



Interweave Connect

www.interweaveuu.org
interweave.connect@gmail.com

September 2011

Don Hoppe, editor

INTERWEAVE BOARD

Maryka Bhattacharyya

-President-

North Augusta, SC
marykahb@gmail.com



Sun Principe

-Vice-President-

Roseville, CA
sunprincipe@gmail.com



Valerie White

-Treasurer-

Sharon, MA
valerie@valeriewhite.org



Don Hoppe

-Secretary-

Baton Rouge, LA
dhoppe2433@aol.com



Dawn Fortune

Newton Centre, MA
Dawn.c.fortune@gmail.com



Steve Hollingsworth

Chattanooga, TN
sbhollingsworth@gmail.com



Eric Morrow

Lexington, KY
etmorr0@email.uky.edu



Nisco Junkins

Eugene, OR
nischohappy@comcast.net

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF INTERWEAVE

I recently took on the job of leading Interweave Continental at the national level and so would like to introduce myself to you. I have so much to say that I don't know where to begin.

Let me start by congratulating each of you for the work you are doing in your congregations and communities. You are the heart of Interweave at the ground level. All of you working together are the ones making a difference, whether or not you are aware of what you each are doing.

One of our new Board members, Nisco Junkins, from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Eugene, Oregon, has developed the vision that this newsletter can serve as an effective communication among Interweave members and chapters. You will see a piece that she wrote about her UUCE Interweave chapter. We look forward to receiving similar stories from each of you, so that we can light each others' minds and hearts to new ideas and actions.

Regarding my own investment in Interweave, I have a host of wonderful memories accrued over more than ten years, as I helped to lead our congregation in Naperville to become a Welcoming Congregation, establish and Chair a new Interweave Committee (yes, we did decide to become a committee of the church), expand our understanding of gender identity concerns and of transgender persons, and more. These efforts always involved the dual role of reaching inward to congregation members and outward to the community to try to bring about change.

This investment led to my receiving the Mark DeWolfe Award from Interweave Continental in Fort Lauderdale in June, 2008. As a strong ally, I am proud of this award and am happy to have my long-term investment recognized in this way. In preparation for receiving the award, I read the words of Mark DeWolfe on line and am privileged to be honored in his memory. He was a gifted minister, with many words of wisdom communicated during his far too short life.

I understand that current goals of Interweave Continental include integrating youth and young adults, improving services to chapters, and revamping the website to increase the effectiveness of our communication. And have fun along the way! These are important goals and ones I am enthusiastic to promote, along with



Maryka H. Bhattacharyya

others that arise. Having worked locally with our Interweave group, I look forward to the possibility of working on the national level with others interested in investing. More to come in the next newsletter!

Yours truly,

Maryka H. Bhattacharyya

President, Interweave Continental

Current Member, Church of the Larger Fellowship

Former Member, DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church, Naperville, IL



Find us on:
facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/interweave-Continental/329134670710>

WANTED: The Latest News From Our Chapters

Please share your Interweave chapter experiences with us! We are very interested in putting articles about what Interweave Chapters are doing in our newsletter, in a new feature called **Chapter Happenings**, which premieres this month with a piece about the Interweave Chapter at my own church.

I know you are busy, but I also know you have stories about your Interweave chapter. It doesn't have to be rare or unusual. It can be how it feels to have your partnership of three being welcomed, or how your Interweave chapter helped a young trans person, or how your Interweave chapter has become your family because your birth family does not accept your partner.

I have sent most of my 67 years being ashamed of being a lesbian. UUCE (Unitarian Universalist Church of Eugene) and UUCE's chapter of Interweave has changed my life. A few weeks ago our chapter of Interweave did a fund raiser for BRO (Basic Rights Oregon) a non-profit organization that works hard for the LGBTQ community. We asked Eugene, OR's BRO representative Jett to come to our regular Interweave meeting. He started off the

meeting explaining that BRO is working hard on Oregon Marriage Equality. I need to set this up a little bit for you to understand what happened. Our Interweave Chapter places an ad or article in the local papers each month telling people what movie we are going to show and what special topic we are going to discuss. Each month we have 25 to 45 people. Most of the people are UUCE LGBTQ and UUCE Straight people but we also have 4 or 5 people from the community who come to check us out. Often we have people who will never become members of any church but are interested in our work with LGBTQ issues and this has proven to be a wonderful outreach to the community. So, we were not surprised to see a man come in to the meeting that we did not know. We introduced ourselves and welcomed him. When Jett started talking the man ask why we were talking about gays and lesbians in a Church. He said we should be praying. My first reaction was surprise and then I realize that this was an important moment. This man had brought his ignorance, hate and big-

otry into our special place. I did not feel shame for one moment, because all the other people there stood up for me, I felt empowered and loved by my church and my Interweave chapter. I asked him to leave and he did after he said something nasty to Jett about his parents.

In the book *Beyond the Collection Plate*, Michael Durall says that no one is a genius in everything. If you don't like to write or writing is not your thing contact me and I will help you.

(niscohappy@comcast.net).

