

*Supporting, Educating,
Advocating ...*

*for full inclusion of LGBT
persons in the Reformed
Church in America*

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The RfA Newsletter

Lining Up for Full Inclusion: New Advocates Gather at BIC Workshops



Room for All was pleased and grateful to offer three "Building an Inclusive Church" workshops this fall in Oakland, NJ, Grand Rapids, MI and Pella, IA. Four RfA trainers—Miriam Bush, Bob Mutch, Marilyn Paarlberg and Rob Williams—shared leadership along with Rev. Vicki Wunsch, our colleague and mentor from the Institute for Welcoming Resources. The workshops drew a combined total of nearly 100 people from nine states, two RCA colleges and ten denominations (including 13 RCA congregations), all of whom expressed a call and commitment to the mission of LGBT inclusiveness in their churches. A Grand Rapids participant shared this response:

I cannot thank you enough for your training the last few days. A friend from church told me I should come but I was unsure of coming to this type of training. I don't know anyone who is gay and to be honest, I was uncomfortable attending a workshop that was about [LGBT] people. I was wrong... To me, the most important part of the training was that this was not a workshop on LGBT people, but rather a workshop on who we are as a church community, whom we exclude, and how we live out our call to be loving disciples of God in a world that so desperately needs it.

We were especially pleased to accept the generous hospitality of All One Body, the new welcoming program in the Christian Reformed Church, who provided great meals and facilities at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids. Many thanks, also to Ponds Reformed Church in Oakland, and Central College and members of Second Reformed Church in Pella for their welcome, meals and logistical support. The ministry of inclusion is a grassroots effort, and we couldn't carry out our work without the help of these and other supporting churches. **For more BIC photos , see p. 9.**

More Trainings, New Format...

Room for All is committed to making these workshops available for as many people as possible, and so we anticipate offering the BIC in a Friday evening/all day Saturday format in the future. Plans are in the works for further trainings in the spring of 2013—please let us know if your RfA regional group or your church would like to host us!

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SAVE THE DATE!

**The RfA Board is
actively planning our
3rd national
conference.**

**“Making Room for
All: 2013” will be
held on October
24th–26th
Central Reformed
Church in Grand
Rapids, MI.**

**We look forward to
welcoming you.**

New Board Members Express Hope for the Future

The two most recent RfA Board members began their service mid-year, due to prior Board resignations. We've invited Tom Folkert and Carolyn (Cari) Keith to introduce themselves.



Tom Folkert was raised in the RCA and majored in Sacred Music at Hope College. He has served RCA churches in West Michigan in music ministry positions

as well as lay capacities, and works as a consultant in the funeral service profession.

As a child, I remember that at every communion service, just prior to receiving communion, we would sing the hymn, “Just as I am, without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me; And that thou bid'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

I never felt like we did a good job of living into believing that God loves us, just as we are. I felt like there were always things for which I was being judged, not necessarily by God, but by my fellow churchgoers. It is easy for us to look down our noses at those unlike ourselves. All too often it can give us a sense of fulfillment to know that we are “normal” and others are “different.”

Through a long and sometimes painful journey, I have come to realize that God's grace goes much further than we may want to admit. The reality is that no matter who we are, what we have done, or where we are on this earthly pilgrimage, we're all in God's loving embrace.

When I was at my lowest ebb, I came upon a church where that

grace was preached and lived! Everyone was welcomed. In my former church I had heard judgment and condemnation for LGBT people, who were even told that they were not welcome at the Lord's Table. In this church, I heard that all persons needed to come to the Table, to taste and see how gracious God is. I heard a welcome I had never heard before.

I want others to experience the same kind of radical inclusion that I experienced in this church—one that includes the welcoming of LGBT people. I hope that my work on the Room for All board will assist in bringing individuals and churches to the place where we are all viewed by our fellow human beings as whole, normal yet different persons, loved and embraced by God.

