Interview with Leo Treadway

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at Mr. Treadway's home
St. Paul, Minnesota

SP: This is an interview with Leo Treadway and we're talking about the history of the gay community in the Twin Cities.

Leo, I want to ask you first, where did you grow up?

LT: I was born in Oklahoma but I actually grew up on the East Coast in South Jersey, about twenty miles southeast of Philadelphia. Philadelphia was the big city for me when I was a kid. I stayed there, in that area until I went off to college at the University of Delaware. I did a year there, then, I was in the Military for three years which took me through the early phase of the Vietnam war.

SP: You were in the Army?

LT: I was in the Army. I was one of several secretaries for General Depew. He was the Chief of Operations for what had just recently become the Military Advisory Command of Vietnam. It had just changed from another kind of structure before I arrived. So, I was on his staff for the year that I was there. That was ’64 to ’65. I went back to college. I got my bachelors and went on and got my masters in counseling and I went to do my doctorate work at Purdue. I eventually ended up here in Minnesota.

SP: I want to ask you about your parents. What was their line of work?

LT: My mother has been a homemaker, she would die a thousand deaths if I called her a "housewife". She has been a homemaker all her life. She never worked, except for a short period after they moved back to Oklahoma to help out my uncle (her brother) with the family insurance business.

My father graduated from what is now Oklahoma State University. He went to work for DuPont; that is what took us to New Jersey. He and my mom were there for a year, then my dad went into the Army Corp of Engineers. My mother moved back to Oklahoma to be with her family and I was born while he was in the military. After the second world war, he came home and we went to New Jersey and he was working as a Chemical Engineer with DuPont. They left there sometime in the early 1970's and moved back to Oklahoma to help my uncle with the insurance company my
grandfather started in the middle of the Depression. It was a number of family business that actually succeeded during that time. It has since been bought out by a bigger insurance company.

My folks are still living back in Oklahoma now. I'm here and I have one other sibling, my sister who is a stunt woman out in Hollywood. She's seven years younger than I. She's a little older than what I think stunt people to be; she's about forty-three now.

SP: So, your family covers the continent from east to west.
How did you end up in Minnesota? It's pretty far north or out of the way at least from that line to the East Coast to...

LT: There is no family here at all so, it's a legitimate question of how I ended up here. I was married in 1970 and in the midst of struggling with identity issues. At that point there were very few resources around. My wife, at that time, was a Lutheran pastor, one of the first ordained women in the Lutheran Church of America. When I left my doctoral program at Purdue, I did an internship in Oak Park, Illinois. It was a family and children service type community program, that's not the name of it. I was there doing an internship. She was finishing her work at the University of Chicago Divinity School. I took a job running a crisis intervention center in a little college town the size of Northfield [Minnesota] called Indiana. Pennsylvania. She got a full-time call to a perish as a pastor. I mention that because, most women at that time were receiving calls, if at all, as associate pastors. She was the pastor of a little community called Homer City, just down the road from were I was running the crisis intervention center in Indiana.

In the process of my arriving there, there were about six months after I arrived and before she finished her work in Chicago and then joined me. That was a period which galvanized the whole identity process around sexual orientation. I had something which I hadn't had for a while, which was some time and maneuvering space and anonymity. I was able to go into Pittsburgh about seventy-five miles away and make some connections with the community there. I subsequently became the advisor for the local gay group at Indiana University Pennsylvania. I was involved with them and was coming out at a faster and faster rate. She [wife] joined me. In 1974, I was beginning to identify myself as gay and trying to deal with the fact that I was married, etc. I decided that ultimately, if I was going to be at all responsible to myself and her, I would have to leave that relationship.

I wanted to move somewhere where there was a viable community. I had a little experience with the Chicago community but, not too much. The community in Indiana, Pennsylvania was just too small and frightened. So, I knew I wanted a city. I started looking around and visiting some cities. A friend of mine asked me if I had thought about moving to the Twin Cities. I said,"No, I hadn't. Where were they?" That was about as much as I knew. I think I might have been once to Minneapolis for a fraternity convention, weekend, something but, like most fraternity conventions, you don't even remember they happened, let alone where they happened. So, I don't have any recollection of having been here prior to a visit I made in October of 1974. This was arranged for me through a doctor at the University of Chicago Medical School, that was a friend of mine and also gay. A friend of his up here, Rick Husky, was someone who was very active in the community at the time. I came up and stayed with some friends. But, the important thing is what happened
when I landed. This is back in the days when they would roll the staircase up to the plane. You'd come to the door and use the staircase and walk across the field. I got to the door of the plane and had a very powerful mystical experience. I felt as though I had been gone for a very long time and had come home. There was this very strong sense of place about Minnesota. To this day, I have no way of explaining that; there was certainly nothing rational about it or emotional, it was something else more intuitive maybe.

SP: ...because you didn't really know the Twin Cities.

LT: I didn't really know the Twin Cities, I didn't know the people I was to meet or stay with. I had no family up here, I might have been up here once before for a weekend but, I don't even have a clear recollection of that. I went through that weekend and met a number of people: John Yokum. [His] lover, at that time, was running what was then called Gay Community Services. It was one of the ancestors of the Gay/Lesbian Community Action Council. Rick Husky, who was my host, and Jim Chalgren who was for a number of years, prior to and after my arrival, was kind of "Mister Gay Out-State Minnesota". He was sort of the person you thought of when you thought about gay and lesbian people outside of the metro area. There were a number of folks like that, that I met.

I had very good experience with people and the community. I don't know that that was necessarily overwhelmingly more than with other communities: Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, etc. Whatever this experience was that I had when I stepped off the plane, there was something to that and I probably shouldn't ignore it. Largely, based on that experience, I decided to come here. It's probably one of the few decisions I made in my life that seems to have been so absolutely right on target, that I've never doubted it and I've never had any interest in leaving Minnesota. Now, that I'm looking for employment again that would allow me to work with the gay and lesbian community or in a setting where I can work with these issues, a number of things have been available around the country. I have no interest in those nor in any national level positions which are open from time to time. It feels to me like Minnesota is where I'm supposed to be.

So, that's how I ended up here.

SP: That was the first time you came and met these people. I want to ask you first about the lover of John Yokum. Do you recall his name?

LT: Jim Faust. Jim died from AIDS complications about three to five years ago.

SP: That visit, was it a visit when you came here [or,] were you coming here saying, "I'm looking at this place as a place to find employment and to live."

LT: My decision was to move here based on the strength, actually the powerfulness of this experience. Without question that was a good decision. I really didn't know anyone here or anything about the city prior to that point. What I had been looking for, I told myself, was a very healthy gay community, sort of the way we talked about in those days. I liked what I found but, it was really the power of that experience that made up my mind for me.
**SP: **Previous to arriving here, did you know anything about the gay community or just the general climate.

**LT: **I certainly didn't know anything about the climate. I remember when I arrived here on February first, I had never experienced anything like that.

No, I really did not know anything about the community. I visited here in 1974. Stonewall was only a scant five years earlier. Now, we look at what transpires in five years and it's geometrically exploding in all directions but, at that point things were moving much more slowly. Even larger communities that I visited like Los Angeles and Chicago, for example, certainly had a visible community but, [unclear]

**SP: **Since you had been to those different places, what was it like to come to Minneapolis? Did you notice what made it different or what did you like about it?

**LT: **Well, again the central piece of my decision was this mystical experience. I liked the fact that people seemed to be much more friendly to me here both in the general community as well as the gay community. People would talk to you on the street and thank the bus driver when they got off the bus. There seemed to be a general higher level of friendliness than I experienced in some of the other urban areas. It seemed like most urban areas had gotten to a fair degree of anonymity and lack of closeness...most of their citizens. Minneapolis and St. Paul, I suspect, are somewhat that way these days. So, there was a general warmth I felt.

People in the community had seemed to go out of there way to host me, take me around, show me around and introduce me to people. And they didn't know me from anybody, just on the recommendation of this friend who was a doctor at the medical school at the University of Chicago. I was impressed by all of that. The other thing I was impressed by was that people talked about things besides the bars. In the other cities I visited, to some extent, it felt like they talked about the bars being more central and pervasive an influence in their lives. Here people talked about things other than bars. They talked about organizations they were just getting started. People were trying to get political change. There seemed to be breadth of activity here that may have been parallel to that in other cities but, here it seemed to hit me up front more. And, the general friendliness and warmth that I translated as a kind of concern for one another that bridged the best of a city and a small town together; you had all the benefits of a large city, plus the kind of small town comradely that felt good to me. I had lived in some cities and small towns before moving here so, the blending was very important to me. Probably most of all, this (the gay (lesbian) community) felt very hopeful, promising and felt like there was a lot of potential here. I kind of experienced that, and decided this is where I ought to be.

**SP: **It sounds like an overall positive experience. Is there anything that you would say you wanted to see changed or were dissatisfied with?

**LT: **You mean at the time of my arrival?

**SP: **Yes, maybe your first impressions, and as you got to know the community more.
LT: Not initially. I don't think there was anything that struck me as negative or gave me pause for concern. As I was in the process of deciding to come here, one of the things that had been a possibility was to take over as director for Gay Community Services; Jim Frost was stepping down. As I had talked to people and actually, in a sense, interviewed for that job, I was under the impression that the job had been offered to me and I was moving here. It turned out that I moved here and they had given the job to someone else. I never did figure out how that was. It was perhaps an early indicator that our community is not always very good about detail and making sure everything was in place. But, that was after I had arrived.

SP: Who were the first people you encountered?

LT: During that first visit, John Yokum who has been a long time friend since. He went by the name Jack back at that point. It was a nickname he didn't stop using until about fifteen years ago. I met John, Jim Chalgren, Allan Spear at about that time. I stayed with a couple men, whose names allude me now. One of them ran an alternative mental health program. I'm not sure that program is still around. The state of Minnesota was in the process of discharging people from mental hospitals; they were creating neighborhood type half-way house in this whole deinstitutionalization thing. This fellow was very involved in that. He ran a program for both males and females who had been discharged from some of the state mental hospitals. Of course, that interest in the mental health issues meant that he was a major player for our community. I think he had been involved with the board of Gay Community Services.

SP: It wasn't something that was state funded? This alternative program.

LT: It was. It was not a gay community program at all. The people I knew at that time, even if they were open were in very general settings. John Yokum worked for Neighborhood Counseling Center, which became part of Abbot Northwestern Hospital, at Eighteenth and Nicollet. I think it is now the Minneapolis Age and Opportunity Program building.

