

LGBT MILITARY VETERANS MARCH AGAINST DISCRIMINATION



Marching up Fifth Avenue with the LGBT American Veterans for Equal Rights New York (AVERNY) contingent in New York City's Veterans Day Parade on November 11th are (left to right immediately behind the AVERNY banner) MCCNY choir member (and AVERNY officer) **Claude Ashby**, MCCNY Pastor (and AVERNY chaplain) **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and MCCNY Board member (and AVERNY vice president) **Joe Kennedy**. MCCNYer **Ray Chism** and **Tony Smith** of MCC/DC (former president of the DC chapter of AVER) also marched in the contingent. American Veterans for Equal Rights is a national organization of LGBT armed forces veterans demanding an end to the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that bans LGBT people from serving in the U.S. military. Public officials marching with the

AVERNY contingent included State Senator **Tom Duane** and City Councilmembers **Margarita Lopez** and **Bill Perkins**. The PBS program "In the Life" interviewed Rev. Pat at the parade. (photo by Tony Breton)

Celebrate the Holidays for real with your family of faith at MCCNY

Christmas Eve -

7 p.m. Candlelight Service, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching. Followed by Christmas Eve hot buffet in the social hall

Christmas Day -

11 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols. Rev. Franc Perry, homilist. Followed by Christmas Dinner in the social hall.

Kwanzaa -

Sunday, Dec. 26, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. MCCNY Board member and Assistant Treasurer Gayle Davis, Esq., of the church's Christians of African Descent ministry, will be in the pulpit.

Celebrate Christmas With Your Family of Faith At MCCNY

See the new Stained Glass Windows (pg. 1)

Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

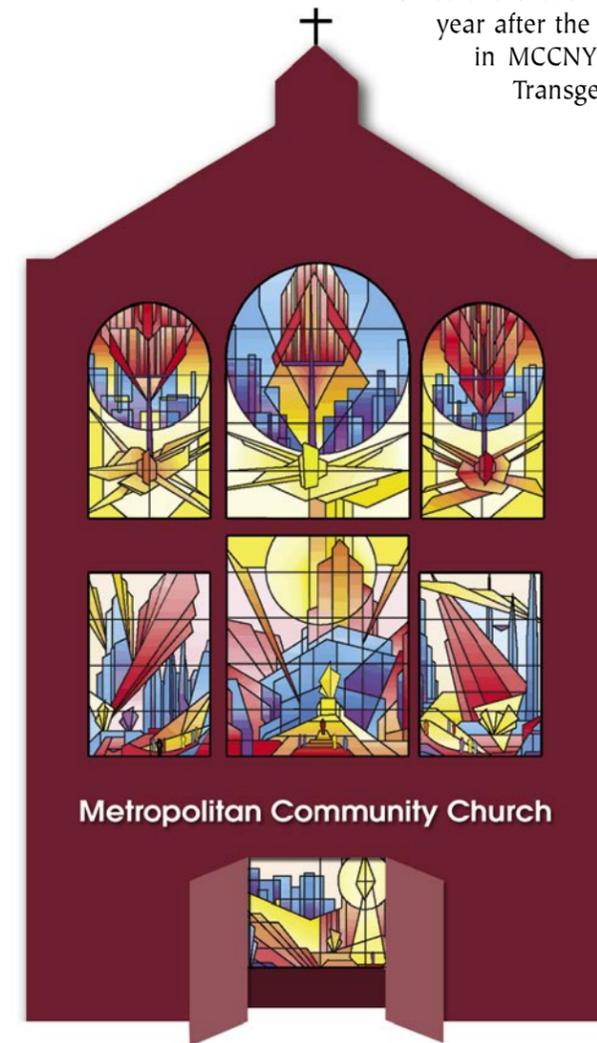
NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS BEING INSTALLED

They're Here and It's Happening NOW!

As the *Query* Newsletter goes to press, work is underway on the installation of the big new stained

glass windows on the front of the Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) building on West 36th Street. The dedication of the beautiful new windows will take place during this Christmas Holiday Season. There will also be a "ribbon-cutting" press conference with local public officials.

The installation of the stained glass windows on the church's façade is the most significant physical upgrade to the building since the church acquired it in 1993. The completion of this ambitious project, just a year after the fund-raising drive that made it possible began, marks another milestone in MCCNY's goal of being the Spiritual Home of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, open to all.



