

# Interweave Connect

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Don Hoppe, editor



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM INTERWEAVE! LOOKING BACK & FORGING AHEAD



Happy holidays from Interweave! As 2011 draws to a close and we begin to look ahead to 2012, I would like to share with you aspects of the recent Interweave Continental Board Retreat, which brought the board members together on October 7-9 at the Elliott & Pickett House in Boston.

We started out with a meeting with President Peter Morales (*see photo!*) and



a series of trust-building exercises led by our own Dawn Fortune. Many members are new to the board, so these exercises were a great way to bring down barriers to communication and share personal stories.

Based on our review of highlights of the past year, we developed six action items for the 2011-2012 year related to increasing the board's effectiveness. We then divided into two break-out sessions that focused on (1) Website/Communication/Membership-Tracking; and (2) Fundraising/Membership-

Expansion. These focus groups generated 7-9 action items each.

Interesting, right?? Well, through the website and effective communication, we aim to engage you in Interweave at the national level and, in turn, support what you are trying to do at the local level. For that, we need to communicate!

The board had the great pleasure of meeting with Alex Kapitan (*see photo!*), the Congregational Justice Administrator for the UUA. Any of you who have not met Alex should try to find a way to meet per (pronoun derived from 'person' that does not connote gender). What a delightful spirit! We learned from Alex that the LGBT Ministries of the UUA focuses primarily on congregations, while Interweave Continental focuses on individual members and chapters - a helpful clarification as we move into 2012.



Finally, I want to tell you about the visions that we developed for Interweave's participation in Justice GA in Phoenix, 2012. We hope to see you there, immersed in Interweave's work with the LGBT migrant community. Sun Principe, our representative on the GA Accountability Group that is helping with Justice GA, led a brainstorming session. Here is what we came up with:

- (1) Sponsor justice education programs that will increase insights into immigration issues and linked oppressions
- (2) Hold banquet or 'taste fair' at local UU church, catered by one or more Human Rights Zone (HRZ) restaurants, to directly support local migrant community.

(3) Interface directly with local LGBT immigrant organizations, like "Third Space."

(4) Participate in a service project, like volunteering to staff a citizenship application event - 167,000 people are eligible for citizenship, but need assistance to file the paperwork.

(5) Focus Mark deWolfe and Sermon Contest Awards specifically on human rights/linked oppressions issues.

(6) Sponsor display of art work made for Justice GA by local queer migrant youth (e.g. Third Space), who would receive the profits from 'donations'.

You will notice that Justice GA is not about demonstrating and getting arrested. It is about seriously trying to support the migrant community, and in our case, its LGBTQ members. If you have additional thoughts on what we might do, please let us know!

To my joy, the board members were energized by the retreat and happy to have spent a weekend working together.

I hope you will share your thoughts on these issues or other topic that interests you. We look forward to hearing from you!

May the holiday season ahead bring you and those you love many special moments to remember.

Warm regards,

*Maryka H. Bhattacharyya*

President, Interweave Continental

Current Member, Church of the Larger Fellowship

Former Member, DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church, Naperville, IL

### IN THIS ISSUE

- I Know I Am Normal.....page 2
- Op-Ed: Joining Hands.....page 2
- Chapter Happenings.....page 3
- LGBTQ Film Series.....page 3
- Beyond Either/Or.....page 4
- Renew Your Commitment....page 5

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# I Know I Am Normal

I have an Aunt who is a Catholic nun. She just celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a nun. She has been very loving to me and supportive of my being gay, but the other day she asked me if I wouldn't rather be "Normal." When I got off the phone I said to myself "I've just been put down. She doesn't think I am Normal." I was preparing myself to feel bad and then I remembered that I have a beautiful loving wife, a Church that respects me, many friends and Interweave to guarantee that my good life will continue. I think I am "Normal." I know I am Normal!!

Many UU Churches are accepting of their GLBTQ members, but what if we get too comfortable? If we go back into the closet and stop working and standing up for our GLBT community we can expect to lose what we have. There are still Gay and Lesbian issues we need to work on like marriage equality and teen suicide.

If those issues aren't moving you, Transgender people give us an opportunity to learn more about people who are different from ourselves. Transgender people are giving us the opportunity to stand up and say that until all are free and accepted none of us can be free. Our

work is not done. Let's stay out of the closet. We need to educate ourselves about Transgender issues. For more information, check out: *I'm a Girl—Understanding Transgender Children* at <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=3088298&page=1#.TsKJGsMk630>.