Rev. Carolyn (Cari) Keith is

an ordained minister in the RCA, a registered nurse, and a trained Spiritual Director. A graduate of New Brunswick Seminary, she has pastored congregations in Ridgewood and Clifton, NJ. She is currently working towards her D. Min at Hartford Seminary. Cari and her husband now live in Gardiner, NY where she hopes to continue writing and working as a Spiritual Director.



With all that currently engages my life, I have been asked why I decided to give time and resources to the work of RfA. My response is a simple one ~ I take scripture and faith very seriously and I am wounded when hurt is hurled at others in the name of God.

I am committed to the work of RfA because I passionately believe

in a God who created in marvelous diversity; in Christ who taught by example to love extravagantly; and in the Spirit who is ever at work growing God's people into new ways of being and understanding.

This is what grounds my Christian faith and yet I have sadly witnessed the injury done in the name of that Christian love, by others who also state that they, too, take scripture seriously. I want us to grow together in our love and understanding of scripture as the transformative, holy word of God and not a list of rules and regulations that both Jesus and Paul railed against. I want us to grow together in understanding so no one who differs from the majority mindset feels outcast, dismissed or unworthy to serve according to God's call.

I do this work because I believe that the church needs to repent of the pain it has inflicted on those whom God has created differently. I long to belong to a church that values this diversity of God's people and celebrates the goodness that it brings to our congregations. I want to belong to a church that opens its doors in hospitality and full welcoming inclusion. I want to belong to a church that affirms the God given gifts for service and ministry of those who celebrate the sacrament with us.

I work for RfA because I believe that exclusion hurts God's people at all levels of our personal and institutional being. Exclusion denies the very gifts God has given us to share. I work for RfA with the hope that one day we might truly be a church that lives the gospel of inclusivity.



Fixed by God

by Valerie Van Kooten

*“Mom, I’m gay, and I’ve known it since I was about 12. And I don’t want to be the weird kid, the weird cousin, the weird kid in the youth group. I just want to be **me**.”*

It was a sultry June night in 2006 when my son Cameron, then 15, said those words. I could feel my heart beating in my ears, and time seemed to stop. Though I remained outwardly calm, I was screaming on the inside: “God—what do I do? Help me!” And at that moment, I knew my world, Cameron’s world, our family’s world, was never going to be the same.

I was raised in a loving, Christian home, and in a Christian Reformed congregation that was renowned for being one of the most conservative in the denomination. My husband and I attended a Christian high school and though there were boys whom we labeled “sissy,” and girls who were considered “tomboys,” the word “gay” wasn’t even on the radar. I knew nothing about homosexuality, other than anyone who ended up that way was probably doomed to hell.

In the weeks that followed Cameron’s pronouncement, being the Type A personality that I am, I desperately tried to find any resources about raising a gay child—most of which consisted of incredibly outdated books at the library, a futile visit with a pastor who sympathized but didn’t want anyone to know that, and an online search to look for Christian

resources—many of which told us that if our child was gay, we as parents were to blame for it all. A huge burden of guilt was laid on top of sorrow and grieving.

In retrospect, I wish I hadn’t so persistently “pursued a solution.” I wish I had simply taken a deep breath and let God take over. But I’m the kind of person who, when presented with a problem, starts looking for the solution. I was going to take care of this problem, as well, because I couldn’t trust a God that would play this kind of trick on my beautiful, creative, intelligent kid.

Six months later I was chatting online with a woman named Rita in Texas; she also had a gay son. Rita said something I will never forget: “Valerie, you are treating your son like a broken car—just get the right book, the right counselor, the right conference for him to attend, and he’ll be fixed.” I was breathless. She had hit the nail on the head. And then she continued. “You are praying that God will fix your son, but you’re going to find out that in the long run, God’s going to fix you.”

What a bunch of bull, I thought. *There’s nothing wrong with me*. But she was absolutely, 100 percent, dead right. My son didn’t need to be fixed. He was exactly as God created him to be.

Something I’ve heard often is that when a gay child comes out of the closet, the parents and grandparents usually head in. The last six years have been a journey, one that has blown a lot of preconceived notions out of my faith and one that has let

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“What Do I Do if My Child is Gay?”

