

by Dan Hart
Young: A woman and her ministry

The Word is Out is a weekly radio show heard on CKDU 97.5 FM each Monday night, at 5:45pm. It's a fifteen-minute gem of an opportunity to address issues of concern to gays and lesbians. Each Sunday afternoon, from 1:00 to 4:00, a cabal of moguls and voice-boxes (and Lady Fortune, who's a lesbian, you know) interview, edit and bur-nish this singular gem of the Atlantic airwaves to a high

polish. If you like the sound of your own voice/vice, *The Word is Out* is for you! If desire and radio go hand-in-hand in your weird world, join us on the fourth-floor offices of CKDU (Dal SUB) next Sunday. Under the jaundiced eye of wizened veterans, you, like the show itself, will be transformed from mere costume jewelry to a thing of great beauty.

To give you an idea of what we're into, the following is a transcript of a *Word is Out* interview with Darlene Young. Darlene is an ordained minister of the United Church. Last summer, after completing a two-year term as pastor of a Saint John, N.B. parish, Darlene "came out" to the media. Controversy ensued. Darlene is currently enrolled in the Master of Theology degree at the Atlantic School of Theology. **Word is Out:** Your spirituality and your sexuality are equally essential components of who you

are. What tension exists within you, between Darlene, the Christian and Darlene, the lesbian? **Darlene Young:** There really is no tension now. In working through who I am, I have found a way, as a spiritual person and as a lesbian, to connect these two and have them, in a sense, in harmony — my theology has come in line with who I am. But for a great period of time, there was a difficulty with everything the Church taught me about gays and lesbians. I had this faith and yet, I was being told that who I was essen-

tially, was not a right person; I was a sinner. . . It is important for a person to own who they are sexually, in order to stand before God spiritually. It was a long process of working this out. There really isn't a tension there now, the two are quite together. It is workable: you can be a Christian and lesbian or gay.

TWIO: It's problematic being a Christian now anyway, most particularly because of various, right-wing dogmas. Did you have to deconstruct late twentieth-century Christianity to make it work? Have you achieved a novel and an honest interpretation of spirituality and scripture? **Young:** What I had to do was to go back specifically and look at those passages that, for so long, the Church has interpreted as being anti-homosexual. When you really look at (those passages), look at the context in which they were written, and then look at the life of Jesus Christ, you see that there is an anomaly between what the Church is saying and the reality of what I am experiencing as a lesbian person.

As I got behind the text and as I looked at the context, (there) was an awakening for me as to what the scripture was really saying. It allowed me to stand in a different place. Most people do take a very literal and fundamental view of the Bible. I don't approach it that way.

TWIO: The confrontation between the Maritime Conference of the United Church and you derives from the dogma which disallows sexual promiscuity, as well as gay or lesbian ministers.

How can your faith flourish in a context which rejects your spirituality because of sexual issues which are so separate from your commitment to a "calling"?

Young: I take great comfort from our national church body which is saying that gays and lesbians have been discriminated against.

They want us to look at what has happened, over time, in the Church. They are calling for a confession to the gay and lesbian community, as a whole confession of the oppression the Church has participated in.

I see, too, that there is a place for a lesbian person who is in relationship. In looking at what the nature of "committed relationship" is, I've realized that relationship doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be married, in the formal sense. What "marriage" is about is the mutuality deriving from coming together, being honest, being faithful to one another. The (personal) relationship I'm in is very much like the marriage of a heterosexual couple.

TWIO: Ideally, there is mutual support and respect flowing between the Church and the pastor. In coming-out and in speaking out, the notoriety which has accrued to you has challenged this mutualism. Does life as an icon complicate your already complicated life?

Young: Well, I think it is quite difficult. Maritime Conference is quite small so, wherever I go, I'm known to be the person who came-out publicly and that's problematic. When I made the statement I did to the press, I know notoriety would be the price. But it's one that I'm prepared to live with and I think it's one that the

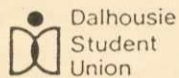
Church has to come to terms with. I'm not going to deny an essential part of who I am, nor am I going to diminish the relationship I'm in by hiding. . . I don't envision a place within congregational ministry, where I'm actually serving a church and living in their house. At the same time, I very much want to stay a part of the Church and be active in some sort of ministry. They will have to, in some way, acknowledge me and make a place.

TWIO: The truth is, too, that you've actually been empowered in a very special way. I mean, you can extend counsel to many people in a way that your opposition cannot, indeed, would not.

Young: Yes, people identify with what I'm going through, either in coming to terms with being gay or lesbian, or with being so in the Church. I'm finding it very refreshing (to) have an opportunity now to speak with people who are struggling themselves. We can share together in that.

TWIO: Whether one struggles with coming-out, or with simply trying to lead a peaceful and an honest life, being lesbian or gay, in this world, is not easy. . . he understated. What can you say to lesbians or to gays who just want to live life, people who don't want to be either actors or activists?

Young: I think the most important thing is to come to terms with who you are and to realize that being gay or lesbian is a good thing. Being comfortable with your sexuality, liking yourself, indeed, being proud of who you are becoming — these are the means by which you can interact with others, you can have relationship, you can enjoy life.



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