

## Minutes for August 19, 2008

The meeting convened at Steph Heneghan's house (thanks Steph for your hospitality!)

Present were Steph Heneghan, Michael Bower, Bob Inderbitzen, Katie Hoffman-Fulda, Laurel Cole, Gail Hall, Tim Dostie, Pat Howland, Ron Robbins, Tom Rolfe, and Mary Dean

Missing were Steve Smith, Wendy Ware, and Bill Hoffman

Mary opened with a prayer.

The minutes from the June 12 meeting were approved as written.

As a recap of last year's activities, we started by talking about the summer movie showings. It was reported that the audiences ranged from one to twenty people, but in most cases some meaningful discussion took place after the movies, and that it was successful overall.

Rather than break up into subcommittees, we agreed to meet as a whole to discuss future programming.

The Bible subcommittee reported that they had not really met to discuss programming, but Ron had added a link to our website that dealt with the issue in an unbiased way.

The "What is it like to be gay" subcommittee produced two options for speakers. One was the Stonewall Speakers, which is a group that speaks before schools, churches, and other audiences. They can include people who represent a broad range of GLBT perspectives and experiences, and could probably tailor their presentation to what we need from them. Mary offered to continue to pursue them.

The second option was PFLAG, which is a group comprising family and friends of GLBT persons. The local chapter meets at South Glastonbury UCC and their website contains information about them. Michael Bower offered to investigate further. The group agreed that both might be valuable perspectives.

We also discussed the idea of personal testimonies, which would be welcome from members of the congregation. Bob Inderbitzen offered to contact a church member about including her recent letter, which would be posted on the website with other testimonials, which we have already received.

We talked about how to solicit these letters, and it was brought up that it might not be a good idea to make a churchwide appeal, but rather let the congregation know that there are testimonials on the website and that submissions would be welcome. We would say that it would be in the context of the "What is it like to be gay" theme.

We launched into the familiar subject of anonymous submissions to the suggestion box. One submission was read to the group. We talked about different ways to reach out to this element of the congregation in a way that invites them to speak their piece. It was suggested that we do a program as part of our "What does it mean to us and our church" part of the process. The program could be a small group

discussion that invites people who feel this way. It could be titled "Not in my church" or "Why am I not being heard?" and it would include only 2 ONA members, one of whom they would feel more comfortable talking to.

It was discussed that the Pew Crew might benefit from a small group discussion, like the one Steph did with the Quilters.

It was also discussed that the topic of whether or not being gay is a choice really needs to be included in a future program. Whether it is with the speakers we are talking to, or someone from the psychological community. Bob offered a one-pager about this topic for the website.

We then began discussion about the upcoming mailing, which will include the questions we have so far and responses to them. We will add to the questions we can't answer now some plan for how we will get those answers. There will be some mention of programs to come, and that there will be an opportunity for everyone to "be heard." There will be an invitation to go to the website to read the testimonial submissions and articles, and an invitation to submit one if someone felt so moved. Possibly, we would include a few lines from the Susan Parker letter as a teaser to get people to go to the website to read the rest.

The church mouse article will include the Sept 28<sup>th</sup> program with Donna and Jonathan, as well as a mention of the upcoming mailing.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, September 11 at 7:30 in the Parlor. Laurel to open, Steph to close.

Another meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 23 at 7:30 in the Parlor.

Respectfully submitted by Michael Bower