

# Interweave Connect

January 2014



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## Letter From Interweave Continental President

Dear Interweave members and friends,

The January issue of *Interweave Connect* focuses on Interweave Continental and its board members. As President of the board, there are times when I need to answer for myself the following questions: Why am I investing in Interweave Continental? What are we, as a board, accomplishing by our actions?" Briefly stated, here are some of my answers:

- generate a monthly newsletter
- hold monthly board conference calls
- sponsor the annual sermon contest and Mark DeWolfe award
- organize an Interweave banquet and a reception to honor our LGBTQ ministers at GA
- generate a transgender curriculum that is currently being tested
- establish financial support for one (or more) transgender youth to attend Camp Atanu'tiq, a camp for trans youth and their families
- maintain a website
- hold an annual retreat of our board members
- sponsor an annual reception for UUs at "Creating Change"
- encourage Interweave members and friends in our UU congregations to interact and learn from one another

We, the Interweave Continental board, believe that the above actions are among those necessary for creating change and establishing a more just society for LGBTQ persons. Will they sustain us? Can we, as a totally volunteer organization that relies solely on individual and chapter dues for financial support, remain self-sustaining? You may hear a certain skepticism or maybe a voice of frustration in my words. I, and the other members of the board, worry about our limited finances. In truth, we are doing so much! And still, there is more to accomplish.

So, for this issue of *Interweave Connect*, I have asked each of our board members to help me with the following questions: Why are you investing time and energy in Interweave Continental? Why are you a member of the Interweave Continental board?

I hope you are inspired by the responses that they have provided. I participated in the process of thinking about those questions, and I have also contributed an article.

Perhaps each of you will also address those questions and consider why you and/or your congregation should financially support Interweave Continental by becoming a dues-paying member or chapter. We would love to hear your responses.

Until next month!  
Maryka Bhattacharyya  
President, Interweave Continental

The National Conference  
on LGBT Equality  
Creating Change

Interweave Continental  
Reception page 7

# A REMINDER FOR ALL *INTERWEAVE CONNECT* READERS

## Is Your Congregation Doing a Fundraiser For This Project?

**A**ranu'tiq (a-ra-NOO-tick) is a Yu'pik word for a person who was thought to embody both male and female, a man-woman. The Yu'pik are a group of indigeneous people who live in Alaska. It is interesting to note that the name, Yu'pik, comes from the Yu'pik word yuk which means "person" and pik which means "real." Translated, Yu'pik literally is a "real person."

Among the Yu'pik, Aranu'tiq people were often revered because it was believed that they transcended traditional gender boundaries. Thus, it is significant that a summer camp for transgender youth should be called Camp Aranu'tiq. It is a camp for real people who transcend traditional gender boundaries. Founded in 2009 by Nick Teich, PhD, LCSW, Camp Aranu'tiq provides transgender

and gender-variant/gender-nonconforming youth with a safe, fun, and unique camp experience where campers are able to express gender however they are comfortable.

In 2007, while on a summer cruise for LGBTQ families, Nick met two transgender children. Neither he nor they had knowingly met other transgender children before this experience. Nick realized that the two children felt safe on the cruise, unlike how they felt in other places and situations where they had been routinely bullied.

Two years after his summer cruise, Nick founded Camp Aranu'tiq. The camp offers activities for youth ages six – eighteen through its week long summer camps, leadership camps and weekend family camps. Campers sleep in cabins divided by age group and gender identity/expression. All cabins are under the direct care of adult staff at all times.



**T**here have been two locations: New England and California. However, they have outgrown the New England location, and the camp will be moved to a larger facility sometime this year. For the protection of campers, the exact location of the camp is told to parents, but not to the public.

Camp tuition is lower than most camps in order to provide a camp experience for trans youth of all social economic backgrounds. For families who cannot afford the tuition, the camp offers need-based financial assistance, and has provided airfare for some campers. Nick, and the volunteer counselors who work with him, believe in the "life-changing power of camp." Nick has a deep personal interest in helping transgender youth to be themselves.

In 2012, Nick authored *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue* (Columbia University Press).

Tova Vitiello  
*Interweave Connect*, editor



## Why Interweave Continental?

I've always been an activist. One of my most cherished pieces of personal memorabilia is a letter from the director of the American Soap Box Derby, written in response to my question of why girls weren't allowed to participate. I was 11 years old, growing up in suburban Atlanta. Much more recently, I had the privilege of working with Rev. Keith Kron to create a volume of 15 stories about life at the intersection of being LGBTQ and a person of faith (Coming Out in Faith). I am a founding member of six nonprofit organizations and have served on many more boards, including two terms as president of Interweave.

