

Methodist Gays Claiming Victory at Conference

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S.A. Light

By DAVID REAL

Members of the United Methodist Gay Caucus were claiming victory Wednesday after they were allowed to set up a display of homosexual literature at the United Methodist Southwest Texas Conference.

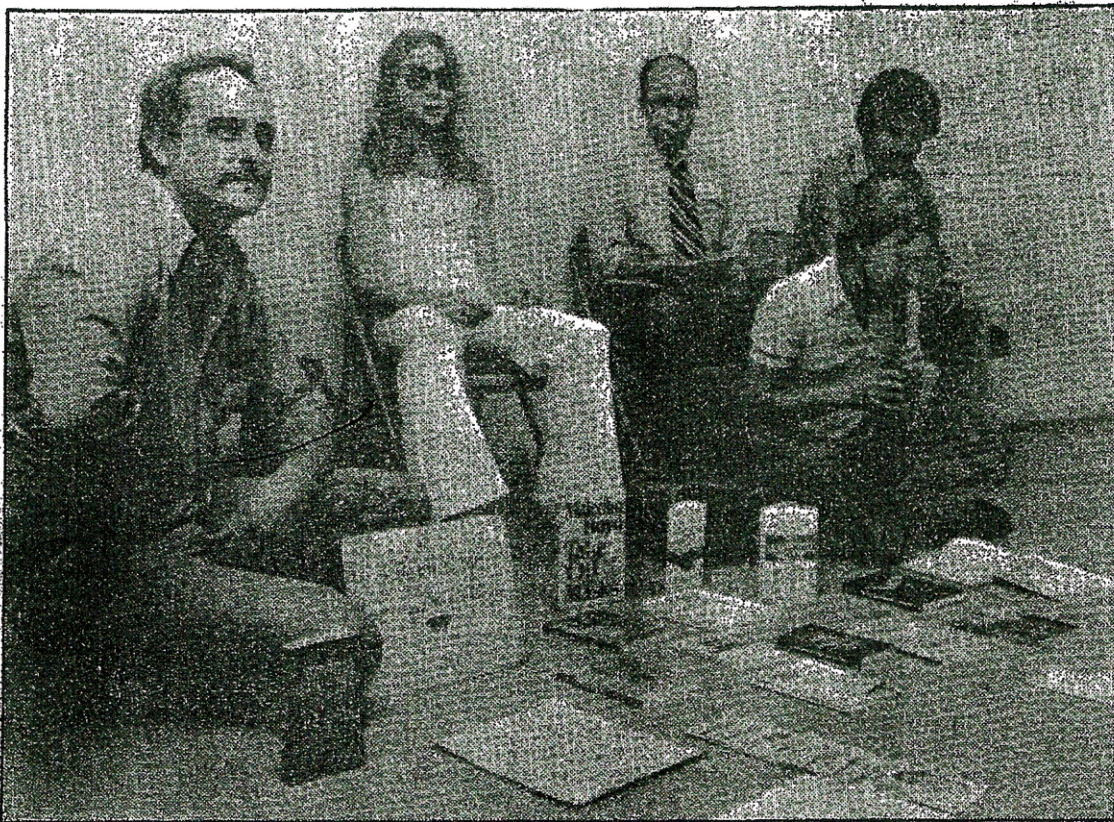
Bishop J. Chess Lovern refused to eject caucus members Tuesday from the conference site, Travis Park Methodist Church, although he initially denied the caucus permission to set up the display.

"They know they're not welcome," Lovern said. He called the caucus' actions "discourteous, but we won't have (police) officers take them away."

Gene Leggett, a former Methodist minister stripped of his credentials after the 1971 conference because of his self-admitted homosexuality, said the intent of the caucus was to establish a dialogue with the church. He said homosexual participation in the church, including the status of homosexual ministers, is still uncertain.

"We are interested in enlightening and sensitizing the Methodist Church to this issue," Leggett said.

The General Conference refused to condone homosexuality in 1972, ruling the practice incompatible with Christian teaching. The decision survived a challenge at the 1976 General Conference.



PROUDLY DISPLAYING gay-oriented literature Tuesday at Villita Assembly Hall are Gene Leg-

gett (L), Pat Brown, Troy Stokes, Peter Madison and Ron Martinez. (Staff Photo by Jean Osborne.)