

Memories

The Lazarus Project

1977-2007

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The Lazarus Project

Dedicated to Rev. Ross Greek, Visionary of His Time and Place

Rev. Chris Glaser, Founding Director

Jeanne Marshall, Chair of National Advisory Council on Church & Society

Mission Development Committee, UPCUSA

And all who have borne witness
and continue to tell their stories,
—The Story—
as we journey in faith





Lazarus Award Recipients

1985	Rev. Nancy Wilson	1997	Rev. Howard Warren
1986	Rev. Steve Pieters	1998	Martha Juillerat
1897	Rabbi Janet Marder	1998	Tammy Lindahl
1988	Rev. Chris Glaser	1999	Rev. George Regas
1989	Rev. Carl Bean	2000	Rev. Don Fado
1990	Rev. Carl Ogle	2000	Jeanne Barnett
1991	Rev. Dave Meekhof	2001	William P. Thompson
1992	Rev. Jane Spahr	2002	Rev. Malcolm Boyd
1993	The Los Angeles Times	2003	Rev. Troy Perry
1994	Dr. John Bailey	2004	Rev. Jack Rogers
1995	Rev. Mel White	2005	Rev. Erin Swenson
1996	Rev. Peg Beissert	2006	Senator Sheila Kuehl
1996	Adele Starr	2006	Assemblyman Mark Leno
	2007		Bishop John Shelby Spong

Volunteer Award Recipients

Don Hargis	Greg Lupton
Chuck Wojnowski	Maggie Ritchey
Daryl Helmer	George Lynch
Michael Miller	Gerald Chester
Robert Patenaude	Ginger Hemingway
Louise Jongewaard	Jack Gregory
Paul Butler	Sue & Bernie Bauer
Doug Elliott	Cherryl Weaver
Sonnie Swenston	Laurie Fox
Doug Galt	Dennis Field
Robert Blackmon	Neal Williams
Jon Berger	Rev. Robert Lodwick
	Rev. Dale Kraai

The Lazarus Project—Remembered

April 2007 30th Anniversary Lazarus Award Banquet Program

In 1977, The Rev. Ross Greek, pastor of the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church (WHPC) having ministered to the "Street People" of the late 60s and 70s, turned his attention to the idea of a viable Christian ministry within the homosexual community. At the same time a six denomination consortium (JSAC) was seeking creative projects to fund. Ross formed a committee and submitted a project to the Mission Development Fund of the PCUSA: "An Alternative Life-Style Experimental Ministry to the Homophile Community." Target area was Hollywood and adjacent communities of North Hollywood, Silver Lake and Beverly.

In addition to WHPC, initial funding came from the national Women's Opportunity Fund, the Synod of Southern California, Pacific Presbytery and individual church members. Chris Glaser, a Master of Divinity graduate of Yale Divinity School, an openly gay man though refused ordination by the Presbytery of the Pacific*, was approved by the Synod's Committee on Social-Ecumenical Concerns and the Presbytery of the Pacific Program Council to be the founding Director of The Lazarus Project.

Chris creatively brought the Project to life, with a multitude of experiences for the Gay and Lesbian and Non-Gay community within the churches of Southern California and beyond. With the help of Lazarus Board members, weekends which encompassed academic, social and worship experiences, brought people from various church and geographic areas together to address new understandings of ourselves as sexual folk, bridging the gap and prejudice of the general homophobia of church and society. A most effective and appreciated Jail Ministry was started by the Project in the early 80s through 1997.

*In October 2005 Chris was ordained by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to serve a parish in Decatur, GA and as interim pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco.

The Lazarus Project's Directors following Chris Glaser were the Rev. Peg Beissert and the Rev. Donn Crail. Since 2002, the Rev. Dale Kraai has served as Moderator of the Lazarus Project.

In 2007 the Lazarus Board, in concurrence with the request of WHPC, reluctantly accepted the decision to close the project. Tonight we celebrate thirty years of being present to a vital and necessary mission. We thank each of you for your support and wish you God's presence, strength and

grace as we each continue the journey for an inclusive church in our various ways.

~

The Lazarus Project commends to you these other Presbyterian groups that have a national constituency and are also working for an inclusive, justice oriented Presbyterian Church.

More Light Presbyterians

<http://www.mlp.org>

Michael J. Adee, Field Organizer
369 Montezuma Avenue PMB #447
Santa Fe, NM 87501-2626
michaeladee@aol.com

That All May Freely Serve

Lisa Larges, Minister-Coordinator
<http://www.tamfs.org>
121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14614

The Covenant Network of Presbyterians

<http://www.covenantnetwork.org>

Pam Byers, Executive Director
2515 Fillmore Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Rev. Robert Lodwick provided the foregoing for the final program.



The Lazarus Project—RIP 2007

♡ Rev. Chris Glaser, Founding Director, August 1, 1977-January 31, 1987 ♡

April 17, 2008

The Lazarus Project was the first of its kind, a ministry of reconciliation between the church and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in a mainstream church, funded at national, regional, and local levels of the former United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and continuing after the reunion that begat the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1983.

Yet it was preceded by the audacious and innovative ministries of the Rev. Ross Greek, Ph.D. and the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, both of whom reached out to all kinds of marginalized people, including LGBT people, long before and long after the creation of The Lazarus Project.

I first met Ross and a gay part-time staff member in the church office the week I was appointed to the Task Force to Study Homosexuality in August of 1976. His basic question at the time was, "How do you church gays? How do we make them feel welcome in our church?"

The following Christmas, 1976, I again met with Ross, and his immediate concern was how to make it financially possible for me to work with him to welcome gay people into the tiny, aid-receiving congregation. We met with Ms. Jeanne Marshall, chair of the National Advisory Council on Church and Society of the UPCUSA, and the Rev. George Cole, a social justice advocate on staff of the Synod of Southern California (before it was & Hawaii), who encouraged us to go for full funding from the denomination, seeking funds from the Mission Development Committee of the national church, which would require funding from the Synod, Pacific Presbytery, and the local congregation.

That Christmas vacation from seminary I was set to work on a proposal upon whose spirit the Session of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church acted favorably without dissent. I can't recall exactly when I came up with the name of the project, but I had been encouraged to give it a name that did not have "gay" in the title! I thought of two images of resurrection which paralleled coming out of the closet: a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, having been a lowly caterpillar; and Lazarus being called from his tomb by Jesus. I decided a gay ministry called "The Butterfly Project" would sound too flighty (!) and I liked the strong biblical story of Lazarus, so I named it The Lazarus Project.

My original proposal was worked on by a committee of Pacific Presbytery that further shaped it, and I am told (as I had returned to seminary) that Claire West personally shepherded it and got it passed through presbytery twice! I think it was Ross who took out the word "gay" and substituted the even then archaic term "homophile."

Because of its controversy, the proposal was not approved by the Mission Development Committee until early 1978, but I had already been hired at part salary as of August 1, 1977. Early on we organized a Lazarus board that included pioneers Jeanne Marshall representing the Synod and Louise Jongewaard representing Pacific Presbytery. Louise remained on the board longer than any of us, until the final days of the Project. (It is to her we are indebted for this memory book.)

During the years of the Lazarus Project, Ross and I equally shared the pulpit and led worship. I led a weekly Bible study. To interpret our work and to raise funds, Lazarus created a quarterly newsletter, "Lazarus Rising," that was mailed to donors throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. We organized twice yearly educational events to interpret LGBT faith experiences to the broader church. Louise suggested we take that educational experience "on the road" and the Lazarus "Road Show" was born. Central to these experiences were the personal stories of LGBT people of faith, but we also invited as speakers the cream of the movement: John Boswell (three times!), Bernadette Brooten, Janie Spahr, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Ann Matter, Howard Rice, Isabel Rogers, Willard Heckel, Brian McNaught, Malcolm Boyd, McWhirter and Maddison (authors of "The Male Couple"), and others. We also worked in many venues for LGBT civil rights, as well as being among the first to provide care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

I conceived of establishing an annual dinner and giving two annual Lazarus Awards, one for a local WHPC or Lazarus volunteer, and one in the broader community whose work was reconciling the spiritual community and LGBT community. Nancy Wilson, Steve Pieters, Malcolm Boyd, Janet Marder, Janie Spahr, Jon Bailey and the L.A. Gay Men's Chorus, The Los Angeles Times, Troy Perry, John Spong and others were among the recipients.

