



December 2012 issue

## Looking Forward

The **Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry** conference is less than a year away -- **Mystery of the Margins, Unmasked - Setting the Table for All Youth: Yours, Mine, Ours**. The conference is focused on our youth's challenges and marginalization and we are making terrific progress in planning. Dr. Caitlin Ryan presented her **Family Acceptance Project** at our last conference. Ryan's study brought us face to face with the hard, cold facts that youth experience when they lose their familial support because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.

Some of our youth are moved to commit suicide seeing it as the only viable option when rejected by their families and church and school communities. Others are tossed out of their homes because of their orientation. Still others run away because their homes are abusive environments. They become homeless couch-surfers, fall prey to pimps and/or turn tricks for some money or a place to stay for the night. Drug addiction, alcoholism and mental illness are also consequences some of our youth experience because they lack acceptance from their families.

Clearly this reality is unacceptable. The figures need to be examined, discussed and actions taken. We members of CALGM are entrusted with the care of these youth; we are all called to be family to the youth who are labeled as different in our society and who therefore are at risk for all these problems. Some members

identify as LGBTQ and grew up knowing these unpalatable truths and need to share their experience with the next generation. In these most trying of times, CALGM believes that what is most needed is a shared experience of hope and dialogue.

And so, at our next conference, in **New Orleans, September 12-15, 2013**, we will offer you and your ministries hopeful, viable solutions and directions. Three **world-class** keynote speakers will deliver keynote addresses. Our first will be **Dr. Anthony Padavano**, a theologian and author of twenty-nine books. Occasionally, Dr. Padavano presents at United Nations Conferences in New York City, The Hague and Geneva. He will talk to us about the Scripture passages so often used against our youth. In our four breakout sessions, there will be an **interesting variety of workshop leaders**, some nationally recognized and from all around the country and Canada.

Finally, what would a conference be without a **banquet??** New Orleans' **Hotel Monteleone** boasts delectable food. And to complement the banquet menu we will have slammin' **Cirque-themed entertainment by Helium Aerial Dance and Entertainment!**

The conference will be a refreshing pause of camaraderie and communal liturgies.

I look forward to seeing you there!!  
Blessings Galore!

D. Jeep Ries  
Vice-President of Conferences

## **Enormous Need, and Great Things Happening in Ministry**

On October 6th, those of us gathered at the Guesthouse of St. John's for the CALGM Retreat took time out for another listening session. It is always so energizing to talk with one another, to hear about people's success in ministry and to learn from each other. The stories we heard spoke of the great hunger for belonging, and the challenge of finding parishes in the Upper-Midwest where LGBT persons feel welcome. One participant drives three hours each way on Sundays in order to worship with a community where he feels at home. Another concern expressed was for those who work on a diocesan level but are not free to speak up in defense of their LGBT children and/or friends for fear of losing their jobs and their livelihood. Once again we hear the Gospel command to welcome each person as Christ. Both as individuals and as local ministries who believe in a Christ who turned nobody away, who defended those alienated and on the margins of his society, we must search out those who hunger and welcome them into the embrace of our communities, leaving no one alone and out in the cold.

We also heard wonderful stories of seeds growing into mature ministries and producing good fruit that attracts others to ministry. Gay and Straight in Christ, a ministry centered in Good Shepherd Parish in Menomonee Falls, WI, has become remarkably fruitful and is now spreading branches throughout the state. While each ministry is local and independent, under the local parish leadership, the ministry team from Gay and Straight in Christ has generously shared their expertise on how to start a ministry, build support, get the word out. What they have received, Ann Castiglione and

team now share generously—and the word has gotten out. We celebrate their success with them—and encourage you to talk with Ann about growing a local ministry when we all gather in New Orleans next September!

Another important lesson repeated during this listening session: **we must work on visibility.** We need so desperately to hear the words “gay” and “lesbian” from the pulpit and have them included in the prayers of the faithful. We pray for all kinds of other groups in our church and at the margins of society. It says so much to LGBT Catholics and their families and friends to hear that we realize that they are among us—and that they are wanted in our parishes. T-shirts with a ministry logo and welcoming signs at gatherings of LGBT groups are also important for getting the word out that our parish communities care.

