



MORMON
ALLIANCE

BY COMMON CONSENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE MORMON ALLIANCE

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May 1995

JANICE ALLRED EXCOMMUNICATED

At 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 9, 1995, Janice Allred, balancing carefully on one foot and protecting her other foot, in a cast for six weeks since painful surgery, leaned over her son's hospital bed and embraced him tenderly, murmuring, "It's going to be all right." Twenty-one-year-old Nephi, recently returned from his mission, head swathed in bandages and still groggy from the anesthetic, smiled faintly. At 11:30 p.m., Janice Allred, sitting in the lobby of her ward building, embraced a friend weeping in shock and sorrow from the news that Janice's bishop had pronounced her excommunication for "apostasy," and murmured again, "It's going to be all right."

But nothing about it felt right.

The bishop had scheduled the disciplinary council on forty-eight hours' notice. Because Janice had not been home Sunday evening, she did not receive the notice until Monday morning. She was not allowed witnesses nor did the bishop allow her to read the statements made at the earlier disciplinary council by her witnesses then.

Using material provided by the Strengthening Church Members Committee, he charged Janice with violating the conditions of her probation by continuing to speak (a condition she had never agreed to) and cited the news report in Sunstone of the earlier disciplinary council, her participation in the November 1994 Counterpoint conference, sponsored by the Mormon Women's Forum, and her participation on the April 1995 Mormon Alliance general conference critique panel as evidence of "continued, open opposition" to the Church. Janice continued to insist that these presentations did not constitute opposition "but he simply could not understand my point of view,"

she said.

Although no gathering was planned, about two dozen friends were still waiting at 11:20 p.m. when the five-hour ordeal ended. "There wasn't a sound in the room for ten minutes," said one. "People came up and hugged Janice and David and wept with them, but many of them just sat still, as if they were stunned. And no one said anything. There was nothing to say, nothing at all."

Janice plans to continue attending church with her family and will appeal Bishop Hammond's decision to the stake president, Carl Bacon, who, in an October 1994 letter, wrote that he would sustain whatever action the bishop took.

ROADSHOW REVIVAL

"All things considered, I thought a little black humor might be in order," commented Marti L. Jones, chair of the Mormon Alliance's session planned for the August 1995 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City. "So a view of the Church as a modern Candide might see it seems appropriate."

The roadshow, titled "Brother and Sister Candide: The Best of All Possible Churches," has the welcome mat out for writers, singers, dancers, and musicians. Those interested in helping or those with ideas for possible inclusion are urged to call Marti at (801) 265-2479.

THE JOYS OF SUBSCRIBING

You may be receiving this newsletter in response to a request for more information about the Mormon Alliance. If so, to receive continued mailings, please remit \$30.00 to the Mormon Alliance, 6337 Highland Drive, Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121.



GEOMETRIC TIES SWEEP CONFERENCE

Alert conference watcher Ardean Watts, a panelist on the third semi-annual "Play-by-Play: General Conference Critique for Serious Watchers," in April, reported that "forty out of forty-five ties" worn by General Authorities had "little geometric patterns," signalling a new trend in "Costume." (The remaining five wore the now-outmoded stripes.) A professional musician, Ardean ranked the music as the unquestioned low point of conference for him but also gave President Gordon B. Hinckley the "Sweepstakes" award for communicating ease, communication, and affability in conducting.

Panelist Yvonne Williams, who had begun watching conference on Saturday with such "a sense of oppression" that she was not sure she could continue, reported with pleasure that it turned into a good experiment for her and identified the address of Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, as the high point for her. "It was completely centered on Christ," she commented. "It was beautiful, it was comforting." Janice M. Allred praised the fact that it was a woman speaking, but "not on women's roles and not to women. Her message was for everyone." For Richard Williams, the high point was Thomas S. Monson's moving and powerful address on mercy, but he compared the Church authorities to OSHA in being able to require members to live by standards that they did not require of themselves specifically, honesty.

The panel concluded that the message on women was mixed: appreciation that women were allowed to vote as a Relief Society and Young Women, but irony that this new visibility also "showed women where their place was--after the boys," and appreciation for Elder Perry's praise of Sister Marjorie Hinckley but lamentations that she was praised "not as a person but as a role" and also that the stories told about her ancestors were both about men.

Audience response was lively, and panel moderator Lavina Fielding Anderson cut off floor speeches heavy on generalities by forcing participants to reference specific conference addresses.

LETTERS

Common Consent welcomes short contributions to this column. We reserve the right to edit for length.

Shades of Missouri

As a descendant of Missouri's governor Lilburn Boggs, my original interest in the Church was more along the historical lines. However, the recent doctrinal conflicts have really struck a chord with me. I suppose that is a result of my Methodist upbringing and the conviction that each person must find his or her own peace with God in his or her own way.

There are interesting parallels between the recent excommunications and the activities of the Southern Baptist Convention. Historically, the Baptists were strong noncreedalists, but my school, Stetson University in Deland, Florida (named after the hat manufacturer) has been "disfellowshipped" from the convention because it fails to follow the Jerry Falwell school of doctrine at Liberty University.

I offer two comments on the present situation. First, there are many non-Mormons who are not anti-Mormon. Many of us respect the beliefs of others, whatever they may be, and Christlike ways of most saints have brought much respect to the church. However, those who are most respectful are also the most intolerant of intolerance. The actions of the church cause these people to question their positive attitude toward the church.

Second, any organization has the authority to discipline its members, to the extent of their membership--but why? Certainly the "marketplace of ideas" is the best place to challenge a perceived heresy. What is being accomplished, other than the infliction of a considerable amount of pain to the hearts of person who have arrived at their belief in just as prayerful a fashion as the General Authorities?

