a few friends who were gay.

I needed to spend a lot of time talking to them and getting some support throughout the whole process. Like us, parents sometimes need some support too. They need to have someone to talk to and maybe to share a tear with.

I know it took me many years to come to the realisation that I was gay (although in some ways I'd always known) and I think it's important to allow parents to have some time too.

For many parents PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) have been the support that they have needed. You may have seen PFLAG marching in the Mardi Gras parade and sitting with us all at Fair Day – you certainly can't miss their rainbow umbrellas.

This committed group of parents and friends are from a wide range of cultural backgrounds; they meet every month to share stories, provide information and support other people who are going through similar experiences. After all, we all need some support at one time or another.

For more information on PFLAG go to www.pflgaustralia.org.au or you can call 9869 1454.

info: If you want any information about groups, services, organisations or community events taking place in western Sydney, you can contact Matt Vaughan at ACON on 9206 2064 or mvaughan@acon.org.au.

Matt Vaughan is the Community Development and Liaison Officer for the ACON Western Sydney Community Development Team.

Hating gays is a choice, not a biblical dictate

Author: Leslie Cannold Date: 22/06/2008 Extra Sun-Herald Sydney

THEIR strength is waning, but there is still a depressingly large number of powerful men in the West, spread across a range of denominations, spewing raw hate and naked prejudice at gay people. All in the name of Christ.

We are talking about the sort of hate that gives rise to claims that homosexual "inclinations" are an "intrinsic moral evil" that, if acted upon, preclude gays from taking communion, occupying any official role in the church and, ultimately, entering the Kingdom of God.

The sort of prejudice that led an Australian Anglican Archbishop to forbid any parish in his archdiocese to welcome the openly gay American Bishop Gene Robinson, and to declare that if Robinson was invited to a crucial meeting of the world's Anglican bishops in Lambeth, then the Australian Archbishop would not be attending. I am sorry, but someone seems to have had a fundamental misunderstanding of the core insights of the Gospels, and it isn't me. It was precisely this sort of attack on the social outcasts of Jesus's time by the powerful men of the day - the Temple Priests - that inspired Jesus's mission and the birth of Christianity.

It was this sort of exclusion of vulnerable and minority groups from society that saw Jesus enter the Temple to challenge the Priests' authority to decide who was cast out, and who was included in the circle of God's concern.

There's a joke about a pamphlet entitled, What Jesus Said About Homosexuality. When you open it, the pages are blank. As far as I can tell, even the religious right in America admits that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality.

But even if the Bible did advise us to shun homosexuals or stone them (as it suggests for adulterers), we don't have to listen. After all, we ignore its command to wed our virginal daughters to their rapists, and refuse its permission to purchase the children of foreigners to serve us as slaves. The point is that even those who claim absolute obedience to Scripture are selective in the Scripture they obey. They know as well as anyone that there is much in the Bible that is irrelevant, outdated or just plain barbaric.

And spare me the Bible-made-me-do-it crap. It didn't work for the Nazis at Nuremberg and it won't work here. Acting pursuant to orders by superiors of any sort doesn't relieve an individual of responsibility if a moral choice is possible. Powerful Christian leaders have a choice. They don't have to vilify and discriminate against gay people, they choose to, and for this they can - and should - be condemned.

What sort of leader makes this sort of choice? Neither the word "Christian" nor "ethical" spring to mind.

Perhaps one day both our spiritual and political leaders will get it through their heads that taking potshots at people because of who they are, not what they do, is stupid, wrong and not very nice. That everyone deserves respect and a fair go no matter the colour of their skin, their marital status, if and how they worship or who they love. That individuals have a moral right to be judged on nothing more nor less than what Martin Luther King jnr called "the content of their character". And one more thing: the powerful men who yearn for the good old days when they could stigmatise and exclude whoever they liked while calling themselves holy should have the courage to source this yen in their own dark heart, and not an ancient book.

