

Interweave Connect

February 2013



Dear Interweave members and friends,

I hope you all enjoy learning about Interweave in this newsletter. Through our interaction with congregations and individual UUs, we have come to realize that not everyone knows what Interweave is, what its goals are, and why you might want to get involved. So here it is. Enjoy, learn, and make the decision to join us!

Nisco Junkins, our newsletter producer, and I just returned from representing Interweave at the "Creating Change" conference in Atlanta. Most of you know that Creating Change is the

annual meeting of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Imagine more than 3,000 members of the LGBTQA community gathered in one hotel! The energy was palpable! So much to learn, with multiple sessions going on at the same time (see coverage of the conference in this newsletter). If you ever get a chance to attend, do it. It is amazing!

Interweave Continental and Annette Marquis, the UUA LGBTQ and Multicultural Ministries Program Manager, together sponsored a Friday night reception for UUs attending the conference. I am happy to say that we had a lively reception, with about fifty UUs enjoying each other's company and exchanging ideas. We had to interrupt conversations to close down the room at 10pm. A thank you to all who attended.

On Sunday of the conference, Joetta Proust of the UU Congregation of Atlanta hosted an after-service luncheon for Interweave members and friends from the Atlanta area UU churches. Nisco and I were the featured guests. We attended a wonderful service at UUCA on reproductive justice and then interacted with Interweavers over lunch and conversation. It was another wonderful opportunity to energize Interweave and exchange ideas. Thank you Joetta.

Moving forward, the board is now planning for the June General Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky. We hope you will submit nominations for our Mark DeWolfe Award, and for the annual sermon contest. Check out the guidelines for these awards on our website www.interweaveuu.org. Again this year, we are plan to sponsor a reception to honor our LGBTQ ministers. In addition, we again plan to host our annual Interweave Continental Banquet. We look forward to seeing you there!

As always, we invite you to let us know what is on your mind.

All good wishes,
Maryka Bhattacharyya, President, Interweave
Continental

Get to know your
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The Interweave Continental Board welcomes your articles for *Interweave Connect*. All articles will be given consideration for printing in our newsletter. Please note that members of the *Interweave Connect* staff reserve the right to edit all articles.

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Interweave Continental

WHAT IS INTERWEAVE?

Is your congregation officially recognized by the UUA as a Welcoming Congregation???

If so, your congregation should form an Interweave Chapter. Members work together to fulfill the continuing commitment of being a Welcoming Congregation.

WHAT IS INTERWEAVE CONTINENTAL?

Since 1973, Interweave Continental has been a nationwide, member-based, grassroots organization of Unitarian Universalists.

We are people who recognize that oppression hurts everyone, regardless of its form.

We are LGBTQA UUs.

We are UU members and friends

We are made up of individual Interweave members and congregation-based Interweave Chapters. We are led by a national Board of Directors. You can find us at www.interweaveuu.org, or on Facebook.

WHY SHOULD YOU AND YOUR CONGREGATION BECOME A MEMBER OF INTERWEAVE CONTINENTAL?

When you, as individuals and congregations, join Interweave Continental, we acquire the funds needed to carry out the extensive work that we do (see above). We are a totally volunteer grass-roots organization.

The LGBTQ community has come a long way, but Transgender people and LGBTQ youth are in danger. Marriage Equality is putting up a good fight, but the battle hasn't been won. We are all learning about LGBTQ issues. With your support, we can do so much more. Without your support, we can do almost nothing!

Form an Interweave Chapter in your congregation, or join as an individual member TODAY!

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WHAT DOES INTERWEAVE CONTINENTAL DO?

We work to end LGBTQ oppression, and through that work, we seek an end to all oppression.

We strive to be a nationwide source of resources, advocacy, and activism.

We strive to be a community for all.

During this past year, Interweave Continental has:

- initiated a newly-expanded electronic newsletter, which is emailed monthly to ~1100 UU congregations and their LGBTQ organizations, providing a vibrant network of communication
- developed a transgender curriculum, funded by the UUA (first draft currently under review)
- provided two \$125 youth awards to groups serving LGBTQ youth
- initiated formation of a Youth Advisory Board and a service project for LGBTQ youth
- sponsored a new LGBTQ Minister's Reception at General Assembly, with the UUA
- identified winners of our annual Mark deWolfe Award and our annual sermon contest
- sponsored our annual Interweave banquet at General Assembly
- worked to update our website – www.interweaveuu.org

What Does It Cost To Run Interweave Continental???

Here is an Estimate of Interweave Continental Annual Expenses – When we dream BIG!