Why Interweave? On a personal level, the people I get to meet and work with are really very special...smart, generous and incredibly devoted to building Beloved Community. I am committed to Interweave at an organizational level for two reasons, one internal and one external:

There is no other faith – non e – that does more to celebrate LGBTQs in every area of our lives. From the smallest congregations to the UUA, embracing the inherent worth and dignity of every person is manifested in the ordinations, weddings, leadership roles and so much more that is available to LGBTQ UUs. At the same time, there is always more to learn, another bridge to cross, an even fuller way to realize the Beloved Community Unitarian Universalism offers. Maybe it is learning about the “silent” B and T in LGBT or “gay parenting.” Maybe it is helping allies move from awareness to action. Interweave is uniquely positioned to support those journeys. As an external membership organization, Interweave's work complements UUA



staff efforts in multiple ways...sometimes by saying things those on the “inside” can't say to individuals and congregations within UUism.

The second reason Interweave is critical is that most people outside UUism have no idea just how welcoming our faith community is – and they need that knowledge. How many LGBTQ people do you know, for example, who lump all religions into the bucket labelled “haters”? How many LGBTQ people of faith and allies do you know who might find solace and spiritual growth in a UU congregation? We're not for everyone, that's for sure. But ignorance of the gifts of respect and inclusion UUism offers is NOT bliss –

**and a visible Interweave chapter is the single most effective way congregations can send a clear signal to LGBTQ people and our allies that UUism embraces all of who they are, as well as those they love.**

The day-to-day work of Interweave is done through generous contributions of volunteer time, talent and commitment. Individual and congregational memberships pay the hard costs for things like having a presence at GA, sending transgender children to camp, printing the newsletter for subscribers who don't have internet access, and transactional expenses like banking and internet fees. None of it happens without your support. If you are a member already, thank you. If not, please consider joining Interweave, individually and as a congregation.

Susan Gore, Secretary  
Interweave Continental

## WHY IS INTERWEAVE CONTINENTAL IMPORTANT TO ME?

When Andrew Luck, quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts, was down 28 points in the playoffs against the Kansas City Chiefs, his statement said it all: “There are no 28-point touchdowns!” The process of winning against the Chiefs required multiple small back-to-back moves down the field, gaining only 3 or 7 points each time.

Likewise, the long-term changes we aim to achieve for LGBTQ persons require that ALL OF US invest not only in achieving those changes by reaching out to the hearts and minds of human beings everywhere, we need to also reach out over multiple generations. There are no 28-point touchdowns! We stay the course and continue investing, realizing that the part of the whole picture that we deal with each day grows and changes, as our small steps unmistakably take us in the direction we want to go. We celebrate the touchdowns, and then we expand our efforts to address the next challenge.

Regarding progress during 2013, there is more awareness and understanding of the issues related to marriage equality and gender identity. Conversations among our young people reveal more knowledge and acceptance of the diversity among gender identities. There is more knowledge and acceptance of transgender people. And to me, that advancement in awareness and knowledge and understanding and acceptance is a prerequisite to achieving changes in the law and in human behavior.

So, that is why I am investing. I want to be part of the effort that continues through time to try to change things, even when many voices ask: “Why do we need to invest? We have come so far. My life is fine.”



### WHAT DOES INTERWEAVE CONTINENTAL PROVIDE TO YOU? WHY SHOULD YOUR CONGREGATION INVEST AND BECOME A DUES-PAYING MEMBER NOW?

Please read my President's letter on the first page of this issue of *Interweave Connect* to be reminded of the many actions that the Interweave Continental board members take – our monthly newsletter being one of them! Also, please read the statements that the individual board members generated for this newsletter. You will notice that each one is different in perspective from the other, but each board member expresses a dedication that makes Interweave (on the national level) what it is today – a volunteer organization highly worthy of your support! By becoming a member, you and your congregation will not only benefit from what Interweave Continental provides, you

will also reach out to support its ability to continue providing it.

Maryka Bhattacharyya  
President, Interweave Continental

## Why Is Interweave Continental Important?

The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City (UUSIC) was formed (1995) in response to the oppression of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. With the support of our Board of Directors, we took our congregation through the process of becoming a "Welcoming Congregation." Then on May 18, 1997, we voted unanimously to become an official Welcoming Congregation. At that time, our Interweave chapter was formed and we became a member of Interweave Continental.

