



35th Anniversary of Anti-Gay Arson Murders

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An arson fire that killed 32 people at the Upstairs Lounge gay bar in New Orleans on June 25, 1973 will be commemorated in that city at the Many Stories, One Voice conference of the North American Convocation of Pro-LGBT Christians, convened this September 4-7 by the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**. Many of those who died were members of the local Metropolitan Community Church, including its pastor, Reverend Bill Larson.

Reverend Rebecca Voelkel, faith work director at NGLTF, said in a release, "The Upstairs Lounge Fire, epitomized by the lifeless body of the Reverend Bill Larson, silhouetted in the window of the lounge, and the charred bodies of so many others, was one of those moments in history when hatred and fear seemed to hold sway. That nearly every religious leader in New Orleans refused to offer words of condolence or healing to the LGBT community at the time, but instead offered condemnation, further solidified the power of death."

She did cite the "courageous" welcome from St. Mark's United Methodist Church there, which opened its doors for the memorial service for those killed.

The conference in September will include a jazz funeral for the victims.