Designer's sketches of windows by Jackson Hall.

Milestones:

January 6, 1972 - MCCNY holds its first Worship Service in borrowed space with the late Rev. Howard Wells as Founder.

October 31, 1993 - MCCNY and its Food Pantry acquire and move into their current home at 446 West 36th Street (a building that had been constructed as a church in 1887 but had become an aesthetically unappealing commercial structure) and begin upgrading the building.

December 10, 1995 - MCCNY becomes the only LGBT congregation in the city to own its own home as the mortgage on the 446 West 36th St. property is burned amid fanfare (including coverage on two major TV stations) thanks to the generosity of the Anonymous Donor.

June 16, 2002 - A shelter for homeless queer youths opens in the church's social hall. The shelter, now known as Sylvia's Place and operated by the church, provides shelter for no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths every night of the year.*

December 18, 2004 - Big new stained glass windows are installed on the front of the church facing West 36th Street.*

*Contributions to the Youth Shelter or the New Windows may be sent to: Metropolitan Community Church of New York, 446 West 36th Street, New York, NY 10018. Please be generous with your Holiday giving.

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

Winter
2005

Pastor's Christmas Message Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Joseph, being warned in a dream, did what the Angel of God told him....

The Magi, being warned in a dream, went home another way....

Matthew 2

December 2004

Dear friends:

As I write this "Christmas" letter during the season of Advent, I am thinking of St. Matthew's story of the birth of Christ and "another way" — all the other ways we as a people, as a nation, as a world could have gone; what could have been different ... what still can be.

I'm recalling a button I saw, "Who would Jesus bomb?", and thinking: It's never too late to end a war. It's never too late to simply put our resources and our people power into helping rebuild. It's never too late to apologize — to repent — to go another way.

They say the good news about repentance is that it brings the past into the present instead of the other way around — the way that traps us in the past. And that gives us a chance to either let go or work things through and move on — and that is the way of hope — hope for change, hope for new life — another way.

On Wednesday, December 8th, the masons are scheduled to begin facade work in preparation for our new stained glass windows — windows that we hope will be completed by Christmas and that will give us natural light in the sanctuary for the very first time.

Maybe you're thinking there is very little connection between that rather mundane hope for physical change and the loftier issues around us — or even the more personal, emotional issues this season can call up for many of us.

But, I am thinking: Windows that depict people of many colors, shapes and sizes coming together to offer/to channel some light sends a powerful and much needed message to the world around us:

That it's possible to go a different way.

Possible to go a different way — to all head in the same direction, to all choose the things that will bring light and clear vision to the world.... It's possible to go the way of peace on earth, good will among all, whether we're talking the courts of Boston or the streets of Baghdad.

It's possible to go another way personally and politically. And that, to me, is very good news — very much what Matthew's story of the birth of Christ is all about.

There's an ad on TV that says something about "the gift that keeps on giving." Maybe those new windows in the front of the Church are that gift — maybe each time someone sees a pane and the possibility of all God's children headed toward the light, 'silently, that wondrous gift is given.' I hope so.

May the way of Christ bring all of us home this Christmas.

With love,



Rev. Pat



Deacon Begins Road to Ordination

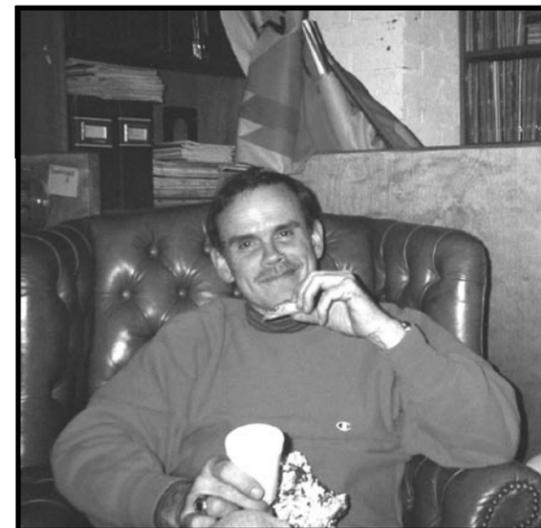
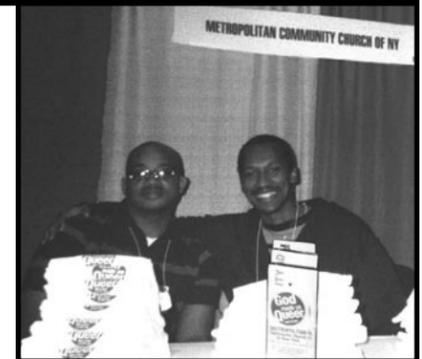
MCCNY Deacon Michelle Cherry-Slack has successfully completed her first semester as a seminarian at Union Theological Seminary and has been officially declared a Formation student for the Ordained Ministry in the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. Deacon Michelle made news earlier in 2004 when she and her spouse, Deacon Montel Cherry-Slack, were married on the steps of New York City Hall by Rev. Pat Bumgardner. Deacon Michelle is the third lawyer from the congregation to be called to the path to ordination; Rev. Patrick Cheng and Rev. Franc Perry are also attorneys. Deacon Michelle continues to work part-time in the church office. Also joining the MCCNY office staff part-time is Beth Kling, a contributing writer to the Query Newsletter and the editor-in-chief of the SAGE (Seniors Active in a Gay Environment) Newsletter.



