

*Supporting, Educating,
Advocating ...*

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

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ROOM FOR ALL

P.O Box 11495
Albany NY 12211
(201) 364-4538

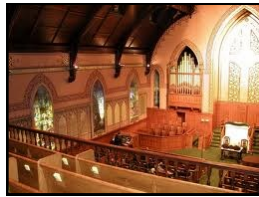
info@roomforall.com
www.roomforall.com



The RfA Newsletter

Inside Out at God's House

Images nuance words. In this issue, we report on words about Christian community that were spoken inside or outside of a representation of that community—a church building. And in the retelling, image-deepens-word-heightens-image.



Inside the walls of an historic church edifice in New York City, one visitor's question to another, "Are you out?" leads to a poetic and biblical reflection on what sort of structures define "in" and "out."

Within or against the backdrop of the chapel building, students at two RCA colleges challenge their campus communities about what it means to welcome or exclude people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The symbolism of the setting adds meaning to their words.



In a meeting room at a "Room for All" rostered church, the pastor asks members to reflect on implications of that designation. Their responses play out in word pictures of new insights and deeper understanding.

The refrain of a [song on the RfA website](#) is this: "God's love is wide; it is a home. Sheltered in peace, we can be known. God's love is wide; it has no walls. So come inside. There's room for all."

Images associated with those lyrics exist in increasing numbers across the RCA—in the initiatives of college students, in changed hearts at a classis meeting, in stories shared at "Building an Inclusive Church" workshops. Inside and outside the walls of our churches, the picture album is growing.

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FROM THE BOARD:

“COMING OUT”

**Middle Collegiate Worship: September 25, 2011
by Miriam Bush**

They slid in
the opposite ends of a pew,
all of us early for worship
while the choir rehearsed Psalm 27,
*“The Lord is the strength of my life
of whom then shall I be afraid?”*

Are you a member? she asked.
No. Me neither.
Where you from?
San Francisco. Michigan.
What do you do there?
What brings you to Middle?
My son’s new church home and
hopes for back home.
Middle? A flagship for some in the RCA
for worship, urban ministry, and diversity.
RCA? Never heard of it.
Then she asked the question,
“Are you out?”

Huh? What? Me?
Instantaneous mental barrage...
“No” - or
was it, “Yes”? I mean...
What do I have to “come out” about?
I love my husband and birthed
our three children in the usual
way of husband and wife.
I don’t need to come out, right?
I’m hetero.
What do I have to come out about?

I have never had to consider
coming out
enduring biases and
sideways glances,
offensive comments, disregard,
closed hearts, loss of job, withdrawn
rights,
condemnation.
I have not had to bear the pain, loss,
and struggle of “coming out.”
That’s not my burden to bear.

Or is it? Do I need to come out?
Where do I “come out” from
and coming out, where am I to go?
“Are you out?”
may be a gift of invitation
to come outside self protection
and stand beside those
who have endured exclusion
and those who have met death,
those who have been
regarded as “other” or “less than” -
yes, Jew or Gentiles, slaves, foreigners,
native peoples, Blacks, Hispanics, Muslim,
poor, illiterate, refugees -
but also to stand beside
lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,
young or old, past or present,
men and women who love God
and seek to follow Jesus.
Is it time to come out
and stand with those whom some condemn
to be beyond the bounds of grace?
It is time for courage
to come out and
say it and live it out loud;
“I believe in grace,
the amazing grace of God evident in the
wondrous diversity of the Creator
modeled by inclusive love of Jesus
instructed by the indwelling of the Holy
Spirit;
that God’s ways are surprising
and deep and wide
and in God all things are held
and in whom we and all of life
live and move and have our being
and are deeply loved.”

Am I out?
Yes! Because
the Lord is the strength of my life,
of whom then shall I be afraid?

*Rev. Miriam Bush is a member of the RfA Board,
Director of the Center for Spirituality, Action, and
Transformation, and a Benedictine Oblate candidate.*



WE'RE WORKING ON IT.....

Progress Report on National Conference & More

The Room for All Board met in March for two days of strategic planning, under the leadership of Dr. Anita Bradshaw. A process of appreciative inquiry confirmed our strong sense of call to this ministry, along with high priorities for diversity, grounding in Scripture and worship, reaching students, and a desire to continue to gracefully engage the RCA. The Board will be sifting and prioritizing new directions in the months to come.

