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THE  LETTER

Serving members and friends of
Community of Christ

July 2017
Volume 30 Issue 2

Labor Day Retreat!
September 1-4, 2017



The 2017 GALA retreat will be held over Labor Day weekend at Camp Red Cliffe, Utah, a retreat in the mountains of northern Utah. We're excited about the opportunity to share with folks in that area, and to meet with some of the Latter Day Seekers who have expressed interest in GALA.

Some have raised questions about the theme for this year's retreat. It was developed by some of the young adult members of the GALA affiliate in Utah, hoping that it will speak to some of our younger members and also with the hope of reclaiming a term that has at times been used in hurtful ways. There will be more discussion and sharing about the language of the theme during the retreat.

This year's retreat has a significantly lower cost than recent ones. This is because the campground is not charging us for the use of the grounds, so we hope to see many of you there. If you register and pay by July 31, cost for individuals is \$60 with a family maximum of \$130. On or after August 1, individual cost is \$75 with a family maximum of \$180. Children under 5 are free. If you can only come for part of the retreat, the daily rate is \$15/day for Friday and Monday, \$40/day for Saturday and Sunday.

There are some scholarships available to help with registration costs. Contact GALAcofchrist@gmail.com with your name and the scholarship amount you wish to request.

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GALA

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jerrydalejr@gmail.com

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(Vacant)

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(Vacant)

(Vacant)

Visit us on the web

www.galaweb.org

President's Message

Jerry M. Dale, Jr., GALA President

Over the last month I have been thinking a lot about the GALA organization and why we seem to struggle to find a sense of passion and direction. We, as an organization, have struggled to find a new identity after the unexpected death of David Howard, former GALA President, and our mission seemed to be fulfilled after the 2013 USA National Conference that finally recognized our worth by allowing our church to perform same-gender marriage/covenant relationship and our ability to perform our priesthood duties when we are in a same-gender relationship.



Robin Linkhart, the Apostle assigned to GALA, has been attending our retreat planning and board calls and has said many times that GALA has a unique and powerful ministry for the church and for the latter-day seeker movement. I recently attended a retreat of Affirmation, LGBT Mormons, at Deer Park Campground, a Community of Christ campground located outside of New Hope Pennsylvania. At that retreat I recognized the pain and suffering of our LGBTQ+ cousins...it was the same pain, my pain, our pain, from the earliest days of GALA. Robin's words rang true to me. We have a unique and powerful ministry to give. We have the ability to recognize the pain and suffering of others because many of us have lived it. We have done and will continue to do amazing things to strengthen our community. I envision a GALA that can honor the past and embrace the future. We need to be a both-and organization. An organization that is able to assist with people through painful times and celebrate the amazing joy's in the life of our communities. Your participation in GALA matters to me. Your voice is critical to our success. If you are able to attend the 2017 retreat, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this vision. If you are not able to attend, I want to hear from you, too. E-mail us at: GALAcofchrist@gmail.com I ask that you hold GALA in your thoughts, intentions and prayers as we face a bold new future.



PRIDE

Did your congregation take part in Pride events this year? If so, please send information about your participation to GALAcofchrist@gmail.com. GALA has several materials that can be shared at your booth or table—and we would like to put together a list of events.

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(Labor Day Retreat—continued from page 1)

Camp Red Cliffe is about 1 hour and 15 minutes from the Salt Lake City Airport, 50 minutes from the Ogden Airport. If you need transportation to and/or from the airport, please be sure to note that on the registration form.

You can [register online](#) or by using the [PDF form on the website](#) or by filling out the registration form in this newsletter. We want you to come!!

Michele McGrath, Guest Minister

Michele McGrath is thrilled to be participating in her first GALA Retreat as guest minister. Michele holds the priesthood office of bishop and serves as director of finance, a member of the Presiding Bishopric, a member of the Earth Stewardship team and the Theology Formation team for the Community of Christ International Headquarters.

Michele served on the team that planned the USA National Conference which recommended sacramental equality for LGBTQ+ folks. This summer Michele will preside over the German National Conference that is considering the same issue. Last year, Michele participated in the GALA Memorial Service at the Temple for the victims of the Orlando attack. Michele, who speaks fluent Spanish, read the names of each victim as a chime sounded.

A native of California, Michele received a Bachelor of Science in accounting from California State, San Bernardino; and a Master of Arts in Christian ministries from Community of Christ Seminary.

“As an ally and mother of a queer daughter, I’m grateful for the blessing the LGBTQ+ community is to the church!”

What should you bring to Camp?

- Bedding (sleeping bag or sheets, blankets, pillows, etc.)
- Towels
- Toiletries
- Flashlight
- Clothes for warm days—cool/cold nights
- Jacket/hoodie/sweater (cool/cold morning and evenings)
- Comfortable dress (we’re casual!)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Extension cords
- Items to donate to the silent auction for our scholarship fund

Retreat Banquet Theme

One of the fun experiences at camp is the banquet. The theme for this year is “Pioneer Picnic”...so bring your bonnets and pioneer dresses, pants, suspenders, boots, and hats!

Daily Themes

Blessed are the Queer in Spirit...

Friday...for they shall laugh

Saturday...for they shall be comforted

Sunday...for they shall be filled

Monday...for they shall be called children of God



CHAPLAIN’S THOUGHTS

by Gail Humphrey

Our retreat theme this year, “*Blessed are the Queer in Spirit*,” focuses our attention on a reality that you and I have experienced firsthand. In the eyes of many,

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(Chaplain's Thoughts—continued from page 3)

GLBTQIA people have little value in the world today. We have been told in many ways that God's love and acceptance is not for us. And just as in Jesus' time, we as the outsiders, the marginalized, can hardly expect any help or support from God or society as a whole.

