

# New publication helps homosexuals, Christianity connect

By Diana Schuh  
FOR THE JOURNAL CONSTITUTION

Candace Chelley hopes that her new magazine, "Whosoever," can make a difference in the debate about the role of homosexuals in the Christian faith.

The monthly magazine made its nationwide debut in June and is evolving into a publication that features in-depth discussions focused on specific themes. The most recent issue discussed mainstream churches that are welcoming gays and lesbians into their congregations. "I'm taking great pains not to be evangelistic," she says.

Her target audience is composed of those who were brought up in a Christian church but found themselves angry at God because of their homosexuality and unwelcome in Christian communities. Chelley's motivation, however, stems from her experiences as the daughter of a Southern Baptist minister.

Once she realized at age 16 that she was a lesbian, Chelley found her father's sermons confusing and contradictory concerning Christianity and homosexuality. For a time she turned her back on God, believing that he had done the same to her.

It wasn't until she was 21 years old that she came to realize that God had stood by her during many experiences.

Chelley came up with the idea of "Whosoever" after attending a "TalkBack Live" show that dealt with same-sex marriages.

"It was amazing to me how hateful these people were," she says. "It didn't seem to be very Christian to me."

"Whosoever" takes its title from the Bible's John 3:16, which states that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus didn't specify that his believers be rich, poor, gay,

straight, right or wrong, she explains.

In addition to the magazine, Chelley has set up a Web site with an e-mail address (sagecomm@atl.mindspring.com). Many of her subscribers and contributors have come through the Web site, which she said has helped broaden the magazine's scope beyond Atlanta.

"I haven't gotten any death threats," Chelley quips, but she has received many responses to the magazine's premise that the Bible is not infallible and that blind faith harms people by keeping them from interpreting the Scriptures for themselves.

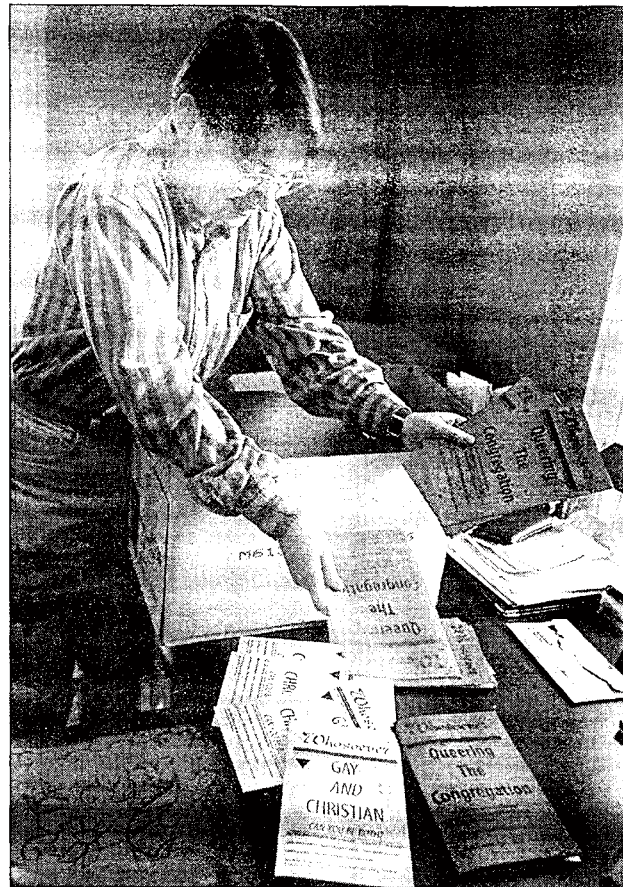
She has developed e-mail correspondence with many of her readers, including a man in Minnesota who initially told Chelley to repent or die. After several exchanges, he told her that he had formed his opinions about homosexuality without ever knowing any gay people. He and Chelley now have a friendly correspondence.

"Sometimes you have to educate people one at a time," Chelley said. "I may not change their minds now, but who knows what will happen down the road?"

"Whosoever" is carried by more than 35 bookstores around the country. In Atlanta, it's available at Brushstrokes, Borders at Perimeter, Oxford Books, and Charis Books & More.

Linda Bryant, owner of Charis Books, says the magazine is a good resource that connects people who have similar ideas about homosexuality and Christianity.

Chelley writes and edits the magazine from her Ormewood Park home, and a friend helps with the printing. Production expenses, about \$600 an issue, come out of Chelley's pocket. Her next task is to search for grant money, financial backers and someone skilled at selling ads.



NICK ARROYO / Staff

**In-depth discussions:** Candace Chelley's publication, begun in June, is carried by 35 bookstores throughout the country. She is seeking financial backing and sales expertise.

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