In the meantime, we're hard at work on several ongoing projects in our ministry areas of support, education and advocacy. Among them:

"Making Room for All—2013"

Thurs. October 24– Sat. October 26 at Central Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Our third national conference will build on the strength of the first events while offering exciting new directions, including:

Keynote Speaker—Justin Lee, Author and founder of the Gay-Christian Network

Conference Preacher— Rev. Adriene Thorne, Middle Collegiate Church

Conference Musicians— Composer David Lohman and Singer/Songwriter Deb Tiemans

Panels:

A Retrospective on the RCA and Same-Sex Concerns, featuring former General Secretaries Ed Mulder and Wes Granberg-Michaelson.

"Family Matters" - Three sets of family members talk about making the adjustment when a son, daughter or sibling comes out.

Workshops:

Inclusive Music for the Church
(David Lohman)

Straight, Gay, and Why it is that Way
(Dr. David Myers)

Understanding Bisexual and Transgender
(Dr. JamieAnn Meyers)

Scriptural Engagement
(Dr. James Brownson)

Strategic Storytelling (RfA trainers)
"Through My Eyes" (Justin Lee)

Hands-On Opportunity: "Responding Through the Arts" (Joel Tanis)

Watch for further details and registration information in the months to come, but we hope to see old and new friends there!

Educational Resource Project

Plans are moving ahead with this first-of-its-kind resource, linking key themes in Reformed theology with the ministry of LGBT inclusiveness. A series of 6 paired videos will include brief contemporary parables and related conversations featuring RCA members reflecting on such themes as baptism, belonging, the sovereignty of God, and others. A series of reflection questions will accompany each video for small-group use. All of this will be available on [our new website!](#)

"Building an Inclusive Church" Workshops

We continue to offer these events geared to those with a heart for widening their congregational welcome to the LGBT community. We're in New Paltz, NY on May 3 & 4, Ada, MI on Nov. 8 & 9, and Columbus, OH on Feb. 21 & 22, 2014. If you would like to schedule a workshop in your area, please let us know!

"How Can I Help?"

It feels good to know that your financial contribution has helped to fulfill a specific need.

In the past, we have sought the help of individuals, churches and foundations to underwrite our national conferences, making it possible for students and those traveling long distances to attend.

Such help has resulted in a wonderfully diverse group of people coming together for a transformative experience.

If you would like to help with travel scholarships, please contact us at

201-364-4538.

Book Review: *Brownson Engages the Church*

by Allan Janssen

James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013.

Jim Brownson has written the kind of book we anticipate from a General Synod professor. He offers a scholarly (and readable!) exploration of an issue that has troubled the church for decades and in so doing he has deepened and furthered the discussion on the Christian response to sexually intimate same-sex relationships. The church cannot engage the discussion without attention to both the content and the conclusions of Brownson's research. This book is not only timely; it is needed.

It is important to state at the outset what this book is not. It is not a full review of the arguments for and against same-sex relationships, either as civil unions or in marriage. It does not, for example, engage arguments that claim that same-sex marriage would undermine or support the (tacit) civic contract. Indeed, Brownson quite clearly states the limits of what he is about.

Most of his research concerns the Biblical record. And yet while he exhaustively probes the Biblical text, his primary goal is not to explain texts most often cited in the debate, but to discover the moral logic that runs through Scripture. In an exegetically responsible way, he places the texts in their broader context, both within Scripture itself and their own era. He concludes that while male-female sexual relations are *normal* within Scripture, they are not normative. Moreover, Scripture does include normative injunctions for sexual behavior, but they follow a particular moral logic that precludes excessive lust, exploitive relationships and the like.

In particular, Brownson contests the notion of "complementarity" that is popular in a number of circles and has been used to deny the moral legitimacy of same-sex relations from a Biblical perspective. This doctrine has several variations, but at base it holds that the Bible maintains, as normative, that male and female "complement" each other, and consequently occupy separate roles. This emerges from creation itself (one hears here echoes of "orders of creation" theology). If the Bible teaches complementarity as normative, then, so the argument goes, same-sex relationships are Biblically illegitimate.

(The same doctrine has been used to contest the ordination of women to office as well).

Brownson argues that this notion cannot be supported Biblically; it does not constitute the moral logic of Scripture.