Project	Activities/Expenses	Total Cost Estimate
UUA General Assembly (GA): Two board members attend	Banquet, awards, booth, workshop, travel, housing, meals, registration	\$6700
Annual Board Retreat All seven board members attend	Travel, housing, meals	\$6300
Creating Change: National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Annual Meeting Two board members attend	Reception for UU attendees! travel, housing, meals, registration	\$4000
Newsletter	Salary	\$15,000
Youth Advisory Council	Travel, housing, meals	\$4000
Youth Service Project	Start-up project, like send a UU youth to transgender summer camp!	\$1000
Trans Curriculum	Nearly completed project, UUA funded	\$2700
CLF Prison ministry: Send newsletter to ~70 UU LGBTQ inmates	Newsletter printing, envelopes, postage four time per year	~\$350 x 4 = \$1400

Compare our dreams to our Actual Income!

Actual Income, 2012: 40 individuals/families, 24 chapters, 1 donation \$3925

Actual Income, 2013 to date: 6 individuals, 4 chapters, 1 donation \$1032

YOU MAY ASK, HOW DID WE MANAGE TO FUNCTION DURING 2012 WITH \$3925 OF INCOME AND SO MANY PROJECTS?? WEEELLLLLL, SOMEHOW WE DID IT!!

For GA Phoenix, board members attended at their own expense when possible. Interweave declined to have a booth or sponsor a workshop. We invested in our wonderful Phoenix banquet!

For the Annual Board Retreat, several board members attended at their own expense and a number of individuals and chapters paid their membership dues in response to an urgent call for support, so all board members could attend the retreat rather than just those who could afford it. Thank You!!

For Creating Change, again, board members attended at their own expense, and Interweave did not host a reception in 2012.

For the newsletter, a true labor of love, Nisco Junkins and Tova Vitiello carried out an enormous project on a totally volunteer basis, with Nisco often working 60-hr weeks to make it happen, and Tova always ready to provide quick turn-around with her editorial input.

How can you help??

Make a firm commitment to membership as individuals, families or chapters/congregations. Go to our website at www.interweaveuu.org and pay your dues!

In addition, request that your congregation dedicate the funds from the collection plate one Sunday to your favorite Interweave Continental project! If even one-third of the Welcoming Congregations took up that kind of collection once per year, Interweave Continental would be able to fulfill its dreams and yours too! Commit to working to make that happen in your congregation today!

Maryka Bhattacharyya
President of Interweave Continental

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Multiracial Multicultural Page



In December, my Lay Minister asked me to submit an article about my experience as a Black Unitarian Universalist who is also an Ally. In my head, my initial thought was a joke: “Here we go again, I’m the only Black person here so I’m the designated poster child for Black people, at least I didn’t get asked to be on the Multiculturalism Committee.” I have visited a few congregations and cannot say that I have experienced seeing a large number of Black and Brown people. That being said, I have to say, I love being a Unitarian Universalist. The principles that guide this faith allow me to be my most authentic spiritual self and expand who I am by coexisting and learning from other member. I officially started my journey as a Unitarian Universalist in 2007 in Philadelphia, PA at Church of the Restoration. That congregation was truly diverse and welcoming. Our pastor, at the time, was a Black, gay male. Going to that church felt like home; comfortable, welcoming, and safe. I wasn’t the only Black person there or one of two or three. I have moved several times since joining the Unitarian Universalist community and each church I have visited I have felt welcomed.

It wasn’t until I moved to the Deep South that I experienced sadness and isolation by being “othered” routinely. I mean, I’m othered and experience the feeling of being an outsider of “White America,” a systematic function of institutionalized racism in this country, yet this was different. But it wasn’t until I moved to Mississippi where I felt personally dissimilar and segregated by the larger Southern culture. When I think about the question “Who am I?,” my response is that I am a Black Woman. That is what

people see. I am a Black, heterosexual, woman who is also an Ally. I am a Black woman, single, educated, heterosexual, with no children, from New York, residing in the Bible belt of Mississippi. My experience in Mississippi has been hard based on all the terms that I used to describe who I am. I’ve been called uppity and a Yankee. I have had several women ostracize me because I am a woman over thirty-five, unmarried, and without children. I have had my sexual orientation questioned for being single and being an ally. Sometimes I get tired of having to explain my difference. I think that ours is a culture that needs clear lines of good and bad, us vs. them, in order to feel comfortable managing the fear of difference and the unknown. Sometimes I feel like I have to hide in plain sight out of the fear of being different.

In the two and a half years that I have resided here, the Unitarian congregations in Hattiesburg and Tupelo have been a safe haven from feeling othered and different. I have felt safe, loved, respected, and welcomed in both communities. In Tupelo, the Unitarian community is working tirelessly to promote awareness and advocate for the LGBT community. Ours is a faith that doesn’t just pray, we are actively involved in creating opportunities for discussing difference, intolerance, social injustice and economic disenfranchisement. Are we a perfect faith? No! We are a faith that is willing to examine whether or not we are a welcoming community. I think that as a community we need to have dialogue not around White Privilege but how each of us has been in positions of power and oppressed, and our experiences of being oppressed. The concepts of privilege and oppression aren’t just about race. It is concerned with all the –isms that impact society and create inequality. To put the Unitarian Universalist principles into action in my life, I have challenged myself to use my heterosexual privilege to “Stand on the Side of Life” personally and professionally. What will you do to challenge yourself or your congregation to be more welcoming?