How much does your minister know about Transgender People? How can Interweave help the Transgender People in UU Churches? Let's have open discussions about Transgender people make sure that the Transgender people in our community know we love and respect them. Interweave is your organization, work with us and demand that Transgender people be served.

I am Normal. Transgender People are Normal, too!

**Nisco Junkins**

*Interweave Board Member  
Chapters Coordinator*



## Op-Ed: Joining Hands In Work For Sexual Liberation

The LGBTQ community and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) have worked and are working hard to overcome oppression directed at queer people. And we've made a lot of progress. One group facing the same kind of struggle for understanding and acceptance but not as far along in their quest for liberation are the polyamorists—people who openly, honestly, responsibly, and with full consent of all involved, love more than one person at a time.

Many of these people are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. But polyamory activists, of which I am one, sometimes find that the LGBTQ community is leery of supporting the struggle of polyfolk.

For more than a decade, Unitarian Universalists for Polyamory Awareness (UUPA) has been quietly reminding the UUA that there are polyfolk in the pews and that polyamory is an ethical life

choice entirely consistent with UU principles.

We've heard LGBTQ activists say things like, "We worked so hard to convince people that we're just like straight people—reliable, monogamous, respectable. We can't afford to be associated with you!"

The leadership of the Association is careful, at General Assembly and elsewhere, to include same-sex couples and parents in their concept of "family". I listen to these inclusive references with mixed feelings: I'm glad for my LGBTQ co-religionists, and sad that there has not yet been recognition of families like mine.

Polyamorous UU's have been strong advocates for LGBTQ equality, partly because it is right, and partly because we know that our own path towards acceptance within our Association has been made immeasurably easier by the

work of LGBTQ UU's and Interweave. We poly UU's are walking through deep snow made passable by your footprints ahead of us: heat is in the very sod you saints have printed.

Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". All oppressions are linked. So long as your poly brothers and sisters are forced to live in the closet for fear of losing their children, their jobs, and the respect of their co-religionists and families of origin, you are not free. You know what closeted life is like. The right of all people to express their sexuality with and among consenting adults is worthy of your support. Welcome poly families in your churches and chapters.

*Valerie White was founding president of UUPA and now serves on its board of trustees. She is a member of the Interweave Board as the Treasurer. The opinions expressed herein are her own.*

## Chapter Happenings

### Interweave in Lexington, Kentucky

Here in Lexington KY, the surrounding religious community is largely evangelical Christian. While ours is a Welcoming Congregation, and that draws a number of LGBTQ visitors, the thought of openly expressing LGBTQ identity in the wider congregation right away can be very frightening based upon damage from prior church experiences. Our Membership Coordinator has noted that it is only the LGBTQ visitors who seem frightened to be visiting and sharing about themselves.

Our chapter's approach is to serve as a safe place for LGBTQ folks and allies to support one another in our journeys, to enjoy fellowship, and to hear some positive stories from the news (we all tend to be intimately familiar with the less than positive news out there, so a focus on "the good news" helps us set a tone of positivity). We also serve as a way for visitors to learn about our congregation in a safe environment without having to out themselves in the larger congregation as a rule.

We work on outreach via Lexington's annual Pride Festival, campus events at the University of Kentucky, helping with the annual city-wide Pride Prom hosted by the local Gay & Lesbian Service Organization, among other events.

Eric Morrow

### First U.U. of Ann Arbor: Standing on the Side of Love

The Interweave Group at First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor has the following mission: "We are a spiritual home to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, their families and allies to nurture social connections; educate ourselves and others; and advocate for social justice. Interweave provides a welcoming presence and gathering place for LGBTQ people, their families and allies." All are welcome.