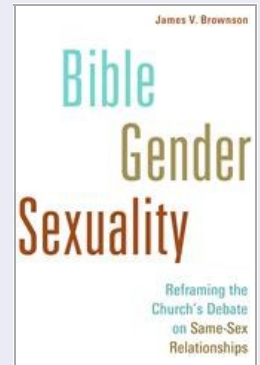
Brownson's book unfolds in three sections. The first involves a discussion of what he calls the "traditionalist" view and the problems inherent in that approach. It also includes a discussion of the "revisionist" perspective. The second section intends to "recover" the broad Biblical moral logic on sexual ethics and includes a discussion of patriarchy, "one flesh," procreation and celibacy. The third section focuses on Romans 1 and explores what Brownson calls "boundary language," as it discusses lust and desire, purity and impurity, honor and shame, and nature.

As with any interpretation of Scripture, one can disagree; hence our libraries of commentaries! However, one can only responsibly disagree by engaging Brownson's reading on its merits. To put the matter in a rather negative way, it is impossible to claim that Brownson has taken a position that argues that the Bible does not prohibit same-sex relationships through irresponsible exegesis. Or to put it positively, Brownson has made an exegetically sound case for his position.

Nor, I might add, is there anything in his book that violates the teaching of the Reformed Church in America; that is, nothing is inconsistent with the doctrinal standards of the church. The result is a book that should engage the church. That is no small accomplishment.

Rev. Dr. Allan Janssen is pastor of the Community Church of Glen Rock, New Jersey and Affiliate Faculty in Theological Studies at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. In June, 2012, he was installed as a General Synod Professor in the Reformed Church in America.

[Ed. note: Dr. James Brownson will sign copies of this book on May 23rd, 4-6 PM at Eerdmans Bookstore in Grand Rapids MI. See our website for [details](#).]



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**“Being Right or In Relationship”
Northwestern College Seniors
Challenge Campus at Chapel Service**

In Response

"The climate on [Northwestern's] campus is complex. It is not "open and affirming" but it is also not a dangerous place for the LGBT community. There is a clear understanding that our Christian duty is to love one another. We just don't do this as well as we should. Taylor's chapel presentation promoted a better climate and hope for a more respectful conversation.

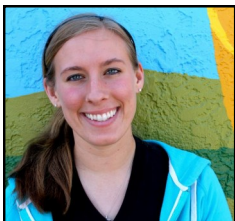
Based on a [previous RfA Newsletter](#), the idea that LEAP is not "official" was presented as a big deal. My view, based on a long history, is that it is more important that LEAP exists. Being official is not the goal. Existing as a safe place is the goal. In the past, the push for "official-ness" jeopardized the group. I think it would cause too many ripples on campus and off campus and could be more harmful than beneficial."

(NWC Chaplain
Rev. Harlan Van Oort)

Taylor Culver and Jeremy Bork have some things in common.

They're Iowans and seniors at Northwestern College (NWC) in Orange City, Iowa. Both will graduate with a minor in religion and have been accepted into seminary, but are considering a year of employment or internship first. They are also members of LEAP (Love, Education, Acceptance, Pride) a campus support group for LGBT students and allies (see [The RfA Newsletter, Spring 2012](#)).

In that regard, the two also share a deep concern: the church's response to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. "It weighs on our hearts," Jeremy confirms.



Taylor believes that "Bridge-building is a huge part of what it means to be Christian. It needs to happen between the LGBT community and the church—there's tension there."

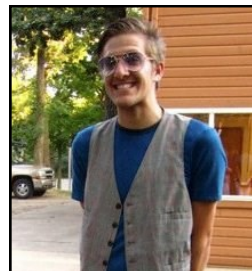
Taylor and Jeremy agree that the NWC campus experiences that tension, as well, and it recently led them to challenge Northwestern students to consider what it means to love as Jesus loved, including people who identify as LGBT.

Taylor had attended a Room for All "Building an Inclusive Church" workshop last November on the campus of Central College in Pella, Iowa. Soon after that, she approached Rev. Harlan Van Oort, the chaplain at Northwestern, to ask if the

college would consider bringing in a speaker to talk about Christians' response to the LGBT community. She suggested a couple of nationally-known names, but Van Oort had a counter-proposal. "I was concerned that the focus of the people she brought up would be too narrow," he reported to RfA. Further, he felt that the best way to approach the topic would be at a student-led chapel service, and he invited Taylor to take up the challenge. She was hesitant, but agreed. The date was set for April 5th.

Taylor prepared for about three months, reading, revising, and asking for help from friends, including Jeremy. "She really wanted it to be constructive," Jeremy recalls. "She wanted it to promote unity, not division."

