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LGBTQ Religious Archives Network

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**Title**

Michael Cole Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

August 8, 2002

**Extant**

54 minutes interview and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history, Reverend Michael Cole discusses Christ Chapel Church; how it was started, to welcome the gay community in the early 1980s, and how his personal theology and experiences guide him in leading the congregation.

**Biographical**

The Rev. Michael Cole, founder of Christ Chapel in Long Beach, California, was raised in Roseburg and Medford, Oregon, in the religious traditions of Foursquare Gospel and Assemblies of God. He recalled that when he was six years old, his grandmother laid hands on him and said he would be a preacher. This remained his dream through his childhood.

After graduating high school he moved to San Francisco (ca. 1963) where he was able to live out his homosexual orientation that he had also realized at any early age. He moved to Los Angeles (ca. 1970) where he worked in the entertainment industry as well as studied at LIFE Bible College, in the Foursquare Gospel Church tradition. He moved to Long Beach (ca. 1974) and began a successful drag performance career as "Honey Carolina."

After hearing Troy Perry preach one Sunday, Cole decided to rededicate his life to God. Over the next few years he played an active leadership role at the Metropolitan Community Churches in Long Beach and in Oceanside while continuing his drag performing. He later noted that he did not "feel worthy of being a pastor." After years of spiritual struggle, Cole retired Honey Carolina in 1981 and, that December, began a Bible study with seven people in his living room. This congregation steadily grew from his living room to his garage to a nearby storefront and finally,

in 1984, to the current site of Christ Chapel in Long Beach. Cole noted that the hallmarks of Christ Chapel are that "we preach the Word" and "we're pretty much free-spirited in our music and worship."

After about ten years, other Christ Chapel congregations began to spin off: first in Denver, Laguna and North Hollywood ("the Valley"). Eventually a total of seven other Christ Chapel-related congregations were formed.

Michael Cole died on March 25, 2005, at the age of 61. Michael Cole's health was poor in the last years of his life. During that time, he agreed to participate in an oral history interview about his life and the history of the Christ Chapel ministry. The hope to interview Michael Cole, however, perished with his sudden death, on March 25, 2005, at the age of 61. After his death, LGBTQ-RAN acquired a previous interview of Michael Cole, conducted by Dr. Melissa Wilcox. Cole had given the rights to use this interview. LGBTQ-RAN contacted his family and congregation, and they concurred that Cole would have wanted this interview to be included in the LGBTQ-RAN online Oral History Project.

### **Scope and Content**

In this oral history, Reverend Michael Cole discusses Christ Chapel Church; how it was started, how it was started, to welcome the gay community in the early 1980s, the community that attends it, and how his personal theology and experiences guide him in leading the congregation.

### **Access**

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/michael-cole>

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### **Languages**

Collection material is in English

### **Custodial History**

This tape was given to LGBTQ-RAN archives by interviewer.

### **Cite as**

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**Tags**

MCC

AIDS

Clergy Activist

California

Cole, Michael