Lead With Love

is a 35-minute online documentary created to help answer that question. Its goal is to provide comfort, information, and guidance for parents who have recently learned that their son or daughter is lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The film follows four families as they share their honest reactions to hearing that their child is gay, including the intense emotions, fears, and questions that it raised.

Interviews with psychologists, teachers, and clergy provide factual answers to parents’ most commonly asked questions, as well as concrete guidance to help parents keep their children healthy and safe during this challenging time.

www.leadwithlovefilm.com

Fixed by God (cont.)

the Spirit plow the earth of my heart and keep it soft. It has driven me to the Bible in a way I had never studied it before. It has made me a much more compassionate person, one who is more concerned about loving my neighbor than always being right. I am learning how to engage graciously with those who don't agree, and how to keep my temper under control, even in the face of discrimination, gibes, and harassment of my son and others like him. As the parent of a gay child, I've had to come out of the closet, too.

The journey hasn't been easy, but it's been full of wonder and trust and integrity. It's just beginning, I suspect, and I'm excited to see what the Spirit has in store for me, for the church, and for our LGBT brothers and sisters.

[Valerie Van Kooten lives in Pella, Iowa, where she and her family are members at Trinity Reformed Church. Along with her career as a freelance writer, she teaches technical writing at Central College.]

REGIONAL GROUPS OFFER "THE GOOD NEWS OF INCLUSION"

Advocates for LGBT inclusiveness in the RCA continue to share ideas and encouragement at periodic meetings of RfA regional groups.



The Long Island, NY area group met recently at St. Paul's Reformed Church in No. Babylon. The group is making plans to exhibit the new Family Diversity Project photo collection, "We Have Faith" (see sidebar).

The RfA regional group in West Michigan has gained new members and energy, evident at their Nov. 4 gathering in Holland where 44 supporters

met for worship, information-sharing and support. A participant in the evening said this:

"Thank you, Hope Church for opening the doors and making room for us to meet. Thank you for chairs and coffee and good space and the custodian who did extra work for us. Thank you, RfA, for helping us sing what we believe. Thank you for helping us navigate what the General Synod vote does and does not mean. Thank you for helping us to listen to one another and share a bit of our stories as to why inclusion of LGBTQ persons has become important to us. It was a good evening to be together. I hope that we can continue to build momentum with clarity of purpose so that the good news of inclusion might be very evident in West Michigan."

Contact information for RfA regional groups is at www.roomforall.com.

**Have You Seen It?**

"We Have Faith: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Clergy & People of Faith Speak Out"

Room for All is pleased to co-sponsor the newest initiative by the Family Diversity Project. Created by the same team that made the award-winning exhibit and book, "Love Makes a Family," which was displayed at RfA's 2011 national conference, "We Have Faith" is a traveling exhibit that presents photos and accompanying stories of LGBT clergy of many faiths and denominations, including Rev. Ann Kansfield and Rev. Jennifer Aull, co-pastors of the Greenpoint Reformed Church. This exceptional resource provides powerful testimony to the ministry being carried out by LGBT people of faith. For more information about "We Have Faith," including how to bring it to your church, RfA regional event, college or seminary, go to <http://wehavefaithexhibits.org/>.

TIPS FOR WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS

Does your church welcome families of all configurations, including same-sex couples with children?

If so, check your baptismal, church school and youth group enrollment forms, and consider changing the terms from “Mother/Father” to “Parent 1/Parent 2.”

Research has shown that such intentional shifts in language are probably the single most important action that your congregation can take to make LGBT persons, families and allies feel affirmed as people of God and welcomed for who they are. *For more ideas on how to live your welcome, see <http://roomforall.com/welcoming-and-affirming/youre-a-room-for-all-church-now-what/>*

Yearbook Confessions by Daniel Plasman



Dear Mike, Peter, and Bob:

While discarding some old books, I ended up flipping through my high school yearbook. I saw your photos and, quite unexpectedly, felt the need to repent.