That desire took on additional urgency as April 5th approached. According to Jeremy, the concurrent Supreme Court deliberations about same-sex marriage were "a hot topic on campus, but a shift in tone was definitely needed. We needed a way to begin the service that would invite people to open their hearts and minds. How could we get a feel for how people on campus already think about the topic? We wanted it to be candid and spontaneous."



Northwestern Students Challenge Campus

“If God’s redeeming work in the world includes loving people and revealing Jesus to them, then we have to come up with a way of reaching the gay community by means of love... Love is more important than our opinions, and we don’t speak for God. We need to trust the Holy Spirit. That’s actually very freeing.”

They decided to make a video of brief, off-the-cuff interviews with NWC students that would serve as a lead-in to Taylor’s reflections. “We wanted to ‘elevate the conversation’ (a phrase from “Love is an Orientation” by Andrew Marin),” notes Jeremy, “both in the video and thematically in the chapel.”

And so they went to work, producing a [6-minute video](#) inviting students to respond to three questions: “If a friend approached you and said they were struggling with same-gender attraction, what would you tell them?” “How should the church respond to someone who claims to be both gay and Christian?” and, “What does it mean to love your neighbor if your neighbor is gay or lesbian?”

Chapel is held four times a week at NWC, and students are required to accrue 45 chapel credits per year (about half the services), so attendance typically declines toward the end of the year as students reach the requirement. But the word was out on social media that “something important” was happening in chapel on April 5th, and it was packed. “Usually people are talking a lot at first, but as soon as we

started the video and the first question was asked, there was utter silence. “Taylor and I were shocked,” Jeremy laughs. “People were glued to the screen.”

After the video, Jeremy read from “Friendship at the Margins” by Christopher Heuertz, along with Isaiah 61, and then asked, “What do righteous relationships look like in the Body of Christ when someone in the relationship is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?”

In her presentation, Taylor unpacked Jeremy’s question, inviting her listeners to wrestle with the topic responsibly, looking through the lens of the life of Jesus Christ. She emphasized the need to build bridges and listed six suggestions for such a process, ending with a reminder that Jesus elevated love over law, citing the commandments to first love God, and then to love our neighbors as ourselves.

“If God’s redeeming work in the world includes loving people and revealing Jesus to them,” she emphasized, “then we have to come up with a way of reaching the gay community by means of love.” She went on to pose these questions:

Is the way we are treating the LGBT community helping or hindering the spread of the Name above all names? ... What is the fruit being borne by the way in which we are loving our LGBT neighbors?... “Is it more important to be right, or to have a relationship with those who find themselves here?”

[To view the entire chapel service, go to <http://client.stretchinternet.com/client/northwesternadmin.portal#>. Then click on “On Demand” and scroll down to “Chapel, April 5th: Taylor Culver”)

That last question raises a point that Taylor subsequently addressed with RfA. Some could interpret her words as implying that same-gender relationships are wrong or sinful. She confirms that’s a sticking point at NWC, but goes on to say, “My aim was to go beyond that, beyond where people stand personally, because relationships are more important than our definition of what is or isn’t sinful. Jesus put love above law. We need to get past the idea that people choose to be gay. Love is more important than our opinions, and we don’t speak for God. We need to trust the Holy Spirit. That’s actually very freeing.”

“We’re not the standard, Jesus is. And Jesus said that the world would know his followers by their love—not their policies. I want people to know that I’m not betraying my faith by doing this. I’m doing it because of my faith.”



“IT STARTED WITH A HEART PULL”

Hope College Students Protest for Change

April 19th was “Day of Silence,” a nationwide effort that uses silence to protest the actual silencing of LGBT people due to harassment, bias and abuse in schools. It was also Visitation Day at Hope College, designated for prospective students and their parents.

And by design, April 19th was the day that a small group of Hope students, alumni and supporters planned a silent “Does Hope Have Your Back?” picket against the College’s [policy statement](#) that does not “recognize or support” LGBT groups on campus. Holding signs comparing Hope’s policies to LGBT-inclusive measures at other Michigan colleges, the group stood in silence outside the chapel, where those attending the day’s service would see them as they exited. From there, the protestors moved to the dining hall and attempted to hold their signs against the windows for the lunch crowd to see. They were met there by members of the College administration, and after several minutes of challenge, three Hope students now face campus judicial charges for “disrupting the academic setting” of Hope College.