Paul Butler initiated and led our ministry to the gay inmates of the Los Angeles County Jail, followed by Chuck Wojnowski, Lynn McClary, and Doug Elliott. Jointly with MCC Los Angeles we conducted early Sunday morning worship services, met individual needs and provided visits.

Twice The Lazarus Project was "investigated" for not fulfilling the mandates of the 1978 General Assembly and twice exonerated. Of the 14 mandates, the only one we did not fulfill was changing LGBT people into straight

people, as if that were either possible or desirable.

With distinction, the Revs. Peg Beissert and Donn Crail followed me as directors of The Lazarus Project after my own decade of service.

For more details and particular stories about The Lazarus Project, I invite you to read my chapter on it in the 1996 updated version of my 1988 book, *Uncommon Calling*, and the many stories about its ministry in my books, especially *Come Home!* and *Coming Out as Sacrament*. In this brief summary, much has been necessarily left out.

I wish to thank all those who made The Lazarus Project possible. Its ministry deepened all of us spiritually and helped resurrect West Hollywood Presbyterian Church.

When asked why The Lazarus Project "died" in 2007, the only observation I could offer is that it seemed to die because of a lack of imagination. I'm not sure whose, but surely Lazarus could have recreated itself along the lines of the continuing needs for reconciliation between the church and the LGBT community.

I also believe that the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church could continue annually giving the Lazarus Award to deserving recipients as a way of remembering the pioneering efforts of The Lazarus Project. I urge WHPC to consider doing so!



Thank You Notes to Those Who Grew Me!

♡ Reverend Peg Beisert ♡

February 2007

I was in Seminary, often the only woman and older than most. In a small group, a young man told us he was gay. The Professor said, "You are married, right? Does your wife know this?" The answer: "No." The Professor's reply: "Then you have homework to do tonight, don't you?"

I was appalled. How could such an intelligent, likeable person be gay? (Being gay was not an admirable quality to me at that point.) On the other hand, I was a student of Nelle Morton, who was opening a whole new world to me, even if the Seminary opposed giving her (a woman) the status of "Professor" at that time.

After graduation I was called to a church in California. Within Pacific Presbytery, there was a minister of a small church I admired a great deal, even when I discovered his church was known as the "gay church." This Pastor, the Rev. Ross Greek, told me, "Gays will always be welcomed here. They are part of God's people." I met one of those people...Chris Glaser, who had been turned down for ordination several times by the Presbyterian Church, USA. Now I was beginning to move to the defense of such bright, devoted people. One day he gave me a "button" to wear. It said, "Honorary Lesbian." I treasure it...and still do. I had stepped over the line.

Each time I preached at West Hollywood Church, my husband and I were invited to join members in a local restaurant for lunch. One of the gay men always asked us if we minded sitting with the gay group, or did we prefer to sit at a nearby table! (Even then, we could not believe their sense of self value was so low. Of course, we joined them.)

At that same time, a woman entered my life...yes, Louise Jongewaard, the Editor of the book you are reading now. With our Pastor's permission (Rev. Frank Marshall) she had started an early Sunday morning meeting at Covenant Church where the topic of "gayness" was explored. Louise kept after me (now serving as Associate Pastor at Covenant Church) and my husband to attend that service. I grew some more!

When Ross Greek was no longer the Pastor at West Hollywood Church, Chris asked me to preach there several Sundays. At this point both my husband and I realized this congregation included some of the most "Christian" people we had ever met...and Louise was still working for their acceptance!


She instituted several "Homosexual Information Days" under Presbytery auspices. These included a continuum of supporting and affirming experience where people were asked to group themselves on a line from those who did not accept homosexuals to those who were supportive of them. This was in the late 1970s. Al and I placed ourselves 3/4 along the way with Chris alone at the end of the line. There was a great blank space between us and Chris. We waited in silence. I finally asked Al, "What are we doing here?" His reply, "I've had the same thought. Let's go." So we joined Chris. It was a kind of "graduation" experience for me. After that day my sermons changed, especially at Covenant. They now centered on acceptance of gay people as part of God's family.

When Chris moved to Atlanta it seemed almost automatic that I became Lazarus Director! As I sat in my new office wondering what I should do, I asked myself what had changed me. I had a little conversation within myself: "What changed you?" The answer was easy: "Meeting and getting to know gay people." "Then you must have people in other churches meet them, right?"

And so I began calling on pastors throughout our Synod and even farther, from San Jose to San Diego. I asked permission to bring three gay people who would share their life stories...all within a half hour following their church service. The answers ran the whole range, from (with a sneering laugh) "No, we're not interested in them" all the way to my favorite: "How soon can you get here to plan this with me?"

Of course, there were a few horrible moments. Even though we had been invited, at one of these, after a gay man's presentation, a man in the church's congregation called out: "I want you to know you turn my stomach. You are disgusting." And the Associate Pastor never told him we were their guests and should not be treated that way.

As the years went by we covered many churches. In my case, I always drove to a Pastor who was willing to invite us, in addition to spending multiple Sundays with my gay friends and their presentations. I remember thinking, "You are riding in a car more often than you're in your home." Finally, in 1995 I resigned...and the next thing I knew the new Moderator of the Lazarus Board was knocking on my door, asking me to edit *Lazarus Rising*, the paper that has gone out to 700 people four times a year.

Times have changed. Today there is far more acceptance of gay people, especially since we now know anyone's sexuality is determined very early, at about two months, in the development of the fetus, long before birth, and we can never say this "lifestyle" was "chosen" by anyone. 

Remembering The Lazarus Project

♡ Rev. Dan Smith, Pastor of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church ♡

One of my most vivid memories of the work of the Lazarus Project was the first time I got to meet and hear John Boswell speak. John was a personal friend of the Lazarus Project's founding Director, Chris Glaser. They became friends while Chris was a student at Yale Divinity School. Because of their friendship and the fact that they both were early pioneers in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement, we were blessed with John's brilliance as a speaker at many Lazarus Conferences.

The first time I saw John, I was sure he couldn't be more than 21 years old. He had that "young gay boy" look about him, and he was just as unassuming. At first I thought to myself, "this" can't be the "genius" everyone is talking about. [John had already published *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century.*] Then he started speaking and I was transformed! He was the boy-genius everyone spoke about so highly.

The Sanctuary of West Hollywood Church was packed to overflowing. People were sitting on the floor, in the aisle, in the Chancel "behind" him and wherever there was room to sit or stand. In those days we didn't have a public address system and John was rather soft-spoken, and always witty! You could have heard a pin drop. Every person listened with an intensity that I had not before experienced. For most of us, who were predominantly young gay men ourselves, I believe it was the same kind of experience that African Americans had when they heard The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak.

Boswell was brilliant. He was able to construct and deconstruct theology, history, anthropology, social history and contemporary gay and lesbian Christian experience with brilliance and ease. I was mesmerized by what he had to say. It was truly a moment of "sitting at the feet of a master teacher." But it was also complex material. He obviously was used to teaching doctoral and post-doctoral students. Like a lot of extremely brilliant scholars, I had the feeling he didn't even know, let alone appreciate, his own brilliance. Thankfully, Chris was able to get John and all our conference speakers to relinquish recording rights so that we could tape all our conferences. Yes, this was pre-cd's and online digital recording! In fact, we thought we were cutting edge in buying a high-speed cassette tape duplicator so people could take home copies of the speaker's address that very day! We didn't need to take notes.