Thanks to all who participated in this session... We're listening—keep talking!

--Sheila Nelson

## **CALGM Retreat—Making a “Joyful Noise” While “Walking Across Egypt”**

Fourteen participants gathered at St. John's Abbey Guesthouse in Collegeville, MN, on October 5-7 for our CALGM Retreat, “Setting the Table for Youth: Yours, Mine, Ours.” The input for the retreat came from two movies: “Walking Across Egypt” and “Joyful Noise.”

Both movies dealt with the issue of how to welcome youth into our faith communities with all the challenges our young people face in life today. After viewing the movies, the group discussed what we learned about working with youth and how to mentor them. Here's a list of the things that we shared together.

1. We need to accept young people without judgment. A non-judgmental attitude sets the stage for trusting relationships that enable us to challenge others with loving gentleness.

2. “The greatest of these is (unconditional) love.” If we want young people to respond to us, we need to genuinely love them and treat them as human beings, with respect and dignity. The value we have as human beings is not earned.

3. God wants us to be happy (full of joy and peace). It’s OK to enjoy life. Joy is more enticing than criticism. It’s good to be generous with “the little things” that don’t cost us much of anything.

4. We need to be patient and encourage young people to connect with God as each knows how. A positive attitude helps youth grow in confidence and self-esteem.

5. We teach young people responsibility by showing them responsibility and giving them responsibility. We have to be willing to let them fail in order for them to grow. –Fr. Bob Pierson

### **GUYLAND: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men (HarperCollins 2008)**

GUYLAND by Michael Kimmel, a sociologist and leading scholar of gender studies, is important reading for anyone concerned about young people in the U.S. today. So many of the problems we see in today’s youth stem from the “guy code”, the rules young men follow while trying to prove their masculinity to other young men. Until the early 20th century, boys became men in their early teens when they left

school and took on the responsibilities of a job and helping to support their families. Now the duties of adulthood are pushed off until well into one’s twenties—and with the economic slump, often into one’s thirties. Kimmel’s work is based on interviews with hundreds of young men. It is a fascinating read with points illustrated by stories and quotes from the boys. Especially significant to our ministry is Kimmel’s analysis of homophobia and the central role it plays in the “guy code:” “Homophobia—the fear that people might misperceive you as gay—is the animating fear of American guys’ masculinity. It’s what lies underneath the crazy risk-taking behaviors practiced by boys of all ages, what drives the fear that other guys will see you as weak, unmanly, frightened... In that sense, homosexuality becomes a kind of shorthand for “unmanliness”—and the homophobia that defines and animates the daily conversations of Guyland is at least as much about masculinity as it is about sexuality (50).” Kimmel shows how this fear leads to: 1) the bullying so prevalent in society—and even in Church youth groups; 2) the hazing rituals that are so demeaning and destructive (note that one study found that 24 percent of students involved in church groups were subjected to hazing); 3) binge drinking; 4) addictive computer gaming and use of pornography, and 5) destructive sexual behavior.

Kimmel convincingly demonstrates how Guyland values and beliefs negatively affect all our youth, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, social class, and family of origin. As a married heterosexual man concerned for the future of his preteen son, Kimmel confronts a central issue we too often ignore—societal understandings of masculinity. –Sheila Nelson

## Questioning

The second Sunday evening of the month in the chapel at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Menomonee Falls, WI, a group of men and women gather to support and affirm GLBT persons, their families and friends. This particular evening, a gentleman joined the group along with a teenage girl. He was recognized by some as the Christian Formation Director from a neighboring parish. The usual assumption was made in the minds of most of us in attendance that evening; the young girl was struggling with her own sexual orientation and probably having difficulties gaining acceptance from family and/or friends. The evening progressed with a reading from scripture, followed by discussion. The young lady sat quietly throughout the evening, listening attentively but offering no comment of her own. Prior to the closing prayer, a last go-around is offered for anyone to say whatever he or she would like to share. As we went around the circle and it came to her turn, she spoke, saying that the meeting gave her hope in the Catholic Church's acceptance of the GLBT community. She then shared that she was asked to attend this meeting because she was struggling with a decision to be confirmed in the Catholic Church, a church, in her eyes, not welcoming to her friends that are gay.

