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Religious Archives Network

A resource center and information clearinghouse
for the history of LGBT religious movements.

Tribute to James D. Anderson

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Our Beloved Jim. That's what we call Dr. James D. Anderson in the More Light Presbyterians Network. "Our own beloved Jim," to quote our field organizer Michael Adee. When Michael sent out a notice to the MLP Network notifying them of this dinner and the recognition Jim would receive, in one short email he used the phrase "beloved Jim" three times. Jim, "our beloved colleague, friend, and leader." It is a honor for me to represent our part of the LGBT movement in this recognition of our beloved Jim's many contributions to efforts to achieve full equality for all LGBT persons.

Jim is truly a beloved colleague. He has served the movement in the Presbyterian Church since its beginning. From 1980 to 2001, he served of the board, first of Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, then of More Light Presbyterians (MLP). Through all those years he served as the indefatigable editor of *More Light Update*, our quarterly magazine. Because of Jim we have a priceless historical record of our Presbyterian LGBT movement, which includes the three national groups we call the Three Sisters—More Light Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve, and the Shower of Stoles—as well as the work of More Light congregations, many local groups and pioneering individuals and congregations. As a professional archivist, he recognized the importance of maintaining an historical record of the movement. No group recognizes the importance of this contribution more than you, the LGBTRAN Advisory Committee, and Jim is truly a beloved colleague for us all.

Jim is also a beloved friend. I got to know Jim as a friend when I went on the MLP board. One of my first questions of the board was, "Are our papers being archived any place?" A blank stare was the response I got. "Archiving? Never thought about it! Talk to Jim Anderson, he might know." I did, and a friendship was begun. Though I had been receiving *More Light Update* for years I had not caught on that the fire that kept Jim at it was to see to it that our history was recorded. For years he had been building our archives at Rutgers University Library.

"Our beloved leader," says Michael Adee. Jim Anderson has been a gift to the LGBT movement because he was also a leader in his own professional field. At Rutgers University he served as Professor of Library & Information Science in the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies from 1977 to his retirement January 1, 2004. His field, and I quote from his bio, "is information retrieval (R) and the design of IR databases, with special emphasis on knowledge representation methods (human and machine), browsable displayed indexes (alphabetical and faceted/classified) and terminological thesauri for mapping and managing diverse vocabularies

of information seekers.” Being a Harvard graduate with a Ph.D. from Columbia University helps!

Recognized nationally for his expertise, Jim headed a team for the Modern Language Association of America that designed a new international bibliography and IR database resulting in the Contextual Indexing and Faceted Taxonomy (CIFT) system. He led a similar project for the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in Paris. From 1991-1997, the National Information Standards Organization called on Jim to chair a committee to revise the United States standard for indexes and related information retrieval devices. During this same period, Jim and his life partner, Raphael, compiled the annual index of *American Periodical Verse* (as in “poetry”).

A leader in his professional field, Jim was always a leader for the LGBT movement. As early as 1984 Jim was named one of 400 leading activists in the U.S. by the national gay magazine, *The Advocate*. In 1991 Rutgers president, Francis L. Lawrence, honored Jim with a university public service award “in recognition for your more than a decade of work to educate and encourage your University and the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to accord to Lesbian and Gay people the same rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all other citizens.”

At Rutgers he chaired the President’s Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, as well as the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, the university-wide effort to do away with all forms of prejudice, bigotry, unjust discrimination, and harassment.

Jim and four other faculty members took that goal of doing away with discrimination seriously and in 1993 sued Rutgers for equal Lesbian and Gay partner benefits. Beginning in 1997 he boycotted all faculty governance meetings as a “second class apartheid professor.” The stark reality of that description became clear in 1999 when the administration, at the prompting of the Rutgers Board of Governors, offered “3/5th” coverage. Jim called these “slavery benefits,” based on the original U.S. constitution counting slaves as 3/5th persons.

Our beloved Jim, tonight we are awed by your willingness to take risks on behalf of the goal of bringing justice and equality to all of God’s LGBT children. You have kept the LGBT movement alive through the years. You have seen to it that its records are available as inspiration and challenge to future generations. So now finish your book, and may you enjoy many years of seeing the sun rise over the seawall at Tampa Bay while continuing the mission of your life to work for full inclusion of LGBT persons in society and in the Presbyterian Church.

You are a beloved colleague, friend and leader and those of us gathered here--and your colleagues far spread across the world--honor you and thank you.