As Boswell was about three quarters of the way through his first address, my mind was filled to the point of overload. It was at that moment that I looked around and wondered how in the world all these people were following him. With my advanced degree in theology, I could barely keep up with him.

Upon the conclusion of each lecture, John took questions from the audience. One rather average looking guy stood up and said what I'm sure everyone felt. He said, "I don't think I understood most of what you said, but for the first time in my life I believe I heard that it was, in fact, the Christian Church that turned society against us. Is that correct?" Boswell smiled and simply said, "You understand much more than you thought. That is correct."

The rest of the weekend Boswell was stellar, meticulously explaining the journey of gay and lesbian Christians from the beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century. It was a brutally painful realization for many of us, that the Church we loved could have been so evil and abusive. Nonetheless, it was the truth.

In the first decade of its ministry [1977-1987] the Lazarus Project's whole focus was on the reconciliation of sexuality and spirituality. People who came to conferences, weekly Bible studies, and West Hollywood Presbyterian Church all sought to reconcile their being gay and Christian. The Institutional Christian Church, including the Presbyterian Church, USA Had no desire to even extend a welcome to its own GLBT members and friends. Two decades later, by the beginning of the new millennium, virtually no gay or lesbian persons cared about reconciling their sexuality and spirituality as GLBT Christians. The Institutional Church had been so inhospitable and cruel to GLBT Christians during the AIDS pandemic and in denominational "debates about homosexuality" that a whole generation of GLBT persons walked away from the Church. The Church was not a healthy place, and they had the wisdom to know that.

As John Boswell said in his lecture, historically, from the first to the fourteenth century, the Church's own homophobia created religious and social intolerance against GLBT people. As Boswell so aptly reminded us: "Those who don't know history are sure to repeat it."

Young gay men and lesbians, with many of their heterosexual peers, have long since left Christianity behind, as we move into the post-Christian era. What insight John Boswell provided us. What a tragedy that the Church cannot hear it.



Notes on *Living* with Lazarus

♡ Donn Crail ♡
Third Director

Before becoming director of The Lazarus Project in the fall of 1996 I had some contacts with Lazarus. While pastor of The Baldwin Park Presbyterian Church we had invited Lazarus for some sessions of our adult education, and subsequently we became a More Light Church. Also as the chair of The Church and Society Committee of San Gabriel Presbytery, before an upcoming General Assembly, I organized a "debate" regarding the ordination of GLBT persons between Chris (Glaser) and Lou Smedes, Professor of Ethics at Fuller Seminary. (Interestingly, Lou eventually became an advocate for GLBT persons countering Biblical arguments used against them.)

For 33 years I was involved in justice ministries. For 20 years I was at Baldwin Park—a small congregation—but one that became somewhat known to our allies as "the mouse that roared." Before that I was one of several co-pastors at the extraordinary Downtown Church in Rochester, NY, a flagship of social reform for over a century and a half.

But WHPC was the first church I was associated with that was "**Fabulous!**" (How many churches do you call and have the phone answered by Bette Davis, Judy Garland, or Bette Midler?)

My initial hope and expectation was for us to gain entry into churches — create face-to-face relationships with GLBT persons — and create change.

For the most part it didn't happen though we tried what we felt were many low key, non-threatening approaches. The committed always came, the others didn't.

Lazarus, while it had the respect of many pastors, was too "dangerous" to invite in. For many it felt safer to approach the issue "in house" than to let in "outside agitators." The testimonies of supposed "ex-gays" was the shield and defense used by many of the more conservative churches to keep "Lazarus" at a distance.

One example: before the crucial 1998 General Assembly we decided we would go 2 by 2 to visit churches who had commissioners going to G.A., just to worship and be available. We sent a carefully worded letter in advance to each of the churches telling them a couple of the members of The Lazarus Project would attend their worship on a particular Sunday and if there were any persons who would like to talk with us, especially any

commissioners to G.A., before or after the service we would be glad to do that, otherwise we would simply be there for worship.

One of these letters was to The Bel Air Presbyterian Church. **The letter was received as though it had come from a terrorist organization.** They couldn't tell us not to come, but said they would meet and guide and sit with us ("us" being: Paul Butler, Cherryl Weaver, and me). The associate pastor and the G.A. commissioner met us practically in the parking lot. They ushered us in, sat on each side of the three of us as though we might escape and commit a terrorist act. We were introduced to no one else, and they did not engage us in any conversation about the upcoming G.A.

I felt we were failing because we could gain so little entrance into the churches. Over the years I began to see the situation differently. I felt sadness for my denomination, which was — and is — in bondage to its own fears and prejudices; at the same time I saw a remarkable thing happening for gay and lesbian persons. So many had come out and were unbound from their grave cloths. Even having come through the holocaust of the AIDS crisis there was a joy — and the gift of humor (that many Presbyterians are sorely lacking). And though we didn't create that we were part of it.

There were great evenings with denominational leaders at the home of Doug Galt and Dennis Field. There was the "Heart to Heart" concert we organized at Pasadena Pres. where David Bottrell told about having his hair styled when he was a teenager. You had to have been there — and many of you were — but it was both hilarious and inspiring as only David can be. But it was the story of his journey out of darkness into light, out of bondage into freedom. His journey, and the journey of many, including William P. Thompson and Jack Rogers, signaled *global warming* beneath the cold surface of the PCUSA.

I have always been amazed that justice is such a big word in scripture — Old and New Testaments — and such a small word in the Church, even a "suspect" and "subversive" word in some churches. Strangely we live in a time when the Gospel often has to be lived and practiced more outside than inside the Church.

I feel both sadness and joy in the closing of The Lazarus Project — sadness that my denomination has come such a short distance in welcoming GLBT persons; but great joy that the larger society has come so far and will come much further (that is as inexorable as the dawn) and we, as individuals, are still here to witness and be a part of that.

Lazarus had become a more apt name for the project than had ever been anticipated.

*"Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, **and Lazarus was one of those at the table.**"*

Perhaps we have been at that table - a disturbing presence to the Church.
I'm grateful to have been there.



Perspective – Seeing Through A Glass Darkly

♡ Rev. Dale L. Kraai ♡

About six months ago, an article in the *New York Times* reported that a national poll had discovered that, for the first time in our history, the majority of young Americans had a negative view of Christianity. The article further reported that the current generation of young Americans view Christianity as “ignorant” and “intolerant.”

Having grown up in the Church, I have found the Presbyterian Church, filled with wonderful, highly-educated individuals of vision, character, commitment and good-will. I have loved and enjoyed the members of the congregations in which I have served. While I have again and again seen that congregations, their members and leaders have every known short-coming and foible, I was taken aback by the article. The next day, I went to lunch with my son (age 30) and told him about the poll. He replied, “Dad, all my friends see Christianity as ignorant and intolerant.”

Today, the public persona of American Christianity drums a message that is creationist, opposes the teaching of evolution, labels abortion as murder, is intolerant of stem-cell research, opposes sex education in the public schools and condemns individuals with alternative lifestyles. While this public face of Christianity bears little resemblance to the congregations in which I have grown up and served, non-Christians in America have little reason to believe that the ignorance publicly championed is the perspective of only a segment of the church.

I suspect that most Presbyterians, clergy and lay alike, have no idea how unloving and judgmental they actually are with GLBT men and women. GLBT persons (church members and non-members alike) see the Presbyterian Church as an oppressor. As a denomination, the Presbyterian Church condemns as sin the love a gay man has for his partner, but fails to see its own bigotry, self-righteousness and hatred. Claiming biblical truth, the PCUSA ignores and dismisses the truths learned by science.

