

Former MCC leader now Episcopal priest: Gwynne Guibord ordained

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Gwynne Guibord was the chief ecumenical officer for the mostly gay Metropolitan Community Churches based in Los Angeles when that position was eliminated three years ago. The MCC cleric was active in ecumenical circles, serving as president of the California Council of Churches, among other posts.

Admitting she was disheartened to lose her denominational post, Guibord said she soon began the process of becoming an Episcopal priest that culminated on January 22. Bishop Jon Bruno ordained her and 11 other candidates to the priesthood in the Los Angeles diocese.

Guibord, who holds a doctorate, has been serving the diocese for several months as its ecumenical and interreligious officer. Not only that, she was reelected last year to a second term as chair of the national Interfaith Alliance's board of directors in Washington, D.C. In addition, she was active in the 2004 Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona and its preliminary events.

She said in a recent interview that when she was ordained to MCC clergy ranks in 1998, a good friend and retired Episcopal clergyman, George Regas, spoke at her ordination. "He made the comment that Gwynne is deep in the closet as an Episcopalian," she said, adding that she has "always been attracted to Anglican theology as manifested in the liturgy."

Guibord emphasized, however, that "I have never defined myself by my orientation. I am a woman who is a Christian, who happens to live with another woman, pretty much in that order."

The MCC, a denomination founded by Troy Perry in 1968, accepted many gay and lesbian seminarians and pastors from mainline denominations to its ministerial ranks in the early decades. But neither an MCC spokesman nor Guibord said they knew if her switch to the Episcopal Church was unparalleled.

Jim Burkitt, MCC communications director, said the church body, based in West Los Angeles, eliminated the office of ecumenical director for various reasons, "including budgetary, philosophical and denominational restructuring." MCC's ecumenical work now is primarily done at regional levels, he said.