Some people wondered why we wanted to become an official Welcoming Congregation when we already had a history of welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. For example: in 1972, as a co-founder of Iowa City's Lesbian Alliance, I went to the minister of the UUSIC and asked if his congregation would allow us to hold dances there. The answer was "yes." In addition to dances, the UUSIC hosted lesbian talent shows, poetry readings, concerts, and a lesbian version of "Taming of the Shrew."

After the Stonewall Riots occurred (1969), police continued to raid lesbian and gay bars. When lesbians rented space for dances, the police threatened to arrest us for unlawful assembly. The UUSIC offered us a safe place to meet. As a result, many of us became members.

Because justification for the oppression of LGBTQ (queer and/or questioning) people is often "religiously" motivated and justified, the UUSIC felt that it was necessary to formally welcome LGBTQ people. As a continuation of our own education and advocacy, we added transgender, questioning and queer to our original list of people who were and are oppressed due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

and gender expression.

Since those early days of meeting at 10 South Gilbert Street (the UUSIC address), Iowa City also continued with its own education and advocacy. In 1977 sexual orientation was added to its anti-discrimination ordinance, and in 1996 Iowa City became one of the first cities in the nation to expand the law to include gender identity. In 2012, the University of Iowa became the first public university in the U.S. to include questions about sexual orientation in their application for admission in order to connect students with resources and networks of interest. In addition, on their applications students have three choices for gender identity: male, female, and transgender. There is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Clinic that provides comprehensive primary care for adult and child (over 10) LGBTQ patients, including hormone therapy and post-surgical care for those who have undergone gender affirming surgery.

There are numerous other supportive services and organizations, such as Iowa Safe School, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center (LGBTRC), the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Staff and Faculty Association (LGBT SFA), The Quire (GLBT Chorus), the University of Iowa Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Allied Union (GLBTAU), One Iowa, Queer Connections, United Action for Youth (GLBTQ & A Youth Group) .... This is just a partial list. In addition to the Unitarian Universalist Society, there are other spiritual and religious organizations who do more than "accept" us, they celebrate us!

So why are both the Interweave chapter and Interweave Continental still important to our congregation? Obviously, LGBTQ people in Iowa City have "the good life!" And at the federal level, look



## Why Is Interweave Continental Important continued from page 5

at all the legal changes that have occurred to bring about equality for lesbians and gays, two groups among LGBTQ.

Yes, I live in Iowa City where life is good for many of us. However, the heteronormative hierarchy in our U.S. culture continues to oppress LGBTQ people in many towns and cities and states within our nation. Prejudice and discrimination still exist in many of the schools and workplaces throughout our country. LGBTQ youth are bullied two to three times more than heterosexual youth. LGBTQ youth attempt suicide four times more than their heterosexual peers. The exact suicide rate is probably higher since sexuality and gender among LGBTQ youth is often hidden from others. There were 1,123 reported murders of transgender people in the last five years (Transgender Europe Press Release, March 2013). Just recently, in December 2013, two transgender women were murdered in Cleveland, Ohio.

I am fortunate, such violence doesn't exist in Iowa City. And yes, same-gender couples can be legally married here while same-sex marriages do not exist in most states. And in many places where they have been legalized, there are groups trying to ban them.

Sadly, my work is not finished. Our work is not finished. I am still committed to the concepts of freedom and equality and justices for everyone. I believe those concepts can become concrete reality in the lives of all people.

If I were in the ocean drowning and someone threw a life-jacket to me, enabling me to swim to shore, I would not leave my jacket in the sand and walk away if there were others, without life-jackets, drowning in the water. I would toss my jacket back in the ocean. I would reach out and help, just as someone reached out to me. I have privileges and protections because of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and allies who struggled and

fought for those privileges and protections for me, a queer, lesbian, dyke.

My commitment to social justice includes participation on the Interweave Continental board because I see what Interweave Continental provides for LGBTQA people ... education, leadership, and organizational development. Through the newsletters, conference meetings and banquets, Interweave Continental offers opportunities to share ideas, to learn about programs and events in other towns and cities.

Interweave Continental is a way to connect with others. In the newsletter, *Interweave Connect*, people have the opportunity to share their issues and concerns. For some, the newsletter that Interweave Continental prints each month is their only safe "community." Although some of us are "out," there are LGBTQ people who fear leaving the "closet." *Interweave Connect* is a "life-line."

