

although she didn't know anything about homosexuals. After five months of weekly 10-hour trips to go through this, and it wasn't doing much good, I finally had to tell my wife and my pastor I could not go back to living a lie. I couldn't do it conscientiously.

This time my wife and my pastor — I live in a very small community of about 5,000 people, very red-necked — went to every business in the community informing them of what I was. I lost half my customers, and for the next three months I got phone calls and letters threatening my life. Three times

shots have been fired through the windshield of my car as I drove along. I've had no more communication with the church, except for the pastor one time coming to say he felt that he'd made a mistake. I've continued to attend church. Only two people from church have spoken to me in over a year. One of those dear ladies, a church board member, called last week to tell me that my name was being removed from the books. They have never contacted me about it. More recently, three elders of the church visited me and asked me to stay away from church altogether.

## Church Funds Program for Homosexuals

by Colin D. Cook

In a recent meeting the General Conference President's Advisory Council (PREXAD) decided to extend a three-year grant to Quest Learning Center, a counseling-training center dedicated to helping people find freedom from homosexuality. The decision was made in conjunction with a Columbia Union Conference vote to supply part of the funding for a six-month period with further consideration to be given after six months.

The General Conference hopes that as more and more union conferences are apprised of the work of Quest and become aware of the needs of people with a homosexual struggle, they will become sup-

portive to the grant and help the Quest program to develop nationally.

This decision follows an impressively balanced statement by the 1981 Spring Council of the General Conference, which stated that although "it is not possible for the church to condone practising homosexuality," nor "endorse organizations or individuals . . . who contend that homosexuality be considered an acceptable alternative," nevertheless, "the church must extend compassion and understanding to homosexuals seeking Christ's deliverance, restoration and redemptive grace. It must show concern by making every effort to develop a ministry that will meet their particular needs" (*Adventist Review*, May 21, 1981).

Neal Wilson, president of the General Conference, has led out in encouraging the new financial arrangements. He has named Duncan Eva, special advisor to the president

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and one-time vice president of the General Conference, liaison to the Quest Learning Center.

Wilson and Eva have stated that the Quest method of ministering to the person in homosexuality is the one that the church could legitimately support on biblical and moral grounds.

Quest holds the view (in company with theologians and biblical scholars like Barth, Henry, Von Rad, Dibelius, Conzelmann and others) that homosexual activity is not in harmony with the will of God and that the universal creation-norm is heterosexuality. Nevertheless, Quest holds, the great message of righteousness by faith in Christ brings mercy and hope to all people in homosexuality.

Christ, the Imago Dei, is the restoration of the creation image, in whom all men find their identity by faith. The search for wholeness and heterosexuality within ourselves thus comes to an end. Men and women receive Christ as their image of God, in whom is their wholeness and heterosexuality. As a trained faith grasps this awareness there is a breaking of the power of the homosexual orientation so that freedom from homosexual drive and activity is a real possibility.

Quest, however, does not believe that a change in orientation is a requirement for acceptance with God or entrance into the fellowship of the church. Although deliverance from homosexual activity is the call of God, the healing of the orientation will vary according to growth and is a result of our faith-identity with Christ rather than a way to it. Nevertheless, Quest holds that the orientation may be healed and that all who desire it may realize their inborn, though fallen, heterosexuality, thus opening the way to heterosexual marriage and family.

The Quest program provides a seven-service support to counselees. The weekly Homosexuals Anonymous meeting (a copyrighted and trademarked program) presently has an average of 14 in attendance weekly. Of these, 40 percent are Adventists and 60 percent of other Christian faiths. About 10 of the 14 are from out-of-state, having located in Reading for six months to a year to receive the Quest experience.

The Growth Classes, also held weekly, consist of a lecture in areas like family, friendships, work, recreation, and finance, followed by group discussion and group counseling. The one-on-one counseling covers family history and present experience as it may be reinterpreted and perceived anew through the therapy of the gospel. Four other services involve Host Families, Home Bible Fellowships, Peer-Counseling and Church Community Worship and Fellowship. Assessment of the Quest program by professionals has been very positive. (Charles Neff, medical director of Philhaven Mental Health Facility; Dr. Paul Miller, author of *Peer Counseling in the Church*; and Dr. Richard Lovelace, author of *Homosexuality and the Church*.)

The church funding came about after the writer, who is director of Quest, presented a five-page proposal in March 1981 to the General Conference via Duncan Eva. Eva, once appointed to oversee the matter, contacted Wallace Coe, president of the Columbia Union Conference, and Gordon Henderson, president of the Pennsylvania Conference. They appointed Bryce Pascoe, of the Columbia Union Conference Health Department, and Dr. Paul Smith, chairman of the Pennsylvania Health Foundation, to assist the writer in the development of the organizational arrangements.

The Quest program is not designed to be an institutional development but rather an aid for the churches. Freedom from homosexuality comes as people with homosexuality experience a spirit of love and affirmation within the Christian community. Quest hopes, therefore, to see the development of 200 Homosexuals Anonymous chapters across the country in five years and possibly 1,000 in 10 years. It is also expected that eight regional Quests will develop within that same period to serve the churches.

Already monthly training seminars (Seminars I, II, III) have been developed at Quest to train ministers, other professionals and concerned laity in the content of Homosexuals Anonymous program and the art of leading it (Seminar II). Seminar I, held in circuit, deals with psychological, theological, philosophical and ecclesiological issues in-

volved in homosexuality. Seminar III, also held in Reading along with Seminar II, provides training for Christian counseling in homosexuality.

As a result of a January Seminar II, Union College, in Lincoln, Nebraska, now has the second Homosexuals Anonymous chapter in the country. Arlee Torkelsen, a member of the psychology department at Union College, was responsible for its launching after he was funded by the departments at Union to attend the January seminar.

Accountability by Quest will be maintained through a board of directors meeting monthly and a board of trustees meeting annually. These boards are still in the process of formation. Great care is being taken to find persons who hold a solid and hopeful view of the gospel and who are comfortable with the gospel's relevance to deliverance from the healing of homosexuality. At present, the

board members are being chosen by those directly involved in planning: The director of Quest and the representatives of the conference, union and General Conference. Later, as organization develops, a constituency will appoint the board. Care is being taken to see that the board appointees also fairly represent each union conference and a broad spectrum of concerned thinkers.

The action of the General Conference toward Quest is a response to Christian community concern. The Seventh-day Adventist church now will give support to a healing ministry to people experiencing homosexual orientation. The implications are unquestionably far-reaching for both practical theology and church ministry. However, Quest does not now become the "official" church program for people in homosexuality. There must also be other ways of speaking the same word of hope.