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Acceptance Sydney invite you to events during World Youth Day Week

A **forum** for GLBT Catholic youth, their parents, family, friends and all who wish to explore this question: **"Is there a place for Gay and Lesbian Catholic youth in the Church?"**

Date: Wednesday 16th July, 6.30 pm for 7.00pm. **Venue:** Lecture room 2.4.29 University of Technology Main Entry Tower Block, Building 1 Broadway Ultimo. (Go to security office for directions)

Catholic Mass Date Friday 18th July @ 8 pm. **Venue:** St Joseph's Bedford St Newtown
Further information www.GayCatholic.com.au

Claiming our Place - Celebrating our Diversity

Sunday July 13, 2.30 pm Pitt Street Uniting Church, Sydney

On the eve of World Youth Day, GLBT people of faith, and their friends, gather in the heart of Sydney to celebrate our lives and offer witness and challenge to the Church and to our society.

Moderated by David Marr

Presiding Minister: Rev. Andrew Collis

Music by Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Choir

Speakers:

Rev. Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Minister-in Association with South Sydney Uniting Church, Co-editor South Sydney Herald, author and liturgist

Michael Bernard Kelly

Gay Catholic educator, author, Convenor of the Rainbow Sash Movement, spiritual activist

Anthony Venn Brown

Former Assemblies of God leader and founder of Youth Alive (NSW), now Gay Ambassador, Author & Co-convenor of Freedom 2 b[e]

David Reeder

Long-time parishioner, Christ Church St. Lawrence Anglican Church, Lecturer in Information Science at TAFE in Sydney

and a **panel of young LGBTQ people from various Christian churches.**

Co-sponsored by Pitt Street Uniting Church, the Sydney Star Observer and the South Sydney Herald

Website:-www.pflagaustralia.org.au-Email editor@pflagaustralia.org.au

Meeting held 4th Wednesday of each month.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH SYDNEY

QUORUM – Monday 28th July 2008 @ 7.30pm

Due to Hans Sparrow taking early retirement, and Marcia Monterey not being able to join us for personal reasons, the drag performers night planned for our next Quorum has been postponed. However, **Pip Ditzell (GLBT Project Officer with City of Sydney) and Dr Robert Reynolds (author of *What Happened to Gay Life?*, and Senior Research Fellow National Centre for HIV Social Research, UNSW)**, representing those involved in research and policy development, will join us to share their reflections on the people and events which have inspired them.

Dinner is available in the Taxi Club's restaurant from 6pm, and the conversation kicks off at 7.30pm on the Club's 2nd Floor, concluding at 9pm.

Further Details contact Glenn Boyd on 02 9569 5122 or 0438 690 921

or email: glenn.boyd@gmail.com

Parra Pride Picnic

The Parramatta Queer Forum has set the date for this year's Parramatta Pride Picnic. It will be held on Sunday, 21st September from 11am – 4 pm at Site 23 in Parramatta Park, the same venue as last year. Keep this date free, as this year's Parra Pride Picnic promises to be even bigger and better than last year's.

DINNER FOR LESBIAN WOMEN @ PENRITH

Come and join us for dinner. Come just to socialise, speak to us about what you would like for lesbians in Penrith or find out how we can support you to start your own lesbian social group.

Where: 3 Thai Junction. 375 High St Penrith

When: Thursday 24th July **Time:** 6pm

RSVP: Penrith Women's Health Centre Phone: 4721 8749

NSW Inc. PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians of Gays) is a group of people who share common experiences and provide support for each other. We listen and love. We help families have open, positive and loving relationships with their GLBT children and we work for their civil and human rights.

Special Thanks to Leanne and Damien Cook from Snap Printing, Silverwater, for their swift, friendly and reliable service with our newsletter printing and their special rates to PFLAG. Phone 9748 6661 for all your printing needs. Email: sales@swater.snapprinting.com.au

<u>PFLAG NSW: Next Family Meetings</u>
July Wednesday 23 rd @ 7.30pm
August Wednesday 27 th @ 7.30pm
<u>PFLAG Penrith: Next Bi-Monthly Meeting Tuesday, August 12th at 7pm</u>
Please ring for confirmation. Contacts Vicki on 02 4730 4660 or Carol 02 47354680
PFLAG Mosman: Contact Maree Ph. 02 99397706
PFLAG Central Coast/Newcastle: Contact Shelagh 02 49773271 contact@newcoastmcc.org.au
PFLAG Northwest: Contacts Val Harris 02 6769 7552 or Fay Heywood 02 6785 7325
PFLAG Bathurst/Orange: Contact Tony Sutton 02 6331 7267
NSW South Coast: Contact Catherine Horsley 02 44214752 Email: kkean@aapt.net.au

