

God's Gays

Mel Dahl grew up thinking God didn't love him. He said his prayers anyway and entered the seminary at age 18. Two years later, he was forced to leave.

Mel Dahl is gay. Now 25, Dahl is starting the Lincoln congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church, a Christian denomination for homosexual men and women. MCC Lincoln began services Sept. 15. Members meet Thursday evenings at the First Plymouth Congregational Church, 20th and D streets.

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The meetings are informal, Dahl said. Members just share problems and thoughts, pray and study the Bible. The group soon will have communion services, Dahl said.

The MCC was founded in 1968 by Troy Perry, a Los Angeles minister who had to leave the Assembly of God Church because he is homosexual. MCC membership is now about 30,000, with 200 congregations in nine countries, Dahl said.

In large cities, the MCC donates money to needy families. It runs a shelter for the homeless in San Francisco, Dahl said.

Anyone, homosexual or not, may attend MCC services, Dahl said. MCC Lincoln has no formal membership yet — between two and 10 people have attended each meeting so far.

But Dahl said he expects the congregation to grow. MCC Omaha had only three members when it was founded nine years ago; now it has about 100, he said.

Dahl said he doesn't think any UNI students have attended the services so far, but he expects to see some soon.

Ten percent of the population is gay, he said. That means 10 percent of the student population at UNI is gay.

Dahl said he started the gay church to teach that the love of God extends to everybody — without prejudice.

"Gay people have been told by the mainline churches that Christianity doesn't apply to them. I was 15 years old before I realized God loved me."

But he said he still could not get rid of the guilt. When he had to quit the seminary at age 20, he still thought homosexuality was "sinful." He said he was "sad about the affair," but he thought the church officials were right in making him leave.

Dahl joined the Navy. He started attending MCC services when he was stationed in New Orleans.

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