His colleague, Patty Shamus, was sort of the lesbian identified staff person there. I met her shortly after I got here. Neighborhood Counseling Center was a general agency that had a commitment to gay and lesbian people. John and Patty were the staff and provided a backdrop and a supervisory relationship for GCS, which was a very fledgling program.

GCS had received some money. Actually, right at about the time I arrived, and thinking I had come to take over that program, they had just gotten the first of their Hennepin County money. That was a major breakthrough.

SP: I want to ask you about your involvement in the Lutheran Church. Was that your family's...

LT: No, my family were generic Protestants. When they moved to New Jersey, my parents decision was that they would attend almost any Protestant church; whatever was most convenient. There were two Protestant churches in our little town of never more than a thousand people. One was a Presbyterian church and the other was a small Episcopal mission. My parents decided the
Presbyterian Church was what they were more familiar with and used to. My dad had some connection with the Methodist Church while growing up, and my mom also.

I grew up as a Presbyterian. At one point I came very close to going to Macalester College here. I remember a discussion of where I wanted to go to college. Our minister had suggested Macalester. I looked where that was on the map and [thought] of how cold it seemed it was going to be up there. I guess that was part of why I decided not come here. This was back in the 1950's and early 1960's; not necessarily a time when young people were terribly insightful about what decisions we were making and why.

After I had gotten out of the military and finished my tour in Vietnam, I came back and picked up my college education again. [It was] my sophomore year at the University of Delaware. Because of my age, I was able to be a floor advisor. That paid for my room and board. There were a couple of men on my floor who were both Lutherans. The Lutherans were building a student center, and doing it themselves. I got involved with them. I met the woman who was president of the Lutheran student organization there. She was the woman who I later married.

Coming back from the war and reconnecting with the local Presbyterian church and having some had some dissatisfaction there then, meeting these people who later became friends with sort of pulled me into the Lutheran Church. That's where I've been ever since. I became or, at least started in that direction around 1965, 1966.

SP: It's my impression that the Lutheran Church doesn't have a lot of people joining it...

LT: That's quite true of most churches these days.

SP: Do you think it's odd that you became interested in the Lutheran Church?

LT: As opposed to something else?

SP: Yes.

LT: The only other church I had any familiarity with was the Presbyterian Church. I had a major disappointment with them. I had grown up sort of being the best-little-Presbyterian-boy-in-town. I came to college and got hooked up with the local Presbyterian church. I went to visit the campus Presbyterian center. The very first night I showed up we waited and waited for the campus minister to arrive. Finally, we got a phone call that he was in jail and wouldn't be coming. This all had to do with a civil rights demonstration. I was impressed that he was concerned about those issues but, being in jail was an anathema to my generation; it wasn't something that you did. I got a little [unclear] at that. He then subsequently got involved with the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) which further alienated me. I was probably pretty conservative in those days and very hawkish, having just come back from the war.

SP: You were in your early twenties at this point?

LT: Yes, I had turned twenty-one while I was in Vietnam. I had just come back to go to college.
SP: In about what year?

LT: 1965, I started college. The rest of this story about how I got disconnected with the Presbyterians was that obviously, this campus minister was what today we would see as a social justice advocate or even a radical, especially in those days. The people of the local church were very unhappy with it but, campus ministry was not directly related to the local parish. They went through a period of time of becoming more and more distressed with him. They finally petitioned the presbytery, the next step up in church hierarchy, to put together a blue ribbon panel to come and investigate. I got trotted out, after agreeing to speak as sort of a star witness because, here I was this best-little-Presbyterian-boy whose needs had not been met at all. This was conservatives having mobilized somebody who was in a key position to tell what a miserable failure this guy had been. I thought about this long and hard. While this man had done absolutely nothing for me, I had subsequently found a home with Lutherans, he never the less had an important ministry to the political-social dissidence on campus. Nobody else would have anything to do with it. He never thought that was important thing, and that sort of put the breaks on this whole process to ax him. [interference] That led to a falling out with some people I had been very close to in the church. All that galvanized me away from the Presbyterian Church at the time. My friendship with the Lutheran students moved me in that direction. That's how I got connected. I really didn't know much about the Lutheran Church.

SP: About your decision to move to the Twin Cities and it being one of the biggest Lutheran areas in the U. S., was that part of the decision also?

LT: It was a small part of it, by then I had become involved with the Lutheran Church. More importantly, I had become involved with an organization call Lutherans Concerned for Gay People. It was the Lutheran corresponding organization with Dignity, a Catholic group, or Integrity, an Episcopal group. I got hooked up with them very early in their history; they came into existence in June of 1974. I came to visit in October but, somehow had also had contact with them. I think I may have seen some notice about them in the church magazine, and I wrote or called. I was interested in getting some information. I probably got involved with them within a month or two after they had been birthed here in the Twin Cities.

SP: Was that a national magazine?

LT: It was the national church magazine where I saw this. Somewhere I came across a reference to this Lutheran group, and I like this was something I ought to pursue.

Part of it was: the experience I had at the airport, some strong connections with the Lutheran Church and I'm married to a Lutheran pastor amongst other things, finding this gay/lesbian Lutheran organization birthed and headquartered in the Twin Cities. All of this plus the experience I had with people and my sense of hopefulness about the potential of this area for gay and lesbian people all kind of pull together for me here.

SP: You didn't really become involved inside the Church until what time?
LT: I was involved with my wife's congregation. When I moved here, I became involved with two or three congregations before I became involved in St. Paul Reformation. In 1981, after they called their new pastor, I began to work with him and we created what was to become the Wingspan Ministry. It was officially launched in March of 1982. It was at that point that I began to work for the Church. I worked for them in 1981 doing for a year doing what we call mission development. In 1982, it became an official ministry in that congregation. I have been with them for twelve years until financial difficulties caused my colleague and I to be laid off. Prior to that, I had been involved but, only as a layperson involved in the congregation.

SP: Between 1974 and 1981 you were doing what?

LT: When I moved here and found that I didn't have this other job with Gay Community Services, I went into a period of immediate job hunting. Since my wife and I had split up, we had split up our belongings very amicably but, I didn't have much in the way of resources, I needed to find a job quickly. I ended up working for the Hennepin County Medical Center in their crisis intervention center. That was back in the days prior to what I think of as the new hospital, it's hardly a new hospital any more. When I hooked up with them, people still referred to them as General Hospital. They were in the old building, which has been torn down now. I did that for a while.

In the meantime, my connections, mostly through Lutherans Concerned, had put me in contact with some other staff people in the American Lutheran Church, which at that time was headquartered in Minneapolis. I began to be aware of something called the Program in Human Sexuality, which was part of the University Medical School. At that time it was attached to the dean's office. It was a kind of an organizational [unclear.] I began to volunteer some time over there and assist with some issues with gay and lesbian issues, particularly when the programs drew participants who were active members of the Lutheran church. The program in sexuality in those days receive a lot of momentum from the American Lutheran Church and the University of Minnesota Medical School. A lot of that has all been changed. I decided I wanted to try and get a job with them, if I could. Probably by early 1976 I secured a job with the Program in Human Sexuality. I worked in their clinic for a year and a half or so.

In about 1977, the program had become the storm of so much controversy, that the medical school, the Church's relationship with it really needed to be redefined and things needed to be cleaned up or whitewashed to get away from all this trouble. One of the things they did was they laid off about 85% of the staff. I was the very last one to go. Ironically, through their own study, I was the highest moneymaker in the clinic; I brought in and saw more people, and dollar for dollar my services were probably the largest single contributor to the financial well being to the clinic. Anyway, they let me go. I went on unemployment.

By this time, Anita Bryant and her target city campaign have targeted St. Paul as one cities where they wanted to repeal human rights efforts. They had done a previous effort in Orange County, in Florida and Wichita before or after us. Eugene, Oregon was one of the other target cities. I stayed on unemployment [while] job hunting and basically volunteering work with the St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights campaign. It was in that capacity that [I worked with] another man that I had
met fairly early on after my arrival, Craig Anderson. Craig is now a counselor for Family and Children Service in Minneapolis. He was the elder for one of the first major newspaper attempts in the community. He was also the one who created the MinneaPaulitan: the resource listing for gay and lesbian organizations, which is now the Equal Time Directory.

Craig was an Episcopalian, and I was a Lutheran. We agreed at a staff meeting that we would start work trying to get support from the religious community. At the time, I remember saying to him, "Gee, I wonder what we will do after this because, this should take only a week or two." We just didn't anticipate that there would be much support out there. As we got into it, we ended up with written support from every major denominational leader in the state. That was kind of a first and just blew us away. After a while, we began to look at that and just marveled at it, and thought let's keep going and see how far we get. We got a lot further than anybody, including what we thought. We were on the campaign to the people who had the strongest connections with gay and lesbian religious folk, as well as mainline denominations. I did that for a while.

When the campaign was over, I got a job with Youth Emergency Services [Y.E.S.] which now has merged with a group that at that time was called Contact Twin Cities. I think, it now is the Crisis Intervention Connection. Youth Emergency Service was a service that came out of the hey day of the 1960's and the disruption on campus at the U of M. It was a hotline, drop-in center eventually, the program I headed was called N.E.O.N. (Nighttime Emergency Outreach Network). We actually sent teams out to meet with people who were suicidal or distraught. I worked there until about 1979, and decided I had had it with mental health work, particularly crisis intervention work. I decided enough was enough, and left that.

I worked at a shop called Come to Your Senses for a while, which is still on the West Bank of the University. That program actually came out of the devastation of the Program in Human Sexuality. It laid off 85% of the staff, you can imagine there were a lot of unhappy people. Some of them got into conversations about should we create some sort of private institute to do what we were doing before but, do it privately. [to see] what kind of a response there should be. When all was said and done, the people who had the longest staying power was a man called Dan Weiss, who had been the clinic director and my direct boss. They decided people didn't really need therapy around sexuality as much as they needed accessed information, skills and products that would help enhance not just their sexual but, also sensual life. Come to Your Senses was a retail store seem to be the thing that would fit that. I was there for a while until I decided that retail sales was not exactly what I wanted to do, and I had only very limited ability to work around gay lesbian issues. [At] each of the places I had been; I had tried the Crisis Intervention Center, the Program in Human Sexuality, Y.E.S. and the N.E.O.N. program, Come to Your Senses. In each of those settings I tried to work on behalf of gay and lesbian people, at least in my non-work hours and also in whatever way I could relate it to a work setting. I left there in about 1981 and immediately started doing mission development work for the Wingspan Ministry at St. Paul Reformation. That was formalized in 1982, and I worked with them up until I was laid off this year 1993.