Latoya Brooks
Friend of the UU Congregation of Tupelo, MS

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The National Conference on LGBT Equality

Creating Change 25

January 23–27, 2013 • Hilton Atlanta

The largest annual gathering of activists, organizers, and leaders in the LGBT movement



National Gay and Lesbian
Task Force
www.CreatingChange.org



Kate Clinton, the Plenary Emcee and Nisco



President Obama issued a video address to LGBT activists gathered in Atlanta for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 25th Annual National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change. Watch



Maryka, Don and 3,000 others



Don Hoppe ex-member of the Interweave Continental Board **Sexuality and Spirituality** Presentation



Bishop V. Gene Robinson has been particularly active in the area of full civil rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Creating Change

The National Conference on LGBT Equality

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Interweave at UU Congregation of Atlanta



On Sunday of the conference we attended a wonderful service at UUCA on reproductive justice.



Joetta Proust of the UU Congregation of Atlanta hosted an after-service luncheon for Interweave members and friends from the Atlanta area UU churches, with myself and Nisco as featured guests.

Gender diversity is welcome here
All are welcome to use the restroom
that best fits their identity.
A gender neutral restroom
is located in the UUCA Office.

Bathroom sign at UUCA

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STORY BEHIND INTERWEAVE'S ANNUAL MARK DeWOLFE AWARD

The Rev. Mark Mosher DeWolfe (1953-1988) was an American-Canadian called to the pulpit of the Unitarian Congregation of South Peel in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada in 1982 (now Unitarian Congregation of Mississauga) after graduating from Starr King School of Ministry in 1981. His academic interest was "Contextual Theology."

After serving as an interim minister, the congregation voted him in to serve as their permanent minister. Rev. DeWolfe was one of the first ordained, openly gay ministers in Canada. He had an out-going personality and a highly distinguished and much beloved ministry. His congregation, friends, and colleagues all suffered a great loss when Mark DeWolfe died from AIDS in 1988.

Shortly before his death, Muriel Duncan interviewed him for the United Church Observer. The article, with accompanying photograph, was published under the title "Time to Live." Later, the congregation published a volume containing ten of Rev. DeWolfe's sermons. The volume is entitled, "Time to Live," printed by the University of Toronto Press.

To honor Mark DeWolfe's major contributions to the gay community and his dedication to social action both locally and globally, a number of organizations, including Interweave Continental, established awards that continue to this day. These include: Mark DeWolfe Social Action Award, Unitarian Congregation of Mississauga; Mark Mosher DeWolfe Scholarship, Starr King School of Ministry; Canadian UU Historical Society's Annual Mark Mosher DeWolfe Memorial Lecture; and Interweave Continental's **Mark DeWolfe Annual Award**.

Now you have a better understanding of the Mark DeWolfe Award that Interweave Continental gives each year at our banquet at General Assembly! We hope you will all think of people you know who might qualify for this award and submit an application.

Below we have included readings that will give you an in-depth feel for the person who was Rev. Mark Mosher DeWolfe. We hope you enjoy the readings and that you are inspired by his life and his words. The Rev. Mark Mosher DeWolfe's spirit lives on via Interweave Continental, and all of you who participate in Interweave.

"Sing Out Praises for the Journey", Hymn 295 from **'Singing the Living Tradition'**, words written by

The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe, revised by Joyce Painter Rice.

From "That Thing With Feathers" a sermon by The Rev. Kenneth Read-Brown First Parish in Hingham (Old Ship Church) Unitarian Universalist May 20, 2012.

"The words to the hymn we've just sung ('Sing Out Praises for the Journey...') were written by a classmate of mine from the Starr King School for the Ministry, Mark DeWolfe. My clearest memory of Mark is of a worship service he led for us, one of our Thursday chapel services. I don't remember anything of what Mark said during that service. But I do remember the title of his talk: Fasten Your Seatbelts, It's Going to Be a Bumpy Ride."

Mark was thirty-five years old when he died of AIDS. The end of his life was a "bumpy ride," but his enthusiasm for living, and his sense of hope can be found in the words he spoke during that worship service.

From "One Year Later," a sermon in 'Time To Live' by The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe

"Many people, including some who have life-threatening illnesses, try to live as if they are not going to die. They live in a state of denial, and are imprisoned by it, for their options are limited. They can take no action which threatens their myth of eternal life....

AIDS is an opportunity for all of us in the religious community to re-examine our attitudes toward life and death. Faith, whatever its form, should give us courage to look in places where the sources of fear hide. I include in that the Unitarian* Universalist faith in the inherent worth and dignity of human life. If we really believe human life has worth and dignity, then we must have the courage of our convictions and be willing to look at it in its end - the place where it would seem to be denied....