The vast majority of Presbyterian clergy are silent when biblical texts are eisegeted, that is, misinterpreted by a few scholars and a small minority of often sincere, honorable ministers. Even though these well meaning persons read their own ideas, bias and bigotry back into the text, the majority of clergy, understanding that eisegesis is being practiced, REMAIN SILENT. I personally believe church leaders are silent because they do not want to jeopardize their congregation’s income flow and are afraid of losing members. Faithful to the institutional church, but unfaithful to the gospel.

We are, of course, thankful for the clergy (a minority) who do speak out and work for full inclusion.

It should also be said that the Presbyterian Church, through its public statements and practiced silence, has done its share to provide a "biblical" and thus a theological basis for the homophobia in American society. While the church commissions a steady stream of study groups and task forces at the G.A. level, almost all congregations refuse to dialogue with GLBT members. Because the Church fails to understand its contributions to the nation's homophobia, the Church rarely even condemns homophobia, a natural consequence of its statements and teachings.


I had hoped that the recommendations of the General Assembly's *Task Force on the Peace, Purity and Unity of the Church* would allow progressive congregations to finally elect and ordain GLBT leaders. Unfortunately, the recent ruling on Lisa Larges' ordination by the General Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission renders this "compromise solution" inoperable. We are back to square one.

Because of the work of Assemblyperson Mark Leno and Senator Sheila Kuehl, the California Assembly and Senate have twice passed legislation providing for "gay" marriage. Governor Schwarzenegger has vetoed the legislation in both instances saying it was too important an issue for the peoples' representatives to determine. The Governor maintains the issue should be resolved by the courts.

Thanks to Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco, the issue of same sex marriage is before the courts. In fact, the California Supreme Court is expected to rule within the next two months. If the courts rule against same sex marriage, it is unlikely to be realized in California for many years.

If the Supreme Court affirms the right of gays and lesbians to marry, the religious right will attempt to use the initiative process to amend the state's constitution and overturn the court's ruling. Defeat for a proposition limiting marriage to one man and one woman is essential. This political contest is worthy of the GLBT community's treasure and all-out effort.

Do not despair. Pray daily that our unfaithful church may better understand and live the gospel.

Driving to work yesterday, I saw a bumper sticker that read, "God bless the entire world. No exceptions!" 

Faith Journey

♡ Robert Patenaude ♡

I was raised by a loving family in the far northern coastal area of California. My father was the principal of the elementary school, and my mother his secretary, in a town of only 750, so I really didn't get away with much when I was young. I liked my local Presbyterian church, but the truly mean-spirited person who was the pastor when I was approaching adolescence made it easy to leave the church. I watched him drive a wonderful, giving woman out of the church because her son was having problems with the law. I confess that I was obsequious, the proverbial "best little boy in the whole wide world," so the pastor was friendly to me, and called me his "little colleague." But I knew he would think differently if he knew my secret: I was gay and had felt different from the other boys since I was five years old.

I went through high school cleverly disguised as a nerd. I was the perfect student who aced the exams but did not go out for sports or go to dances. That suited me fine; I regarded high school as a dangerous period I was trying to survive. I blossomed in college when I realized that I could be what I wanted to be. I realized that I was not unathletic, for instance, and got on the varsity swim team. Still, I felt that my gayness was an illness that needed to be healed (but not a sin forgiven—I was well beyond the church's influence at this point). I kept intending to seek out psychotherapy, but did not do so for years. I finished college, studied in Germany for a year, and completed a master's degree, still procrastinating. When I began my doctoral studies I met a fine young woman at Occidental College and thought the time had finally come to be made straight.

It didn't work. My psychiatrist was a nice person perfectly eager to try; after all I was 25 years old and celibate, and loved by a woman—by the standard of that time (1968) "a good candidate for reorientation," and my graduate school was willing to pay for it! I learned much useful information about my relationship with my parents, but my attraction remained solely to men. Therapy came to an inconclusive end. My woman friend and I parted ways (although I did seek her out years later to explain) and I went to work still celibate but now profoundly alone and unhappy. Just before my 30th birthday I decided just to end the celibacy—no romance, no social connection, just sex. Doing so created a terrible secretive divide between my regular work life and my sex life. They were compartmentalized; in fact they took place in different cities.

Then my work life faltered, and because my work had become my life, so did I. I was fired, but not, as far as I know for being gay. I remember that evening I took off all my clothes, curled into a ball, and for the first time in years prayed to God. I did not ask for my job back; I asked for comfort and understanding. And I think, in time, that both requests were fulfilled. The comfort and understanding came first from an unlikely source, the gay motorcycle club scene in Los Angeles in the late 1970s, and then from a traditional source, a new church. My years in the wilderness had come to an end. For the first four Sundays I attended West Hollywood Presbyterian Church I managed (much to my embarrassment) to burst into tears at some point in the service. Something—a line from a hymn, sermon or prayer of confession would set me off. I now see it as the Holy Spirit breaking back into my life. The gospel of Jesus Christ was not about power and authority, and not even about being exactly right, it seemed to me, but quite simply was about loving one another without condition.

The Church not only comforted me, but it also propelled me back into the world. I attended 15 consecutive General Assemblies in an attempt to convince the larger church that it needs to embrace its gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members fully. The church was there to celebrate when I finally found a life partner at the tender age of 50, and there to comfort me when I lost him to AIDS five years later, in March 1998. Life still remains an extraordinary adventure, and I thank God for all of it.

Bob served as one of the editors of *Lazarus Rising*.



Come Out Lazarus!!!

♡ Jack Gregory ♡

Working with a group of people who are highly motivated to achieve freedom and equality for our subjugated brothers and sisters has been an extremely diversified experience for me, and I'm sure it has been for all of those involved. True, this battle in countless variations has been ongoing for eons, but I do believe we are making progress.

Working with the Lazarus Board has forced me to rethink many of my own reactions and beliefs and to take more time to listen and attempt to understand other people. Holding my own tongue is hard...but often is the best action. I've also had to reassess my own beliefs and actions as a Christian...no, as a child of God. I have also found that "church people" are often bound more by man-made dogma (I can think of more colorful words) than by God's love.

Still, I do believe, as the song says, "We'll walk hand in hand...We shall overcome!"

Long Live Lazarus!



My Life With Lazarus

♡ Doug Elliott ♡
April 2007

After working twenty-eight years with L.A. City Schools, as a teacher, supervisor, and principal at five different schools, I retired in 1985. Several months later I attended my first Lazarus Board meeting at WHPC. This was shortly after my first visit to the gay friendly West Hollywood Presbyterian Church. I formerly attended Hollywood Presbyterian Church where Dad had been an elder, but I didn't feel at home there. Having heard about WHPC welcoming gays, I determined to visit and make a connection with the gay community. I needed to learn more about other homosexuals. Outside of a few occasional gay acquaintances, I was completely ignorant about the history and activities of other gays, and had internalized the homophobia of my culture, avoiding any social recognition of my limited sexual life.

Though comfortable with my sexuality, and valuing it as a special gift to be treasured, I knew it wasn't something to be shared with family, most friends, or the public. Other people talked freely about their lovers and partners, but I never dreamed that someday I could do the same. Few heterosexual people understand about the real diversity of sexual orientations. Many didn't seem to care or want to hear about ours, while others were quick to condemn. Some regarded us as sick or evil, demon-possessed persons. Job opportunities were withheld and friendships avoided or denied. In 1957 when I began teaching, I would have been judged unworthy to be a teacher or administrator. In fact, when I was interviewed for my administrative examination in 1968, different superintendents asked me if I had a girl friend. I assured each I did, and in spite of being single, managed to make the top of their recommendation lists. And I actually did have many female friends.