SP: About Wingspan, who started it? You started it with...

LT: The new pastor for St. Paul Reformation in early 1981. They went through the process of
calling a new pastor. I had been a member of that congregation now since Reformation Day, October 1980. As we were interviewing the first candidate Paul Tidemann, we said we were trying to help this congregation become hospitable to gay and lesbian people, and asked what did he think of that. His response was, "Well, I really don't know much about that or thought about that but, it looks like you are doing what needs to be done." At the end of this interview process where we had clearly been asking gay and lesbian related stuff, which was pretty unheard of at that point, the congregation decided to call Paul Tidemann as the pastor. He began in 1981. Shortly after his arrival, he began to ask some of us whether we thought that everything that needed to be done, in terms of gay and lesbian people, was being done by the Church. The answer to that was "Well, no there wasn't." But, the only way we would be able to accomplish more would be to move this out of the volunteer realm and create a specific program and have some paid staff in place; a sort of logical organizational first step. I agreed to do the mission development work. I went out and essentially went out and hustled my own salary from people I could convince to invest in this project, and put the thing together.

**SP:** Who were the people who were funding this?

**LT:** Just about any and everybody I could cajole money out of. We got some money from the Episcopal Bishop in Minnesota, Robert Anderson at the time. He has just recently retired, a very strong advocate for gay and lesbian people. I met him through this work I had done in 1977, 1978 for the St. Paul Human Rights Campaign. There were some congregations that put some money in. There was some social justice money that was available to help with certain projects in some of the Lutheran bodies. I applied for those grants so, I did a thousand here and there and pieced it together. I made myself about a thousand dollars a month.

**SP:** That's not much.

**LT:** No, it's not much, although it was a little bit more in those days but, not a lot more. A lot of it came from church resources. I just sort of played all the leads I had.

**SP:** You said that there wasn't much opposition to this. You found support.

**LT:** In this particular congregation there was a fair amount of support. This is a fairly unique congregation. There are about seven or eight different congregations in the history of the current congregation. It's actually the consolidation of two church bodies: St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Reformation Church. They were only three blocks apart. This had occurred during the 1978, 1978 period, the same time this referendum was going on. The pastors of both those congregations stepped forward without being asked and supported the maintenance of the ordinance. That was my first clue that there was some receptivity here.

The earlier churches did some amazing things. One of them became the first Lutheran church in the Upper Mid-West to become racially integrated. There had been a woman named Claire, and I can't remember her last name, who became big in what was called the Sunday School Movement. That was to bring young people into the church. She had such an impact on this neighborhood that at one time, the name of one of the church bodies was Claire Lutheran Church. That was most
remarkable because churches were rarely named after women. If you did find one, she was probably dead for about two thousand years. This was really kind of unique. The church had also carried on a major battle with its own synod. Reformation was a Swedish church, in that period it was Swedish. This congregation began to see that holding services in Swedish only kept people out of the church. Unless you spoke Swedish, you couldn't come to church and have any understanding of what was going on, and you couldn't participate in some of the choir church gatherings where the language was Swedish. They tried for years to get them to switch to English or at least Swedish and English. Then, it finally gave up and left that particular Lutheran body and joined another synod.

There has been this history of what is now St. Paul Lutheran Church of always trying to reach out to people who get marginalized, whether it's by virtue of language, race, sexual orientation. About the time we were building our Wingspan Ministry, the church was also building its Refugee Resettlement Ministry. We worked with a lot of Southeast Asian refugees. As that seemed to catch on and other churches also became involved, we were asked if we would work with Ethiopian refugees. Lutheran Social Service had a very difficult time finding congregations to work with them. The irony was at that point that Ethiopian refugees were better educated, usually spoke English, had marketable skills where they could get a job here. Hardly any of that was true for Southeast Asian refugees by and large. Hmong refugees for example had no written language, most who came here did not speak English. Some had few skills. Some were trained as warriors but, what do you do with a warrior class in St. Paul? It was much harder work but, the difference was that the Southwest Asian people looked more like us white caucasian folk, and Ethiopians looked less like us so, there was this whole racial thing. Anyway, that history is what St. Paul Reformation has had for a long time. It is the tradition that continues to keep that congregation involved in social justice issues. In that context the emergence of something like Wingspan is not surprising.

**SP:** As Wingspan became established and better known was there protest from other parts of the Church?

**LT:** Yes. We went through a process every year at our synod conventions other pastors and congregations would have introduced resolutions to have our ministry censured, our senior pastor disciplined, to withdraw any church funds, anything that could try and do in Wingspan. They were totally unsuccessful year after year, it continued to exist in the face of all of that. We certainly had difficulty in terms of getting the money we needed but, nobody was able to snuff us out despite their best and repeated efforts. For a while when we were part of the old Lutheran Church of America, before that body joined the E.L.C. A. Herb Chilstrum was our synod bishop. He is now our residing bishop for the entire denomination. At our synod assemblies we would have all these resolutions about setting up a task force or, to do studies related the Church and homosexuality. We'd fight it out. There would be resolutions about supporting the maintenance of the St. Paul Human Rights Statute or getting a statewide statute in place, etc. Homosexuality was something that got talked about a lot in the Lutheran Church. Unfortunately, things often felt fairly polarized, and I'm sad to say that hasn't changed much, if anything it's more polarized in the Church today.

People tried a lot to destroy the [Wingspan] Ministry. For several years we would get all kinds of abusive phone calls, threatening and harassing letters. Probably the most unsettling experience was
two or three years into the existence of Wingspan. My office was in the back part of the church. I had come through the door out into the sanctuary and saw two men wandering out in the sanctuary. (We didn't have the church locked up as much as we do now.) I asked them if I could help them [because,] I originally thought they might me looking for the Hallie Q. Brown Center (a neighborhood program of social service and clothing distribution and food shelf kind of thing, a part of the Martin Luther King Center). I thought that might be what they were looking for because, frequently people would get in and not know where to go. They began to ask questions about, "Was this the church that had that homosexual ministry?" There was a whole way people would begin those conversations, and those guys did exactly the very expected way of going about this. I knew they were not supportive people but, I didn't know why they were there. Their whole presence seemed to be intimidating, and they didn't want to leave. At about this point, my colleague, Anita Hill came out [unclear] and was looking for me. We finally said that if they didn't leave we were going to call the police. They kept not leaving and continued to be intimidating without crossing that line into violence. Finally, she went back in and called the police, and they left immediately when we reported the incident. That's the only thing we had like that happen.

We still get hate mail and phone calls from time to time. Those experiences probably helped to galvanize my participation, along with Karen Clark, in getting the Governor to set up two sequential task forces on prejudice and violence. That was in the mid, late 1980's, and that led to the creation of statutes that dealt with hate crimes. That was a major victory because, in that legislation, it was the first time the phrase "sexual orientation" had appeared anywhere in Minnesota statute. We followed a format very similar to the human rights legislation, of enumerating classes of people who were specifically in need of protection against these sorts of things. It was a blow to the religious right, which was not any more happy with us as a result of some of those kinds of things also.

**SP:** About the kinds of complaints you would get from the people who came into the church (the two you were talking about) or from the church itself (other than your church), what would they base their arguments on?

**LT:** Mostly all the stuff was based on the notion that homosexuality was a sickness or, that it was a sin or, to some extent that it involved criminal activity or, some combination of all of that. It depended on who you were talking with what cluster of stuff you would get. People within the church tended to read scripture to us. It just amazes me that as recent as a conference this year somebody felt the need to read to me from the Bible, almost like they think this is something new and I've never heard this before.

**SP:** ...that they are going to change you mind somehow?

**LT:** Yes, somehow there reading to me is going to change my mind? It doesn't, it just gets me agitated.

**SP:** But, you are well equipped?
LT:  Well yes and, in a different way than used to be true. There was a way I used to let myself get sucked into some of these conversations about what the Bible "says" about homosexuality, which really has nothing to do with what the Bible says about homosexuality at all, if it even says anything. It has everything to do with people asking me to justify myself, and of course there is no way I can do that to them. They assume that homosexuality is wrong no matter what I say is going to make any difference to them because, of course if I'm living this sick sinful lifestyle, I'm going to rationalize it away or deny it. Those conversations ended up being very unproductive and I just stopped having them and would hang up on people, and just not talk with them, they would call back 130 times. It became clear that the whole purpose for this was not to have a reasoned respectful dialogue but, was to serve purely as a harassment value or, to somehow keep me and gay and lesbian people in our place. These days I just approach it differently. I think there is no Christian consensus on what they so called traditional material says. I interpret it one way and other people interpret it other ways. I would say it says very little, if anything, about homosexuality as an orientation. It talks about behavior, and only behavior that is a particular kind: abusive, exploitive. Other people argue that it condemns homosexuality and homosexual behavior. So, we just end up at a dead end. What I've begun to do now is...

LT:  This is volume 2, the continuing saga.

The approach I use these days is to ask people, gay and lesbian in particular, "Do you find yourself in the Bible? Do you find your story in God's story?" If you don't, it probably makes no sense for you to be a Christian if you can't somehow connect yourself with those stories and experiences. That's no great new insight. I think women and racial communities have done that; somehow you have to find your connection with this, and not simply see this as book that's been designed to beat you down. Well, when I ask that question, people started sharing with me parts of scripture that seemed to speak to them as gay or lesbian people and gave them a sense of confidence and hope. To make a short story out of this, if you ask different questions, scripture begins to reveal some very different material to you, [like] are there people like me (gay and lesbian people) in scripture. At least that's what we might identify on the basis of their behavior, which is of course only an observable thing you can measure in the historical part of scripture. And, the answer to that is it looks as though there may be, and not just a few but a number of them. How would you know that they were gay or lesbian, particularly since that notion of identity is a more late twentieth century phenomenon? [It is] again by looking at evidence that suggests there are inordinately close same gender relations, which is basically what we do today. If you and I were to walk out of here hanging on one another with our arms around each another and somebody drove past, they would turn to the passenger and say, "Look, I bet those two are probably gay." You begin to find stories of people who had those kinds of obvious close relationships. You can't say on the basis of the biblical material that they are in fact gay, lesbian or even bisexual but, you can't say they are heterosexual because, they are relating or behaving in ways which clearly don't fit maybe a wider definition of what heterosexuals do.