MCCNY Exhibits at LGBT Expo

MCCNY Deacon Brenton Buchanan (left) and volunteer Lloyd Lee at the church's outreach booth at the LGBT Expo at the Javits Center. Deacon Brenton coordinated the volunteers who staffed the booth for 7 hours on Saturday, November 6th and 6 hours on Sunday, November 7th.

Volunteers included Cheryl Tucker & Cheryl Bassett and Michael Sims. Expo organizers said well over 10,000 people attended the event. The "God Made Me Queer" T-shirts that were on sale at the Expo are available in the church office for \$15. They were created for MCCNY by Mel Bryant & Bradley Curry.



MCCNY Stalwart Sues to Stop Discrimination

Bob Hollinger's name has appeared often in the Query Newsletter over the years for his efforts as a stalwart volunteer at MCCNY. He has often opened his home to church ministries, including the Men's Group and the 40+ Group, for social events. He is seen here in a rare moment of relaxation in the church library, where he has served as a volunteer librarian. The Query was saddened and outraged to learn recently, as the NY Blade reported, that Bob was targeted for anti-gay discrimination by the administration at the New York City public grade school where he worked as a teacher (even in this day and age, in this city, it still happens!), and we wish him well as his lawsuit to redress this grievous injustice moves forward in the courts.

January Events: Mark Your 2005 Calendars

Annual Congregational Meeting, Sunday, January 16, 2 p.m.

MCCNY's Annual Congregation Meeting will take place in the church's social hall at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 16th. Everyone is welcome to attend, and all 411 official members of the congregation are eligible to vote at the meeting. The church's proposed budget for the year 2005 will be presented to the meeting by the Board of Directors for approval, and elections for positions on the Board of Directors will be held.

Martin Luther King's Birthday, Thursday, January 20, 7 p.m.

This year MCCNY hosts the 8th annual LGBT interfaith celebration of Rev. Dr. King's birthday, co-sponsored by NYC's three LGBT congregations: MCCNY, Unity Fellowship Church and Congregation Beth Simchat Torah.

Lunar New Year, Sunday, January 30, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

MCCNY's Asian-Pacific Islander ministry takes center stage for this celebration. There will be a special guest preacher.

Diverse Offerings from MCCNY's Education Ministry

Calendar booklets listing MCCNY's Religious Education schedule for the 2004-2005 programming year are available at the church. Besides the church's signature "Queering the Bible" course and other Bible Study classes, the offerings include various classes by well-known career coach Ed Vladich; yoga classes at the church by Matthew Godino; the Artist's Way sessions with Ali Stafford; a step-by-step Recovery Program conducted by Rev. Paul Bradley; a prayer and discussion group moderated by Mike Gilbertson; the weekly Theatre of the Elephant with Bill Koch; Gianni's discussion group for self-identified men seeking to keep a Positive Spirit in the face of HIV and AIDS; teacher Denise Janssen's Bereavement workshop; and many more. Everyone is welcome to take advantage of these offerings.

Address at the gala by Rev. Pat Bumgardner (Continued from page 5)

...On who we understand ourselves to be — on that, we must build. I'm asking you to join me in financially supporting our vision. Give whatever you can. Maybe it's \$5, maybe it's \$500, maybe it's \$5,000.