What I want to say should be said face to face, but since our graduation decades ago I learned that two of you have died (one by suicide), and I have no way of knowing how to contact the other. Perhaps, then, I write these words for myself.

All three of you were gay. My friends and I were right in our assumptions. We went through junior high and senior high together, with one of you since kindergarten. I'm sorry that I never initiated a single conversation with you. I wasn't the least bit interested in knowing you, much less your story, your struggle, or your private pain.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.

I regret that I never picked you on my team to play basketball or baseball, but smugly let you watch from a distance while the rest of us real boys bonded together, playing our hearts out during recess or gym class.

According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

I knew you were different, so did the guys I hung out with. We smirked behind your backs and told gay jokes at your expense. I'm sorry that in my insular world of close-knit friends I counted you as those who didn't count.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

I'm sorry that I played out the parable of the rich man (Dives) who daily strutted past his gate, refusing to notice a lonely and hurting Lazarus. I could have and should have done something to let you know in ways unmistakable that you belonged.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

I'm sorry that the denomination in which I am ordained makes no room for you as an equal in its official denominational stance (much like I did when all of us were back in school). Yeah, the church talks about loving the sinner while hating the sin, but how does it feel to be told you're a sinner for living out your God-given sexuality?

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

I'm sorry, that though the Reformed Church in America loves to say it is *reformed and always reforming* – which would suggest that our interpretation of scripture is subject to fresh breaths of the Spirit aided by new scholarship and emerging scientific discoveries – such is not the case, so it seems, when it come to homosexuality.

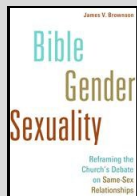
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

I'm sorry that as a church we have yet to learn that unless we practice radical hospitality and inclusion, the gospel we preach and seek to live out is never the full gospel, maybe not gospel at all.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
(from Psalm 51, NRSV)

[Daniel Plasman is an RCA minister, currently serving as co-interim pastor at Edgewood United Church (UCC) in East Lansing, MI.]

BOOK PREVIEW



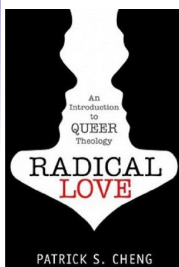
In *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*, James Brownson argues that Christians should reconsider whether or not the biblical strictures against same-sex relations as defined in the ancient world should apply to contemporary, committed same-sex relationships. Presenting two sides in the debate ~ "traditionalist" and "revisionist" ~ Brownson carefully analyzes each of the seven main texts that appear to address intimate same-sex relations. In the process, he explores key concepts that inform our understanding of the biblical texts, including patriarchy, complementarity, purity and impurity, honor and shame. Central to his argument is the need to uncover the moral logic behind the biblical text. Written in order to serve and inform the ongoing debate in many denominations over the questions of homosexuality, Brownson's in-depth study will prove a useful resource for Christians who want to form a considered opinion on this important issue.

Publication Date:
January, 2013
Pre-order at

[http://www.eerdmans.com/
Products/6863/bible-gender-
sexuality.aspx](http://www.eerdmans.com/Products/6863/bible-gender-sexuality.aspx)

Sexuality, Gender and God-Talk Explored in "Radical Love"

Book Review by Jes Kast-Keat



Does being a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person or ally imply that one thinks differently about God? Patrick S. Cheng's book, "Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology" is an excellent place to begin an exploration of that question.

Rev. Dr. Cheng is the Associate Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is a contributor to Religion and Gay Voices section in the online Huffington Post. Cheng's work is not only well researched; he also offers his personal perspective as a gay, Asian-American theologian and minister.

In his introduction, citing Paul's affirmation in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, Cheng clearly defines what he means (and does not mean) by radical love; namely, a "love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries...that separate us from other people,... from preconceived notions of sexuality and gender identity,... or from God...Radical love is at the heart of both Christian theology and queer theory."

