

Coming Out of the Dark

Friends Congregational Church welcomes all through its doors

By RHONDA REINHART
Staff writer

Someone once said an open hand holds more friends than a closed fist, and the Friends Congregational Church on Southwood Drive in College Station adopts a policy that reflects open hearts, minds and hands.

On June 16, 1996, the Friends Congregational Church adopted The Open and Affirming Statement defining the church's stance on acceptance and discrimination. According to the statement, church members affirm "That in the spirit of love and openness, we welcome into the community of faith persons of every sexual orientation, race, nationality, ability, age and gender to participate in all aspects of our church's

life and ministry."

Jo Hudson, minister of the church, said the more dramatic part of the statement is the acceptance of gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

"Open and affirming means accepting of all people," she said.

Ruth Schemmer, former moderator for the church and a graduate student in sociology, said society consistently excludes gays and lesbians.

"I can't think of any other group that is more systematically excluded from worshipping God," she said.

Friends Congregational Church is a member of the Brazos Association of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The church was formed in 1978 under its original name, College Station United Church of Christ. The name was changed to Friends United Church of Christ to reflect the church's spirit of "oneness with God and with one another."

PLEASE SEE **CHURCH** ON PAGE 5.



Gay couple dispels stereotypes about homosexuality and AIDS

By AARON MEIER
Features editor

Two people meet, they fall in love, they commit to each other and decide to move in together.

This scenario sounds like a typical love story of two people making the tough decision to start a committed relationship. The only distinguishing fact is these two people are both men, homosexuals, in a long-term relationship.

"Brett" and "Chad" have been romantically involved for almost three years and living together for the past two.

Chad said he met Brett walking across the Texas A&M campus.

"He was walking with my roommate, who was gay," Chad said. "Brett asked about me. He called later that week and asked me out."

Dating in modern times can be intimidating for any couple, but Brett and Chad said dating for them poses special challenges.

"The only difference between a 'hetero' date and a 'homo' date is that we can't figure out who pays," Brett said.

Brett said the political and social environment of

A&M places restraints on homosexual relationships that straight couples do not encounter.

"We know that here in College Station we can't dance, hold hands or whatever," Brett said. "However, there are other places which are a little more open-minded. We are not here to recruit anyone — no toaster ovens in stock — just live our lives that God gave us."

Brett and Chad said their relationship goes through good times and bad just like any other.

"I cannot sit here and say everything has been great," Brett said. "Everyone gets in fights. We know how difficult it is to find someone you click with, straight or gay, and we click. We fight like a married couple — so people say."

The couple has exchanged rings, which they said symbolizes their love for each other.

PLEASE SEE **COUPLE** ON PAGE 5.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE HOUSE

COMING OUT

Continued from Page 1

Coming Out Week begins Monday when the GLBA hosts a PFLAG panel to speak on "Coming Out To Family."

Ron Hudson, a junior industrial distribution major thinks PFLAG is a great way to inform the public about gays and lesbians.

On Tuesday, Rainbow Christians will present Rev. Jo Hudson of the Friends Congregational Church. "Friends Congregational Church is what you call a welcoming church," Moore said. "Welcoming churches

are open to people of every diversity, i.e. gays and lesbians."

The Allies, a group of students and staff members who wish to provide a safe haven, a listening ear or an open door to gays, lesbians and bisexuals, are bringing a heterosexual panel to discuss "A Straight Talk on Gay Issues" on Wednesday.

On Thursday, youth groups from Houston, Austin and Dallas, including The Houston Area Team Coalition of Homosexuals, Out Youth Austin, and Hope House of Dallas, will present "Gay Youth."

Tabbs said the groups are mainly 16-21 year olds who will discuss the problems teens face with being gay in high school.

The week concludes with the Open House of the Gender Issues Education Services from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

"The whole week gives people a chance to talk before they take the first step of coming out and tell their parents and friends," Tabbs said.

Any questions on places and times of events can be directed to the GayLine at 845-0321.

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