Royla Furniss & Joan Burleigh  
Interweave Co-Chairs

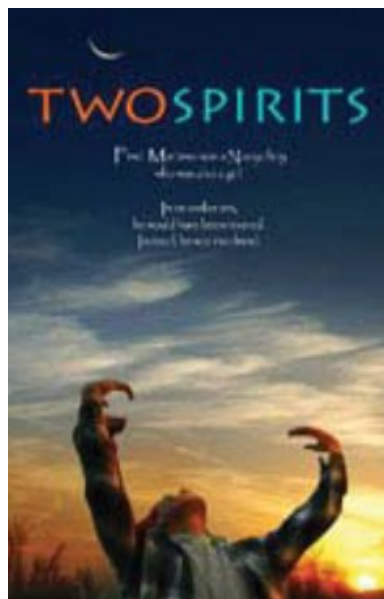


Congressman John Conyers Jr., holding a SSL tee-shirt, shares the spotlight with two couples from UUAA at Michigan UU Social Justice Network's Standing on the Side of Love conference.

### LGBTQ Film Series: A Great Chapter Activity

Some UU churches have expressed interest in establishing Interweave chapters, but are having difficulty coming up with ideas for activities to get things started. Movies are a great way to generate interest in LGBTQ issues and bring people together.

For the last six years, on the second Friday of each month, UU Church of Eugene has shown a movie, shared food and discussed LGBTQ issues. This constant is an important part of UUCE's Interweave Chapter. A recent selection which was well received was *Two Spirits*. In this film, filmmaker Lydia Nibley explores the cultural context behind a tragic and senseless murder. Fred



Martinez was a Navajo youth slain at the age of 16 by a man who bragged to his friends that he "bug-smashed a fag." But Fred was part of an honored Navajo tradition—the "nadleeh," or "two-spirit," who possesses a balance of masculine and feminine traits. Through telling Fred's story, Nibley reminds us of the values that America's indigenous peoples have long embraced.

Chapters are encouraged to pass along information about topical films that they have liked. These will be included in future newsletters. Please send your suggestions to Chapters Coordinator Nisco Junkins at [nisco-happy@comcast.net](mailto:nisco-happy@comcast.net).

## “Beyond Either/Or”

by Amy Zucker Morgenstern

an excerpt from: *Coming Out in Faith: Voices of LGBTQ Unitarian Universalists*

Unlike a woman I knew in college who said unhesitatingly that she'd known she was a lesbian from age two, I had to learn my sexual orientation gradually. I didn't get the first glimmer of the idea that I might be bisexual until I was about 18, and I didn't strongly identify this way until several years later.

What I have known for as long as memory stretches back is that either/or choices make me suspicious. When presented with a confident statement that two things stand on the opposite sides of an unbridgeable divide, I reflexively ask whether they are really mutually exclusive. Being a both/and thinker serves me well as a minister, particularly in the role of community-builder. Part of my job is finding a way for opposites to dwell together in peace.

The desire to go beyond either/or also brought me to Unitarian Universalism and kept me here. When I went to my first UU congregation I discovered a place where I could be Jewish and Buddhist and this great new (to me) thing called Unitarian Universalist. It allowed room to keep adding new ideas, theologies, practices, and ethical perspectives: where the assumption that met such changes would not be “You can't do that,” but “Let's see how that fits in!”

In other words, Unitarian Universalists are ripe for understanding bisexuality. When they don't get it—and I've encountered some, both heterosexual and homosexual, who don't—it is usually because they haven't yet expanded their capacity for both/and thinking to encompass sexual orientation.

When bisexuals stay closeted, it's generally out of fear. Why do Unitarian Universalists hide our religion from the world? I think it is often for the same reason. We accept the assumptions of the wider society; we define ourselves by its categories. According to some members of other, more creedal faiths Unitarian Universalists, like bisexuals, are simply unable or unwilling to make a commitment.

Bisexuals know just how hard it is to say both/and where others have said either/or. It puts you betwixt and between, and it's so much more comfortable, so much more emotionally safe to fit into a set category. But we bisexuals have also learned that the problem is not in ourselves, but in the categories, which are figments of the mind.

Coming out is a proclamation of faith in reality instead of the divisions that falsely claim authority. Unitarian Universalism will begin to claim its full authority as a religion when it comes out boldly as a both/and faith. Celebrating bisexuality, that dissolver of false boundaries, can be the key that opens that closet door.