Perhaps anticipating misinterpretation, Cheng is careful to point out that radical love is *not* antinomian; not about abolishing rules, sexual or otherwise. Instead, he defines love in Pauline terms premised in I Corinthians 13, therefore non-exploitative, consensual, and honoring other, self and God.

Similarly, Cheng takes care to unpack the word "queer," once a derogatory term in the context of LGBT persons but now having three positive layers of meaning.

What exactly is queer theology? Cheng offers three responses to this initial question:

First, queer theology is LGBT people 'talking about God.' Second, queer theology is 'talking

about God' in a self-consciously transgressive manner, especially in terms of challenging societal norms about sexuality and gender. Third, queer theology is 'talk about God' that challenges and deconstructs the natural binary categories of sexual and gender identity" (p9).

Again, for Cheng, queer theology is rooted in the radical love of God, a love so extreme that it dissolves preconceived boundaries.

The second section of the book, "A Genealogy of Queer Theology," introduces the reader to numerous writers in queer theology. The final three sections, "God: The Sending Forth of Radical Love," "Jesus Christ: The Recovery of Radical Love," and "Holy Spirit: The Return to Radical Love," comprehensively express Cheng's Trinitarian theology.

Each chapter concludes with a handful of study questions that welcome the reader to personal reflection. along with a list of books for further study on that topic.

If you are looking for a lucid introduction to LGBT/Queer theology, I highly recommend this volume. Unlike some theology books, it is accessible and doesn't require a seminary education to understand. Cheng's expansive knowledge on queer theology will leave you feeling more confident in your own articulation of theology through the lens of queer thought and experience. Consider *Radical Love* as a gateway into the field. You will walk away with an extensive bibliography of queer theology from the past seventy years, seeing queer theology rooted in the Christian tradition expressed in God's radical love.

I hope you, too, find Cheng's book to be a conversational partner in your framework of queer theology!

[Rev. Jes Kast-Keat is Associate Pastor at West End Collegiate Church in New York City, and a member of the Room for All board of directors.]

“What It’s Like to be a Room for All Church”

In the last issue of this newsletter, we introduced a new series which invites pastors or parishioners in rostered Room for All churches to reflect on how the decision to be publicly welcoming and affirming of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities has affected their congregation’s life together, or that of individual members. This month, we’re pleased to feature excerpts from a reflection by Alexandra Foucard, a member of Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. Alexandra shared these words during worship at Marble this past June 24th, which happens to have been the day before the 2012 General Synod voted that “homosexual behavior is a sin according to the Holy Scriptures.”

Today, I feel this is my official “coming out” as a spiritual being who is in a relationship with a woman. Last time I came out at a church, it didn’t go so well.

Although I was not asked to leave my former church, it became clear in order to save my sanity and sense of self I had no choice...

What had been periodic mentions from the pulpit about “the sin of homosexuality” had become more frequent and the pastor also began to make jokes about gays. In retrospect, I allowed my spirit to be broken by these jabs and lost all confidence in myself, my family and my God-given talents. I began

questioning my relationship with my partner.

One day the pastor announced to the choir (of which I was a member) that he was “cleaning house.” We were asked to fill out a questionnaire with one question asking “Have you engaged in homosexual behavior?” I prayed about it and decided to answer truthfully. I was told I could stay but would have to answer to a monitor who would be assigned to me.

When I walked out of that meeting, I was furious and called a close friend... He gave me “The Power of Positive Thinking” [by former Marble pastor Norman Vincent Peale] to read. I found myself weeping at times and cheering at

others— saddened by the way I had so beaten my spirit and elated that I was now being healed.

I went online to see if Marble still existed, and the first photo I saw was that of the GIFTS Fellowship *[G(LBT) people in Faith, Tradition and Service]*.

I started attending Marble in January 2010. I immediately felt welcomed and saw how many people extended love and true compassion. I started to believe the truth, which is that God wants me to be happy with who I am and whom I love....

I know I belong at Marble, and I am eternally grateful to God for guiding me here when my family and my well-being needed it the most.