Nisco Junkins

Interweave Board Member



Nisco Junkins

From the UUA

UUA President's Statement on the Repeal of DADT

The Rev. Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), has issued a statement in recognition of the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT):

"The official end today of our armed services' "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is an important milestone in the long struggle for civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans. Finally, our gay and lesbian friends, family, and loved ones are

granted the basic right to serve in our country's military with dignity and integrity. We are heartened by the Obama Administration's sound—though long overdue—decision to reject the institutionalized bigotry enshrined in DADT.

I wish to thank all those dedicated Unitarian Universalists who, for 17 years, have raised their voices against DADT. While we have moved closer to justice, let us also remember that the fight is not over. Our LGBT brothers and

sisters still face discrimination, in and out of the armed forces. As people of faith, we will continue to challenge this discrimination and bigotry wherever we find it.

Let us take a moment to celebrate this victory. And let us continue to stand on the side of love in support of those who serve."

(<http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/187395.shtml>, 9/15/2011)

Ten Ways To Become a More Welcoming Congregation

When people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, &/or transgender (LGBT) first come to your congregation, they may be uneasy until they know they are welcome. Many LGBT people will assume that you and your congregation don't want them unless you clearly invite them in. Members of oppressed groups need to know that the congregation is aware of their issues, and that they are welcome as their full selves. Little things are often the most important. What will really make people feel welcome, and what will make them want to return, is inclusion in all aspects of church life. You can make it clear that they are welcome without their having to ask.

1. Engage with the "Welcoming Congregation" Program: Go through the Welcoming Congregation Program. If your congregation is already recognized as a Welcoming Congregation, do a refresher course if you were recognized more than five years ago, and/or consider engaging with "Living the Welcoming Congregation."

2. Proclaim your welcome: Advertise in local and regional LGBT publications and newsletters, including online ones. Place a note in all of your Orders of Service that states your welcome.

3. Make information about LGBT people and issues available: In your literature area, on your bulletin boards, and/or on your website, include literature about LGBT people and issues and what LGBT outreach and public witness your congregation is doing.

4. Take steps toward inclusive language: Provide written guidelines for inclusive language to all people who write for church newsletter and website, participate in worship services, lead religious education programs, and who serve as greeters.

5. Acknowledge and respect individuals and families: Accord full acknowledgment and respect to each person and family, as defined by the person/family. This includes the definition of pledging units, listings in the church directory, family events, and all other aspects of church life.

6. Avoid assumptions: Avoid making assumptions about the sexual orientation or gender identity of members or visitors; respect each person's identity, self-labels, and pronoun preferences.

7. Take special steps toward transgender welcome: Do education around understanding the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, and take special steps toward transgender welcome and inclusion.

8. Make LGBT issues a part of worship.

9. Do outreach and public witness around LGBT issues.

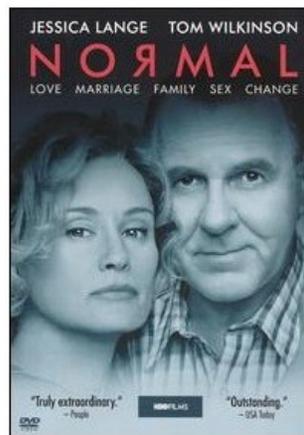
10. Extend your welcome beyond sexual orientation and gender identity: Emphasize the interrelatedness of all forms of oppression and weave this into everything that the congregation does.

<http://www.uua.org/lgbt>

Chapter Happenings

Interweave at the UU Church of Eugene, Oregon

My Church, Unitarian Universalist of Eugene, has been meeting the second Friday of each month for over six years. We check in about LBGQ issues, share food, watch a movie and follow with a discussion about the movie we have just viewed. A couple of years ago we showed the movie "Normal" (2003) starring Tom Wilkinson and Jessica Lange. This is a wonderful movie about a man who tells his wife on their 25th wedding anniversary that he feels that he is a woman trapped in a man's body and wants to undergo gender re-assignment surgery. After we watched this



movie, a beautiful graceful woman in our community, named Grace, raised her hand and shared with us that she had gone through the same thing in her life. Grace shared her story and allowed us to ask her questions. It was a wonderful, caring, educational evening. Please share your Interweave chapter experiences with us.

Submitted by:

Nisco Junkins

UU Church of Eugene

Interweave Board Member

On the Religious Left

In Remembrance of Bishop Walter Righter

The LGBT and faith communities are both mourning the loss of a staunch supporter among faith leaders. Bishop Walter Righter died Sunday 9/11/2011 at his home outside Pittsburgh. He was 87 years old.

Bishop Righter served as a bishop in Iowa and New Jersey in the 1970s and 80s. It was during his time in New Jersey that he made what would become a groundbreaking decision to ordain Barry Stopfel, an openly gay man, as a deacon in the Episcopal Church. Bishop Righter's decision to ordain Stopfel outraged conservative members of the church, who, in 1995, charged him with heresy. In 1996, a panel of eight bishops dismissed the heresy charges in a 7-1 vote. Their conclusion, that "there was no church doctrine forbidding the ordination of gays and lesbians who are in a committed relationship," paved the way for further inclusion of LGBT people in the Episcopal Church and something even more unusual: an apology. In

1997, the church's General Convention issued an apology for the years of rejection and mistreatment experienced by LGBT Episcopalians.