Most of those present that evening learned at least two lessons; first, not to assume anything about anyone because one's assumptions are probably completely wrong; and second, that the message portrayed by some Catholic churches, as well as some of our Catholic leaders is giving the impression that our lesbian and gay brothers and sisters are not welcome in our churches. This idea is negatively affecting not only the individuals directly involved but

also family and friends of the LGBT community. It needs to change and the change begins with each of us as an individual welcoming everyone as a "Child of God."

-Carol Weber



## Tribute to Fred Weber

At the end of our October meeting in St. Joseph, Minnesota, the Board once again had to let go of a much beloved board member, Fred Weber. Fred joined the Board six years ago, generously accepting a leadership role in NACDLGM soon after being introduced to the organization. He has stuck with us through the name change and some very difficult days; but when things got challenging, the board always looked forward to sharing a meal together at the end of the day—knowing we could count on Fred for a few good jokes and some hearty, reinvigorating laughter. Fred always knew how to put things back into perspective. Fred was the Membership Person on the Board; he kept our spreadsheets up to date, reminded you when your renewals came due, sent out newsletters and appeals, faithfully doing whatever work we needed done.

Just as importantly, Fred was a beautiful role model for us, exemplifying the power of love in so many ways. His obvious love for his wife and family witnessed to the Christian ideal of family. His love for his parish, pastor, and the Catholic Church taught us about hope and patience and commitment. His love for CALGM showed us

what can be accomplished when one loves generously, selflessly, and with dogged determination mixed with a great sense of humor. Fred has been and will continue to be a tremendous blessing to us—and we are deeply grateful for his involvement with CALGM. Already we miss him terribly! Special thanks, too, to his wife Carol for sharing Fred with us so generously over the past six years—and for being his assistant in many of the tasks he took on for CALGM.

Please join us in praying for special blessings upon Fred and his family. And when you see him in New Orleans, give him a big THANKS!

## **CALGM 2012 Membership Meeting—St. John’s Abbey Guesthouse**

On October 6th a small but dedicated group gathered for our Annual Membership Meeting. We had participants from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Connecticut, and New York. Most of what we talked about is covered elsewhere in this RECLAIM, but what follows are the highlights of our meeting.

### **President’s Report (Sheila Nelson):**

- An update on our interactions with Bishop Cordileone following our Albany Membership Meeting; Michael Zampelli, Arthur Fitzmaurice, and I returned to Oakland for another meeting in early February. We have already reported to you the communications following that meeting: the Board, as individuals and as a group, affirmed our commitment to the Gospel, a pastoral approach to ministry and outreach to alienated Catholics, and a desire to continue to work within the Catholic Church. As a board, we have discerned the need to pray to be faithful to our

call, to remain in respectful dialogue with Church leadership, and to put our energy into the work we are called to do in setting the table, readying a place for all our LGBT persons and their families at our parish tables.

- We explained the new ANNUAL membership plan, which will run from January 1 through December 31 with 3 categories of membership: individual, household, and institution (diocesan/parish/college campus ministry, etc.). Current members should have already received a letter explaining this. If you’re not currently a member and would like to be, check the SUPPORT US tab on our website [www.calgm.org](http://www.calgm.org).

- We had a very informative and inspiring listening session in Memphis in May. Thanks go out to all the dedicated folks in Memphis! You can read about that session in the Summer 2012 issue of RECLAIM. We also had a listening session in Collegeville, MN, and hope to do a third in the Oakland/Berkeley, CA, Area in February. If your local ministry would like to host a listening session, please let one of the Board Members know. We’d love to hear what you have to say...