If you ask questions; are there experiences that I had that I can find in there? For example are there coming out experiences. There aren't coming out experiences in terms of somebody getting up and announcing that they are homosexual somewhere in the Bible. If you understand that the whole coming out process basically has to do with being open, honest and sharing that with one or more
people in order to improve, heal or reconcile those relationships, than you find some stories that deal with that theme. The best example is Joseph and his brothers. Joseph is the one with the bright coat whose brothers were really pissed off at him, and threw him in a pit, then sold him into slavery, and that was that as far as they were concerned. Meanwhile, a famine comes on the land where they are yet, in Egypt there is a surplus of food. The brothers are sent to Egypt. In the meantime, Joseph has risen up through the ranks mostly because of his ability to interpret dreams. He becomes a lord in Egypt and the brothers are brought to him. He knows immediately who they are but, of course they don't recognize him, they aren't expecting to see him either. Here is a man who had every opportunity to seek revenge, carry that out and certainly gotten away with it because, they would not have known who they were dealing with. He chose not to do that. He instead chose to tell them who he really was. In a way that's the kind of guts of what the whole coming out experience is. There are probably people like me; there are experiences I can relate to.

If I look at how I'm treated by church officials and other Lutheran Christians, I find imagery in there that talks about the sheep who are neglected by the shepards or the weaker sheep that are pushed to the edge by the fat sheep who eat all the best grass, drink the best water and mess it up for everybody else. When you look at scripture in another way, you begin to get some different understandings. I call them "wonderings" because, none of these are definitive. But, if the Bible thought homosexuality was a sin, you either would not expect to talk about it or, if it did, always condemn it and never, never lift up same gender relationships as a model for the rest of us. Yet, that is what you get in some of these stories. Of course, there is more to it than the quick thumbnail sketch I've given you. Those conversations I find now very productive, and to have with gay and lesbian people and people in the church who are tempting to get out of this dead end that the religious right has sort of forced us all into. We simply just start with a separate set of questions, and we are off and moving again.

SP: Who were some of those people or church's groups who were a problem for the gay community?

LT: Locally, there was a group called F.E.L.L.P. (Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Laity and Pastors) who were opposed to a number of things. They were opposed to a statement that I and a number of others had worked on with the Minnesota Council of Churches, that went through their process and was voted on and approved officially by the board. It gave support for human rights to gay and lesbian people, called for: repeal of the sodomy statutes, legislation to address what at that time we called hate crimes, examine and come up with some response to issues related to custody and visitation. We were particularly looking at issues of people who had their children from them because they were gay or lesbian. I described all of that the way I did because, subsequently the M.C.C. has repudiated that in fact that document was ever officially passed. They did that in part because, although it went through the process exactly the way that was described, it created the same kind of firestorm reaction in the pews that the release of the recent E.L.C.A. document on human sexuality has done. F.E.L.L.P. was angry about that statement, and wanted to make sure the statement did not speak on behalf of them. They were also upset with Lutheran Social Service because, they were running a program attempting to deal with adolescent sex offenders which in fact used some pornographic material. This was in part an extension of the fight about the Program in Human Sexuality, which the Lutheran Church had participated and provided major leadership
for. It also used sexually explicit material, some of which was clearly pornographic. It was done for reasons which some of the Church understood and others simply did not want to deal with it.

F.E.L.L.P. was on everybody's case for a while. They were the ones who organized resolutions and attempts to censure our congregation, pastor, staff, etc. There was another group that emerged, which was a happy coincidence for those who were anti-homosexual, that was the emergence of Outpost Ministry. It was an ecumenically based ministry and strongly identified with the conservative religious community. They believed you could be called out of the homosexual lifestyle by the power of the Holy Spirit. Some people believed you could be changed to be heterosexual, others believed that you were just called away from sinful behavior. Some believed that there actually was a homosexual behavior, others said there wasn't. I think there was a lot of purposeful ambiguity about exactly what they believed. Because they opened up a program and started counseling homosexuals and were staffers by some people who were identified as "ex-" homosexuals, they were a good reference point for homophobic forces within the religious community. They had been repeatedly criticized for being so anti-gay, and all they were doing was tearing things down, they weren't doing anything for homosexuals. Now, they could point and say, "Well, here is this ministry, and not only is it attempting to reach out to them but, it is being successful, etc." They will trot out that program every time and the classic success stories every time there is some policy decision. These people always show up at the Capitol every time we participate in an attempt to get human rights protection in place, and every time homosexuality comes up in any form those folks are there. What they will not do is give you any shred of evidence that their claim that are at all actual.

There is a number of people I've dealt with who are ex-Outpost clients who finally just said, "This is crazy. It doesn't make any sense. It's not helping me, this is who I am; I'm a gay man or a lesbian." Even their director at one time, Jeff Ford, who I had known, had some mutual respect for and some greater level of cordiality between us than with some other folks. I was convinced it was a good idea for me to stay on top of what they were doing and [vice-versa.]

[interference]

Jeff has subsequently left that position in a way that left a lot of question marks. When all the dust settled, low and behold he emerged again. He said he was a gay man and was proud of that, in a committed relationship. He and his lover have been together a couple years. He since repudiated all this stuff, and these folks don't want to deal with his criticisms from inside that whole structure and experience. The last time there was a major emphasis on ex-gay ministries within a Lutheran context, I went to the pastors who stood up and touted all of this. I said, you made some claims that are very interesting. You understand that I have some reluctance about simply accepting them at face value. I would be happy to see evidence in support of your claims. I never even got a letter from these pastors, which of course is not surprising because there is no evidence.

F.E.L.L.P. was a group. Outpost was a group. There are now several other ex-gay ministries which have emerged in Minnesota. Eagle's Wings was created within North Heights Lutheran Church. They belong to the same synod we do. Their purpose was in part to help homosexuals from their point of view but, also to create a kind of political entity that counterbalanced Wingspans efforts. If
we asked for money then, they would jump up and say, "Well, you shouldn't give money to Wingspan, if you aren't going to give it to us." Part of their work was much more political. There was a third group that is called Keys Ministry, which is now located down near Rochester. That group uses specifically the twelve step AA program to bring you out of homosexuality. Most of their work seems to be letter writing, correspondence approach. I've talked to the director and some of the people involved. It really isn't much different than the others, except it's located in southern Minnesota and correspondence, the rational is the same.

Other groups that have been problematic during the time of the 1977-78 human rights referendum is a group called C.A.M. (Citizens Alert for Morality) emerged to press for the removal of the human rights protection. Ultimately, they were successful. [pause] I think that's what the group was called. The group was largely initiated from pastors of very conservative church traditions: Baptist, more conservative elements of the Lutheran Church including the ones we have now been having trouble with. They organized a campaign which lead to the removal of the human rights protection for gay and lesbian people in the city of St. Paul. There was some support for that from Anita Bryant and her target city campaigns. That group with different names but, different intents have risen and fallen over the years as we attempted to focus on getting the human rights protection in St. Paul. When we tried to do it at the state level, they would also be involved.

Probably the group that has had the greatest impact was originally called the Birean League, which started out to be a Bible based political watchdog. Their executive director, Tom Prichard was always watching to see what we were up to at the State Capitol. Anytime we made some moves, the Birean League would organize. I went to some of their organizing day on the Hill, and was very disturbed at what I saw. Of course, the rhetoric I was familiar with so, there wasn't a whole lot new there. Mostly, what I discovered was how organized the religious right was becoming at that point, and how much interlocking networks there were particularly, communications networks. A lot of this had come into place around anti-abortion efforts. There was christian identified media groups; Channel 23 is now an example, which also had some radio stations way back then. You had newspapers, newsletter networks, prayer groups all hooked together. So, there was a way in which, if you wanted to, you could turn out people and letters to activate this network. Once they did, boom! It was like pushing a button and having all this stuff come. I was very alarmed at that. I tried, even before the Birean League had gotten off the ground, to raise the alarm other people, most of whom, including Senator Allan Spear, told me that all of this was not going to go anywhere and fizzle out. I tried to tell him and others that I felt this was going to be a very serious group to deal with, and we should give some attention to what they were doing and saying, and prepare ourselves. Most people thought I was being alarmist. A year or two they found out for themselves.

SP: In 1978?

LT: The Birean League came into existence in about 1980. They were sort of after the St. Paul human rights campaign effort. Clearly, as they would say, "Homosexuals were on the move, and there needed to be an organized effort within the christian community in response to that. There certainly were other [responses] to: sex education in school and school based clinics, and now, H.I.V., A.I.D.S., condom distribution. Now, we just take them as part of the landscape.
**SP:** Yes. What is the reason for their existence? Why did they start the Birean League?

**LT:** I think the simple answer is that conservative Christians tend to define very clearly who's in and who's out, in terms of the people of God. Of course, they see themselves as being in. The more different you are from them the more out you are. So, homosexuality is pretty far out of the people of God. There is this sense of who are the righteous, good people and who are the bad people. Some of this has shaped up as a fight over, on the one hand people who are attempting to misuse scripture (which would be us, in their perspective) as opposed to people who stand firmly on the word of God (that is to stand for the Bible). That is sort of the righteous argument with the volume turned up. You turn it up further and you hear people who talk about standing with God in the face of dominions of satan. That's a little dramatic but, it's only a matter of degree. For them it's a matter of standing firm in their faith on the word of God against evildoers [mocking] who are of course dragging down our christian society on all fronts. They are upset with media, feminist, homosexuals, virtually with anybody or issues that have been defined outside of the righteous people of god. It takes on a kind of crusade mentality, what is exactly what we have seen in some of the darkest pages in the history of the Christian Church. It's this kind of, "I'm right, you're wrong. I'm better than you are. I'm on God's side, you're not." mentality that creates wonderful things like the Inquisition.

**SP:** Were you going to say more?

**LT:** I'm going back to the original question about who some of these groups were. The Birean League has since transformed into a new name: the Minnesota Family Values Coalition. Part of that is PR, and part is strategy. It hooks them up to a nation-wide effort. It is also a name that has immediate validity, [instead] of this obscure biblical reference. Birea was a city in the early Christian times. It was noted specifically for never accepting anything at face value without putting it to the most arduous of tests in terms of their understanding of biblical material. It was sort of an early christian version of bible-believing christians. The reference makes sense. It was just so obscure to most people, that a name like Family Values Coalition was going to have a lot more people support it, who may not define themselves as christians. But, it's still the same player, and lead by the same man. Many of the people who have been important players there have been key opponents around gay/lesbian stuff for years. The one other person who is perhaps important to comment on is Roger Magnuson, who wrote the book Are Gay Rights Right? It has become a sort of military briefing on how to stand against particularly human rights efforts of gay and lesbian people. It sort of lays out all the issues. A lot of the language we here today over and over comes right out of his book. Roger is an Oxford trained lawyer and a pretty sharp man. Unfortunately, he wasn't a little brighter on this issue.