I had a very successful career as a teacher, supervisor, and administrator. My last school, Glenfeliz, won the coveted L.A. County Human Relations Commission's "Outstanding School of the Year" award for human relations and student achievement, which was presented at a large luncheon at the downtown Sheraton Hotel, and recognized at a Board of Supervisors Meeting. My sexual orientation had nothing to do with my work. Few knew that I was a closeted gay man. The next year my school gave me a grand retirement party at the New Otani Hotel with over two hundred attending, including superintendents, district staff, fellow principals, faculties of the various schools I had served, and friends who came to help celebrate my life as an educator.

When weeks later I decided to publicly attend a "gay church" I discovered the extent of my own homophobia. Three different Sundays I attempted to visit WHPC and get up the courage to walk into a gathering of gay people, but fear someone might recognize me and discover I was gay caused me to turn back home the first two times. On the third Sunday I stayed and found a welcoming church with beautiful, normal and welcoming people, most of whom were gay.

It was amazing to be open with other gay people in a public arena other than a bar, and I finally found a church home. I immediately began to explore the various church programs, and invited myself to a Lazarus Board meeting as an observer. At first I remained quiet and listened, but soon found myself fully engaged and invited to join the group, where I have participated for the last 22 years, twelve of them as the chaplain to gay men in the L.A. County Men's Jail.

One of the Lazarus goals was to sponsor a ministry to gay inmates in our jails, and Paul Butler had begun one in the early 1980s. Prison is never a hospitable place, and for gays it is hell. When Paul left to become a police officer, I was asked to take his place. I had attended San Francisco Theological Seminary, taught Sunday School, and was a church elder. I reluctantly agreed to give it a try.

The L.A. County Men's Jail had a special "Soft Unit" established to protect gays from a series of prison murders that had been happening. Housed in the upper prison floors of the Hall of Records, it was actually the least violent place in the prison system, and some non-gays pretended to be gay to try and get assigned there. The head chaplain couldn't have been more hostile to us, and tried to have me put out. His office was in the main entrance of the jail where he had anti-gay pamphlets on the counter. His message was clear that gays were of the devil. An abundance of fundamentalist chaplains had volunteered and were running the place.

Lazarus joined with Catholic, Jewish, and other chaplains to see that the prison was run constitutionally with no one religious group given special favor. The chaplain's office became our office and all were given equal access. No sectarian tracts were allowed on the front counter, though individual chaplains passed out plenty of their own. The former fundamentalists had to back off, and prison policy gradually changed. Some of the deputies began to lighten up a bit. The law was on our side if they got out of line. Lazarus played a large role in helping bring about positive changes of attitude.

We held interfaith services to accommodate the men's great variety of religious backgrounds. Some other chaplains encouraged their gay men to

attend our inclusive services. The Jail Ministry proved to be the highlight of my Lazarus experiences. Where gay men daily encounter so much rejection, we brought them hope through Sunday services reminding them they were children of God and loved as family. From 50 to 150 gay inmates would gather in the main dining room at 9 a.m. each Sunday for our service.

I have participated in the various activities of Lazarus, which included visiting other Presbyterian churches to dialogue and provide testimony as to our own life experiences as homosexual persons. We called these "Faith Journeys." We visited schools and colleges, and planned and conducted seminars and workshops. Our years with Lazarus have been nourishing to us as well as those we have served.

But it is sad to see the churches' rising resistance to homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgender persons. The war hysteria and "end of time mentality" of our national current political leadership seem to have frightened people into increased homophobia. Many American people, like third world countries, have covered their love with fear of being overwhelmed by evil. Fundamentalist believers often behave with hatred of their enemies, like the religious opposition Jesus had to deal with. These were the ones who killed him to protect their faith traditions. Their successors are doing the same to others today.

Loving one another with equality and justice for all is what Jesus required. It is our only goal and supposedly that of the Presbyterian Church USA. Prejudice and misinformation about GLBT persons have caused fear to overwhelm love and harden hearts and blinded eyes. They have made an idol of the Bible that has become their tool for discrimination and bigotry. The printed words are misused to suffocate the spirit of the law. Literalists actually bend the text to conform to whatever biases they need to justify condemning others.

Our greatest hope is found in working with young people and college students. University students have become more receptive as their quest for knowledge opens doors and allows new insights and studies to bring enlightenment. Scientific studies are liberating and do not support the hate based messages of the "religious right." As part of the Lazarus campus ministry, for fifteen years I have participated in various campus classes. Today we find the students are better informed and very supportive. Years ago the religious conservatives kept asking the same tired old questions about what they thought the Bible said about homosexuality, quoting or misquoting passages that had nothing to do with the subject at hand. Today's youth are not as trapped in the backwaters of ignorance that still haunt so many. As in impoverished third world countries our own U.S. bred

Puritans become the blind leading the blind. They indoctrinate and mislead others, becoming stumbling blocks to progress in human relations. Hard line fundamentalists cluster in the churches that, out of fear of God's judgment, preach hatred and intolerance, and perpetrate the blind faith and the fear that nourishes it.

Lazarus is leaving the Presbyterian Church USA because the church refuses to accept them as equals, and will not dialogue with GLBT persons. In this and other ways, the church becomes less significant as the community at large becomes wiser and better grounded in reality and morality.

Eventually the people will call for more reformation, and an awakening and reshaping of their outdated institutions. Perhaps the church will even find Jesus again. There are far greener pastures that need our attention, and where the humble and the meek shall inherit the earth.

† Doug Elliott died on Valentine's Day 2008 †



The Lazarus Experience: Thirty Years of Blessing

♡ Gerald Chester ♡

April 2008

Sharing Our Stories — We went place to place, like wanderers of old, to churches, schools, and bars, sharing with those who would listen about how we felt the presence of God in and lived out our LGBTQ lives. Sometimes timid, fearful and frozen, people would, in a matter of a couple of hours, become a little more relaxed and interactive during our brief time together. They would come to life and we would become more energized with our telling, and all enjoyed the gourmet feasts we sometimes shared along with our stories of love.

Sharing Our Visions — We spent three to four hours on Saturday mornings once a month as a Board with the Director. It was a time to share cultural, societal, political, as well as personal, triumphs and tragedies. It was a time to explore and argue wild visions on how to bring about a just and inclusive church and society, how to celebrate, honor and recognize those who shared and acted out their visions of love in a world filled with hate, how to reach out through media, and how to communicate by newsletter with those who shared our visions. It was a grand time for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ to work side by side enriching each other.

Feeding Our Minds, Hearts and Souls — We would plan and to weekend conferences we would go. Wonderful speakers, teachers, and writers challenged us to reach beyond our own perceptions into God's vast and wildly inclusive love. We were inspired.

For many LGBTQ persons, the Lazarus experience was all too brief and for those of us who have survived, it lives on in our very being.



Lazarus Memories

♡ Billy Ray Williams ♡
February 2007

I am a member of St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church Hollywood, also of B.C.C. Beth Chayim Chadashim, House of New Life and Congregation Kol Ami, Voice of the People, which rented space at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church until they created their own Synagogue new building at 1200 N. La Brea. A beautiful spiritual worship space designed by a Christian architect, it is a wonderful building for Jewish services of our gay brothers and sisters!!!

I remember Dale Holland, my Presbyterian friend. We were in Pat Rocco's S.P.R.E.E. together. Dale won many a costume party!

At Lazarus Project's banquets my friends and I enjoyed honoring the guests of honor of that evening. Several times we were rained on at the Women's Club. Last year at Pasadena Presbyterian the attention and food was wonderful, making me wonder why it had taken so long to come home to the Church.

This year, 2007, with the recipient being Bishop John Shelby Spong I knew that I had to attend. It was wonderful with everyone receiving their own electric votive light!

Rabbi Lisa Edwards couldn't attend, as she was to be returning from a trip to Israel late in the evening of the 28th. It was hilarious the year when she won the door prize of the picture of Lazarus that she graciously gave to Bishop Ed Vazquez, saying, "Here, I think this picture will look better with you than in my office!"