In the Book of Matthew, the story that we call the beatitudes, we find Jesus at the height of his popularity. He has spent much of his ministry teaching his followers about the Kingdom of the Heavens and has performed many miracles in order to help those he came in contact with. The oppression and disease that he saw everyday was too much for him and he was moved to compassion. His ministry was so popular that large crowds followed him from place to place so they could be healed and to hear the words that he spoke. If Jesus had been part of the establishment, a member of the Pharisees or the Sadducees, the words that he spoke to the people would have been quite different. Instead of praising those seen by society as the spiritual giants, authorities and true followers of the law, Jesus' teachings were aimed at those that were seen as spiritual nobody's. No one in their right mind would have ever approached these people and bless them as he did. The people that followed him had no charisma, no religious clout; they didn't even know the law or the sacred books. They were nothing. And yet, these were the very people that Jesus repeatedly reached out to offering healing and hope. Jesus told them that they were valued, worthwhile and loved. He also gave them an understanding that was not recognized by the religious authorities – the Kingdom of the Heavens was available to them then and there. What a radical idea! There was no need to wait for some future date or time. If they allowed grace to work in their hearts, they could have the kingdom at that very moment. It was this hope, this knowledge

that many clung to and over time was the power by which many chose to follow Jesus even to death.

We have the same promise and the same hope. Even though we have been marginalized by much of society and told that we are of little value, Jesus says that is not true. The message for us today is that we are worthwhile and loved with an extravagant love that is far beyond our understanding. God will go to the ends of creation to work for our happiness, joy and salvation. God wants to enter our hearts if we will allow it and through grace, be transformed into the image and likeness of God and like Jesus become fully human. We have our own "*Blessed are the Queer in Spirit,*" beatitudes that speak to the longing of our hearts and minds to be loved and love as Jesus does. Jesus' message is timeless and just as true today as it was then.

I hope that together at the retreat this year we can come to a greater understanding of God's acceptance and love for us, to fully know that we are forever in God's presence and blessed.



ELECTIONS ARE COMING

by Stephen Donahoe

Watch your inboxes in the next few weeks because we will be emailing information about voting for several important board positions. Both Dave Brosh and Kylei Davenport have resigned from their Member at Large positions. Many thanks to both Dave and Kylei for your service on the GALA Board! Since we are so close to the retreat, the board has decided it's best for the membership to elect people to fill those positions, rather than the board appointing them.

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(Elections Are Coming—continued from page 4)

The slate of candidates for each position is as follows:

Member at Large

- Clay Birks
- Ginger Farley
- Kathy Sharp

Undersecretary for Publications

- Pam Robison

Vice President

- Parker Johnson

President Elect

- Jerry Dale

Many thanks to all of the volunteers who are interested in running for board positions. The organization depends on your leadership.

Again, look for ballots in your email inboxes in the coming weeks. We hope to have a very high percentage of members voting.

Also, remember, only GALA members can vote, so if you haven't paid your membership dues yet, this is a good time to do that. You can renew your membership or become a GALA member for the first time at <http://www.galaweb.org/membership5b.html>



SEE YOU AT RETREAT!



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GALA RETREAT 2017
September 1-4, 2017
Camp Red Cliffe
12566 Highway 39
Huntsville UT 84317

Michele McGrath, Guest Ministry

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) E-mail _____

Special Dietary Needs _____

Medical/Special Need _____

I need an accessible cabin. Lower bunk only

I will need transportation

To / from Salt Lake City Airport To / from Ogden Airport

Flight number / arrival time / departure time

I will pay through

Mailing a check to GALA, PO Box 146, Lapeer MI 48446

PayPal (Credit Card)





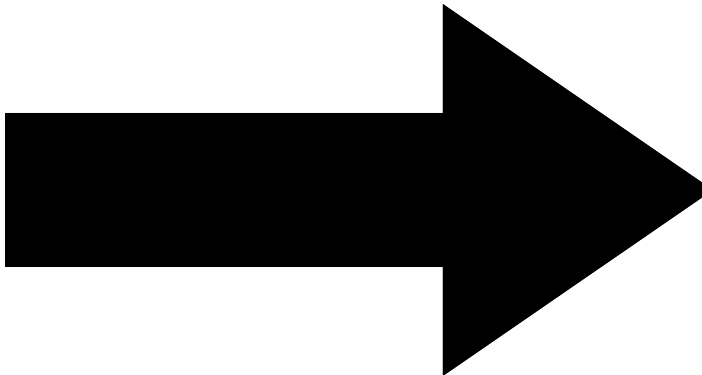
November 2016

P.O. Box 146
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Join or renew your
membership
today here
or online at
www.galaweb.org



2017 GALA Membership

Name(s): _____

E-mail: _____

YES; send me the newsletter by e-mail

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Membership Level (U.S. dollars):

Individual(\$25) Family(\$40)

Limited Income(\$10)

I would like to make an additional donation for the 2016 retreat:
 \$50 \$100 \$200 or \$ _____

I would like to make an additional contribution to advance GALA's outreach and educational goals:
 \$50 \$100 \$200 or \$ _____

Contributions to GALA are tax deductible.

**Please return to: P.O. Box 146
Lapeer, MI 48446**