Dean Boggs Bunch
Tallahassee, Florida

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and Religion on the Line Tapes

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6. Steve Benson	Reasons for leaving LDS Church	6/94	KTKK	10.00	_____
7. Michael Barrett	Reasons for his Excommunication	7/94	KTKK	10.00	_____
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TRANSITIONS

Spring 1995 brought new direction to three of the Mormon Alliance's original trustees as they resigned, joined by a fourth a little later. Paul and Margaret Toscano resigned on April 15, Margaret to bury herself in the library in preparation for her oral exams followed by work on her dissertation, and Paul to "become a temporary single parent," catch up with work, and "because it was time to move on." Fred Voros, a third founding trustee of the Alliance, resigned effective on May 6, for personal reasons.

In a nostalgic gathering on May 7 that combined farewell party and transitional business, the continuing trustees gleaned wisdom from these "elder statesmen" and paid tribute to their achievement. "It takes a tremendous amount of energy to move a locomotive the first ten feet," commented Allen Roberts. "In two and a half years, Paul, Margaret, and Fred built a healthy, stable organization that has a clear direction, sustained energy, and growing momentum."

Ironically, Janice Allred was attending this meeting as Robert Hammond, her bishop, was attempting to have the letter about her disciplinary council delivered to her. She received it the next morning.

A fourth trustee, Erin R. Silva, who had already planned to resign to devote more time to expanded personal interests, submitted his resignation, not only from the Alliance, but from the Church within hours of learning that Janice Allred's bishop was convening a new disciplinary council. Writing to his stake president, Erin said in part:

I value my experiences as a missionary, a priesthood holder and leader and a friend to those in many wards and stakes. But I find it no longer possible to remain a Latter-day Saint in light of the Church's emphasis on obedience to what I consider corporate ecclesiastical authority which has led to the discipline or excommunication of many friends and associates (most recently Janice Allred) who wish to follow the dictates of their own hearts.

... The most important thing for me right now is to ... strengthen my relationship with Jesus Christ whom I love with all my soul.

To those who for any reason find yourselves outside the embrace of the Church you once enjoyed, I invite you to return and partake of the happiness you once knew. You will find many with outstretched arms to warmly welcome you and assist you. . . we live in a world of diversity. We can and must be respectful of those with whose teachings we may not agree. We must be willing to defend the rights of others who may become the victims of bigotry.

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, April 1995

By Common Consent is the quarterly newsletter of the Mormon Alliance. Comments, articles, and items for inclusion are welcome submitted thirty days before the mailing deadlines, which are the first weeks of July, October, January, and April. Please submit them at The Mormon Alliance, 6337 South Highland Drive, Mail Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121, thirty days in advance of publication.

The purpose of the Mormon Alliance is to identify and document ecclesiastical/spiritual abuse, to build more sensitive leadership, to empower LDS members to participate with more authenticity in Mormonism, and to foster a healthier religious community.

Membership in the Mormon Alliance is \$30 per calendar year. Benefits are the newsletter, the annual Case Reports volume, and mailings about quarterly meetings held in Salt Lake City. Subscriptions received at any point in the year will bring you to all four newsletters and that year's volume of the Case Reports. Individual copies of the Case Reports (scheduled for publication in the fall of 1995) will be available for \$20.00 from Signature Books, 564 W. 400 North, Salt Lake City, UT 84116.

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To report cases of ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse, contact:

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1519 Roberta Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
(801) 467-1617

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CHURCHWATCH

Lavina Fielding Anderson

Note: This column contains reports events relevant to on-going issues of leader-member relations, Mormon feminism, and academic freedom.

7 June 1994. Elder M. Russell Ballard appeared on "Talk of the Nation," hosted by Ray Suarez, an International Public Radio program, two days after Howard W. Hunter was ordained president of the Church. In response to a question about "the church's evolving position on intellectuals and scholars," Elder Ballard announced: "People can believe what they want to believe. The issue that surfaces in the minds of bishops and stake presidents . . . who in the instance of just six or seven total in a church of almost 9 million that have been disciplined over issues of basically doctrine—one of the challenges the bishop and the stake president have is to keep the doctrine pure. If the doctrine starts to become what anybody thinks or what anybody thinks it ought to be, we will soon be in very deep and difficult water. . . . Somehow the doctrines have to be kept pure and they cannot be subject to the membership changing them."

14 August 1995. Jan Shipps, interviewed by telephone for Religion on the Line (KTKK Radio, Salt Lake City), responded to a question about the influence of dissidents on the Church: "Well, I'm not sure you can say that the dissident herself shapes Mormon as much as you can say that the dissident who is disciplined draws the line and says, "You

can go this far and no farther. If you go this far, you've gone too far." . . . That gives the people inside an understanding of what you have to do to stay a Mormon."

5 November 1994. The question-answer period following Paul Toscano's paper at the Mormon Women's Forum Counterpoint conference, included a discussion of the 1993-94 excommunications and Church leaders. J. Frederic Voros, a member of the audience and a friend of Paul's, told of a meeting he had in May 1994 with Howard W. Hunter, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve less than four weeks before President Benson's death: "I met with President Hunter, not with any particular agenda but because I had long wanted to tell him how much I appreciated his wonderful Christ-centered and loving talks. . . . The most remarkable aspect of the meeting to me was that before I left and without any prompting or prelude, President Hunter said to me, 'Please give my regards to Brother Toscano. I have always thought highly of him.' And I think this is a response to the personal question to Paul, 'How is it after your excommunication?' I know at least one member of the hierarchy who, after that excommunication, was able to express how highly he regarded Paul."

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*We've been a little
disorganized recently!
Thanks for your interest.
Lavina*