“ROOM FOR ALL” CHURCHES

MICHIGAN:

Holland: Hope Church

NEW JERSEY:

Clifton: Allwood

Community Church

Highland Park: Reformed Church of Highland Park

Metuchen: The Reformed Church of Metuchen

New Brunswick: First Reformed Church

Somerville: United Reformed Church

NEW YORK:

Albany (3):

The First Church in Albany, Third Reformed Church, Community Church of Colonie

Brooklyn (2):

Greenpoint Reformed Church

New Utrecht Reformed Church

Hudson: First Reformed Church

Kingston: Old Dutch Church (The First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church)

New Paltz: The Reformed Church of New Paltz

New York City (4):

Fort Washington Collegiate Church, Marble Collegiate Church, Middle Collegiate Church, West End Collegiate Church

North Babylon: St. Paul’s Reformed Church

Scarsdale: Greenville Community Reformed Church

Spring Valley: United Church of Spring Valley

NOW MORE THAN EVER!

by RfA Development Officer Rob Williams

This has been a year of great strides forward for making *Room for All* in the RCA, and we give thanks to God and to you! This is the time I want to call “the third wave.”

The first wave came in 2005 as an outcry in response to the General Synod trial of Dr. Norman Kansfield for having performed the same-sex wedding of his daughter and her partner. That outcry formed itself into *Room for All*, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to full LGBT inclusion in the RCA. Together we built a board of directors, a supportive network of relationships and several regional “hubs of influence.” That first wave crested in an enormously successful national gathering, “Making Room for All – 2009” at Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI.

The “second wave” was pulled into being in the months that followed. After prayer, consultation and listening, the RfA Board concluded that the time had come to call our first staff person. God spoke to the heart of Marilyn Paarlberg and she left her job and began coordinating the mission of *Room for All* in the fall of 2010. With Marilyn’s deep commitment, theological training, broad roots in the RCA and gifted management, our community of supporters and advocates grew dramatically. The *Room for All* newsletter was launched, two workshops on “Building an Inclusive Church” were conducted (in Albany, NY and Holland, MI). The year climaxed with our second national conference, “Making Room for All – 2011.”

2012 began with two more BIC workshops offered in New Brunswick and Princeton, NJ.

This past summer, four Room for All leaders were trained to lead the workshops, and three more have just concluded. Our movement for LGBTQ welcome and affirmation continued to build as 21 churches have now signed “A Covenant of Affirmation” becoming rostered Room for All churches. A challenge grant from the David and Carol Myers Foundation resulting in new and increased contributions from our growing base of supporters has made all this possible. (It’s not too late to be a part of this matching grant offer!)

Now we stand at the rise of the “third wave,” this one propelled into being, I believe, by the deliberations of General Synod 2012, for which I give thanks. Does that surprise you? I am grateful because the various overtures and discussions represent a recognition of the effectiveness and growth of *Room for All* since 2005. Furthermore, the aftermath of R-56 (see the Summer 2012 RfA newsletter) has enlarged opportunities for dialogue across the RCA and mobilized new support for LGBTQ inclusion: a “third wave.”

Now more than ever, your contributions to the mission of *Room for All* can make an enormous impact. Ensuring financial support for our outstanding executive director, Marilyn Paarlberg, multiplying our offerings for “Building Inclusive Churches,” generating our third national conference, “Making Room for All – 2013,” and the transformation of many more hearts and minds of RCA members, leaders, and congregations. Now more than ever, you can make a difference!

How to contribute: Checks payable to Room for All may be sent to P.O. Box 11495, Albany NY 12211. PayPal transactions may be completed by clicking the “Donate” button at www.roomforall.com. Stock transfers are also possible—please contact us for information.

Collegiate Church Corporation Enables New Initiatives

Thanks to a generous grant from the Collegiate Church Corporation of New York, Room for All has embarked on an exciting two-phase project.