In some communities, people have attended Interweave activities and then decided to join the UU congregation. As one young person said to me: "I was living in a rural, conservative town and I was harassed in high school and in my church because I am transgender. So, I decided to move after graduation. I looked on the Internet for a congregation in my new city where I would be welcome. Several said that they were open to everyone, but the UU had an Interweave chapter. For me, that meant I really could be myself, a gender non-conforming person."

Interweave Continental and Interweave chapters have a significant role in our UU congregations and in our towns and cities. We present a challenge to our communities to expand the acceptance and celebration of what it means to be human.

Tova Vitiello, editor of *Interweave Connect*  
Interweave chapter, co-chair  
Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City, IA

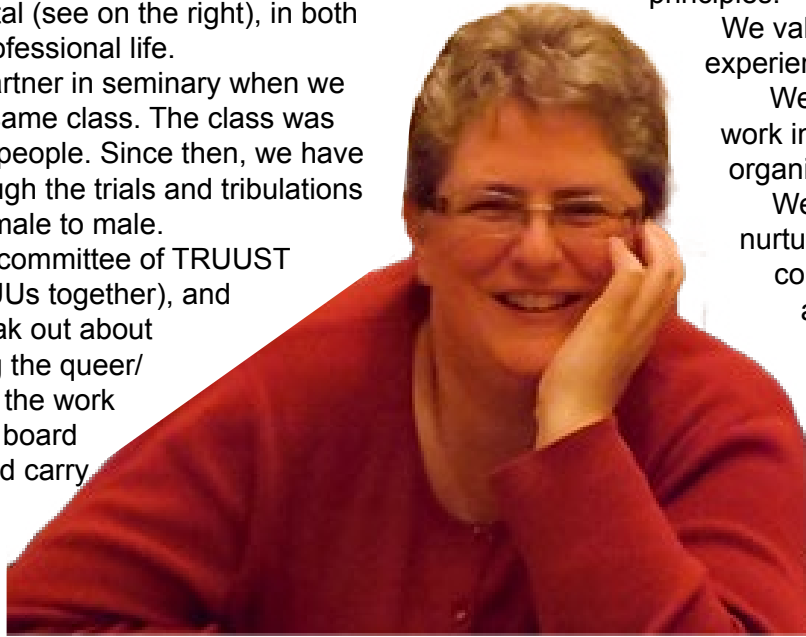


## Resident Minister: Interweave Continental Board

Other than myself, the Interweave Continental board is composed of lay persons who sometimes find themselves dealing with situations that would confound even the most experienced minister. I appreciate the opportunity to apply my training and share my experience as a minister to help. I have facilitated interactions among board members, and I have facilitated communications between board members and congregations. My intent is to always bring us back to the shared commitment we hold to our UU principles. I am committed to the mission and vision of Interweave Continental (see on the right), in both my personal and my professional life.

I met my lifelong partner in seminary when we found ourselves in the same class. The class was pastoral care for GLBT people. Since then, we have remained together through the trials and tribulations of his transition from female to male.

I sit on the steering committee of TRUUST (transgender religious UUs together), and I am ever-willing to speak out about my experiences in living the queer/transgender life. I enjoy the work that we, the Interweave board members, engage in and carry out as a team.



Reverend Michelle LaGrave  
Resident Minister of Interweave

### Interweave Continental Mission And Vision

Interweave Continental is a membership organization that advocates for LGBTQ people and actively works to end oppression based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

We recognize that we will not be free until all forms of oppression have ended.

We are an associated organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

We are guided by Unitarian Universalist principles.

We value and affirm the lives and experiences of all LGBTQ people.

We provide leadership and work in collaboration with other organizations of similar vision.

We strive to connect and nurture all LGBTQ individuals, communities, groups, and their allies.

### Meet the Leaders of Interweave

8:30 pm Friday January 31  
Room 346AB at the Hilton

A church that not only says it welcomes LGBTQs but ordains, marries and celebrates our fabulousness in every way? It's Unitarian Universalism. Meet the Leaders of Interweave: UUs for

**The National Conference  
on LGBT Equality**  
*Creating Change*

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

LGBTQ Concerns and staff from Multicultural Ministries Office of the UUA. Learn more about Interweave and Standing on the Side of Love, a faith-based movement for social action. Free food and beverages, too! Can't make the reception? Find us online at [www.interweaveuu.org](http://www.interweaveuu.org) or at [www.uua.org/lgbtq](http://www.uua.org/lgbtq).

