

*from Rev. Elder Cecilia Eggleston, Region 4*

This weekend was one of great contrasts. On Saturday I marched with our MCC group at EuroPride in London. MCCers from North, East and South London, as well as from MCC Bournemouth formed a bright and lively part of the parade, sharing our stickers “God Made Me Gay” and “No Fear in Love” and information about MCC with the crowds. For the first time in my Pride experience, I noticed people responding to and actually applauding our presence. Whether they had heard of MCC or not, onlookers were glad that there was a positive, affirming church presence at Pride. The placards from MCC East London made people smile in agreement – “Queer and Christian – Any Questions?” “Practising Safer Texts” “God ISN’T homophobic”.

Elsewhere in the parade, trade unions and the Gay Police Group walked alongside football teams and HIV charities, younger and older, completely outrageous or dressed for comfort, the rich diversity of our communities mingled together in the sunshine. It was wonderful to experience the freedom and strength in number that Pride offered us.

On Sunday night, I was honoured to be part of the International Day of Prayer in support of LGBT people in Nigeria. Two parts of the service were especially moving. Individuals read out testimonies about what it is like to be Nigerian and LGBT. What it is like to hide oneself away, to live in fear, to not be able to be truthful with family members, to have the power of the government turned against you. Within these testimonies, there was tremendous courage and hope in the midst of oppression and exclusion. Prior to the service, people had been emailing in prayer requests via the website <http://www.lgbtnigerians.org/> a young person described how they were badly beaten with a cane by their father, after a family member read a text message on the mobile phone. Another spoke of a 21 year old friend who has “disappeared” and who he thinks has been murdered. “We talked of finding our Prince Charmings...now he is asleep in Jesus”.

We have come a long way. There is still so much to be done. It is an Unfinished World and we have an Unfinished Calling. We know that our God is a God of Justice and that our prayers and actions make a difference. We need to match the courage and faith of our sisters and brothers in Nigeria. We need to make our voices heard, so that all around the world, everyone gets the freedom to walk in the sunshine at Pride.