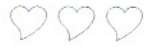
Rabbi Denise Eger couldn't attend this year because she had a Bar Mitzvah to do.

We seated ourselves six at one table and me at another when I was told that I had my own table closer to the center of the room. So we moved to the reserved table where we even had a vacant seat, which we said was for Elijah, according to Jewish custom for Passover.

This year my guests were Bishop Ed Vazquez, Father Bill Koffinke of the Free Anglican Church out of Scotland, Alvin Gross and Martin Rubio of Congregation Kol Ami, Pat Bates and Sue Roth of B.C.C.

P.S. We can thank Dale Holland for his work on the centerpieces at the Women's Club. The pictures are of him winning two first prizes in costume!

[Billy enclosed two pictures of Dale—one as a unicorn and one dressed as Carmen Miranda—absolutely marvelous.]



My Gay Spiritual Journey

♡ Daryl Helmer ♡

April 2008

I was born and raised in a conservative evangelical church where dancing and going to the movies were looked down upon and being a homosexual was sure damnation. My parents were a little more liberal when it came to the movies, etc., BUT not in the area of being Gay. As I developed and came to realize I was "different" I did not know what to do. My religion and my God were very important to me and I did not want to be damned for the feelings I had. At first I thought it was just a stage I was going through and then I realized it was no stage. I went through college with those feelings and into my working career. I was involved with an inner city church in Minneapolis, MN and worked with youth groups, all the time hiding my true feelings and finding release in chance encounters and feeling so guilty. I prayed on a nightly basis that God would "cure" me or just let me die. It was a terrible period of my life. I finally came to accept my feelings of being Gay, got a lover and moved to California. While I could accept my feelings I still had trouble putting those feelings together with my spiritual beliefs and feelings. I continued to pray for deliverance.

While in Los Angeles I read about West Hollywood Presbyterian Church and decided to attend. I was greeted by many friendly people but during my attendance the Board members of the Lazarus Project reached out to me. They invited me to one of their meetings and thus began my spiritual growth, aligning it with my sexual feelings. I learned what the Bible really said and love was stressed. I began to develop and grow. I joined the Lazarus Board and became very active, including being on the Speaker's Bureau going out and sharing my spiritual journey as a Gay man. I truly believe that God led me to the Lazarus organization to show me I was child of God who just happened to be Gay and who was loved. I am so grateful for the Lazarus Project and the hope it brought to so many of God's Gay children around the nation!



Dancing on a Grave...The Lazarus Project Ends

♡ Don W. Clay ♡
June 2007

Before 1976, any Presbyterian could be considered for service in the church as a deacon, elder, or pastor. In that year, the General Assembly issued "definitive guidance" to prohibit ordination of gay people. In 1996 this exclusion was codified as the Book of Order's "Amendment B" (which also excluded unmarried sexually active straight people). Amendment A, which would have removed that wording, was approved by the 213th General Assembly in 2002 and sent to the presbyteries for approval. A majority of presbyteries did not approve the amendment. Our own Pacific Presbytery voted it down by one vote, 100-99.

The words of the poem below grew out of my own compassion for openly gay individuals who would be ministers of Word and Sacrament, deacons and elders in the Presbyterian Church, USA, and for our greater Presbyterian Church while it continues to struggle for its soul. The specific event referred to in this poem is the crucifixion of Matthew Shepherd, a gay man, in Laramie, Wyoming, in the fall of 1998.

The body

Is fixed to the fence
In front of the church,
Pierced through
While blood pours out,
Running into the street.

Inside the church
Parishioners hesitate,
Councils debate,
Presbyteries contemplate
And clergy
"authenticate"
Holy Scripture.

Cars pass...
People pass...
Time passes...
We all pass...
We want to pass...
We seek "cheap grace."
It costs us nothing.

The dilemma remains.
While extending a message of inclusivity,
We maintain "faithfulness" to exclusive polity.
This crazy-making task is our own cross,
Holding on to incongruity
While living in fear and ambiguity.

Great and gracious God,
Help us all to look over our fences
And actually see...feel...touch...and taste
That blood which flows today from your body
Into the street...

While "those sinners"
Who have offered their hearts, minds, and lives to Christ
Wait and watch for signs of new life and hope
Within the body of Christ,
Where the now-excluded can actually become one,
And we, the church universal,
May gain a whole soul.

This poem was published in the church magazine, *The Sign of Jonah*, at St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, Rolling Hills, California, in March 2003. The piece was greatly inspired by my participation as a Board Member of the Lazarus Project—a mission of the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church/Pacific Presbytery.

With the discontinuation of this ministry in July of 2007, my hope is that the Lazarus Project's very important work will continue through the memories, lives and vision of those who have been touched and educated by its mission—full equality for all people in the PCUSA. Until all share equal rights and equal opportunities, the work of the Lazarus Project, its supporters, and other like-minded Presbyterian advocates (More Light Presbyterians, The Covenant Network, That All May Freely Serve, The Shower of Stoles, etc.) remains incomplete and undone—a work in progress. Lazarus Board members now must seek new ways to serve the struggle for justice and full inclusion not only in the denomination, but also in our society at large. While it is true that participants and supporters of Lazarus can rejoice in and be proud of all that has been accomplished over the past thirty years—for “we have come a long way”—all agree that much more needs to be done. Full equality has not been accomplished, despite acknowledgement and celebration of the Project's work.

A lurking sense exists that needed change for all God's children will not be easily gained nor will equity and full inclusion come about in our time. Until full equality is realized for all persons, those who embrace the hope, vision and mission of the Lazarus Project must not rest, but instead continue to strive for justice. It is only with the achievement of full equal rights that “peace which passes all human understanding” will be realized. If the church abandons its quest for justice in order to preserve “peace, unity and purity,” we must work for justice outside of the church, or identify and support those institutions that are willing to risk all for what is just. This is how we create the “soul music” that saves our souls. There exist many places to accomplish this most important work. We must continue to sing our song and tell our story—whenever and wherever we can.

Working with members of the Lazarus Board has enriched my life immeasurably, empowering me to help educate others. I am also thankful to the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery of the Pacific, and most of all to my former fellow Board Members who have afforded me the opportunity to serve on the Lazarus Board. I regret that this vital ministry is being discontinued at this astonishing time of “reform and much needed reforming.” I cannot

celebrate the discontinuation of the Lazarus Project. For me, it's too much like dancing on a grave.

(Don Clay and his wife Cathy have left the Presbyterian Church, joining uncounted others who seek justice for LGBTQ persons outside the church that presently chooses not to address the injustice. They are now members of the First Congregational Church of Long Beach, United Church of Christ, where 40% of the members are openly gay and serve in all aspects of leadership of the church. One of the two very gifted ordained pastors is an out lesbian.)



In Memory and Gratitude for The Lazarus Project

♡ Robert C. Lodwick ♡
April 2008

Chris Glaser became my "Pastor" at a very crucial time in my life. I was married, ordained to Ministry in the Presbyterian Church and was a staff member of the Program Agency. At the same time, I was struggling with my own identity as I began to internalize the fact that I am GAY. Outwardly I was functioning very well but inwardly I was a "basket case." At the 1997 General Assembly in Philadelphia, the "Task Force to Study Homosexuality" was holding an Open Hearing. I went and was mesmerized. I did not leave my seat but listened to story after story by gay and lesbian Christians. Some of them were like my story. I knew that there was at least one gay on the Task Force and soon found out it was Chris. The next day I saw him having breakfast with Virginia Davidson, Chair of the Task Force. I waited until they finished their meal, then I pounced on Chris, pouring out my/our story. He became my pastor and teacher and a supportive friend to my wife. He asked both of us to share our stories in *More Light* that he edited. We chose pen names. I chose Bill and Hedy chose Sarah.