First, a new website will be rolled out early in 2013. We look forward to an enhanced online presence with increased flexibility and capacity. This will be necessary to make the second phase of the project possible:

Supporters have been asking for RCA-specific resources that consider our denominational identity and stories in approaching conversations about LGBT inclusiveness. The Collegiate grant has provided seed money to develop web-based resources which will be downloadable from the RfA site. These will include print modules, video interviews, and more. We’ve just begun to assemble a project team, but we hope to launch the first results in the year to come. Thank you, Collegiate Corporation, for helping us expand our mission of support, education and advocacy!

GLIMPSES INTO "BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH"



"Vicki's Angels" — Rev. Vicki Wunsch, trainer from the Institute for Welcoming Resources, can always be counted on for laughter as well as wonderful coaching. She's joined by RfA's Bob Mutch (left) and Rob Williams.



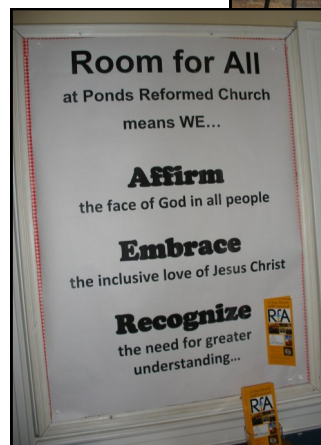
RfA Board member Bob Mutch engages participants in Grand Rapids, MI about the importance of framing the conversation about LGBT inclusiveness in ways that take into account the values and culture of your congregation.



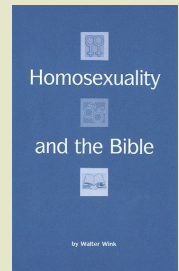
Rev. Miriam Bush (right) offered worship leadership in Pella as well as insight into Scriptural engagement.



RfA director Marilyn Paarlberg shares her home congregation's story of becoming a "Room for All Church."



Ponds Reformed Church in Oakland, NJ boldly announces its identity and support for Room for All near the door to the church office.



LOOKING FOR AN ACCESSIBLE ADULT STUDY RESOURCE?

Originally published in 1996, this essay-length pamphlet by biblical scholar and theologian Walter Wink has been reprinted and updated many times until Wink's death this past May. Although he addresses specific verses and passages, Wink's broader approach discusses the nature of biblical authority and interpretation, the danger of bibliolatry, and the possibility of allowing differing viewpoints.

"These are issues about which we should amiably agree to disagree. We don't have to tear whole denominations to shreds in order to air our differences on this point."

Copies may be ordered at www.forusa.org

\$1.75 for one copy; significant savings on bulk orders.

FALL 2012

ROOM FOR ALL CHECK-LIST:



Please consider joining this ministry as you are able:

- ☐ Help us share the newsletter electronically & in print.
- ☐ Consider a financial donation and invite others to do so.
- ☐ Wear a RfA lapel pin, or fund the next order.
- ☐ Become a “Room for All” rostered congregation.
- ☐ Share stories about what you, your church, or your RfA regional group are doing to help build this movement for LGBT inclusion.
- ☐ Spend an inspiring hour reading the RfA website, www.roomforall.com
- ☐ “Like” the [RfA Facebook page](#) (we like you, too!).
- ☐ Foster dialogue about sexuality in your church.
- ☐ Offer to host a “Building an Inclusive Church” training event at your church, or provide a scholarship for someone else to attend.
- ☐ Share a resource that may be helpful in the work of inclusion.
- ☐ Invite a Room for All board member to speak at your church, classis, or regional synod.
- ☐ Pray for the LGBT youth and adults in RCA families, churches and campuses.
- ☐ Pray for the work of Room for All.
- ☐ Pray for the Reformed Church in America & its staff.
- ☐ Pray for the work of the R-56 (now R-28) task force.

What's on Your Mind?

The RfA Newsletter is a forum for extending our mission of support, education and advocacy for full LGBT inclusiveness in the Reformed Church in America. If you have a response to something you've read in our newsletter, or an idea for a future article, please let us know. We welcome your letters, stories or questions.

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