* * *

“It all started with a heart pull,” says Hope sophomore Rebekah Givens, one of the protestors. “I honestly didn’t know any LGBT people, and I wanted to learn. So I started listening to their stories.” In the process, listening led to trust. After time,

when a friend came out to her, Rebekah remembers realizing that she had “been blind” to the isolation and fear of a community that existed around her. “As I learned more, I went from wanting to understand to asking, how can I identify as an ally?”

The involvement for junior sociology major Chris Rodriguez began with an intent to support the LGBT community in Holland (where the City Council voted in 2011 to not add sexual orientation and gender identity language to its anti-discrimination policies). “But as I compared the official statement that talks about respecting and protecting all students with the discrimination experiences of LGBT people I knew, and the College’s refusal to grant status to LGBT groups, I realized that I didn’t have to go off campus to address this problem. It’s an immediate issue right here.”

In the past, Hope is Ready, an unofficial student-organized LGBT support group, has unsuccessfully petitioned within approved channels to be assimilated; such status would give them, among other things, permission to hold meetings openly in designated rooms. (The April 19 protest was not organized by Hope is Ready.)

Chris and Rebekah point out that, citing the value of academic and intellectual freedom, school policy does allow public opportunities to engage alternative viewpoints on human sexuality, even if they differ from institutional policy.

“The policy states that Hope provides safe places for the community to discuss issues of human sexuality,” Rebekah notes.

Student Protest at Hope College

“But those forums don’t address the issue as it needs to be addressed. They are *not* safe, and LGBT students feel they can’t risk telling their personal stories. This just enables the impression that the problem is far away, not here. Coming out is ruthless at Hope.”

Chris agrees. “Fear about this issue permeates the campus. It’s *so* not safe here that, based on experience, most LGBT students wouldn’t have dared to participate in such a public and risky event. But so much time has passed without change that it made some of us realize that something else has to change. Why should a certain student group be excluded? Human rights transcend policies. Seeing people marginalized on a Christian campus is unacceptable and we felt it was time to act. The allies acted as a voice for the voiceless.”

The Christian dimension is important to Rebekah, as well. She was raised in a church-every-Sunday family, and views LGBT exclusion through the lens of her faith. “Our job as Christians is not to judge,” she believes. “We’re not the standard, Jesus is. And Jesus said that the world would know his followers by their love—not their policies. I want people to know that I’m not betraying my faith by doing this. I’m doing it because of my faith.”

[Additional descriptions and student reactions to this event are posted at <http://hopeforsamelove.tumblr.com/>]

REGIONAL GROUPS CONTINUE LOCAL ADVOCACY

RfA supporters continue to be actively engaged in inclusive ministry in their local communities.

Members of the Mid-Hudson NY group have lent valuable logistical support to the “Building an Inclusive Church” workshop in New Paltz on May 3 & 4.

The Albany-Schenectady group is hosting a screening of “Love Free or Die,” the award-winning documentary about Bishop Gene Robinson, on Sunday, May 19th. See our website for [details](#). The group will also participate in the Albany Pride Parade on June 9th.

The West Michigan group has lent support and publicity for Dr. James Brownson’s book, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*.

In March, the group hosted the author at a public gathering at Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. On May 19, RfA will co-sponsor a [book signing opportunity](#) at Eerdmans Bookstore.

RfA supporter-members from the four Collegiate congregations are making plans for participation in the annual New York City Pride Week, including a mixer, a worship service, and participation in the June 30 parade. Supporters from Marble Collegiate Church will once again offer water to marchers and passersby throughout the parade.



One Assessment of LGBT Life at Central College

Central College supports pro-LGBT groups as official student activities, and has a [welcome statement](#) that specifically includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

RfA Board member and Central College senior Cameron Van Kooten is completely out on campus. He reports,

“It’s not too hard to be openly gay [here]. I know there are those who remain closeted, but I can’t image a more welcoming place... I have felt completely supported by the administration, faculty, staff, and student body.

“Central has created a place for me to grow, thrive, and strengthen leadership skills that I hope will serve the Reformed Church. I have been blessed to find a home here, and to be shown by Central the love that God intended for all His children.”

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

We continue our 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 a response from Rev. Hartmut Kramer-Mills, pastor at the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey.



We discussed in our Invitation & Outreach Committee your request to contribute material for your article. It was a great discussion that made us review much of our history of becoming open and affirming. We realized, for example, that our becoming open and affirming preceded our registration with Room for All.

