

THE ^{portable} GAY & LESBIAN READER

The Arch Bishop



Sodom got bum rap

(Reprinted from "New Beginnings Ministries: What We Do".)

"New Beginnings is a Christian counselling outreach for people desiring freedom from homosexuality by the healing of the whole person through a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

"New Beginnings provides support for family and friends touched by the disappointment and hurt of homosexuality and seeks to assist them in loving and encouraging one struggling with homosexuality."

(Reprinted from notes inspired by "Homosexuality and the Church". This New Beginnings seminar assembled in an upper room of Halifax's World Trade and Convention Centre on January 20, 1990.)

Beatitudes for Beginners

Blessed are the exponents of simplistic theories of sexuality who, distracted by their pet project free thoughtful people to consider matters of substance;

Blessed, therefore, is the New Beginnings Ministry;

Blessed is this perverse marriage of scientism and salvation, which is: a) hugely entertaining, and; b) transparent and on the wane. Wane! Good name for the holier-than-thou spirit which resurrects this beast from time to time;

Blessed are all Scriptural literalists because anyone knowing even the tiniest bit more than they do about context and interpretation looks really good;

Blessed are gays and lesbians, for they are the fullest expression of

God's "perfect sexual ideal";

Blessed is the heterosexual, the Also-Ran of God's "perfect sexual ideal";

While I'm in this Blessed mood . . .

Blessed is Chucky Musgrove. One fatal Friday night, many years ago, Chucky busted my front teeth while our Boy Scout troop played soccer in the church basement. I forgive you, you pathological shit.

New topic. Blessed is the Act whenever committed with originality. Should that be spelt with a capital 'O', as in "Original Sin"? An oxymoron, really: it's all been done;

Blessed is the gay man who can fun-cum and have something intelligent to say afterward. Your address, please;

Blessed is the feminist/lesbian who can slice-and-dice the patriarchy for lunch and refine the art of the multi-orgasm at night, both with equal fervour. Tongues of Fire, indeed!;

It's a mixed blessing, admittedly, but . . .

Blessed is the opening of a local New Beginnings franchise. Confronted with New Beginnings' solicitous and insidious approach, the Community of gay men and lesbians must: a) "secure the barricades; b) provide lesbians and gay men with real support. Don't suggest a longer Happy Hour; c) "give a damn";

Blessed are the saints and sinners for whom *this* world is the Christians' "Better Place". To transcend prejudice and hate, to relieve mistrust and suffering: now that's a New Beginning.

Dan Hart, Minor Prophet.

Conference

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As they asked and answered questions inside, others were marching outside the convention centre with placards explaining to the media why they disagreed with the conference.

Hodder says there was some worry they would be funding the ministries by paying the registration fees. But they felt it was worth the money. "If we had not been permitted to enter the conference then the response would have been much different," he says. "I'm sure they incurred additional costs for having to rent a room in the Convention Centre."

Church's queers

Ring around the collar

by Robb Cribb

A seminar was recently held in Halifax by the New Beginnings Ministries of Toronto and the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship entitled *Homosexuality and the Church*. The seminar was designed to help pastors, Christian workers, and concerned Christians address the increasingly controversial subject of homosexuality and its relationship with Church precepts.

The attitude held by ministries such as New Beginnings and Inter-Varsity regarding homosexuality and what it means in our society has become the most prevalent and accepted throughout most of the Church. The general response in dealing with the confusion, self-doubt and bitterness which often affect lesbians and gay men who are coming to terms with their identity is to counsel them to turn away from homosexuality, "to overcome by daily walking in truth and light," as stated in some Christian literature. This attitude presupposes a desire to achieve "the healing of the whole person through a personal commitment to Jesus Christ".

All of these notions are viewed as questionable by Darlene Young, a former student at the Atlantic School of Theology, and a United Church minister who operates a lesbian support group in Halifax. "I find it sad that people cannot get beyond their own fears," said Young. "I came out in a public way when I arrived here and I have paid the price."

The lack of acceptance for gay men and lesbians in the church is manifest in Young's situation. She hasn't been able to find a church where she is permitted to minister since returning to Halifax. "I'm struggling with the church structure," Young said. "Sexual orientation has nothing to do with one's ability to minister, and yet I can't find a church that is willing to deal with this question of sexual orientation in an intelligent manner. I'm struggling to look for work."

Barbara Rumscheidt echoes Young's distaste of the prejudice and discrimination which surround lesbians and gay men in our society. Rumscheidt is a student at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, and is active within the United Church. She and her husband are members of Friends of Affirm, a group affiliated with the United Church lesbian and gay support group Affirm. She is also a member of Lesbian and Gay Rights Nova Scotia, a group lobby-

ing for inclusion of sexual orientation as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the N.S. Human Rights Act.

Rumscheidt is confident that through public education, LGRNS has gained the support of many influential individuals and groups throughout the province, including a number of MLAs. "We believe there is a lot of support, but we would like to see some solid evidence," she says.

Both Rumscheidt and Young have received abuse as a result of their convictions, in the form of hate calls, vandalism, and verbal abuse. As a lesbian, Young experiences first-hand the devastating

effects of homophobia on individuals. The support group she facilitates provides general support and counselling for lesbians who are trying to deal with the problems they face daily in dealing with jobs, families, and friends. Says Young, "It's a positive experience for everyone."

It was Shakespeare who wrote, "Sweet are the uses of adversity," and despite the adverse conditions which all gay men and lesbians within the church are faced with, it is with firm resolve that Darlene Young says, "as we move and react to the present situation, we will be able to find some semblance of acceptance."

The Projection Room is Now Open

Rumours

2112 Gottingen Street
Monday to Saturday
8pm - 1am

Owned and Operated by
the **G**ay **A**nd **L**esbian **A**ssociation
of **N**ova **S**cotia

COMING SOON

- Wet Shorts/T-shirt Contest
- Uniform Night
- Alternative Music Styles