Most of the other opponents are either national groups that have some local affiliates. The American Family Association is Reverend Donald Wildman's operation. They publish a slick little booklet every month, that I think is mailed every month to every church in the United States. They see themselves as sort of media watchdogs. People in St. Paul Reformation would always throw these things away, and I would dig through the trash to get them because, they always told me what was going on around sexual minority stuff in the media. I'd find out which shows, programs, movies dealt with homosexuality. He went into great detail around [homosexuality.] There were
some chapters and members of that group here in Minnesota. When I was on the first Governor's
task force on gay and lesbian Minnesotans, we ran into some of those people in Grand Rapids.
They tried to make life pretty miserable for the task force up there. The people who were around
certainly were people who regularly watch the 700 Club, Pat Robertson's effort. Prior to him was
Jerry Falwell. He had come to Minnesota [mainly] to try and galvanize people locally against the
"homosexual agenda".

**SP:** Was that at the time of the St. Paul ordinance repeal in 1978? Or, is this another trip?

**LT:** It would have been afterwards, 1979 or 1980. He wasn't really a major player in the St. Paul
Human Rights Campaign effort in 1977 or 1978. He was out there. I'm sure people got material,
suggestions or encouragement from him. Anita Bryant was sort of the religious right person most
identified with that.

Interestingly, the one person you might have thought would be involved with that but has never
been in any of these things, as far as I know, is Billy Graham. His headquarters are in Minneapolis.
There certainly has been a lot of turf stuff going on right here in his city. He has really stayed
above and out of all of this.

**SP:** I heard that at one point there was going to be a gay hotel built across from his headquarters.
This was in the *Advocate*. It said that the Ministry was considering moving out if it went up.

**LT:** That may be.

**SP:** He never talked about that publicly in his sermons?

**LT:** Yes. There was another situation which had to do with what appeared to have been a phone
call campaign orchestrated out of his headquarters about G.L.C.A.C. Gay and Lesbian Community
Action Council receiving United Way dollars. I have never heard anything that has suggested to me
that he was involved in any instance like that. If anything I suspect...

If anything it was probably some other manager folk that got wind of this and did it. You can
clearly look at someone like Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson and see their ad in what happens that is
homophobic, I never saw that with Billy Graham. Maybe he did have a hand in some of that but, he
is one of the televangelists who has stayed above all of that.

**SP:** Could you tell me what it was that Anita Bryant said that made her look so ridiculous? I heard
this from people. Do you think the same?

**LT:** It might be easier if I tell you what she said that made sense. She seemed to have a [unclear]
for saying things that reflected poorly on her. Anita Bryant was a religious fundamentalist, like the
description I laid out earlier. She very clearly thought that the way she saw the world was right and
all of us homosexuals were wrong. There was a way in which she was very critical of others whose
life was less christian and perfect than hers. What happened, in the midst of all this stuff, was that
she and her husband ended up divorcing. So, you has somebody who was a spokesperson on behalf
of American Christian morality who when push came to shove her life was starting to fall apart. [unclear] Most of her contribution to the scene here is probably more in the way of a "celebrity gets some attention" than, really influencing people very much. Most of what she had to say, if you thought about it, even if you didn't like homosexuals some of it seemed a little beyond the pale. Who was she to be criticizing when her own life was in shambles.

SP: They still looked at her as this singing Miss America who claimed to be an authority.

LT: She was a bible-bleeding christian, former Miss America, former singer, former orange juice spokesperson. There was a way, from the mind set of conservative christians, she was richly blessed because she was a faithful christian so, what better spokesperson for this stuff. I never understood what prompted her to get started with all this in the beginning. I suspect it was something personal.

I had a conversation with some other community leaders of my generation. We were talking about some of the people who were particularly prominent in their leadership and hostility toward gay and lesbian people. One thing we recognized with some of the men was that when they were younger they would either have been somewhat effeminate or pretty, likely to have been kidded as being homosexual or maybe approached by homosexuals. I'm using that language to emphasize something. They also could have had some reason to be concerned that if we won, everything was going to hell in a handbag. There was clearly a kind of personal aspect of this that had some reasonable surface validity. You look at some of these guys and say, "Yes, when he was a teenager or in his early twenties, he was probably pretty cute. I can believe that gay men would have approached him." In fact, the person I had in mind said that. That was part of his story although, he didn't dwell on that. I heard him a number of times talk about having been approached. You get these sort of personal things that these people are playing out. I don't know what it was for her [Bryant]. She came to town early Fall 1977. The vote was in April of that following year. She did a performance and there was a demonstration. It also appeared that there were some agents (provocateur) that were there outside with us but, nobody had the slightest idea who they were or where they were from. The seemed bent on trying to get the crowd whipped up into some type of violence but, we weren't interested in that. She was performing inside a building which was owned by the National Fruit Company, which was an interesting juxtaposition.

SP: Is that what became known as...

LT: National Fruit Day, that was just a local thing as far as I know. There were some bumper stickers, pins, etc.

SP: It's good material for gay people to make fun of but, like you said, other leaders didn't take it all that seriously.

LT: I don't think she was ever taken seriously here or, changed anybody's mind one way or the other. If you are all ready against homosexuals, you might quote her. I don't think she particularly accomplished very much here.
SP: Do you think that her being a spokesperson it might have made gay people not understand what was going to happen with the repeal in St. Paul or, the organization of the right?

LT: Yes, I think we knew this was a serious threat but, I'm not sure that many of us believed that the repeal was going to happen; that somehow in Minnesota, the home of the Progressive Movement with clear thinking people and big hearts, taking away somebody's civil rights just didn't seem very likely. What happened was that C.O.M. Citizens Of Morality made bigger inroads than any of us expected. They pushed the issue of pedophilia and had some cases in point. There was a gay man, who lives down the street, who worked for the Catholic Church, maybe a parish school. He was a music teacher, and wanted to teach only boys in the choir; wasn't interested in working with girls. He was fired because he was homosexual. He was very clear; this whole thing of only wanting to work with boys seemed suspicious.

SP: And, choirboys at that.

LT: Yes. Anyway, that court case went through the process, and finally his firing was upheld. The church didn't have to pay any damages; essentially they won the case. But, they quoted that case a lot as [if to say,] "Look what could have happened, if he had worked there and they hadn't fired him or, if they had been forced by a law such as this to hire him." They really played everybody's fears. There had been another case, which involved a man who was Lutheran who wanted to work with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and become a big brother. In the process he was identified as homosexual. Big Brothers decided to reject his application. There was a claim made but again, very little came of that. But, they would dredge up these experiences which sort of triggered peoples' collective memory of having heard or read some of this. As it turned out, both of those cases would have gone exactly the way they wanted them to go but, they used them as though they hadn't. [As if to say,] look what could have happened if certain vigilant people hadn't been watching out. They really played to peoples' fears, and I think we were largely unprepared for the extent of knee-jerk reaction that we got from people.

SP: Was that Johnson?

LT: Gary Johnson. He had been involved in Lutherans Concerned when I arrived here in 1975. I think we might have had some kind of correspondence prior to that. I knew him, and the situation with Big Brothers had happened prior to my arrival. It had been like in 1974.

SP: About something else called a church, I want you just to comment on it, it's Church of the Chosen People.

LT: Church of the Chosen People was something that Jack Baker and others created; Mike McConnell, Tim Campbell, Brad Golden maybe. The group that they were most identified with were those who had been in that preface five year period I had talked about earlier. They were the movers and shakers then but, had been replaced by more mainstream, less radical people in the community. They were always very critical of the church, and some rightfully so. The Christian Church has probably gone out of it's way to prove itself the enemy of gay and lesbian people in many regards; much more so that it has ever proven itself to be friends. I think their criticism was
very logical. They also began to articulate a classic position, although I don't think anybody would have identified it quite this way at the time. [Their message was] "We're not just like everybody else except for the gender of our sex partners. We are in some ways a different kind of people." This argument between we're just like everybody else and we're different is the classic argument that has been going on forever.

The argument existed in Germany in the 30's. Magnus Hirshfield and his sexuality institute, a big library which was burned that famous night when they were burning books, had really argued the case of gay and lesbian people being like everybody else. The did a sort of scientific medicalization of homosexuality legitimizing and looking at assimilation, etc. There was another group run by Brant who published a periodical called Der Eigene (The Other). His position was that gay men in particular, this whole thing seemed to be a men's thing, were very different. Part of that difference had to do with pederasty, love between men and adolescent boys. I'm talking about teenagers opposed to pedophiles. Anyway, Church of the Chosen People had this other viewpoint of, "We're against Christianity. Look what Christianity has done for us. Our spirituality is different." That spirituality was intertwined very tightly with sexuality and sexual behavior. Their religious observances were purported to be a lot of sexual activity, including sexual activity with younger late adolescence males (not males below the age of consent, I don't think). I don't know any of that first hand but, that was the common gossip about them. They never became a very strong group, in part because alternative religions have never gotten too far in this country. [unclear] The reaction of many people in the community was, "Why even bother with the Church when, if the Christian Church was beating us up, why step out of that sort of sick institution into another church institution which probably not going to be any better." This all seemed weird anyway. There are at least a lot of gay and lesbian people who have grown up in the Church, and therefore respond to it in a pretty predictable way. So, it never got very much of a head of steam. It was around for a few years. They would advertise in the Pride Guide. At that point, the Pride Committee radical in the way it looked at things than would be true today. Today it would probably be described as being entrepreneurial.

SP: Who would be involved in this church? Jack Baker...

LT: Jack Baker and Mike McConnell were archons I think were the titles they gave themselves. Maybe Tim Campbell was involved and Brad Golden. I'm not sure who else. Most of the people, at that point, seemed to be pretty marginal to the community which was already more and more mainstream.

SP: Brad Golden, is he still around?

LT: I think so.

SP: I keep hearing the name but, I don't know his significance in the community.

