



Welcome Dialogue Group

WDG: A group of Christians who support gay, lesbian and other sexual minority persons and their families. We work to include them in an open and welcoming environment, especially in Mennonite and Anabaptist churches.

Welcome Dialogue Group Plans for 2010

Meetings will continue to be planned for the second Monday of every other month. Dates are:

January 11	March 8
May 10	July 12
September 11 (Picnic)	November 8

Everyone is invited. Purpose of the meetings is to provide support, advocacy, and fellowship.

Group officers for 2010 are:

Chair - Chet Raber
 Vice Chair - Ken Beam
 Recording Secretary - Ruth Detweiler
 Corresponding Secretary - Ruth Martin, Mark Emerson
 Treasurer & Newsletter Editor - Phil Zimmerman
 Web Manager - Mark Emerson
 Librarian - Esther Becker
 Program Chair - Jay Martin
 Historian - Marilyn Denlinger

Plans for 2010 include exploring collaboration with other like-minded groups in Lancaster County, collaborate on joint activities with other groups, increase useage of our Website and Newsletter, work to invite younger persons to meetings, and add representatives from 2 new congregations. An additional challenge was suggested: Each of our Welcome Dialogue congregations take time to make plans for the new year that will move us forward, even if less dramatic. How can we bring a change is status?

Available Resources:

DVD:

Coming Out Strong
 BMC

Body of Dissent: Lesbian and Gay Mennonites and Brethren Continue the Journey

BMC

It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School

New Day Films

Books:

The Cost of Truth

Edited by Roberta Showalter Kreider

Homosexuality and Christian Faith

Walter Wink

And more!

WDG Librarian is Esther Becker. Contact her at eahbecker@aol.com or 717-768-8242

The Welcome Dialogue Group brochure has been reprinted and updated. Contact us if you would like one or several.

Lancaster LGBT Coalition

WDG has been involved with this group called by Bill Cherry of First United Methodist Church of Lancaster. The first meeting of the group took place November 15, 2009, with 5 WDG group members attending. The second meeting was January 10, 2010, with Zem Martin and Chet Raber as WDG representatives. The Welcome Dialogue Group had previously discussed the concept of a coalition of groups working towards more church inclusiveness. This immediate participation felt rewarding.

The Chairperson for this coalition is Andrea Brown, Associate Pastor at Grandview United Methodist Church. Statements are being prepared and we are moving forward. More complete information will be available in the next newsletter.

The coalition will be developing a mailing list of persons willing to be the communication person from coalition to a congregation. The relationship to a congregation will not be official, but voluntary and informal.

This person will have two main tasks:

1. Receive communication from the coalition about upcoming events and forward to congregation and members as able.
2. Communicate with the coalition about the needs of the congregation and convey resources useful to the congregation, as possible.
 - DVDs, books, etc. for library or other use.
 - Tools for education

We can begin by thinking about people we know in different congregations, discussing the project with them, and even inviting them to be the “unofficial” communicator for the coalition and their congregation.

Reported by Chet Raber

Connecting Families Retreat, an annual gathering of LGBT supporters and families, will be meeting at Pearlston Conference and Retreat Center in Reisterstown, MD, just north of Baltimore, April 9-11, 2010. For more information contact Ken Beam at kebe@dejazzd.com

Visit our updated website, www.welcomingdialoguegroup.org, for more information.

There are stories, resources and links to more. Mark Emerson is the site manager.

Booklet Recommendation

“None Can Stop the Spirit”, edited by Karl Shelly and Heidi Siemens-Rhodes, June 2009. Pastors and Leaders Express Hope for a More LGBT Inclusive Mennonite Church.

This booklet includes a copy of “An Open Letter to Mennonite Church USA”, signed initially by 100 pastors and leaders by invitation. When opened to wider invitation, more than 1300 signed on and they are continuing to add more.

The booklet also shares short testimonies, stories, poems and essays by pastors, leaders and others who support welcoming LGBT persons.

WDG has given these “pink booklets” (they are bright pink) to pastors and leaders who have spoken at our meetings. More booklets are available from our librarian, Esther Becker, at (717)768-8242 or aehbecker@aol.com.

Building an Inclusive Church: A Training Opportunity

Several WDG members attended this training opportunity held October 9-10, 2009 at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster. The training purpose is to help your congregation become a community that openly welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Chet Raber and John Stoner reported that it was a very insightful and helpful event. Two areas of note: 1) Sustainable action and 2) Creating a Culture of Relationship - one on one meetings. Focus on persons who are neutral, open or supportive of LGBT persons rather than those who strongly oppose.

Resources were available for purchase. The book “Why Congregations Need GLBT Persons” by Steve Klapp is highly recommended.

2010 UPCOMING EVENTS

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| March 8 | Welcome Dialogue Group meeting, 7 PM at Akron Mennonite Church |
| May 10 | Welcome Dialogue Group meeting, 7 pm at CMCL |
| July 12 | Welcome Dialogue Group meeting, 7 pm at CMCL |
| September 11 | Welcome Dialogue Group Picnic, more details later. |

You are invited to join us for our meetings. If you have never come or it has been a long time since you visited with us, come get acquainted with us. A typical meeting includes stories, sharing and reports of activities. We welcome visitors and new members.

Contact the editor - Phil Zimmerman at pkzimm@gmail.com