## Interweave Continental is a Mega-phone for Queer Folks

**D**uring a conference call involving Interweave board members, Maryka, our president, asked the following questions: Why are you investing in being a board member? Why is Interweave Continental important? What do we provide to congregations that makes it important for them to become dues-paying members of Interweave Continental? In response, one of our members asserted that UUism is the most queer friendly religion she knows and that's why she loves it. I agree with her.

I love that our faith has always been ahead of the curve in terms of knowledge and acceptance of LGBTQQIA people. It's one thing to say that you are an open and affirming congregation and think nothing more needs to be done about being inclusive, and it is quite another thing to really examine what that means from a structural and personal experience. Unitarian Universalist congregations walk the walk. They use an amazing comprehensive sex-ed curriculum called "Our Whole Lives" to teach our youth, teens and young adults about human sexuality. They are allies with other LGBTQQIA people and organizations. Unitarian Universalists fight as a whole on the local and national level for more protections for LGBTQQIA people. We have a national group, Interweave Continental, that keeps our congregations informed about LGBTQQIA related news, and it offers resources and support to them.

I think one of Interweave's most important roles is to act as a mega-phone for queer UUs. In the pages of our newsletter, we can lift up and share stories of joy, heartbreak, triumph and hope. Someone, for example, in the rural south who is feeling discouraged by the lack of understanding about trans\* people can read about what is happening in California with progressive trans\* inclusive laws, and feel

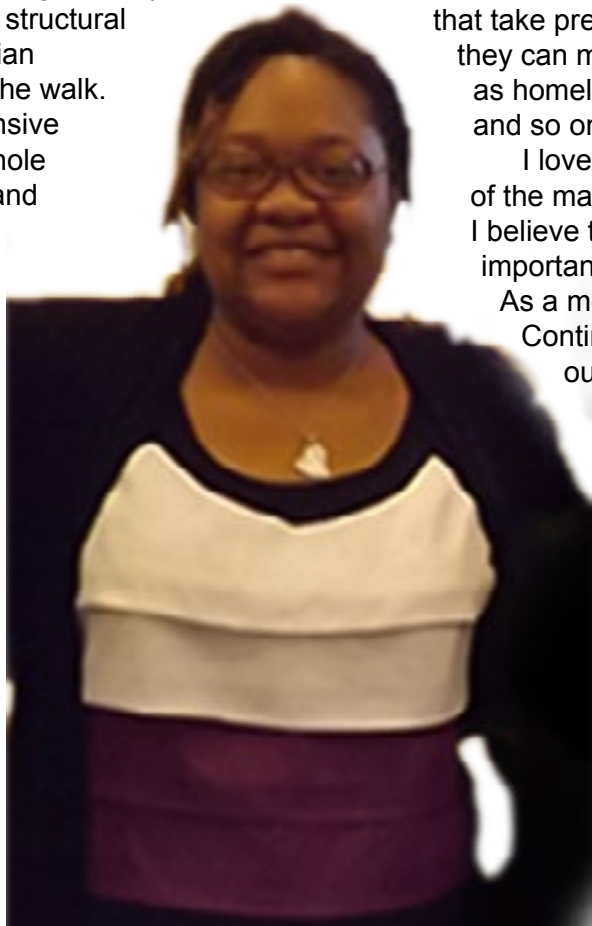
hopeful that it will get better in that southern community. People need lifelines like this. People need glimmers of hope in the darkness.

In terms of what I think I bring to Interweave Continental and to my own congregation, I make sure that the voices heard are not just the white, middle, and upper-class male voices that are, I believe, over-represented in the larger movement. When my own congregation's Interweave group was talking about marriage equality as the end-all-be-all of lesbian and gay rights, I brought their attention to the fact that their privilege was showing as middle-aged, white, middle class. It had not occurred to my well-meaning church friends that queer youth, people of color and transgender folks have other concerns and issues to deal with that take precedence over whether or not they can marry. There are issues such as homelessness, violence, racism and so on.

I love that our faith is at the forefront of the marriage equality movement, but I believe that we have pushed other important struggles to the back burner.

