

## A Mother's Letter to NARTH

A NARTH member recently wrote us a letter describing her efforts to understand her gay son, as well as the family dynamics that might have contributed to his sexual identity. Seeking to also be aware of the gay-affirming side of the issue, she has been attending the monthly meetings of P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), an organization which affirms homosexuality. These meetings are held at a local mainline Protestant church.

### Ex-Gay Ministries Offer Truth and Hope

She reports: "There is no comparison to the support and nurture given to gay men and women and their families in the *Exodus*-related [ex-gay] support groups and seminars... when contrasted to the dead-end hopelessness of the P-FLAG meetings. I have attended the Exodus support group in my city for the past eight years, as a parent of a 30-year-old son who told my husband and me that he was gay thirteen years ago, when he turned seventeen. We were devastated. Our marriage became dysfunctional. My husband and I were prominent in our community, and this contributed to our total inability to deal with this revelation for five years."

She continues, "As Christians, we took our son to a Christian psychiatrist in our city when he first told us. Tragically, the psychiatrist was totally unsympathetic to the NARTH position and gave our son and us *no* hope for change. We were told we would have to accept the homosexual condition as "God's second best." We did not learn of Exodus until 1990, and we learned of NARTH in 1992.

"We have now learned from the NARTH and Exodus materials and programs about some of the root causes of homosexuality and our possible parts as parents in creating the family dynamics that set up our son for gender confusion. Our family system was the classic detached, emotionally absent father and over-involved mother enmeshed with the children. We are trying to change these dynamics through counseling and use of NARTH and Exodus materials.

"We are, also, learning to express our love for our son and his partners and gay friends unconditionally, while not giving our blessing to their homosexual behaviors and unions. This is the hardest 'tightrope' either of us has ever tried to walk."

### Pastor Moves Congregation Toward Gay-Affirming Position

Her church's pastor had "married" a gay couple a year ago

(one member of that couple, she notes, since contracted AIDS and recently committed suicide), and the P-FLAG group had gathered to express their anger that the "marriage" had not been on church grounds, but in a private home. The pastor clarified that his parishioners were not ready for such a church-based ceremony, but said that his mission was to gradually prepare his parishioners to accept future same-sex marriages. Having the P-FLAG meetings on church grounds was part of that gradual education process, he informed them.

At one P-FLAG meeting, the group agreed to raise funds for "making schools safe" so that gay-affirming programs could be established in them. They showed the film, "It's Elementary," which, as she said, "targets children as young as first grade to de-sensitize them" against the idea that heterosexuality is the norm.

### "Attitude Adjustment" Requires an Acceptance of the Bizarre

She describes another P-FLAG meeting: "The group members were sharing positive feedback, and one single mother of a 29-year-old son, who had full-blown AIDS, shared with great pride that the next night her son would be performing 'drag' for the first time at a gay bar near our city. She had obviously grown into this attitude of pride after months of being encouraged into this posture by fellow group members who had 'worked' with her attitude of becoming totally accepting and encouraging of her son's 'drag' behavior."

### The Battle is Fought with Support—and Information

"Our son is currently totally disinterested in the NARTH or Exodus information. However, the information provided to us as parents and as influencers of policy in our families, communities, work, church and government has been life-changing for us. I pray for the emotional strength and wisdom to sensitively inform the local P-FLAG group that another option of healing and wholeness is available to all persons struggling with gender-identity issues, and this information needs to be given to youngsters in our school systems as well. I hope to offer NARTH's information book entitled, "School Sex-Education Guidelines: Teaching about Homosexuality" to the pastor leader of our local P-FLAG group for use with his teen support group and with P-FLAG, as P-FLAG contacts our local school boards. I wonder if he and P-FLAG will extend to me, and to the NARTH materials, the same high degree of tolerance which is expected of me at P-FLAG meetings." ■