Metropolitan Community Church has a dream for this city, and it's about building on the conviction that every life counts. That's the message that will continue to go out loud and clear come the day when we have a new 500 seat sanctuary.

That's what we'll be feeding on, when we can turn our existing building into a social services center where — instead of the 5,486 men, women and children who received food last month — double that number will be fed physically and in here [touches heart], where it really counts if we really want to make a difference in this world.

...We offer shelter to children because we believe they are the Gifts of God to all of us, the people of God. Their lives count, and we want to bring out the best in them, because that's what's best for our world.

...Tonight we honor the truth of who we all are. So, whether I'm talking about raising the money to build a new church and expand a social services center, or marching for peace or doing an "illegal" wedding on the steps of City Hall, it's all about the truth that we are all the beloved Children of God. When we can learn to honor that truth in everything — when we can learn to love as God loves, without distinction, then this world will be a better place.

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor Joe Kennedy

Graphic Design
& Layout Editor Les LaRue

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018.
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m.,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.



Rev. Daniel Neusom, an exceptionally gifted singer and preacher, presided at the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion at MCCNY's 7 p.m. Worship Service on Sunday, Nov. 14th.

Rev. Franc Perry Reaches Out To the Whole Community On Behalf of the Church

Rev. Franc Perry's ministry at MCCNY involves increased outreach to and interaction with the LGBT community beyond this immediate congregation and with the city at large. Rev. Franc's experience as a noted civic activist and lawyer give him unique qualifications for this work. Listen for an official announcement soon of the new title Rev. Franc will be assuming to reflect this focus of his ministry. Rev. Franc continues to preside at the Midweek Worship and Communion Service, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Rev. Franc's spouse is former MCCNY Board member Jeff Bornheimer. Their daughter is the adorable, much-beloved baby Ruby.



Rev. Michael Hydes Becomes Pastor of MCC Hagerstown, MD

After two years on staff at MCCNY, Rev. Michael Hydes has accepted a call to become Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Hagerstown, MD. Rev. Michael and his spouse, Chris Baker, were commissioned and sent forth by MCCNY's congregation on Sunday, Nov. 21st (photo above). Fittingly, it was this church's annual celebration of **Leather Sunday**. Rev. Michael and Chris have been active in NYC's leather community, and Chris is the former president of the **Metro Bears** organization. Rev. Michael has now taken up his new position at MCC Hagerstown. By means of the Internet, however, Rev. Michael continues to edit the weekly telecast of MCCNY's Worship Services (seen throughout Manhattan, Sundays from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., on Time Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 109), and Chris remains the Webmaster for MCCNY's website (www.mccny.org), where among numerous other features, photo galleries and links, the *Query* Newsletter can be read online. (photo courtesy of Deacon Danny Gonzalez)



Struggle for Peace and Justice Goes On

On Sunday, Aug. 29th, dozens of members of the church's Social Justice ministry, led by Rev. Pat Bumgardner and carrying a Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) banner, joined more than half a million other citizens in the **United for Peace and Justice** march past the site of the Republican National Convention. The commitment of MCCNY's Social Justice ministry to Peace and Justice — it's Jesus's Way! — remains firm despite adverse election results. (photo by Bev Heath)



Pastor from San Juan Preaches at MCCNY

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielson-Morales (photo at left), former Co-Pastor of ICM [ICM is MCC in Spanish] Cristo Sanador in San Juan, PR, visited this congregation several times recently and was MCCNY's Guest Preacher on the First Sunday of Advent (Nov. 28th), winning a warm response from the congregation. His sermon asked: Are you prepared this Advent to BRING God into the world (by your good and loving deeds)? When he was Pastor in San Juan, the church there grew substantially. Rev. Edgard is also a tenured Professor of Physical Sciences and an Assistant Dean at the University of Puerto Rico. (photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)



Extended Duty for Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini

Despite the truly heartfelt and emotional "farewell" given to Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini by the congregation on September 19th (when the combined attendance at the 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Worship Services was well over 400) as she and her spouse, Rev. Tawnee Walling, moved to Maine, Rev. Kristen has not abandoned us. On the contrary, she "commutes" to MCCNY from Maine for one week a month and uses the Internet to keep in touch with congregants on a regular basis. Rev. Kristen will continue this daunting schedule until her successor as Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life assumes the full-time duties of that position in 2005. And Rev. Kristen will continue on a permanent basis to conduct the church's twice-a-year Retreats at the Incarnation Retreat Center in Ivoryton, CT. Preaching from MCCNY's pulpit on Nov. 7th to a congregation terribly shocked and dismayed by the election results, Rev. Kristen won a standing ovation and a loud chorus of "Amen's" when she assured us that our standing as beloved LGBT children of God is guaranteed by God and cannot be altered or diminished by right-wing politicians or voters. (photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)