As a member of the Interweave Continental board, I want to remind our UU congregations that there are still extremely important issues that we should address: employment discrimination, hate crimes, substance abuse, youth homelessness, sexual exploitation, violence against trans folk .... I want to make sure we are fighting the good fight on multiple fronts, and I want Unitarian Universalists and Interweave members to represent the voices of those many people who have not been heard. I want

them to know that we are listening, and we will take action!



Niala Terrell-Mason  
Board Member  
Interweave Continental



## We Can Make A Difference

**A**s an older, ex-Catholic lesbian, I feel passionate about LGBTQ issues. Things are happening today that I couldn't have dreamed of forty or fifty years ago. A same-sex couple was married at West Point! There is more acceptance of transgender people. Some schools have welcomed LGBTQ students with their same-gender partners at school dances. When I first came out, none of my friends, nor I, would have imagined such things! If we did, we kept quiet. It would have been thought "crazy" by the rest of society. But, it is part of our lives today. Eight years ago, my partner and I happened to enter the UU church in Eugene, OR. We were welcomed as individuals and as a couple. I didn't believe it! It was our first experience with a religious institution where we felt truly welcome. The reason I am involved in Interweave is because I want to support all UU congregations in their efforts to welcome and celebrate LGBTQ people.



UU of Eugene Interweave Chapter meets the second Friday of each month for a potluck, movie discussion and fun.

While LGBTQ people have managed to bring about changes in our society, our work is not done. There are still kids who are homeless for no other reason than they are LGBTQ. Marriage equality is now a fact of life in a few states, but states like UT and OR (my home state) are still struggling. I am told that transgender people are ten years behind lesbians and gays as far as acceptance. Some older LGBTQ people have been forced back in the closet because they are not accepted in their hospital or nursing facility. Perhaps some of you have had the experience of being without your significant other during a medical crisis because you are both of the same gender.

Interweave Continental has been, and continues to be, a learning experience for me. It is an opportunity for me to see what other UU congregations are doing for their LGBTQ people. Because of my work with Interweave Continental, I have had the pleasure of meeting wonderful people who are also passionate about LGBTQ issues. *Interweave Connect*, this newsletter, informs me and others about what is happening to Queers. Remember, a few years ago when "Queer" was a dirty word? Things are happening fast, and it is important that we are informed about the changes that are being made. Interweave Continental is doing many things to support LGBTQ people – to mention a few:

- An Interweave banquet each year at GA
- A reception honoring LGBTQ ministers each year at GA
- A Sermon Award for a minister or student who gives an important sermon about LGBTQ issues
- The Mark DeWolfe award to people who have spent years making a difference for LGBTQ people.
- Hosting (in conjunction with UUA Multicultural Ministries Office) a reception for LGBTQ UUs who attend Creating Change

This year, Interweave Continental will financially help a young person attend Camp Aranu'tiq, a camp for transgender youth. Yes, we are doing all of those things, but it costs money. We need your financial contributions to continue. Start an Interweave Continental chapter in your Congregation. Our work isn't done, and you can make a difference!

Nisco Junkins,  
Vice-President and Newsletter Production Manager  
Member of UU Church of Eugene, OR



Kimberly and Nisco Junkins will be offering Transfiguring Congregations – a Transgender Curriculum from Interweave Continental!

## How Interweave Benefits UUCE

The Interweave Chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene is an energizing and vital part of the church. One of the first UUA recognized Interweave Chapters, the Eugene group has been a focal point for celebration, welcome and support for LGBTQ members & allies. Interweave provides the UUCE with consistent and effective contributions in education, community building and social justice work.

For many years, the UUCE chapter of Interweave has offered a monthly potluck and movie night at the church. Church and community members are invited to view movies that address varied aspects of LGBTQ, sexual identity and gender issues. Evenings usually open with introductions and each person responding to a question related to the theme of the upcoming movie. This is often a fun and creative interlude. After the movie, there are discussions/responses to the films. Frequently, personal stories are shared and heard. In addition, as specific social justice, community, or entertainment opportunities or issues arise, the informal Interweave meeting will be a source of information and action. All parts of the Interweave meeting are conducted in accordance with UU principles and sources of our tradition. This is an approach that often engages and intrigues guests who are experiencing the Unitarian Universalist church for the first time.