Susan Russell, former president of Integrity USA, an organization for LGBT Episcopalians, credits Bishop Righter with making progress possible within the Episcopal Church:

"I look around the Episcopal Church today where there are no impediments to the ordination of gay or lesbian members. . . None of that would have happened without Bishop Righter's leadership."

Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, the current Presiding Bishop of the

Episcopal Church, agrees. In a statement, she says:

"[Bishop Righter was] a faithful and prophetic servant. His ministry will be remembered for his pastoral heart and his steadfast willingness to help the church move beyond old prejudices into new possibilities."

In 1998, Bishop Righter published *A Pilgrim's Way* about his experience before and during the trial and how he came to understand the fear underlying the heresy accusations leveled against him. Bishop Righter's leadership allowed the Episcopal Church to become the first Mainline Protestant denomination to move toward the full inclusion of LGBT people. As a supporter of LGBT Episcopalians, he will be greatly missed, but the changes he helped make in his church will remain a testament to his sense of justice and to his integrity as a human being.



Bishop Righter

(<http://glaadblog.org/2011/09/13/in-remembrance-bishop-walter-righter/>, 9/13/2011)

In The News

Gay Iranians to Ahmadinejad: "We Are Everywhere!"

Gay Iranians are sending a message via a new Facebook group — "We Are Everywhere." London's *Guardian* first noted that a string of anonymous Iranians were proclaiming their homosexuality in videos posted on the "We Are Everywhere" Facebook group as a protest. They live in a country that not only recently executed three men for gay sex but has a president who denies their existence.

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ah-

madinejad, once famously told a reporter during a news conference, "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country. We don't have that in our country. In Iran, we do not have this phenomenon. I don't know who's told you that we have it." The country has also banned "glamorous haircuts," necklaces for men, and even proposed banishing little dogs. The rules are enforced by an army of 70,000 moral fashion police.

Iran recognizes that Internet organizing can be effective. The country once tried shutting down Internet connections because of the danger it posed to the regime in 2009 during an uprising of the "Green Movement," which reacted with unrest to a fishy presidential election there.

Lucas Grindley (http://www.advocate.com/News/Daily_News/2011/09/12/Gay_Iranians_to_President_We_Are_Everywhere, 9/17/2011)

Federal Update: Record Number of “Respect For Marriage Act” Co-Sponsors

The *Respect for Marriage Act* has gained two new cosponsors in the House, bringing the total number of cosponsors to a record-breaking 122! Today, Congressman Jim Langevin of Rhode Island and Congressman Tim Walz of Minnesota announced their support of the bill that will overturn the so-called *Defense of Marriage Act* in a statement released by Congressman Jerry Nadler, the lead sponsor of the *Respect for Marriage Act* in the House. In his release, Congressman Nadler took note of this historic development:

“As the march toward full equality for LGBT Americans is seeing some real, concrete progress, the movement to repeal *DOMA* is steadily growing stronger and more robust,” said Nadler. “The coalition working for LGBT rights in the Congress and the nation as a whole is larger than ever before, and we gain new allies every day. And, just this year, New York State enacted marriage equality, hammering one more nail into the coffin of bigotry and discrimination against gays and lesbians. Dumping *DOMA* is simply not a question of if but when.”

Langevin and Walz's support of the *Respect for Marriage Act* comes weeks after *Freedom to Marry* partnered with statewide LGBT organizations in Rhode Island and Minnesota to get these members on board. As part of our aggressive federal program, *Freedom to Marry's* field and new media teams worked with *Marriage Equality Rhode Island* and *OutFront Minnesota* to reach out to Congressional offices and generate hundreds of constituent contacts in support of repealing *DOMA*.

This historic development in the House, coupled with Senator Barbara Mikulski's announcement last week that she would become the 30th cosponsor of the *Respect for Marriage Act* in the Senate, makes it clear that the momentum to end federal marriage discrimination is at an all-time high and that our strategy is working! Our staff is continuing to work with local, state, and national partners to secure more cosponsors, and with the help of *Freedom to Marry* members across the country, we're certain that more and more elected officials will take a stand against *DOMA*.

Cameron Tolle (<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/blog/entry/federal-update-record-number-of-respect-for-marriage-act-cosponsors>, 9/13/2011)

SEND YOUR NEWS TO “INTERWEAVE CONNECT”

NEWS TO SHARE ?

A MEMBER TO SPOTLIGHT ?

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES ?

AN OPINION TO VOICE ?

SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:

interweave.connect@gmail.com

EX UMBRIS ET IMAGINIBUS IN VERITATEM

(From out of the shadows and imaginings, into the truth)

*Inscription on the tomb of Cardinal
John Henry Newman, who was buried
beside his life partner, Ambrose St. John.*

*Newman was beatified by
the Catholic Church in 2010.*



Interweave Connect

156 Massapoag Avenue
Sharon, MA 02067-2749

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SAVE THE DATE!

CONVO 2012/ CREATING CHANGE

Baltimore, Maryland
January 25-29, 2012



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Phoenix, Arizona
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