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## **Guide to the Robert G. DeSantis Papers, 1971-1974**

Processed by Nathan Purkiss; machine-readable finding aid created by Gabriela A. Montoya

GLBT Historical Society

989 Market Street, Lower Level

San Francisco, California 94103

Phone: (415) 777-5455

Email: [reference@glbthistory.org](mailto:reference@glbthistory.org)

URL: <http://www.glbthistory.org>

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### Accession number: 1994-04

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

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Processed by:

Nathan Purkiss

Date Completed:

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Encoded by:

Gabriela A. Montoya

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#### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Robert G. DeSantis Papers,

**Date (inclusive):** 1971-1974

**Accession number:** 1994-04

**Creator:** DeSantis, Robert G.

**Extent:** .85 linear feet in 2 boxes

**Repository:** The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.  
San Francisco, California.

**Shelf location:** Housed at the GLBT Historical Society

**Language:** English.

#### Acquisition

The papers of Robert G. DeSantis (#1994-04) were donated by DeSantis in 1994.

#### Access

Collection is open for research.

#### Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the GLBT Historical Society.

#### Audio-Visual Materials

There is one picture of DeSantis.

#### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Robert G. DeSantis Papers, 1994-04, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

#### Biography

Robert G. DeSantis was a member of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of Los Angeles in its beginning years. The MCC was the first lesbian and gay church, founded in 1970 by the Reverend Troy Perry.

In 1971 DeSantis began classes at the Samaritan Bible Seminary of the MCC (he was officially accepted into the program in 1972). After graduating from the seminary, he became an exhorter for the MCC. In 1974 he was appointed the Acting Chaplain of the San Quentin Prison Ministry by the US Board of Prison Ministry. The term "Acting Chaplain" was used by the MCC to describe his role as an unlicensed minister. The extent of time he served as the prison ministry as well as his

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future involvement with the MCC is unknown.

During the early 1970's DeSantis kept limited correspondence with several national evangelistic organizations such as the ministry of the Reverend Billy Graham. He also kept correspondence with California Assemblyman Willie Brown regarding the 'consenting adults' bills AB 437 and AB 470.

#### **Scope and Content**

The Robert G. DeSantis papers (.85 linear feet) document the religious career development of an individual who aspired to become a member of the MCC hierarchy from 1971 to 1974. The papers also document his involvement with the prison ministry and his personal correspondence with gay prisoners throughout California. The papers are divided into three series; the prison ministry and prisoner correspondence, correspondence and Seminary notes.

The prison ministry notes include administrative papers concerning the appointment of DeSantis and his correspondence with the US Board of Prisons Ministry, pamphlets of religious support organizations established at San Quentin, newsletters, papers collected from the 1974 Stonewalls Prison Conference, and personal correspondence between DeSantis and prisoners from various prison facilities throughout California. The prison papers are organized chronologically.

The personal correspondence between DeSantis and inmates from various prisons provides some of the most useful information in this collection. Letters written by Clem Bassett, Herbert Hay, Harry Lieble, and Bill Thiel give personal accounts of the experiences of gay inmates. The most interesting and disturbing papers are to be found in the letters written by Gary Keller and Ron Rose who maintained a love affair in the psychiatric facility of Atascadero. Their letters to DeSantis portray the violent discrimination that patients may have suffered at the hands of hospital employees after they openly acknowledged their homosexuality. The letters describe an incident, for instance, where Keller had been forced unconscious by a seizure and was awakened by a night guard who was kicking him relentlessly and accusing him of having sex with Rose. Keller said he was prevented later from taking his seizure medicine as punishment for the disturbance.

The professional portfolio of DeSantis, as well as his notes on the Samaritan Bible Seminary are useful for portraying the structure, ideology and hierarchy of the MCC. The seminary notes which are the last papers of the collection give an extensive description of the classroom content which was being taught at the MCC. Psychological theory is used in conjunction with Biblical principles to construct a Christian ideology that is both traditional and pro-gay. The notes are arranged by class subject in chronological order.

#### **Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Gay men

Christians

#### **Materials Removed from the Collection**

Six inches of pamphlets, propaganda and newsletters for the national and Los Angeles MCC.

#### **Related Collections**

Subject files: MCC

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#### **Prison Files**

Box Box 1

#### **San Quentin Ministry Notes and Papers 1971-1974**

#### **National Ministry Notes and Papers 1971-1975**

#### **Correspondence with California Prisoners:**

**Baldwin, Ronald E. 1975**

**Bassett, Clem 1975**

**Burkart, Nickey J. 1974-1975**

**Collier, Charles E. 1974**

**Combs, Dan 1975**

**Dudley, Timothy E. 1974-1975**

**Fairchild, Henry T. 1974-1975**

**Hay, Herbert D. 1974-1975**

**Keller, Gary 1973**

**Lawrence, Everett C. 1975**

**Lawrence, Scott C. 1973-1974**

**Lieble, Harry 1974**

**McCarroll, Ellis 1975**

**Rose, Ronald 1973-1975**

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**Thiel, Bill 1974-1975**

**Prison Ministry Monthly Progress Notes 1974**

**Stonewalls Prison Conference, 1974**

**San Quentin Local Newsletters:**

**Moto 1974-1975**

**The Cellmate 1974-1975**

**The Vacavalley Star 1974-1975**

**Correspondence**

Box Box 1

**Willie Brown: AB437 and AB470 (consenting adults bills, 1971-72)**

**Billy Graham, Leroy Jenkins, Church of the Resurrection**

**Personal & MCC Professional Correspondence & Related Materials**

**MCC Samaritan Seminary Notes**

Box Box 1

**Rites, Sacraments**

**Sermons**

Box Box 2

**Hose, Rev. John. Church Administration, 1971**

**Phloen, Rev. Rich. The Message of the Prophets, 1971**

**Harrison, Rev. Roger. John's Gospel, 1971**

**Callaway, Rev. Ted. History of Christian Thought, 1971**

**Practical Theology, 1972**

**Hetz, Rev. Dick. Sermon Preparation, 1972**

**Pederson, Rev. Don. The Epistles, 1972**

**Perry, Rev. Troy. Exhorters Class, 1972**

**Hauser, Rev. Dwaine E. PHD. Life and Teachings of Christ, 1972**

**Phloen, Rev. Richard. Survey of the Old Testament, 1972**

**Pederson, Rev. Don. History of the Christian Church, 1972**

**Rev. Hood? Pastoral Counseling, 1972-1973**

**Harrison, Rev. Roger. Survey of the New Testament, 1972-1973**

**Hetz, Rev. Dick. Pastoral Care and Field Work, 1973**

**Perry, Rev. Troy. Current Christian Problems, 1973**

**Fisher, Rev. Bob. Homiletics, 1973**

**Communicant's Class**

**Sandmire, Rev. James. The Gospels, 1973**

**Photos of DeSantis located in Photo Room.**