

INTRODUCTION. The GALAS History Project is an effort to gather and preserve recollections and artifacts from throughout the entire history of GALAS from 1985 to the present. Its aim is to honor and appreciate the efforts of GALAS members who have made us what we are today: an inspiring and effective ministry serving GLBT people that other organizations both locally and nationwide look to as an example.

The project is a work-in-progress that is evolving over time as I obtain more information and deepen my knowledge of our history. As I continue to work on the project, I will be contacting more GALAS leaders and members to gain their perspectives. I would like to thank Mark Benson, Tom Johnson, George Regas, Mike McAuly and Tymeri Cuervo for their much-appreciated contributions.

The following is a brief summary of some of the information I have learned about GALAS' first year. If you would like to add your recollections or archival materials (flyers, invitations, letters, or anything else of historical value) to the mix, please do ... that's what it's all about. Your participation will give the project the fullness it deserves.

The genesis of GALAS was a small group discussion of James B. Nelson's book *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*, led by Denis O'Pray in the spring of 1985. There were several gay men in the group, which was open to the entire parish. They expressed the need for a support group at All Saints. During approximately the same time period, a small group of gay men who were members of All Saints expressed the same need to George Regas, then All Saints' rector. Together, George and these church members took the first steps to introduce a new ministry for gay and lesbian people at All Saints, relying on their faith in God's love and on each other as they moved forward.

The very first meetings of GALAS were comprised entirely of men. However, there was one woman in the original book study group who was going through the process of coming out to herself and her priest. She became close friends with one of the original men in GALAS, and she would become the first lesbian GALAS member.

The initial gatherings of the new ministry were held in private homes, which provided a "safe space" for members who were in the process of accepting they were gay or lesbian. The group began meeting once per month, with the first meeting under the GALAS name occurring in October 1985. Announcements of the meetings were printed in the weekly newsletter mailed to the entire

parish, and were also included in materials handed out to the congregation attending Sunday services. This publicity represented an important breakthrough for the new gay and lesbian group.

On March 2, 1986, George Regas came to speak to the members of GALAS. Although 40-45 people were expected that evening at Tom Johnson's home, the crowd surpassed all expectations, with almost 70 people (all men) showing up. Every available space was covered -- including tables and floors. Clearly, there was a strong desire and need for the new organization. Over coffee and cookies that night, the goals of GALAS were discussed. It was an evening that was both fun and inspiring.

The first potluck was held at Tom Johnson's home in the first half of 1986. In honor of a bishop who had died a few days earlier, a serving table was draped with a black cloth. Potlucks were held once a month and soon became a GALAS staple, growing steadily from the 25-30 people who attended the first event. A curious fact about the early potlucks is that they tended to be exactly two hours long, each one ending promptly at the stated time.

Small groups started up in the summer of 1986, with one member hosting a journaling group at his home. This group was an excellent resource, using specific writing exercises to help members express their creativity and feelings.

On October 19, 1986, GALAS held a dessert soiree to celebrate its first birthday. This party was held not in a private home, but in the Great Hall at All Saints. In one short year, GALAS had come a long way. It had established itself as a vital welcoming point and source of connection for gays and lesbians at All Saints, and was recognized and welcomed by the Church at large.

This month, we celebrate a GALAS "Sweet 16" birthday with our Fall event "A Call to Action" on October 20. Please be there to honor the call to action to which the first members of GALAS responded. Following the path they have made for us, we will continue to lead the way -- serving, growing, and going where we have not gone before.

*Compiled and written by Angela Bolton
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