- We’ve finished a new CALGM brochure (which members received with their renewal request). If you would like copies to share with others who might be interested in joining us in our efforts to build a more welcoming church, let us know. We’re eager to share!

### **Treasurer’s Report (Bob Pierson):**

CALGM’s checking balance as of October 6, 2012 was \$7,538. The savings balance (including the Board Scholarship Fund, the Haas Fund, the Marianist Grant, and the Website Fund) was \$19,552.92 for a total balance of

\$27,090.92. We've trimmed our expenses and are doing well. That said, we're looking at major expenses for the New Orleans Conference and would like to be able to subsidize people who need what the conference will offer but whose financial situation makes it impossible to attend without some assistance. Similarly, we need to build the board—and some wonderful potential board members will need support to pay for travel and accommodations for our meetings. So please remember us in your end-of-year donations!

**Resource Director's Report  
(Arthur Fitzmaurice):**

Our Resource Director has been mightily busy (in addition to finishing his Ph.D. and settling into Post-Doctoral Research). Major involvements include:

- Responding to press inquiries (and trying to rein in reporters who want to sensationalize our situation).
- Connecting people who e-mail us to local ministries or responding to their concerns directly; special effort has been made in connecting to Spanish-speaking parents.
- Consulting with the local committee of a diocese looking to expand its outreach efforts.
- Doing follow-up presentations on the Family Acceptance Project to religious educators in Los Angeles.
- Preparing for upcoming booths at the Gay Christian Network Conference in Phoenix in January 2013 and the National Catholic Education Association Meeting in April 2013.

- Major revisions to the website—some pending, some completed; we need volunteers to help update content and suggest resources to be added; e-mail rd@calgm.org with your resources and ideas.

- Watch the web and FACEBOOK page for Advent and Christmas reflections.

**Vice-President of Conferences  
(Diane Jeep Ries):**

Jeep updated members on plans for our 2013 New Orleans Conference. See her article in this issue. Please plan on joining us for a phenomenal conference in a fabulous hotel in one of the country's most exciting cities!

**CALGM Changes Its Membership  
Renewal Process**

At our meeting in St. Louis in February 2012, the CALGM Board of Directors decided to simplify our membership renewal process in two ways. First, we decided to pare down the number of membership categories to three:

- \*Individual membership (1 person)...\$40
- \*Household (2 at same address)..... \$75
- \*Diocese/Parish/Institution  
(1-3 persons)..... \$100

Second, we decided to have everyone's membership renewal due at the beginning of the calendar year. So from now on, our annual membership will run from January 1st to December 31st. We recently sent our new membership brochure to everyone on our current membership list so that you can renew your membership for next year before January 1, 2013.

If we don't hear from you before January 1st, we will send you a reminder, and if we don't hear from you after that, we will move you to our Donors and Friends list so that our membership list stays up to date. Please don't forget to renew your membership.

**If alleviating LGBT estrangement from the Catholic church is important to you, consider a monthly automatic banking donation to CALGM. CALGM, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkley, CA 94709**

**REMINDER REMINDER REMINDER**

**The Early Bird registration for our 2013 CALGM Conference in New Orleans is available until January 1, 2013. After that, the prices will rise.**

**So, if you want to get a good deal, register NOW for our 2013 conference online at [www.calgm.org](http://www.calgm.org). The early conference registration fee is \$195 and the early banquet fee is \$40. Why not save some money???**

***I want to help CALGM set the table for LGBT Catholics and their families.***

My Contribution:  \$100  \$50  \$25  Other

How I will make my Contribution:  Checks payable to CALGM

Credit Card:  Visa  Master Card  AMEX  Discover

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVV# \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

***Please Complete:***

Name (as it appears on card): \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Send checks to: CALGM 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709

Or contribute online by visiting: [www.calgm.org](http://www.calgm.org) and selecting the "Support CALGM" tab.