LT: He was kind of a hot dog. He had a lot of energy and would get involved in a lot of projects. He tended to approach things from a more radical or at least a libertarian stance. He was very active in the Pride Committee for a number of years. I don't know if he worked at one of the bars.
A lot of his contacts were there. At that point, he was a young man and fairly attractive so, the whole sexual energy piece which sometimes is the key that unlocks understanding of how certain things happened or why they happened the way they did. I suspect that is part of his story. I never knew him very well, we had pretty different ways of looking at things, and I don't know if we said ten words to each other.

SP: About youth programs, you were one of the first people involved in youth programs. When did this start and how?

LT: There had been some attempts, even as I was trying to get Wingspan going back in 1981, to respond to the presence of at least street youth, some of who were gay or bisexual males. St. Marks Cathedral put up some money for me to work in that area. I think they had something in mind other than what I ended up doing; I think they wanted me working in the park or something. I was trying to get a more broadly based program going. Anyway, there had been a recognition of this issue but, nobody knew quite what to do with it. There were a couple of people: Mark Haliva, Steve Broin. Both of them are still around, and at one time had some connection with a therapy-style group for young males. They were time limited, and would run ten to six weeks. They had very stringent rules to try and avoid the slightest hint of scandal or sexual activity between members. As a result those groups came and went, basically didn't stay around more than one shot.

There was another group of people, very vaguely defined, who had sympathy in the direction of N.A.M.B.L.A. North American Man Boy Love Association. This would have been around 1982 to '84. There was interest in bringing a representative from N.A.M.B.L.A. to the Twin Cities to talk about that organization. At that time, they were the only organization talking about gay and lesbian youth. There were other groups, mainline agencies, working with kids but, not really talking about or doing much with gay lesbian youth.

A program was put together and a speaker was going to come. There was a response panel of four or five individuals (therapists, somebody from MCC Church) a pretty heavy response. This meeting was moved three or four times; there were bomb threats, etc. Finally, they got put in the Hennepin Government Center in a little auditorium on the same level as the jury selection room. The place was packed. This representative from N.A.M.B.L.A. spoke. He said several things which were quite memorable. I don't know how he got to this point but, one was the observation that, "There wasn't a teenage boy anywhere in America that couldn't use a blow job right now." Well, that was dramatic and colorful enough that it got picked up and carried in the paper, etc. Another thing he said was that, "Gay and lesbian organizations and leaders were too frightened to do anything on behalf of youth, and in order to protect themselves had abandoned youth." And, in as much as that was the case, "If we were not doing anything, we had no right to be critical of what N.A.M.B.L.A. did." That comment really hit me between the eyes. I thought, well he's got a point. I think we can be critical but, basically if we don't like what they are doing, we have to get out there and do something ourselves. That precipitated some discussions between Lloyd Birchard (the pastor of the MCC congregation) and myself. Lloyd is now a pastor in Honolulu, Hawaii. He may still be there.

[Interference]
Lloyd said that MCC would start a youth group. I said I would start a program that adults could be in support of gay and lesbian youth. So, they going, which was called G.A.Y. (Growing American Youth), a patented, copyrighted title of MCC. Two older women ran it. As they described them to me, they were motherly types. They had set it up trying to blunt whatever criticism might come from the broader community. I'm not sure what else may have been required but, here was a church-run group with two women, not two men. While that was getting cranked up, I went off and went through what we call in the church the counciltation process. The purpose of which is to bring together people of like mind and focus on an issue and hope that you can stack the deck in a certain way, so that people will want to take the momentum from this meeting(s) and move along. It's a kind of organizing technique.

Wingspan and the Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities did a series of meetings. Opposed to Dignity, which was outside the Catholic Church, C.P.C.S.M. exists inside the Church. C.P.C.S.M.'s David McCaferty and myself with Wingspan created this series, and out of this came Minnesota Task Force for Gay and Lesbian Youth. That came into existence and was functioning by June of '85. One of the things they did was send me off to meet with the youth group and I was to convey the message,"Hi, we're this group of well-meaning adults. Can we help you, what would you like from us?" The Task Force was to really to both support the youth group and to look at educational training for [unclear] professionals. By that point the youth group had begun to fall apart; partly because the adult leaders were trying to run it a little too firmly. Adolescence were bristling under this. They had said to the Church, we'd like to have this be a youth-run group. And, the lesbians were apparently ready to finish their commitment to this project, and were stepping down. So, the youth began to run the group and would burn themselves out left and right. You would come once and come back a second time, and you would become a leader at that point. Even before you could get your issues taken care of, you were out there given responsibility to call people and make arrangements and basic group stuff. The young people said that they would like some leaders to help. I initially got involved intending only to be a temporary thing until we found some people who had more experience as adult leaders than I saw myself having.

I started working with the group. Don Letourneau began to work with me. He also had been on the task force. Don is a straight man. [He] worked a lot with street youth. That has always been his area of interest. [unclear] He wanted the group to deal more with street youth. I guess I didn't want it to be a mainstream youth group only but, I think that's what happened. More and more of the youth who became involved were mainstream, less and less were high profile, stereotypical or street youth, which was sort of what it was in the beginning. Anyway, Don worked with us. It was he and I for a while. We began to bring some other people on board. Karen Wright and [a configuration of four adults:] two lesbians, a gay man and a straight man. We continued meeting at M.C.C. for a while until we began to outgrow that space and the timings for our meetings began to conflict with timings for Sunday afternoon church meetings. This made it difficult for kids to feel comfortable, with these other people hanging around. They weren't eavesdropping but, they would be making coffee at one end of the room and we would be trying to meet at the other. We ended up deciding that we ought to consider relocating.

[By the time we were ready to move,] I didn't think it had occurred to any of us that this had once
been or might still be conceived of as an M.C.C. group. It long since stopped having any direct contact with the church. Don was working for Youth Diversion, which had its office in the building were the Minnesota A.I.D.S. Project currently resides at 2025 Nicollet. We moved over there. Meanwhile, the Minnesota A.I.D.S. Project was growing all over the place and they begin to take over more and more of the building. Youth Diversion needed more space and finally moved out, Don went with them. Since we had been meeting there the question was, because this was an ideal location, could we somehow continue to work there. Karen Wright, who was one of the adult leaders, also worked for M.A.P. around development (fundraising). She secured permission to meet there. We met there from 1982 up through summer of 1992, about seven years before the group moved. Probably, six of those years have been in the location were M.A.P. is. M.A.P. subsequently had to change the sort of insurance coverage they had, particularly for groups other than theirs meeting there. Because we were there on Sunday, there had to be a staff person present. They would have to pay them, it got very unwieldy. So, they told us they couldn't continue to host us there.

We looked for another site. By this time the A.I.D.S. Project was located over at the south end of Loring park at 428 Oak Grove. We moved in there and began to use that space. That was a nicer space. We were in a bigger room with nice carpet, fresh paint, no windows but, generally was a better space and more convenient in some other ways. We met there until August of 1993, when we decided to close Lesbian and Gay Youth down together. [That was] in large measure because for a while L.G.Y.T. had been the only game in town.

Part of our work was to foster either by example or direct support or direct consultation the creation of some other groups. A group got started at South High School. Two of the boys who came to L.G.Y.T. went to South, recognized one another and said, "Gee, we should do something at South." A group at Central High School, here in St. Paul, got off the ground and as time went on there were probably a dozen groups in the metro area, including L.G.Y.T. For one group trying to serve everybody, that was slowly replaced by a number of groups located geographically throughout the metro area, which began to eat into our numbers. District 202, which was the youth center funded by the Minneapolis Foundation, got started. That was able to have some paid staff, their own space and those things began to have inroads. L.G.Y.T. had accomplished what it had set out to do, and it was time to retire from the field.

[There are] three other major players. One was the Minnesota Task Force for Gay and Lesbian Youth which we initially helped start. [It] focused more and more narrowly on what they could do. Their task now has to do with providing scholarships for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender high school students to pursue post-secondary education. They have been doing that for several years now. A second group, that has probably had a greater impact, was the Youth in A.I.D.S. Project. I worked with their director, Gary Remifeti, to lay out a plan, which he was then able to get funding for. [It] was to provide H.I.V., A.I.D.S. education/prevention services for gay and bisexual boys, twenty-one years of age and younger. That was done somewhat unofficially in concert with L.G.Y.T. L.G.Y.T. was a very productive place to contact boys to go through the Youth and A.I.D.S. Program. Some boys who had come to the Youth and A.I.D.S., that had not been aware of L.G.Y.T., got referred to us. There was a very symbiotic relationship between the two.
[L.G.Y.T] also made a major commitment to training, education and other youth serving professionals. Part of my job there and at Wingspan was to assist with those sort of things. That training program is now over and they now receive money to actually work to help develop social support groups. They have been major players in the development at South, Central and other places around the metro area and state. What we have is we have gone from a period when we only had L.G.Y.T. There were several predecessors that hadn't lasted very long, then L.G.Y.T. came on the scene and was around for about ten years and provided the backdrop against which some other things could develop. [Those were] a scholarship program, creation of other groups largely by example and model and through the efforts of Youth and A.I.D.S Project People training for school and other professionals through Youth and A.I.D.S. Project. The Minnesota Department of Health had received a demonstration project grant around A.I.D.S. education, schools and what we were able to convince those two project directors: Ruth Ellen Lure for St. Paul, Pat Thayer for Minneapolis. [What was required for them] was that, if they were going to do prevention education, part of that needs to be directed toward gay and bisexual males. That meant that you just couldn't do A.I.D.S. education. You needed to talk about male-to-male sexual experiences, the real transmission, or raise the issue of talking about adolescent homosexuality. So, that group had a major impact.

The other thing which had developed out of Wingspan was the creation of posters, which began to appear in youth serving agencies: schools, churches. Actually, [the posters are] throughout the state and we've been shipping these things all over the country and other parts of the world. There was a cartoon series poster. Cartoons were the answer to the major question, "What do you do. Your best friend has just said to you I'm gay?"

SP: Yes, I've seen these.

