



# CREATE\*: JUSTICE

# FOR LESBIAN & GAY PERSONS

121 North Fitzhugh Street • Rochester, New York 14614

THE REV. LYNN U. NELSON, *Chairperson*  
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DATE: 24 MAY 1983

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For Immediate Release:

## CHURCH GROUP WORKS FOR GAY CIVIL RIGHTS By Diane Engster

At least one church-sponsored group is becoming part of the solution rather than part of the problem for lesbian and gay persons. The group, known as CREATE\*: JUSTICE for Lesbian and Gay Persons recently presented a thought-provoking program before the April 1983 fellowship meeting of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley near Rochester, New York. The program included the showing of the film, "Pink Triangles", a documentary on discrimination against gay and lesbian persons in contemporary society and throughout history. The film's title is derived from the grim historic fact that gays were forced to wear the badge of a pink triangle while prisoners in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. CREATE\*: JUSTICE plans to offer future programs within local churches on discrimination against gay and lesbian persons.

GAY CIVIL RIGHTS  
24 May 1983

The ecumenical group was formed to transform some of the despair of discrimination into hope for the achievement of civil rights for one of the few minorities who have no widespread legal protection against discrimination. The group, consisting of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and Baptists, may be the first of its kind in the country sponsored by a mainline denomination. Its members, both gay and non-gay, clergy and layperson, men and women, came together in June, 1981. Its name is an acronym for Church Responsibility for Education and Advocacy Towards Equality and JUSTICE for Lesbian and Gay Persons. CREATE\*: JUSTICE was voted into existence and funded as a Mission Challenge Project by the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, the official governing body of 75 United Presbyterian churches in 5 counties in Upstate New York. The original mandate for such activity within the United Presbyterian Church came from a policy statement entitled, "The Church and Homosexuality", voted upon by delegates from throughout the country at the denomination's General Assembly held in San Diego in 1978.

The statement proclaimed that "there is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence" and urged United Presbyterians to work for civil rights for gay and lesbian persons in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

GAY CIVIL RIGHTS  
24 May 1983

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley has enabled CREATE\*: JUSTICE to be the first United Presbyterian group committed solely to fulfilling the San Diego mandate on civil rights. The group has recently been working to educate the religious community about two bills that have been before the New York State Assembly concerning civil rights for gay and lesbian persons, and the prevention of discrimination against gay and lesbian parents in child custody disputes.

Members of the group hope that their work will help to remedy the alienation that many gay and lesbian persons feel in relation to the Church. They are trying to answer the question put by a former Moderator of the United Presbyterian Church in a speech before the 194th General Assembly in Hartford (1982). The former moderator, Howard Rice, challenged the Assembly stating that "Black Presbyterians, gay and lesbian Presbyterians, and many women across our denomination... (are asking), 'Who will stand for us?!' Women, blacks, gay and lesbian people in our church are not feeling that others really do understand or share the depth of isolation now felt in anguish... The future will depend even more on how we deal with the question, (form) relationships that respond, and... risk on behalf of others in their pain, to be where the Lord Jesus Christ always is, among the marginalized and hurting.."

GAY CIVIL RIGHTS  
24 May 1983

The United Presbyterian Church, locally and nationally, must continually work against its own homophobia. Many gay and non-gay persons remain concerned over the contradiction of the religious discrimination in refusing to ordain gays and lesbians into the service of the church while advocating an end to secular discrimination.

For more information regarding the work of CREATE\*: JUSTICE, contact the Reverend Lynn U. Nelson, CREATE\*: JUSTICE, 121 North Fitzhugh Street, Rochester, New York 14614.



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THE REV. LYNN U. NELSON, *Chairperson*  
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Dear Friend,

Your name has come to our attention as someone within the religious community who believes in social justice and equality. You may have previously received a letter from us in April, 1983. Unfortunately, that letter did not contain a reply card. We are now contacting you in order to develop an advocacy network of informed and understanding individuals who will work to attain civil rights for lesbian and gay persons.

We are inviting you to join with CREATE\*: Justice to make our community a better place to live for all God's people. CREATE\*: Justice is a project of the Presbytery of Genesee Valley with both gay and non-gay members from the Presbyterian, Catholic, Episcopalian, and Baptist faith communities. We subscribe to the belief expressed by the 1978 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that "there is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence," and are committed to implementing the mandate of the General Assembly to work for civil rights for gay and lesbian persons in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Over the past 2 1/2 years we have engaged in Biblically-based educational programs at the judicatory and local church levels. We now hope to expand our efforts by informing the religious community about gay/lesbian civil rights through "Advocacy Updates" which we will occasionally send you. Our first such update is enclosed.

We are asking you to respond to our call for justice in the following ways:

1. By indicating your willingness to remain on our mailing list and to receive occasional CREATE\*: Justice mailings concerning civil rights for gay and lesbian persons.
2. By endorsing and becoming a co-signer to the enclosed letter which will be sent by CREATE\*: Justice urging Gov. Cuomo to sign an executive order barring discrimination against gay/lesbian persons in the state arena. (See "Advocacy Update")
3. By sending a personal letter to Gov. Cuomo expressing your support for an anti-discriminatory executive order. (See "Advocacy Update")

Advocating justice,

*Diane Engster* Diane Engster

*Ralph Carter* Ralph Carter

on behalf of CREATE\*: Justice

The Honorable Mario Cuomo  
Executive Office  
The Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

October 23, 1983

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As lay and clergy leaders from various religious backgrounds, we join together with CREATE\*: Justice to urge you to sign an executive order barring discrimination against gay and lesbian persons. CREATE\*: Justice is an ecumenical group based in Rochester, N.Y. consisting of men and women, both gay and non-gay, lay and clergy from four denominations. (Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, and Baptist) The group is funded as a Mission Challenge Project by the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, the official governing body of 76 Presbyterian churches in five counties of Upstate New York.

As persons who believe that God calls us to affirm the worth and dignity of every person, we endorse the policy statement adopted by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in 1978: "There is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence." We are personally and collectively committed to supporting civil rights for gay and lesbian persons in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

We are pleased that you, too, made a similar commitment at the Fund for Human Dignity dinner on May 16, 1983. We urge you to fulfill this commitment. An executive order providing equal opportunity and justice to those in the state arena would be the first step in providing equal opportunity and justice for all of the citizens of New York State. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this matter and advocate immediate action for which you have our strong support.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Lynn U. Nelson, chairperson

Cosigners:

OPENING STATEMENTS GIVEN AT MARCH 23, 1982

PRESBYTERY PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF

CREATE\*: JUSTICE FOR LESBIAN AND GAY PERSONS

Tim Sally's Statement:

The man whom I loved and with whom I shared five years of my life had served honorably in the military for several years before we met. He had planned to make a career of his service.

However, when the Air Force discovered he was gay, they discharged him on the grounds that his homosexuality and military service were incompatible. They cited "damage to morale" as one reason for their desire to be rid of him.

This "reverse blame" is the same prejudicial mentality which kept blacks in the military segregated from whites many years ago.

Where is the justice when we as Christians allow an irrelevant factor in one's personal life, which has no bearing on job performance, be the grounds for wiping out a person's career hopes and all of his or her veteran's benefits?

\*Church Responsibility for Education & Advocacy Toward Equality