**Amy Zucker Morgenstern** has been parish minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto, California, since 2003, having previously served the congregations in Rutland and Middlebury, Vermont. Her vision of Unitarian Universalism is expressed in the mission of her congregation: “Transforming ourselves, each other, and the world.” Always an activist, she was propelled into action for LGBTQ rights by the Vermont debate that resulted in the nation's first civil unions law. She has a passion for adult religious education, has taught the subject at the Starr King School for the Ministry, and in 2007 coauthored *Interweave's* bisexuality curriculum. An artist, Amy posts her works-in-progress and writes about religion, politics, and culture at her blog, *Sermons in Stone*. She lives in San Francisco with her wife, Joy, and their four-year-old daughter.

### PEN PALS

#### CLF Prison Ministry

The Church of the Larger Fellowship is looking for UU's to exchange friendly letters on topics of mutual interest with

LGBTQ prisoners.

For more information, contact  
[PrisMin@clfuu.org](mailto:PrisMin@clfuu.org)

## COIF: The Perfect Gift for the Holidays

*Coming Out in Faith: LGBTQ Voices in Unitarian Universalism*, by Keith Kron and Susan Gore, is a collection of poignant testimonials illuminating the lived experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Unitarian Universalists. *Coming Out in Faith* also helps to raise awareness of Unitarian Universalism's active role in promoting a vision of humanity that not only embraces LGBTQ people but actively seeks to learn from the unique strengths they bring to questions of personal faith and organizational vitality.

*Coming Out in Faith* makes a great holiday gift!

Buy it now in the UUA Bookstore at:

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1434>



## RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO INTERWEAVE: Last Chance to Take Advantage of Year-End Special Deal

Interweave Continental is a progressive and welcoming religious voice within the LGBTQ community, a transformative movement that celebrates LGBTQ people and works to end oppression. Within the UUA, and society at large, Interweave provides support, information, and advocacy. We are fully committed to being a multi-cultural institution, working to end all forms of oppression

Your membership in Interweave represents your commitment to join us in doing this work! Many of you on our rolls have been dedicated, supportive, and faithful members for many years. Our hats are off to you! But some, perhaps inadvertently, have allowed their memberships to lapse. Nevertheless, Interweave continues to work for all of you, providing support, information, education, and advocacy for greater LGBTQ inclusion and rights within the UUA and everywhere. To be successful at our efforts, we all must work together. To do our work, we must have the full commitment of all of our members and chapters.

If your membership has lapsed and you haven't yet renewed, now is the time to **RECOMMIT TO INTER-**

**WEAVE!** We are working hard to make the process easier for everyone.

In an effort to streamline our bookkeeping (and yours, too), Interweave is moving to a set "membership year." Beginning in 2012, your financial commitment to Interweave will run from October 1 through September 30 of the following year (members and chapters). If you have joined or renewed recently, you are a member in good standing through September 30, 2012. And, as always, Interweave appreciates your continued support.

We realize that a number of individuals and chapters may be unaware that their memberships have lapsed, and, admittedly, we have not done a very good job of notifying people about that. Hopefully, by going to this regular "Recommit Date" of October 1st each year, it will be easier for all of us to stay current.

For individual or chapter memberships that have expired, Interweave is offering a one-time special deal: pay your renewal between now and December 31,

2011, and your membership will be in good standing through September 30, 2013! This is like getting almost a whole year's membership for free!

Your financial recommitment to Interweave can be submitted by mailing your check to **Interweave, 156 Massapoag Avenue, Sharon, MA 02067** (be sure to include your email address); or on the Interweave web page at <http://bit.ly/q6gzwi> (members) or <http://bit.ly/oNrVPa> (chapters).

Please, if you are able, consider an additional gift to help us to provide financial assistance to those otherwise unable to participate in our activities.

**Renew your commitment to  
Interweave today!**

*Happy Holidays!*



*Just because current LGBTQ members feel so welcomed and included and integrated does not mean that feeling or message will be obvious or felt to LGBTQ visitors/newcomers. Also, with the continuous process of coming out, having an Interweave chapter creates an obvious safe space for newcomers to come out in a smaller group to get a feel for the larger congregational atmosphere. And then there is community witness that can be done to show those beyond the congregation that there is, indeed, a truly welcoming church for LGBTQ people.*

**Eric Morrow**

*Interweave Board Member & Webmaster*



## **Interweave Connect**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

#### **CONVO 2012/ CREATING CHANGE**

*Baltimore, Maryland  
January 25-29, 2012*



#### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*Phoenix, Arizona  
June 20-24, 2012*