LT: That was wildly successful. We had never even thought about this as something other than a response to teachers, particularly from the St. Paul district. [They asked,] "Don't you have something we can hang up so, that people can see that we are knowledgeable and willing to talk about the issue, give it some visibility?" It turned out that there really hadn't been much out there. You either had posters that were event specific, like Pride celebration or National Coming Out Day, or you had posters that were educational, like a page out of Encyclopedia Britannica. No kid was going to stand there for twenty minutes and read this thing. We ended up finding, much to our surprise, there wasn't anything. We created this and people said, "Please think about doing a role model series." We thought about that, and decided not to do that but, to do a [unclear] stages of life series, which is still in the works and needing grant money to get finished. People said also, "Gee, these posters are so great. It would be wonderful if we had them in the buses." Finally, we took and had it laid out in the bus poster format. Then, we went through a little process with the bus company, the company that handles the interior advertising, and got the poster in there. It's been running for virtually all of 1993 in every bus in the metro area. Wingspan is going to continue the project in 1994, and in 1995 move to a different poster. The interesting thing that has developed out of all this is that we had to sign a contract, which recognized that the advertising company was bound by their contract to replace damaged, defaced, stolen posters. We had a long discussion. The advertising company thought these would get people riled up, and they would deface them and create unpleasantness in the bus. Very little of that has happened but, we have had
to authorize a significant reprinting of several hundred more to finish out this contract year because, their being stolen off the buses. What we've discovered is that it is young people who are stealing them. These are apparently a much sought after item that end up in kids bedrooms. So, it's like stop signs.

That's a kind of not so quick overview of youth stuff.

**SP:** How did you initially get the word out to youth? How did you tell them about this? Was it through schools?

**LT:** We did it everything we could think of. When L.G.Y.T. was new, and about the only kid on the block, it was fairly easy for us to get some coverage or to at least get people intrigued in what we were doing. There were articles that appeared in the *Star and Tribune*, the *Reader*¹. We got brochures made up, business cards, posters. We'd put these up were we could, and periodically had more printed up. When training for Youth Serving Professionally began, we started giving people stacks of the brochures, posters. We had some that were specific youth group posters as well as these others I just talked about. We did everything we could. We were on radio and t.v. so, word got around quite a bit.

**SP:** What radio, t.v. shows?

**LT:** I can't remember all the radio shows.

**SP:** Was it a.m. or public or community radio?

**LT:** It was both I think.

**SP:** WCCO?

**LT:** I think so. Mostly, we hit the talk show circuit.

**SP:** So, that would be like what? Not like "Good Company"²?

**LT:** That was sort of before "Good Company" actually got going. There was something else, "Twin Cities Live," I think, was the name of it (a morning show). One of our kids was on the "Donahue Show". We worked cooperatively with people in the *Star and Tribune*, in particular around the special supplement "Growing Up Gay" that Kurt Chandler and the *Reader* redid. The *Reader* was the photo journalism and Kurt was the writer.

**SP:** That was the big supplement in the spring.

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¹*Twin Cities Reader*, a local newspaper

²A talk show on KSTP-TV
LT: Yes. Twenty pages or so.

SP: Issues that you dealt with most. What were things that kids wanted to talk about?

LT: Everything. Mostly what young people wanted was a chance to meet other sexual minority youth. They would put up with what we thought were wonderful programs but, were actually pretty boring for them, I guess, simply because they were able to connect with other people there. That seems like such a simple need yet, it was so difficult for them. You had to worry about coming out to somebody and how were they going to react. Even if it was somebody who was gay or lesbian, would your coming out to them terrify them. How you just connected with other people was difficulty for sexual minority youth.

The major thing we contributed was a place. We met regularly every Sunday. The number of Sundays we didn't meet in seven years, I could probably count on one hand. We were always there, particularly around big family holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter. That was the time they would often need us the most. It was very easy to figure out who we were, where we were and how to connect with us. Some of the issues we had had to do with security; should be make it easy for people to find out who we are and where we are, would the wrong people show up? Mostly, we dealt with our own internalized homophobia. We were always nervous when we took a step toward being more open. We had brochures at first that just gave a contact phone number, then the address you could write to, then the address where the meetings were. Each step got closer. We never had the hordes of parents descending on us for subverting their children or, the bigots there to harass us. We had two or three incidents over the entire history of the group, that I could recall. It ended up not being the big deal that we had thought it was. And, the Franklin-Nicollet area is not the best area of town; you have a number of people who are troublemakers wandering around there.

Mostly, our task as adults was trying to not scare ourselves to death about thing, and not think in terms of what the worst case scenario might be. Some people probably would believe that we were not very responsible or thoughtful. We never had insurance around malpractice or any of the host of issues one might consider. When we would do field trips like bowling or sledding, we'd load kids up in the car and take them. We never thought about what would happen if a meteor fell out of the sky and we were all killed. We were sort of aware that those issues existed. But, if we tried to protect ourselves from every conceivable thing that might happen because, that homophobic "They" do terrible things to us if we weren't--by the time we had finished protecting ourselves, we wouldn't have been able to do anything. To some extent we learned to bite the bullet and keep biting it, and we went through all that time without any trouble at all.

SP: That's all the questions I had about that. I want to ask you about some of these names. One that might be linked; a man named Don Green.

LT: Don and I were roommates at one point.

SP: I read an article about his suicide in Seattle. Did you work with him also?

LT: Don was a bouncer at the 90's. I'm not sure exactly what his background was. I think he had
some social service, social science college stuff. He was certainly more than just a bouncer. He had been an important player in some of the early organizing going on in the community. He was a bridge between what sometimes was referred to "just the bar crowd" and those of us who were more into developing organizations and building community, etc. There were actually three of us who were living together in 1975-76 in an upstairs three-bedroom duplex. It has since blown up. There is a vacant lot and apparently the building blew up. It was Don, myself and a man who was one of the first openly-gay identified artists in our community. Certainly there were a lot of people at the U, and elsewhere, who were artists and performers who were artists and performers who were gay or lesbian. But, Tom was always pushing that issue about how important his being gay was to the creative way he responded to the world. We lived together. Tom worked on his stuff. And, like many people in our community he had also had difficulty with chemical dependency. He was very much into the AA groups and Lambda Sobriety Center. Don also had some chemical dependency problems and been involved with that as well.

Don was a kind of leader in somewhat the same way I think of myself. If you about it you probably identify them with one or two particular things. But, a lot of what I've done over the years has tended to take more of a background position and not be a leader. Not that I object to that or there is anything wrong with that but, I sort of worked behind the scenes and Don did too. He would be on boards and committees or working around certain things, and wasn't the identified leader but, was a major force around a bunch of stuff. One of the areas we worked on together was the Assault Project. It was the first organized larger scale community attempt to deal with what we would call today "queer bashing" and that kind of stuff. We had tried to do some organizing and training for professionals. There had been several incidents we had been able to point to, and we held a big conference. Don was one of the people who had some major responsibility within that. Craig Anderson was another. Don was kind of glue in the community. He knew a lot of people. You certainly would ask him of his feel for some things before you moved too far ahead because, he had his finger on the pulse of a lot of people in the community, bar people.

**SP:** Another person who worked as a coat check in a bar.

**LT:** Steve Endean

**SP:** Steve Endean, who went on to lobbying. How did you know him or did you?

**LT:** Yes, I knew Steve very well. I think we first became associated in 1975. Very shortly after I got here, the first thing I got involved with was the Gay Men's Coffeehouse. I was one of the founders of that but, I was also interested in some political things. The group to get involved in was, at that time, the Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights M.C.G.R. Steve was a primary mover and shaker in that. Allan Spear was part of that and later Karen [Clark] many of the people we talked about were. Steve was very interested in partisan politics so, our paths would split at that point. We had a common interest as far as political issues, and we would work around human rights issues particularly at the state level. That was what M.C.G.R. was doing at that point. But when it got into politics and electoral stuff, I just wasn't as interested in that. So, our paths were sometimes pretty diverse but, we would come together around a particular project. He was the
power behind the campaign manager for the St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights. He was active in all the efforts at the state level until he moved on from here. We worked on some sodomy repeal stuff together.

He moved on from here and created the Gay Rights National Lobby, which was an attempt to transfer his activities from a state focus to a national focus. That group was then replaced with, among other things, the Human Rights Campaign Fund. There were some other intermediary things. Steve carried pieces of his project along but, pretty much doing the same kinds of things all the way through.

Steve and I had some decidedly different opinions as time went on. I would get calls from Steve periodically to try and facilitate some stuff here in Minnesota, in order to benefit some stuff nationally. I cooperated with a lot of that for a while. Finally, my commitment was less to national stuff and more to Minnesota. At this point, I would say one of my goals is to help create Minnesota as a place of sanctuary for sexual minority people. I really believe that we have possibly hit the high water mark this time around, and we are going to have our hands full just holding on to what we got, let alone making lots of headway. And when push comes to shove, as we see happening around the country with the religious right pushing repeals or trying to blocking human rights efforts and a whole variety of things, I think there needs to be some places in the country which are sanctuaries for our folk. I want to make Minnesota one of those. So, more recently, I have tended to resist some of Steve's request to direct things at the national level. I'm not against that, I'm just not the one who wants to be doing it. I think there are lots of other people out there who are and can be doing that stuff. That's their field, my field is more state. We continue to be friends. Even though we had a difference of opinion strategically, I always considered Steve to be a close friend, we worked very well together. I was genuinely sorry at his death. He was a real pioneer in our community locally and nationally. There are not a lot of people around with Steve's vision or energy. I frankly wish there were a few more like him or, that he was with us.

SP: About ethnic minorities [and you] leading youth groups and church too, did you find that there were places for ethnic minorities? Did they come to...

LT: Are you talking about ethnic or racial minorities?

SP: Racial, like Native American and African American.

LT: The youth groups, by and large, have had a pretty good track record of attracting young people from communities of color. I think that the adult organizations have not done so bad by and large. I think it is very fashionable to bash groups because they don't have more people than they do. Yet, we need to remember that it is a very small percentage of the population in Minnesota who are other than caucasian, one or two percent something like that, that's very small. That's growing but, we're still dealing with a very white state. In the youth group, certainly African Americans have always been there in some significant numbers, more recently Asian American males. L.G.Y.T. in the later years became almost predominantly a boys group because, in part, the work of the Youth and A.I.D.S. Project had begun to funnel so many young men into the group that what had been a balanced group before had been a balanced group before got badly out of whack. In order to
salvage the program for the young women, that group pulled out and created Young Lesbians and Their Friends. The intent was that we would get back together but, that never happened. Anyway, I was talking about males and that reminded me of that piece of it. We've always had a good representation of African American youth, primarily Asian males in later years.