When Chris helped organize and staff the Lazarus Project at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, I became a dues paying member. In my position as Area Associate for Europe of the Presbyterian Church, I was at a meeting in Cyprus and discovered that after Lazarus was brought up from the dead, tradition has it that he became the Bishop of Kition, the ancient name for Larnaca, Cyprus and died there some thirty years later. Inside the church, I found a picture of Lazarus, which I gave to Chris and which became the symbol on the annual Lazarus Awards.

Upon retiring in Southern California, I have had the joy and pain of serving on the Board of Governors of the Lazarus Project from 2000 until our demise in 2007 and our final Board meeting in 2008. I will always be indebted to the Lazarus Project for its insights, for *Lazarus Rising* and for the many friends I have made over these years on the Board and with leaders like Chris Glaser, Peg Beissert, Donn Crail, Dale Kraai and of course, Dan Smith.



What The Lazarus Project Was To Me

♡ Elizabeth Shaddix ♡
April 2008

I like that The Lazarus Project helped me grow. Also, it was the people's gifts to bring the LGBT back to the church. The church has come closer to us. I like the way we were able to honor so many. I will miss the group and hope that we will all find a way to keep at it.



Making Our Lives Available to Others

♡ Sonnie Swenston ♡
April 2007

Dear friends,

Thanks so much for asking me to serve as the emcee of the banquet last night. It meant a lot to me. I hope that I added to the occasion.

And in one of those great synchronicities of life, in my inbox this morning was this wonderful quote from Henri Nouwen:

Making Our Lives Available to Others

One of the arguments we often use for not writing is this: "I have nothing original to say. Whatever I might say, someone else has already said it, and better than I will ever be able to." This, however, is not a good argument for not writing. Each human person is unique and original, and nobody has lived what we have lived. Furthermore, what we have lived, we have lived not just for ourselves but for others as well. Writing can be a very creative and invigorating way to make our lives available to ourselves and to others.

We have to trust that our stories deserve to be told. We may discover that the better we tell our stories the better we will want to live them.

This is all so true! So whether we tell our stories in written form or orally, we just need to tell them and tell them—and to know that they are valid and they are useful, and the telling of our stories is something that we are SUPPOSED to do. This is one of the things that Lazarus did so well over the years, and something that we need to do ourselves, and to find ways to encourage others to do as we go our separate ways.

Thanks again.

Love,
—Sonnie



From More Light Presbyterians

♡ Michael Adee ♡
April 2007

Celebrating 30 Years of the Lazarus Project, West Hollywood, CA

Sonnie, Dale, Dan, Donn, Bob, Robert, Peg, Laurie, all Lazarus Project Board members present & past and members and friends of the Lazarus Project,

What a difference The Lazarus Project has made within the LGBT Equality Movement in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and certainly within Southern California! What a great run you have had!

All of you have been part of a life-giving, life-saving ministry and witness. Thank you.

The following is an expression of gratitude and recognition of The Lazarus Project from More Light Presbyterians.

With gratitude for each of you,
Michael

.....

More Light Presbyterians & friends —

Celebrating 30 Years of the Lazarus Project — An Extraordinary Chapter in the LGBT Equality Movement

Last night, Lazarus Project Board Member Sonnie Swenston served as Emcee of the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the Lazarus Project hosted by Pasadena Presbyterian Church, Pasadena, CA.

The Lazarus Project was founded by the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, West Hollywood, CA, a More Light Church, in 1977 as "a ministry of reconciliation rooted in the faith experience and spiritual journeys of individuals who seek to empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual persons to love one another in the just and respectful way Christ taught us." Chris Glaser served as its founding director from 1977 to 1987.

The Lazarus Project was a pioneer in sending lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and heterosexual allies into churches and schools to share their faith, stories and hope for the church and society. Its founding in 1977 was just three years after the birth of the More Light Movement in 1974.

In addition to its offering of hundreds of educational panels in churches and schools throughout southern California, The Lazarus Project gave annual "Lazarus Awards" to individuals advancing LGBT equality in church and society. Presbyterians receiving Lazarus Awards included Erin Swenson, Martha Juillerat and Tammy Lindahl, Jack Rogers, Chris Glaser, Janie Spahr, Peg Beissert, Dave Meekhof, and the late William P. Thompson and Howard Warren.

Last night the Board of Directors of The Lazarus Project celebrated the 30th Anniversary of this extraordinary mission project, as it gave its final Lazarus Award to Bishop John Shelby Spong, and thanked their volunteers, supporters, and friends.

Those of us within More Light Presbyterians are indebted to and deeply grateful for the vision, service and witness of The Lazarus Project these thirty years. We want to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who served in and through The Lazarus Project as executive directors, board members, volunteers, speakers, supporters and Lazarus Award recipients.

Two statements of appreciation follow this expression of gratitude, one from the National MLP Board and the second one from the Board of Directors of The Lazarus Project.

So, with the celebration and closing of The Lazarus Project, we know that many stories are yet to be shared, yet to be told. I join Sonnie Swenston in her wish and prayer that all of us will tell our stories of faith, love and hope for our Church and world.

With hope and grace,
Michael

Michael J. Adey, M.Div., Ph.D., National Field Organizer
More Light Presbyterians

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National More Light Presbyterian Greetings to the Lazarus
Project Dinner Celebration at Pasadena Presbyterian Church,
Pasadena, CA on April 28, 2007

On this occasion of the celebration of The Lazarus Project and its important ministry and legacy of reconciliation, education and outreach, the National Board of More Light Presbyterians wishes to offer our gratitude to The Lazarus Project for your work to increase understanding and acceptance of LGBT people and their families in the life of the Presbyterian Church and in the world.

We thank the Rev. Dan Smith, the Session and congregation of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, one of the founding congregations of More Light Presbyterians, that has provided hospitality and resources for The Lazarus Project these many years. We also thank you for the significant collaborations you have encouraged with the First Presbyterian Church of Baldwin Park, the United University Church of Los Angeles, the Presbytery of the Pacific, the Los Ranchos Presbytery More Light Chapter, and the More Light Congregations of the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii.

More Light Presbyterians are grateful for your history, ministries and witness. We will work to carry forward our legacy and vision that the Presbyterian Church will become a Church for ALL God's people.

Bear Ride and Kim Smith King, Co-Moderators, National Board of Directors, and Michael J. Adey, National Field Organizer, More Light Presbyterians
www.mlp.org

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A Statement of Appreciation from The Lazarus Project
Board of Directors

The Lazarus Project wishes to express special appreciation for the moral courage and witness of the Presbytery of the Pacific in its hospitality and financial support of this inclusive ministry. We wish to express thanks to the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii and its staff for their encouragement, often in the face of criticism.

We continue to be grateful and to love the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church, which gave us birth and provides us a home. We give thanks for the other More Light Congregations of this synod, with whom we walk hand

in hand: The First Presbyterian Church of Baldwin Park, The United University Church and Los Ranchos Presbytery More Light Chapter.

Also, for those other congregations that have made known their welcome—with justice—to all persons, we give thanks to God. And all those who support us with your spirit, your prayers, and your gifts, we are thankful to share this ministry with you.

Most especially, to many who have labored with us and some who have died still waiting for the church to know their names and the meaning of their lives, we re-dedicate this ministry.

For all those whom Jesus loves and has called forth from their confinement, we will obey his command to "LOOSE THEM, AND LET THEM GO."