In the middle ages, people would greet each other by saying, "Memento Mori" - remember death. It used to mystify me how one could go on living when the awareness of death greeted them every morning. Isn't that too depressing?

Lately I've come to understand that differently. It is not only possible, it is wise, to remember death by living deeply and well. To remember death takes your

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focus off the future, which you cannot control, to the present, which you can affect....

What has helped to keep me alive and to keep me wanting to be alive is one absolutely vital word: love. A vital word, literally, a word for life....I am proud of the people who have stuck by me in this difficult year, for they could have done as so many have; run away, hidden, bolted, rejected the ill[ness] to preserve the facade of health, betraying a rotten core...I am reminded every day of how interdependent we are, how the love we share ... keeps all of us alive.

The gifts of love are in fact the gifts of life. Remember that we honour life most by how we live, and love it best by living it most strongly."

From "In the Presence of Majesty", a sermon by The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe, February 2, 1986

"Unitarian leaders over 100 years ago glorified the free individual. Perhaps the reason our faith has not spread in Canada as much as some would hope, is because the experience of life in this country is not supportive of the glory of the individual person. Rather, here in these northern climes, we feel the glory of the world, the majesty of the land, the call of the spirit to open places.

But it is also a key part of our Unitarian heritage to affirm the value of human existence. And this we can still do, even as we recognize our smallness in the scheme of things. A Canadian Unitarian spirituality would look at the vastness of existence, at our smallness, and say affirmatively, "It is something to be here." We may stop shy of proclaiming humankind the crown of creation, but we can be nonetheless like those old Icelanders, looking out on a land of ice and snow, of majestic mountains and high-rising tides, of space that stretches on, on beyond the beyond of our farthest imaginings, and say, "it is something to be here."

Recognizing our smallness and our positivity would be to affirm the necessity of our responsible behaviour while here. Éto recognize our smallness in the grand scheme of things; our smallness in the presence of majesty, is to recognize that we cannot live as if we alone were the ends for which the universe exists - no matter what our old religious myths may seem to say. Yet is it something to be human in the presence of majesty, if only because we can recognize it and rejoice, rejoice in the wonder of it all. We can

recognize the majesty for what it is, and we can seek to know our place in right relationship, sacred relationship, to the world. "

Lovers Tossed By These Difficult Times by The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe

Know that the love which blooms inside you is stronger than fear,
for people who love find strength they didn't know they had.
Know that the love inside you is stronger than illness,
for people who love hang in when physical health is gone.
And know that love is indeed stronger than death,
for people who love are like stones tossed into a pool.
The circles of love radiate out and echo back long after the stone has come to rest on the bottom.
So remember your love as a source of strength;
remember who you are:
lovers tossed by these difficult times.

A Person Is a Puzzle by The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe

A person is a puzzle. Sometimes from the inside, it feels like some pieces are missing.
Perhaps one we love is no longer with us. Perhaps one talent we desire eludes us. Perhaps a moment that required grace found us clumsy. Sometimes, from the inside, it feels like some pieces are missing.
A person is a puzzle. We are puzzles not only to ourselves but to each other.
A puzzle is a mystery we seek to solve -- and the mystery is that we are whole even with our missing pieces. Our missing pieces are empty spaces we might long to fill, empty spaces that make us who we are. The mystery is that we are only what we are -- and that what we are is enough.
In the gray stillness of this morning, into the accepting peace of a still sky, let us offer our failings, our inadequacies, into the silence. And let us know that we are accepted, by God and by this company, exactly as we are. Accepted -- missing pieces, and all.

With what benediction shall I leave you? by The Rev Mark Mosher DeWolfe

With what benediction shall I leave you?

This: In your life, may you know the holy meaning, the mystery that breaks into it every moment. May you live at peace with your world and at peace with yourself. And may the love of truth guide you in your every day. Amen.

INTERWEAVE CONNECT, the Monthly Newsletter Of Interweave Continental

Interweave Continental's newly-expanded newsletter, *Interweave Connect*, is produced monthly by Nisco Junkins and edited by Tova Vitiello, both members of the Interweave Continental board. Articles are submitted by congregations and individuals nationwide, as they relate to each month's special focus.

Nisco Junkins emails the newsletter monthly to each of our ~1100 congregations, their affiliated Interweave Chapters and groups, and to individual Interweave Continental members. All issues can be directly accessed from our website: www.interweaveuu.org.

Interweave Continental would like to shout out **A BIG THANK YOU!** to everyone who made last year possible, by submitting articles, joining as members of Interweave Continental, and reading our newsletter!