We have had some native American youth who have come through from time to time. I have always wondered why that has not been any greater than it has been. I've talked with people in school settings. Some of it I think is cultural. I think African American youth know how to survive in a white society and don't necessarily have an African culture as an alternative. Asian young people are somewhat the same. [For] native Americans, I think part of dealing with their situation seems to be going back and recovering their own traditions. That's very different than the white way we go about things. I think that's why we haven't had more Native American youth or, they haven't stayed around longer or, they that the ones who did were the ones who were assimilating into white culture more.

For Hispanic youth there have been some but very few. I think that has a lot to do with very heavy emphasis on family and marriage. It seems much more difficult for Hispanic or Latino young people to come out. Their process gets slowed down and they're not able to make the break until later in life. That's just my guess.

Anyway, I think the group has been pretty diverse, as diverse or in some cases even more so than I would have expected. Some of that has been because of intentional work. We were always trying to find additional adult leaders from the communities of color, doing whatever we could programmatically and otherwise to make L.G.Y.T. very hospitable to other than white youth.

[Lutherans are really a national church. What I mean by that is what defines the Lutheran Church historically has been national groupings: Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, etc. The Lutheran Church was basically an immigrant church coming to this country so, each of these groups of primarily white northern Europeans was the way the Lutheran Church was defined for a long time. As American society became more established, the Lutheran Church ceased to be sort of missions from the old country, and began to take on characteristics of a uniquely American Lutheran Church. So, the history of Lutherans in this country has been these national churches coming together and becoming American Lutheran bodies. Also, they began to be more responsive to the growing diversity within broader society, which among other things includes racial diversity. There has been probably for the last thirty years some intentional work for Lutheran churches to become more racially diverse. Most of that work has been in the last ten years.

The history of this particular congregation is one where it became one of the first Lutheran churches in the Upper Mid-West to become racially integrated. We had talked earlier about the historical stream, the traditions of this church which had always been to reach out to more marginalized people. That was done first around issues of language. This used to be a Swedish-speaking congregation, that was excluding people. They went to English to try and tried to get the broader Church to go to English. That became racially integrated. More recently, there work with refugees
has brought Asian people into the Lutheran Church. We now have Asian American congregations, Hmong congregations, in particular, in this part of the country.

SP: And, the name of this church is?

LT: St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church. It's actually a hyphenated name. It's a consolidation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Reformation Lutheran Church. A process and the clumping together continues.

SP: Was this outreach to minorities before or after you came?

LT: That was before I came and the church became involved outreach to gay and lesbian people. The congregation had established itself as an integrated congregation and worked through a lot of those issues. The transition of opening the congregation to gay and lesbian people happened much less painfully because, people had already been through that thinking around racial inclusivity.

SP: Do you know what early steps this church took toward gay and lesbian people?

LT: The first thing that was really a signal to the community was back during the St. Paul human rights referendum in 1978. I told you earlier that a friend, Craig Anderson, and I were to try and develop support within the religious community. In the process of our doing that a church approached us with a statement of support from their pastors, and that was St. Paul Reformation. We had not approached them, and I'm not even sure I knew anything about this congregation then. They felt that the human rights of gay and lesbian people should be maintained in the ordinance, and they signed on as supporters. That was the first thing that began to identify this as a congregation for gay and lesbian people might be welcome. Subsequently, I became involved here, a member in 1980. We had just begun to have some conversations about what we might do in support of gay and lesbian people. At that point, they went from two pastors, from each of the two consolidating congregations, to a single pastor. That was in 1981 when that process began. The congregation decided to call Paul Tidemann. During the interview process we had told him that we were interested in working with gay and lesbian people and a little of what we had done. We asked him what he thought about that because, we wanted to be sure that somebody came into the church who was going to support that, if not provide some leadership for it as well. We were satisfied with his answers on this issue and a lot of other things. The congregation decided to call him. Paul joined us in 1981, probably in the first quarter of the year. He arrived here and began to ask questions of whether we thought we were doing everything that needed to be done or could be done in response to gay and lesbian people. The answer to that was, "well no, it seemed that a lot more that could be done." Those conversations then set the stage for some discussion about the creation of what was to become Wingspan Ministry. I was involved centrally in all of that. I spent a big chunk of 1981 and the first part of 1982 doing what they call mission development work, the purpose of which is to sort of lay the foundation and prepare for the formalization of either congregation or ministry, etc. March of 1982 then was when Wingspan Ministry was officially accrued to be adopted by the church council. That gave us the staff and vehicle for beginning to do a lot of work both within and outside the church around gay/lesbian issues.
There were a number of things we began to do to get some visibility to gay and lesbian people here. We quickly began to make the newspapers available: Equal Time, GLC Voice, Gaze. We began to set aside bulletin boards to post information about gay/lesbian issues, organizations, etc. It was very important in the beginning that when people walk in the door they see some things they weren't accustomed to seeing in Lutheran churches. That was that this was a place that gave some visibility to gay/lesbian issues. You could see that quickly there were announcements about activities that appeared regularly in the bulletin under community announcements. Things were included in the prayers. [interference]

One of the things that we tried to make this visibly a gay/lesbian sensitive friendly space was we began to talk with organizations and make this space available for them. This was at a time when it was much more difficult for gay and lesbian group to meet. Either people were reluctant to let them use their space or gay and lesbian people sort of assume that no one would say yes. There were very few places were groups could meet. We began to open up the facility here. P.F.L.A.G. [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays] began to meet here. Gay Fathers Support Group began to meet here. Subsequently, a group for spouses of primarily gay or bisexual men (it was really a women's group) began to meet here.

[interference]

We maintained that sort of posture of hosting groups and individuals so, a lot of the kinds of meetings that need to be held as a community began to develop. We provided space for them. Some of those went on to become groups, some didn't, they dealt with specific issues. St. Paul Reformation began to have very high visibility as a place where, if you or your group need to meet, something could easily get worked out. That was part of our outreach to the community.

SP: You gave a few names of the people you worked with to develop Wingspan. Who were some of the people higher up in the church already who helped?

LT: To answer that question I need to back up a little bit and explain Lutheran polity to you.

Lutherans are to some extent a hybrid between what is called an episcopal style of leadership, were you have bishops and everything is run in a very hierarchical fashion; the Catholic and Episcopal Churches are like that. At the other end of the continuum you have what are called congregational churches. The style there is based in the congregation. Within the Lutheran Church you have a hierarchy of sorts but, there is considerable deference paid to congregations making their own decisions for themselves. Within rare occasions, our bishop does not tell us what we have to do, nor do people in the national Church tell us what to do because, we affiliate with the denomination there are certain understandings. We have this combination of leadership which is not truly episcopal, nor is it truly congregational but, we employ some of the best of both, at least we think. So, what that meant was that we didn't have to ask anybody's permission, except here in the local congregation. So, the year of mission development work I did was approved by Paul Tidemann. It was done with the knowledge and approval of the church council. What we were doing was trying to develop a plan to see if something like Wingspan Ministry could get off the ground and be self-supporting. Once we were ready to seek formal approval, that happened through the church
council, who has final say for what happens in the congregation. In the process of developing this whole thing, we consulted with lots of people. I talked to other pastors, layleaders elsewhere in the church. We met with our synodical bishop. The synod being a step or two above the local congregation. If you think of a congregation as being like a town, we have our conferences which are like counties, our synods are like states. That's a very rough approximation because, some synods actually include several states, depending on population.

Anyway, we talked with our synodical bishop, Herb Chilstrom, who is now the residing bishop for the P.L.C.A. but, he was our synodical bishop at the time. We were in very close conversation with him and other local bishops because, at that time the three Lutheran bodies which merged and became the E.L.C.A. all had judicatories here in the Twin Cities. So, we were dealing with Lutheran Church of America bishops, American Lutheran Church bishops and bishops in association with evangelical Lutheran congregations. We also met with the people ecumenically because, at least in the beginning, it seemed likely that the success of this was in part going to be dependent on how broadly we would have to go in terms of getting support, financial support. In the very beginning we talked about ourselves in much more ecumenical language than we have recently. Now, we talk about ourselves specifically as Lutheran and work primarily within a Lutheran structures.

In the beginning, I met with bishops or judicatory heads from some of the other denominations. We had very good relationships with the Episcopal bishop and church. Part of that was circumstantial because, the man I was dating at the time was an Episcopalian so, I had an affinity for the Episcopal Church, primarily through him. We had some connections with Presbyterians and Methodists. Presbyterian, I knew that church fairly well because, I had grown up in a Presbyterian church. Methodists were not so different, and I had worked with a number of Methodists over the years. So, there were a number of people who were involved in talking with us and consulting around the creation of Wingspan. In the very early years, we set up an advisory board which represented some diversity within the religious community as well as people outside the church. They were sort of a soundboard us in terms of projects we took on.

**SP:** What about the Catholic Church and Dignity, did you have anything to do with them? Did they come to you, and was there any communication?

**LT:** Back in those days work within the Christian churches around gay/lesbian issues was very ecumenical. There was a lot of overlap and cross participation between people who were members of Dignity, Lutherans Concerned and Integrity; those were the three main groups. There had been a fledgling M.C.C. congregation. Actually, there had been two: one in Minneapolis and one in St. Paul for a period of time. We all worked together. One of the things we helped to create was the Lesbian Gay Interfaith Council of Minnesota. That organization went by the way maybe five years ago but, it had been a very strong presence. It was a common vehicle for all of us to come together, work on issues and work supportively of one another. At that point in our history the numbers were small enough that we needed each other. As the groups became strong, sank their roots and became viable institution in the community, the numbers of each individual group grew. The expressed need for more ecumenical connections began to wither away; people had enough to do with their own organization.
The ecumenical focus was very important. It led to one of the significant accomplishments that our ministry did in 1982. We actually had begun work on this project with the Minnesota Council of Churches about the same time that I was doing the mission development work. All of this came to fruition after Wingspan had become an official entity. We worked through what at the time was called the Social Justice Committee, which was chaired by the senior pastor here Paul Tidemann. He was the official representative from the Lutheran Church in American (Minnesota Synod). That was his assignment to work with that committee. That committee took on gay and lesbian issues, I had gone and done some presentations. Eventually, a document was created that was in two sections. There was a narrative section that talked about a variety of gay/lesbian issues. It certainly talked about cause, cure and all that very general stuff. Then it moved into a second section which was composed of four focal areas which had to do with human rights, support for human rights for gay and lesbian people, call for the sodomy repeal, raised issues of custody and visitation rights, called for legislation to protect gay and lesbian people from violence.

SP: Thank you, Mr. Treadway.