### Among the benefits of Interweave to the UUCE are:

#### Support for UUCE LGBTQ members, allies and families, including:

- Fun, conversation, entertainment, education, intriguing movies often not seen anywhere else in local venues; good food
- A welcoming place for free and responsible search for meaning for people at all points on their path of inquiry

- Support and information resources for LGBTQ and ally families in locating LGBTQ friendly schools, community resources, support groups, networking opportunities



UU Church of Eugene

#### Community building within the church:

- Interweave provides leadership on LGBTQ/sexual identity/gender education issues in the UUCE. For example, the leader of UUCE Interweave, Nisco Junkins, who serves on the national Interweave Continental board, will be offering the UUCE an opportunity to be a site for the first tests of the new Transgender curriculum developed by the UUA.
- The Interweave (excellent) potluck and movie brings many allies to an LGBTQ social event opening doors to communication.
- Interweave attracts new members to the church. People coming to Interweave experience the principles and our sources of wisdom and spirituality in action. They experience the respect for the inherent worth and dignity of each individual and they see a church that is seeking justice and equity. Many people have come to several Interweave meetings and then have decided to attend a church service. Some go on to become members.

## How Interweave Benefits UUCE continued from page 10

### Community building at the local, regional and national levels:

- Interweave has helped raise funds in support of UUCE youth within our church to attend an Interweave Continental transgender summer camp. The UUCE Religious Education program donated the proceeds from one of their monthly fundraising “Soup Sunday” events to this project. The church also contributed its Third Sunday Offering. Not only will this “scholarship” support specific people in the church, it raised awareness of transgender issues for all members of the UUCE.
- Interweave sends announcements of the Movie Nights to a large mailing list of local churches, synagogues, other religious organizations, local LGBTQ organizations and activist groups. As a result, every month the UUCE and Interweave are widely advertised in the local community.
- Interweave sponsors special events, such as inviting a recognized Portland movie maker to present a movie about the trans experience. His presentation of the movie and his personal attendance at the showing attracted diverse segments of the local community, including members of the UUCE, people from various parts of the university community, local activists and people from the region around Eugene.
- Interweave welcomed an LGBTQ group from a small city 60 miles away, who were seeking support and connection to a larger LGBTQ community. They attended a movie night and provided fascinating insights and opinions in the discussion.



### UUCE Interweave has been an active voice for social change within the church and community:

- UUCE Interweave is a visible presence at local community events. A significant contingent of Interweave participants and allies walked with the banner of UUCE Interweave in the annual Eugene Celebration parade. Interweave had a table and representatives at the Eugene Celebration and Gay Pride events.
- Interweave invited local members of PFLAG to a movie night in their honor.
- Interweave connected with the statewide Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) organization, which is instrumental in leading an effort to change an amendment to the Oregon State Constitution which defines marriage as only between a man and a woman. BRO is working to bring marriage rights to LGBTQ citizens. Interweave members are supporting the petition drive for BRO, had a BRO table at the UUCE Service in Action Fair and established a liaison with the BRO group that is doing outreach to the religious community.
- Interweave supported a UUCE youth Ally to attend the UUA General Assembly. At UUCE he presented the anti-bullying program he created and implemented at his high school. Interweave assisted him in organizing his own wonderful fundraising event, where he wowed the audience with his diverse musical talents.

The UUCE Interweave brings creativity and commitment to service in action. Our actions encompass a wide range of strategies and targets. We have affected people’s lives, hearts and understanding and in doing that, we have affected our own.

Laura Alpert and Jean Ella  
Members of UUCE

## Attorney General Holder Responds to Same-sex Marriage Decision in Utah

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. said that Obama administration will recognize more than 1,300 same-sex marriages, even though the state of Utah won an injunction to stop same-sex marriages. The litigation could take years.

On Dec. 20th, U.S. District Judge Robert J. Shelby, a 2012 appointment of President Barack Obama, ruled that Utah's ban on same-sex marriage violated the guarantee of equal protection and due process under the U.S. Constitution.

Judge Shelby said the state's laws "deny its gay and lesbian citizens their fundamental right to marry and, in so doing, demean the dignity of these same-sex couples for no rational reason." Judge Shelby ruled for three same-sex couples in a lawsuit challenging a voter-passed amendment to the

Utah constitution that defined marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. The trial court ruling overturned a state constitutional amendment, approved in 2004 with sixty-six percent of the vote. After the federal court ruled that Utah's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, there were 1,360 same-sex marriages.

The state of Utah unsuccessfully petitioned two lower courts to stop same-sex weddings before it succeeded in persuading the United States Supreme Court to issue a stay while the state appealed. On Jan. 6th, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a stay,

pending appeal of the ruling, thus preventing additional same-sex marriages from being performed in the state. Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert announced on that day that the ban, an amendment to the Utah constitution, would be legally enforced while the litigation continued. During that time, he said, the state would not recognize or confer new marital benefits to those same-sex couples who had married.