Here are topics and items you may have learned about from reading Interweave Connect during 2012:

- The president of the NAACP has a Transgender brother
- Marsha Aizumi and her Transgender Son -Their Journey to Acceptance and Love
- Rev. Theresa Novak and her partner, Anne Spatola, are honored by Equality Utah
- The Board of Directors of Interweave Continental expresses its concern over the sentence imposed on Dharun Ravi following his conviction on fifteen counts, including invasion of privacy and bias intimidation, in connection with events leading to the suicide of Tyler Clementi in September of 2010.
- Interweave Banquet at General Assembly
- Interweave honors GLBTQ ministers at GA
- GLBTQ ministers – the focus of our June issue
- Switch – Documentary film that addresses the impact of gender transition on the surrounding community
- The whole April newsletter explored the transgender issue
- Gay Marriage Video Goes Viral
- Marriage Equality vote in MN, WA, MY and MN and UU congregations participate!
- A minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort in South Carolina takes part in a photo exhibit for lesbian families, showcased in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.
- UUs celebrating Gay Pride all over the US and Canada
- The UUA adding the word “queer” to our language as of July 1
- GLBTQ Immigration Issues at GA: Maryka Bhattacharyya, President, Interweave Continental, helped husband and wife team get their citizenship papers completed, ready for review by the Mi Familia Vota lawyers
- The importance of GLBTQ Allies
- A man tells his congregation he was born a woman, after serving as minister for over 30 years.
- Multiple UU congregations that serve gay youth with teen cafes and youth groups. Examples: WAGLY, Fox Valley Youth Group and Illinois Safe School Alliance, and Merrimack Valley Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth.
- GLESN and LGBT Bullying in Schools
- Teen transgender groups like Open Arms Transgender Youth group
- Lexington, KY Catholic high school told a lesbian student couple the day of prom that they would not be allowed to attend. They decided to get dressed up and to try to attend anyway and were barred from entering. About 50 of their peers bravely remained outside – in the rain!
- OUTreach Resource Center – a resource center for congregations that want to start a program for LGBTQ youth.
- Eagle Scouts fighting Boy Scouts of America

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- Camp Aranu'tiq – a summer camp for transgender youth.
- PFLAG is alive and well. December issue focused on PFLAG and its work with UU congregations.
- Transgender officers in the military
- The number of LGBT delegates at the 2012 Democratic Convention, is historic and record-breaking: 486 in total from every state in the country and a dramatic upswing from the 288 on board for the DNC in '08.
- The Realities of Incarceration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Transgender persons
- Oklahoma judge refuses to allow male sex-change candidates to have feminine names.
- "Explain Myself" written by a transgender youth
- Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Welcoming Congregations and their contributions
- New Multicultural Awareness page:
 - o Anita Hill at GA
 - o Stop pretending racism is over
 - o Finally Found My Tribe!
 - o Dear Nisco, you are visible to me

Interweave National Youth Advisory Board

In order to better engage and meet the needs of LGBTQ youth, both within Unitarian Universalist congregations and within the wider community, Interweave Continental is in the process of forming a National Youth Advisory Board. The new board, which will consist of LGBTQ youth from across the country, will develop and coordinate outreach projects, engage in public advocacy on behalf of LGBTQ youth, and assist Interweave Continental's Board of Directors, as well as our local chapters, in responding to the challenges and opportunities that arise in our rapidly changing social and political environment.

The Board of Directors of Interweave Continental looks forward to receiving your

thoughts, comments, and suggestions about the direction of the Youth Advisory Board, and the issues that the Advisory Board should address. In addition, we ask you to suggest possible members for the Youth Advisory Board.

Please feel free to contact Board of Directors Secretary J. David Macey (jdavidmacey@msn.com) or any of the members of the Board of

Directors listed on the cover of this issue of Interweave Connect with your ideas and suggestions.

Thank you,

Maryka Bhattacharyya
President of Interweave
Continental



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Interweave Membership: What Do I Get From It?

I first encountered Interweave when a friend invited me to join her at a Convo in Lexington, Kentucky, in the 1980's. Living in West Virginia at the time and attending a small fellowship, I sometimes felt isolated and didn't often see the connection between my sexuality and my Unitarian Universalism. Convo opened my eyes to possibilities.

In the years that followed, my membership was inconsistent, in part because the volunteer organization, flung across the continent, was inconsistent in reminding me to renew. Yet, I always drifted back. From time to time, I was approached to join the leadership, but I resisted until I saw some real hope for making a difference.

While I was on the board and then, President of Interweave Continental, things shifted. The UUA re-evaluated its relationship to independent affiliates, ultimately eliminating the explicit connection and endorsement. However, Interweave always had a deeper purpose. Like many other fine organizations, we worked to eliminate barriers for BGLTIQ folks. But, we were the only group doing that through our UU values and principles, and we were the only group to agitate within the UUA and within our churches for deeper and wider inclusion.

Interweave makes a difference in the world, particularly in the UU world. Even as the UUA decommissioned independent affiliates, Interweave

and the UUA worked together. This was especially so at our General Assemblies. For example, we honored the UUs from Massachusetts who sued for the right to marry. That was high profile. Other work was low profile: for example, adding gender-neutral bathrooms at GA, and monitoring the practice to ensure safety and support for transgender people. We were an important voice in re-visioning youth programming for the association, working to ensure support for BGLTIQ youth. Further, we reminded the UUA

and our congregations that marriage equality was not the only issue for our community. Working with members of Interweave, for example, we created the bisexuality curriculum.



