

## **A Safe Harbor for Gay & Lesbian People**

When I think of Reverend Richard Rhem, I immediately think of his important stand for gay and lesbian people in West Michigan and beyond. He allowed a gay church to meet in the basement of CCC. He gave consciousness-raising sermons and invited other speakers to help his congregation to see the injustice in the homophobic atmosphere of the church at large and in the greater society. He insisted that his congregation reject the homophobic stands taken by most, if not all, congregations in the region and at no time wavered from this position, even in the face of excommunication from the church denomination that had been his life.

In an era when the going was especially tough, gays and lesbians in West Michigan, as well as their parents, found an acceptance at CCC that was not available in other churches. Ahead of the times, Reverend Rhem heard their voices and courageously acted in their behalf. He lost his position in the official church, but his message could not be silenced. Indeed, it made a difference in more peoples' lives that he could ever imagine.

Lynne Deur  
former CCC member