Reflections on The Lazarus Project

♡ Louise Jongewaard ♡
Lazarus Board Member 1977-2007

30th Anniversary and closing of the Project
Pasadena Presbyterian Church, April 28, 2007
The Lazarus Project Award given to Bishop John Shelby Spong, Episcopal
Bishop of Newark, New Jersey

The Lazarus Project came into being thirty years ago because The Rev. Ross Greek, prophetic pastor of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church during the 60's and 70's, saw the need for ministry to what he called the homosexual community in West Hollywood and surrounding areas. He started "rap groups"—just "come as you are"—and he applied for national church funding for what would be called "The Lazarus Project, An Alternative Lifestyle Experimental Ministry." The funding would come from National, Synod and Presbytery levels of the UPCUSA. The Project would be located at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church and would gain support from churches and individuals across the country, with the newsletter, *Lazarus Rising*, providing news and education related to the Project. It was an idea whose time had come.

Chris Glaser*, who was openly gay, received his Master's in Divinity from Yale Divinity School in 1977. He was denied ordination in the Presbyterian Church. Chris became the founding director of the Lazarus Project and served in that capacity for ten years. Directors following Chris were Rev. Peg Beisert and Rev. Donn Crail. For the past six years Rev. Dale Kraai has served as Moderator of the Lazarus Board of Directors.

An inclusive ministry, the Lazarus Project has reached out to both church and society. Starting in West Hollywood, there were no boundaries to the ministry. We (members) went into the jails with the Jail Ministry for over a dozen years. We provided programs for churches, schools and community organizations. Chris Glaser used his creative skills to put on skits both in and out of the church, and he preached sermons and counseled with those seeking understanding of their sexuality and witness in the Christian (faith) Community. Professional videos with study guides were made and circulated across the country: one on Youth Dealing with their Sexuality and Suicide; one on HIV/AIDS and the Need for a Caring Community; and one on Sharing Life and Faith Stories, to bring new understanding into all our lives.

We linked with groups in other denominations, including Episcopalians, Methodists, Catholics, UCC and Evangelicals, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). We shared conferences and gatherings. Some series started Friday night and ended Sunday afternoon. We might as well have been pursuing graduate degrees; however, we were seriously in search of enlarging our understanding of sexuality and calling the church to the same task.

The Lazarus Project had a booth at a number of General Assemblies, witnessing to GA participants and providing information to share "back home". We joined in bringing overtures to General Assembly, attempting to change the Book of Order to make space for us, including us as God's people in our church. We marched and demonstrated against the attempt by government and the church to control our lives, as teachers and as leaders in and out of the church. We went into classrooms and provided experiences for teachers and students to set aside the dubious myths, fears and stereotypes that were rampant in both church and society.

The Project had the help of those with academic degrees teaching at local universities and from across the country. We heard from professors in the social sciences and doctors in psychology and psychiatry who were working on cutting-edge research in the field of sexuality. We were assured that the National Professional Psychiatric and Psychological organizations had declared in the 1970's that "homosexuality" was no longer diagnosed as a disease (to be treated) and they did not support the idea of "reparative or change therapy".

We were actively reaching beyond and no longer "accepting the indifference and ignorance of the day," *we were arriving at a point where ideas once accepted no longer made sense: cognitive dissonance set in.* WE WERE COMING TO NEW LIFE AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING, EVEN IF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY WERE GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME "GETTING IT."

We wrestled with understanding our sexuality—not an easy task, for gay or non-gay. Building trust in ourselves and in one another, we were able to share with transparent honesty. In essence, we were literally playing out both the role of Lazarus "coming to new life" as well as carrying out the task Jesus set forth, when he called the villagers to unbind the grave cloths.

The Lazarus Project worked to enable people to "unbind the grave cloths of prejudice and fear." We, folk of ordinary wisdom, had a driving need to reach extraordinary understanding of new life and freedom.

- We heard gay students speaking for themselves in the Los Angeles School System's Project 10, directed by Virginia Uribe.
- Today, we see same sex or diverse groups in schools. Lazarus helped open that door.
- We read of parents going to court so their lesbian daughters can date for the prom.
- We also hear of the city manager of Largo, Florida, being ousted after he told the city commissioners he was entering the surgical stage for transitioning to be female in gender.
- In the last *Lazarus Rising* newsletter, we noted that the Vice President's daughter, Mary Cheney, and her partner, Heather Poe, are having a baby; and Mary considers their relationship "a marriage."
- Same sex marriage is legalized in The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada and South Africa. A number of European countries are examining the issue of marriage as a Human Right for persons regardless of gender.
- Many churches ordain GLBT persons as leaders; the Orthodox Jewish Seminaries now accept openly gay students, while PCUSA still struggles with both the ordination and marriage issues.
- Some states have come forth with legislation for "legal partnering" which is *reported* as providing "the same rights as marriage"; however, nothing, Nothing But Marriage, takes the place of marriage and all the rights and privileges it confers.
- In justice and equality's favor, a Los Angeles jury just awarded a large settlement, \$1.7 million, to a former Chatsworth firefighter who was retaliated against for supporting the claims of his black, lesbian colleague who alleged racial, sexual and sexual orientation discrimination. Her trial date has not yet been set.

The Lazarus Project has laid a firm foundation: wrestling the issues and bringing forth new understanding which is our contribution of "Good News" these past thirty years. There is much work yet to be done. That which is ahead may make yesterday's work seem like a 'walk in the park'. Equality and justice for all still calls us to the task, whatever it may be. So let us continue the journey and tell the story well.

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For, once upon a time, The Lazarus Project brought about a phenomenal experience that enriched and changed our lives while impacting the world in which we live. We celebrate the Lazarus Project, for, in essence, it will always be present. We need only ask that God be present as we gather energy for the journey and the tasks and days to come.

May 10, 2007 Brief Addendum

In the May 7 Newsweek, Mike Penner, L.A. Times sportswriter for twenty-three years, announced, "I am a transsexual sportswriter, planning to return from a vacation as Christine Daniels. She returned, and still writes for the Times.

I called my alma mater, Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, where I got my degree while Bernard was working for his Master of Divinity at Yale. I asked if the school had a Gay and Lesbian Center and was referred to the Director of the SAGE (Sex and Gender Equality) Center.

I was impressed with the progressiveness of my school in including their students' sexuality and gender as part of enlarging services to the student community. The center had been open six months and had already had a series of debates on the issue of Marriage vs. Partner Unions. We both agreed that they were not equal. Partnership/Union contracts do not carry the same (over 1000) protections and rights that marriage carries and is recognized at all levels of government: i.e., local, city, county, state, national and international.

This will continue to be one of the major human rights issues and struggles of the early 21st century. We, as members of the PCUSA, must continue to break down the barriers of prejudice in our nation and to advance the cause of equality and justice for all people.

Note: The Lazarus Award has been given over the past twenty-two years to many deserving persons chosen for their work in breaking down the barriers of prejudice and advancing the cause of justice for the marginalized people in our society. The commendatory plaque was "Presented to John Shelby Spong in grateful appreciation for your prophetic ministry to those who have been rejected or are on the margins in both church and society. Your preaching and teaching, writing and other efforts especially on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities have immeasurably strengthened the voices for justice and inclusion and have given to all of us the courage to continue this struggle."

*The Reverend Chris Glaser, founding director of The Lazarus Project, is an ordained minister in the Metropolitan Community Church. He served as Interim Pastor of the San Francisco MCC until the end of 2007. Chris has written ten books. Atlanta, GA is again home for Chris, where he is presently working for the Human Rights Campaign, writing a study guide to accompany the movie "For The Bible Tells Me So". The movie won awards at Sundance and is now available at Blockbuster and other outlets.



Memories The Lazarus Project*
1977-2007

Sharing *The Memory Book* was approved by the Lazarus Board of Directors, at the close of the Project in April 2008. Further copies are available for \$20.00, shipping and handling included. Books may be ordered from:
Louise Jongewaard (checks payable to Louise Jongewaard)
7307 West 88th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90045

*Memories---The Lazarus Project has been made available to the Lazarus Archives. The Memory Book contains remembered history of The Lazarus Project, personal statements, recollections and collected memories of people who wished to share their experiences.