Interweave matters to me because it helps to change the world – not just the big old scary heterosexist world out there, but our individual small worlds – our UU churches and fellowships, our UUA. We practice making the world a better place by making our association a better place. We've done it; and though the world changes around us, we keep doing it. Interweave provides an opportunity for people to cooperate in doing just that – working where they are – in their congregation, in their city or state, in their world. I hope you join me in that commitment.

Rev. Jonalu Johnstone
First Unitarian Church, Oklahoma City



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The group of people that attended the December 2012 UUCE Interweave monthly meeting.

the Interweave Chapter at UU Church of Eugene, OR

Seven years ago, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE) started an Interweave chapter, and it continues to serve our members. We meet every second Friday for a potluck, LGBT-themed movie and a discussion. We have had sweetheart dances for Valentine's Day, guests from PFLAG, and a house-party fundraiser for Basic Rights Oregon (a non-profit working towards equal marriage, etc.) – raising more money than any other group. Each of our activities includes LGBT people and our straight allies. I don't know if any one activity has changed people's lives, but I do know that our Interweave activities have made a difference in the lives of LGBT people and straight people. The existence of our Interweave lets others know that we are a Welcoming Congregation.

At our monthly meetings, we introduce ourselves to one another, and we respond to a thought-provoking question about a current LGBT issue. The questions vary. An example of one question is "How would you feel about a transgender settled minister for our church?" Another example is "How will the US Marines look with openly gay, lesbian and transgender people?" In addition, we show a broad range of LGBT-themed movies: documentaries, dramas, comedies (email me for a list of movies we have shown). We start the movie at 7:00 pm, and a discussion about the movie follows.

We advertise the event every month with local newspapers, LGBT organizations, University of Oregon bulletin boards, and our church newsletter

(print, website, listserves). A great mix of at least 20-35 LGBT people and straight allies attend every month. Because of our advertising and the interesting movies we show, we always have new people attending. Many return, and some have become members of our congregation.

Now, I will tell you the story of "CJ," my hero, and how Interweave played a significant role in her life. While in Jr. HS, CJ came out and was badly bullied. As a result, she was home schooled before finding an alternative HS where she felt comfortable. Interweave helped her to connect with an LGBT Youth support group sponsored by the local PFLAG chapter. Members took her out for coffee and spent time with her. Even though she was not yet an adult, we were honored that her mom trusted us to take her with us to Portland's Gay Pride Celebration, two years running. CJ enjoyed walking the handsome Chow Chow that belonged to a lesbian couple, declaring that "he is a chick magnet." I am proud to tell you that CJ is now working on a university film degree. Because of Interweave, she feels supported by her community.

In past years, the church has paid our chapter dues. In recent years, however, we have passed "the hat" around at our monthly meetings in order to collect the money for the chapter dues. Members of UUCE feel that it is an honor to be part of the national Interweave because of the important work that they do. It helps us to know that through Interweave Continental (the national organization), we are in communication with other Interweave Chapters who are working toward similar goals.

Nisco Junkins
Interweave Connect
UU Church of Eugene Member

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Interweave Continental Remembers Jeanne Manford Founder of PFLAG (1920-2013)

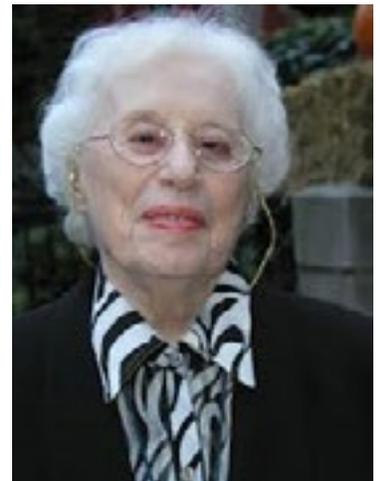


Jeanne Manford marches with her son, carrying the sign that started a movement.

Jeanne Manford, the founder of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) died on Tuesday, January 8, 2012 at the age of 92. She was a schoolteacher who became a political activist and a social reformer because of her son. She publicly stated: "I have a homosexual son, and I love him."

In April, 1972, Jeanne and her husband were at home when they received news that their son, Morty, had been beaten and hospitalized. Morty was among a group of gay activists who were distributing fliers at a New York City political dinner. The group was protesting news coverage of the gay rights movement.

Angered by what had happened, Jeanne wrote a letter to the New York Post, criticizing the police for their lack of protection. She stated that they watched and did nothing. After publication of her



Jeanne Manford

letter, Jeanne continued to speak out. She gave radio and television interviews.

In June, 1972, Jeanne marched along with her son in the Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day Parade (now known as the Pride Parade). She carried a handwritten sign that said: "Parents of Gays: Unite in Support for Our Children." Seeing Jeanne and her sign, lesbians and gays pleaded with her to talk with their parents. That is when Jeanne decided to form a support group.



The first formal meeting of PFLAG took place in Greenwich Village on March 26, 1973. There were approximately twenty people in attendance. Today, PFLAG has 350 chapters throughout the United States, and assists in the establishment of similar organizations internationally.

Jeanne Manford reminds us that one brave voice can transform people and change society. One person, carrying a handwritten sign, can make a difference. Jeanne Manford was more than a supporter of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people. She was a brave warrior for our equality. And most importantly, she fought to save our lives.

Tova Vitiello
Interweave Connect editor
Co-chair Interweave:
Unitarian Universalist Society, Iowa City, IA

NYC Councilman Daniel Dromm marches with Jeanne Manford at the first Queens LGBT Pride Parade in 1993. Manford was one of the parade's grand marshals that year.

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My Service on the Interweave Board has been Satisfying and Inspiring and Educational.



So, why am I, a (relatively) straight polyamorous elderly

white woman, learning how to use Quickbooks as Interweave's treasurer? I mean, there are plenty of other oppressions besides homophobia which might more directly impact me: agism, for instance, and discrimination against atheists, and lookism, and patriarchy, and monogamism. (By "monogamism" I mean not the practice of monogamy, which is one honorable ideal, but the concept that monogamy is the only right way to be in relationship.)

Here are some reasons why:

For more than ten years the Interweave board, since long before any of the current members were on it, has offered friendship and encouragement to polyamory activists like me. Now it is encouraging the efforts of UU kinksters to organize.

1. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere; all oppressions are linked. Matthew Sheppard and Harvey Milk are my brothers.
2. I get to interact with some really cool people, present and former board members.
3. I get my consciousness raised about lots of things I might never have understood in the way I do now.

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That last point deserves a bit more explanation. Let me give you some examples. Former board member Dawn Fortune, for example, a seminarian at Andover-Newton and a candidate for the Unitarian Universalist ministry, and Alex Kapitan at the UUA's LGBTQ taught me why the "gender binary" assumption is painful to many people who don't fall into one of society's two neat gender categories. Susan taught me about the special difficulties experienced by aging Lesbians in our congregations. I've learned a lot about transgender issues from Sun.

And here's one more thing: I've written before in these pages about my peak religious experience singing Fred Small's "Everything Possible" at Creating Change in Minneapolis in a mini flash mob consisting of me and Penny Gnesin and Sue Fulton of Olympia's Daughters. A picture of me with them is on my Facebook page. Recently, after the end of DADT, a photograph of the first same-sex couple to marry in the chapel at West Point went viral on Facebook, and like all right-thinking people I cheered and teared up a little at the sight of the two women coming out the aisle through an arch of swords. When I looked more closely, I realized: it was them! It was Penny and Sue! And I had sung with them!

Yes, my service on the Interweave board has been satisfying and inspiring and educational. I recommend the experience.

Valerie White
Interweave Treasurer
Sharon, MA



First same-sex couple to marry in the chapel at West Point



Our Chapter's Next Chapter

In June of 2005, I was one of several members of Oklahoma City's First Unitarian Church who gathered, in the midst of our preparations for Oklahoma City's Pride Festival and Parade, to discuss the possibility of organizing an Interweave chapter within our congregation. Several of us were involved with BGLTQ organizations in the wider community, our congregation had been certified as a Welcoming Congregation since 1998, and our Program Minister, Jonalu Johnstone, was serving at the time as the President of Interweave Continental, Interweave's national organization. Why wouldn't our congregation have an Interweave chapter of its own?

At the same time, one might have asked – and some did – why we would need an Interweave chapter? Our congregation was a fixture at Pride festivals and a regular participant in Pride parades, our ministers weighed in regularly in public debates over issues related to sexual orientation, and we proudly self-identified as a Welcoming Congregation. What more did we need to be doing?

Our serious discussion about forming an Interweave chapter began as we worked our way through sections of the UUA's "Living the Welcoming Congregation" program and asked ourselves, perhaps somewhat belatedly, the crucial question, "Now what?" Rather than listing our accomplishments as a Welcoming Congregation – and they were many – we began to reflect on what more we could do as a predominantly heterosexual, white, middle-class congregation to make our community more open and more welcoming to BGLTQ people and to expand our engagement with Oklahoma City's large and diverse BGLTQ community.

The Interweave chapter that we envisioned would play an active role in organizing social events for members of our congregation and the wider community, including both BGLTQ individuals and Allies, and it would sponsor educational programs to help expand our congregation's and our community's awareness of the diverse range of issues that affect the BGLTQ community. At the same time, our

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group would be a visible presence outside of our congregation, bearing witness through outreach and advocacy to our Unitarian Universalist commitment to support the BGLTQ community.

Our vision was an ambitious one, and we've spent the past seven and a half years working to realize it. Our numbers, like those of just about every voluntary organization, have fluctuated, but over the years we've included, albeit not always simultaneously, an impressive cross-section of our congregation's membership, including gay, lesbian, straight and occasionally transgender individuals, as well as several long-term participants from outside of our congregation. I'm proud to say that we've persevered and that we have continued to live out our commitment to making decisions by consensus, hammered out over monthly potluck lunches. Those potlucks have acquired a reputation for the quality and variety of food that we contribute.

The list of our chapter's achievements is an impressive one. In addition to hosting our congregation's booth at the Oklahoma City Pride Festival and organizing our annual Pride Service each year, we have sponsored film screenings and discussions for the congregation and the wider community, we have conducted educational programs on bisexuality and on transgender issues as part of our congregation's adult education program, we have lobbied for BGLTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policies in our city and our schools, we have organized sessions at regional BGLTQ-focused conferences and summits, and we have played an active role in organizing Oklahoma City Youth United (OCKYU), a citywide social and support group for BGLTQ and Allied youth.

It's hard to believe that our Interweave chapter is almost eight years old now. It's been an adventure for all of us who have been part of the group, and I think that we are stronger both as individuals and as a congregation because of the work we have done. At the same time, there's much more work to be done. As Unitarian Universalists we place a high value on education, and we pride ourselves on our readiness to

explore new ideas and to confront difficult questions. As a chapter, we have challenged ourselves and our congregation to ask and to attempt to answer some of those hard questions, but perhaps too often we have kept these exciting, often exhilarating conversations to ourselves, and we haven't done as much as we might to challenge those friends, neighbors and fellow Oklahomans outside of our congregation who do not see eye to eye with us.

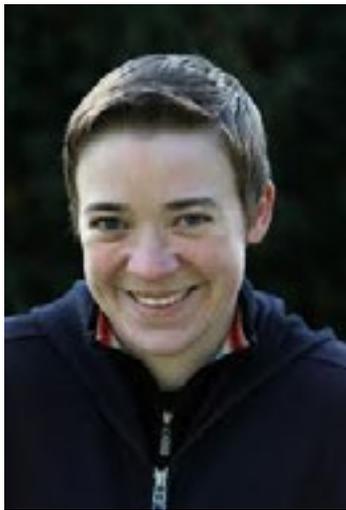
Oklahoma remains one of the most socially conservative states, and public discourse is often dominated by a rhetoric that is implicitly and sometimes explicitly homophobic, biphobic and transphobic. Change is possible, and anyone who looks at our city and our state with open eyes can see that change is taking place, even if we sometimes seem to take a step backwards for every two steps that we take forward. To fulfill our vision of seven summers ago, we shall need, in our next chapter as a chapter, to step farther out of our comfort zone and to engage even more actively with allies, both within and outside of Unitarian Universalism, to confront and combat bias as it occurs, all too regularly, in the world around us.

This, I believe, is one the places where our affiliation with a newly reinvigorated Interweave Continental will serve us well. As a member of Interweave Continental's national Board of Directors as well as the facilitator of the Oklahoma City Interweave chapter, I have been excited to see Interweave Continental expanding its outreach, undertaking ambitious new program such as its national youth initiative, and responding vocally and articulately to major issues on the national level. Our intimate connection with a national advocacy organization as well as with other BGLTQ-positive agencies, organizations and religious communities in Oklahoma will provide the strength and support we shall need in order to transform the wider communities to which we belong.

J.David Macey, Jr.,
Oklahoma City, OK

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Continuing the Welcoming Congregation Journey: Transgender Identity and Inclusion



Alex Kapitan

On Saturday, February 9, from 1:00-5:00 p.m., First Unitarian Church, Portland, Oregon, will be sponsoring an interactive and informative course in transgender identity. This workshop will include a panel discussion and practical and concrete steps for increasing mindfulness and support of people of all identities and ways of expressing gender. All faith traditions and family members are welcome to bring questions, energy, and curiosity.

This workshop will be facilitated by Alex Kapitan, the Unitarian Universalist Association LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Administrator in the office of LGBTQ Ministries. Alex manages the Welcoming Congregation Program and works to assist UU congregations and leaders in increasing their welcome and inclusion of all people. Alex is a transgender and queer-identified lifelong Unitarian Universalist.

Preceding the workshop, there will be a trans pre-program meet up for all trans, gender non-conforming, and gender questioning/curious spiritual folks and people of faith. From 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., attendees are invited to join in fellowship, brunch, and informal dialog about all things trans and spiritual. In addition, several local trans community service and advocacy agencies will be providing information throughout the day for attendees.

Location of Event:

First Unitarian Church, Eliot Chapel, 1011 SW 12th Ave.,
Portland, Oregon 97205

To RSVP for the trans-meet up and for all questions, please contact:

Kate Fagerholm, Administrative Associate
KFagerholm@firstunitarianportland.org
503-228-6389, x.10



First Unitarian Church, in Portland, Oregon

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