Evan Wolfson, president and founder of Freedom to Marry, a New York-based group leading a campaign to legalize same-sex marriage, commented on the U.S. Supreme Court issuing a stay, pending appeal of the ruling. Wolfson said that the order wasn't a sign that the court is leaning against conferring same-sex marriage rights. He stated: "I don't think this order ... tells you anything about how the Supreme Court will

ultimately rule. This has to do more with the orderly and smooth process of an appeal."

Same-sex couples who had wed after Shelby's decision worried that the state might not recognize their marriages as valid. On Jan. 8th, Gov. Herbert's office sent a memo to state officials stating that Utah would not consider same-sex marriages lawful, as it appeals Shelby's ruling. However, on Jan. 9th Utah Attorney General Sean D. Reyes told all Utah county attorneys and clerks that even though the state "cannot currently legally recognize marriages other than those between a man and a women," the

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same-sex marriages that took place between Dec. 20 and Jan. 6 were recognized as legal at the time of the ceremony. Reyes recommended that clerks provide marriage certificates to all couples married during that period, saying that this would allow same-sex couples to have proper documentation in states that do recognize same-sex marriages.

Attorney General Holder announced on Jan. 10th that the Obama administration will recognize “for purposes of federal law” those marriages “as lawful and considered eligible for all relevant federal benefits.” Holder went on to say: “These families should not be asked to endure uncertainty regarding their status as litigation unfolds. In the days ahead, we will continue to coordinate across the federal government to ensure the timely provisions of every federal benefit to which Utah couples and couples throughout the country are entitled – regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages.”

There has been some discussion among lawyers as to the legal reasons why the federal government recognizes those same-sex marriages that were performed in Utah. Holder said that the Justice Department has been working since June 2013 to implement the Supreme Court’s decision in *United States v. Windsor* which maintained that people in same-sex marriages are entitled to equal treatment

under the law. The ruling required the federal government to recognize same-sex marriages from states where they are legal. Utah’s Attorney General Sean D. Reyes told all Utah county attorney’s and clerks that same-sex marriages that took place between Dec. 20 and Jan. 6 were recognized as legal at the time of the ceremony.

In addition, even though Utah is not conferring any new benefits on same-sex couples who married, the state has not taken any action that would indicate that the marriages are void. One example: The state of Utah said it would not invalidate spousal health benefits that it had already approved for same-sex spouses of state employees. Another example: The state of Utah said it would not invalidate new driver’s licenses that it had already given to same-gender married couples who had changed their last names.

Not long ago, President Obama stated that he did not support legalizing marriage for same-gender couples. Now, he and his administration are taking what they believe to be the correct legal position on same-sex marriage. Unitarian Universalists might say that the federal government is “standing on the side of love.”

Tova Vitiello, editor  
*Interweave Connect*



## Utah and the Vortex of Hate

While many in this country are shivering in the coldest of storms due to a polar vortex, we are driving back to Utah from a state where the sun still shines and there is warmth. I spent the last three weeks in California, the state of my birth; the state that in my heart will always be my home.

What a trip! What a journey! What a swirling of emotions the last few weeks have been! On January 3rd, with more than a hundred friends and family members in attendance, we exchanged our wedding vows and danced late into the night. Our joy was even more meaningful because we thought that when we returned to Utah our marriage would also be legally recognized.

We thought the smoggy hateful skies of Utah had parted and the light of love was shining brightly. We felt excited. We imagined all the weddings I would officiate. It seemed that justice had finally come..

Then, just as our car was almost packed, justice was so quickly snatched away. The vortex of hate blanketed Utah again. I feel rage. I also feel disappointed that we missed the celebrations, and will return only to share the grief and the pain. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker said: "the arc of the universe bends toward justice." I, too, believe the arc of the universe bends in that direction. However, I hate that the arc is such a long one.

The Rev. Parker worked to end slavery, but racism still thrives more than a hundred years later, and heterosexism and homophobia continue. I also know that love, in the end, is so much stronger than hate. I know that faith can be greater than fear.



Rev. Novak and Anne cutting their wedding cake

I know that the snow will eventually melt and the sun will shine again. In the meantime, we will just have to keep each other warm.

Rev. Theresa Novak,  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Ogden  
Ogden, UT