MCCNYers March Against Breast Cancer

Deaconess Moshay Moses (at right in photo), facilitator of MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry serving the transgender community, organized the church's contingent in the annual March Against Breast Cancer recently. Among those in the MCCNY contingent were choir member and cancer survivor Nina Schnell (at left in photo).



Gala at the Copa Draws Over 400

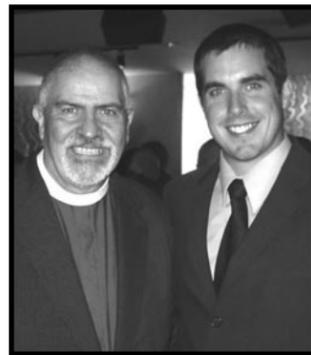
The October 4th fund-raising gala dinner-dance at the Copa drew a crowd of more than 400 well-wishers. The event was organized by MCCNY's Capital Campaign committee, co-chaired by Mark Gilrain and Bob France, Esq. It raised money and public enthusiasm for the planned expansion of the church and its major social services ministries: the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and the Sylvia's Place Homeless LGBTQ Youth Shelter.

Because late-arriving contributions are still being tabulated (*please keep those donations to the Capital Campaign coming, folks!*), the exact figures on money raised have not yet been announced. The Silent Auction at the gala (conducted by Board member Arnold Munglioli and his volunteers) brought in more than \$7,000.

Rev. Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, spoke at the gala. Public officials who were guests of honor included New York City Councilmembers Phil Reed and Christine Quinn, New Paltz, NY Mayor Jason West and Asbury Park, NJ Deputy Mayor James Bruno. Nyack, NY Mayor John Shields was unable to attend because he suffered a minor heart attack earlier in the day. The entertainment was coordinated by band leader David Raleigh.



Photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez



Excerpts from the address at the gala by Rev. Pat Bumgardner, MCCNY's Pastor:

Two years ago, we gathered in this place to initiate our Capital Campaign entitled "On this Rock." We took the theme from a story in the Bible... "On this rock I will build," the passage says. It's a story about people coming to understand who they really are to each other, and what that means for how we live our lives...

What matters tonight – and every night and every day of our lives — is the way we love and care for and, bottom line, treat one another.

"Love is our hope and our salvation," Bell Hooks says. The Bible I read says, God Is Love. It says that in the end, the only questions that will be asked of us are about feeding the hungry in body and spirit, and clothing the naked, and caring for the sick (Mt.25). It says that loving God is the same thing as loving one another — that's what Jesus meant when he said, "As often as you do it to the least of these, you do it to me." What really matters this night and every night is that we love one another in a way that honors that divine presence in each of us, a way that brings out the best in each other. That's the heart and soul of what this campaign "On this Rock" is all about.

...You don't have to go to Western Sudan to find the hungry or the homeless. Right over here on West 36th Street [at MCCNY's Food Pantry and Homeless Queer Youth Shelter], you'll find plenty every day, lining up for a bag lunch or some groceries or a hot meal, or the chance to sleep one night on a cot instead of a piece of cardboard, in a safe space instead of a dangerous one. Metropolitan Community Church operates New York's only emergency shelter for homeless Queer youth, in a city where estimates range from 8,000 to 30,000 children homeless.

...What's the connection between equal marriage rights and feeding the hungry or clothing the naked or sheltering homeless Queer youth? ...We must not allow equal marriage rights to take a back seat to any other human rights movement today, because there is a connection: Two gay men in Florida getting to keep the children they've fostered back to life and health — when those men's own life together is honored and sanctioned, licensed and protected as it should be — will mean just a few less children unwanted, unhoused, uneducated and without hope on the street tonight. There is a connection...

And the connection is this: We are all of us the blessed and cherished Children of God, who deserve as our birthright to be treated equally, justly and with love. That's not just a sentiment but a way of life according to the Bible I've been reading.

(Continued on page 6)