Just the decision to be open and affirming has had a great impact on our life as a congregation. All of a sudden, we found ourselves hosting a multitude of events, including the Holy Relationships Conference (together with neighboring Christ Episcopal Church); concerts by the NJ Gay Men's Chorus; two dialog events for churches of the Regional Synod; a regional RfA training event involving

participants from several denominations; a Rainbow Chat group (in the process of establishing itself; together with the Reformed Church of Highland Park).

The process has also brought the people of our congregation closer together. One of our members, for example, did not know that her adult daughter was lesbian until the church provided these dialog opportunities. In contrast to many other cases, the discovery did not lead to complications but brought the family, and, ultimately, the congregation closer together.

As pastor, I have also benefited from these developments. For example, preaching on issues of homosexuality is much easier when one does not have to expect sharp criticism. However, it is more than preaching; to journey with our congregation into this new world has also broadened our personal outlook and made us appreciate new facets of diversity within the surrounding community.

We also had several visitors and new members, who felt initially drawn by the rainbow signs by our doors.

In addition to all these wonderful local experiences, it was also important for our church to register as a “Room for All Church” with RfA. An immediate advantage was that this put us on various websites, thereby increasing our visibility as a church. On a deeper level, RfA has served as a resource center for us. The affiliation has helped us find new language and also tools for a more proactive acceptance of LGBT people. By the same token, we hope to contribute as a local church to the growing pool of experience compiled by RfA. Our denomination's crest has the inscription "Concord makes Strength." Room for All is making all of us stronger when it unites us under its umbrella.



“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
Schenectady: First Reformed Church
Spring Valley: United Church of Spring Valley

ADVOCACY: ANOTHER JESUS

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth... You know him, because he abides in you, and he will be in you.” (John 14: 16)

“I support what RfA is about, but do I have to be an *advocate*?”

It's a question that comes up when people talk to us about RfA's ministry, or about joining the roster of RfA churches.

“Have to” implies some baggage with the term, perhaps because advocacy has a political association today. We might equate an advocate with a lobbyist, and that may scare people away from using the word in a faith context.

For help, we went to a scholar of the Gospel of John.

In the verse cited above, the Greek word for an Advocate is *Paraclete*, from a verb which means “come to (or called to) the side of” - an action. But in this verse, part of Jesus' post-resurrection farewell to his disciples, it's a noun; in fact, a person.

What's more, Jesus identifies with the name. “Another” suggests that Jesus regards himself as an Advocate, already present before the “Another” yet to come.

But the one coming is not simply some other Advocate; by telling his followers that they already know this coming Advocate even before he asks God to send him, Jesus seems to say that this “Spirit of truth” will be, in some new, non-corporeal sense, himself. Another Jesus.

Although the first Advocate must return to the Father, the *Paraclete* Jesus will dwell forever within those who love him and follow him— in believers, and therefore in the church.

[For commentary on the *Paraclete* as another Jesus, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XII-XXI*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970, pp. 644 & 1141.]

What does this mean for Christ-followers? If Jesus clearly identified himself as one who comes alongside of another (and his ministry itself surely

supports that), and if the Advocate-Jesus abides within his followers, it would seem that we are called to be “another Advocate,” as well. Not Jesus, but *as Jesus*, coming alongside of others.

Brown points out that the function of the *Paraclete* in John's gospel encompasses witness, spokesperson, consoler and guide (p. 137).

Room for All strongly associates its ministry with this understanding. It's the Advocate within who compels our mission to look to the first Advocate's example and to not only “be Christ” to others, but also to affirm that Christ dwells within all who seek to follow him. All. With no distinctions.

What if RCA members and congregations were to fully claim the word “advocate” – noun and verb – as Jesus did? What would our advocacy look like in the full spectrum of those who follow Jesus and within whom Jesus dwells?

Will You Come and Follow Me (The Iona Community)

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known, will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen, and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the “you” you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around, through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

SPRING 2013

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.
- Plan to attend “Making Room for All: 2013” Oct. 24-26 in Grand Rapids, MI

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.

info@roomforall.com



**ROOM FOR ALL
P.O. BOX 11495
ALBANY, NY 12211**

PLEASE CONSIDER PRINTING &
MAILING THIS ISSUE TO SOMEONE YOU
KNOW WHO DOESN'T HAVE
ELECTRONIC ACCESS.

“MAKING ROOM FOR ALL: 2013”

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 24 – 26

CENTRAL REFORMED CHURCH

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN