


Interweave World

Vibrant Threads from Unitarian Universalists for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns ▼ October/November 2006

Interweave's Mission/Vision

Interweave Continental is a membership organization actively working to end oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity, recognizing that we will not be free until all oppression is a thing of the past. We are an affiliate organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and our work is guided by Unitarian Universalist principles. We value and affirm the lives and experience of Queer people of faith of all ages, races, ethnicities, income levels, and abilities. By providing and supporting leadership, and working in collaboration with other organizations of similar vision, we strive to connect and nurture all Queer individuals, communities, groups, and their allies.

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UUs Work To Defeat Virginia "Marriage" Amendment

by Marc DeFrancis

As the summer heat lifts, I find myself tackling a second job with every spare volunteer minute I can find: fighting a marriage-exclusion amendment coming before voters in just two months. This November, Virginia will be one of the half-dozen states where our nuptial options—and our families' futures—will be weighed in the crude scale of ballot referenda.

You wouldn't know it to judge from the dull roar of karaoke and laughter that billows out of my favorite gay bar in Arlington, Virginia every Friday night. Only 50 days to go before harmless sounding Ballot Question No. 1 will face every voter here, and the last time I bothered the customers at Freddie's Beach Bar and Restaurant to ask, no more than half of them even knew there was an amendment to think about.

The fog of indifference—sometimes it's a brick wall of cynicism—is quite understandable. Until very recently our state legislature here in Virginia was only known for its ability to generate homophobic panic legislation any time the words "same" and "sex" were mentioned together. Many otherwise well-informed bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender (BGLT) folks stopped reading the coverage of state politics, if they ever started. And among those who do know a bit about our upcoming "marriage" amendment, quite a few are still staying away from advocacy—and may even stay home from the polls—because they assume the measure is bound to pass. But the good news is that this time that assumption is wrong.

Thanks to groundwork laid in years of work by our statewide BGLT rights group, Equality Virginia, along with our long-established local BGLT organizations in northern Virginia (Arlington and Alexandria especially) as well as increasingly vocal, increasingly visible (I'm talking about highway signs, honey) public advocacy by Unitarian Universalist (UU) churches all over Virginia, this time we are finding all kinds of support for equality from formerly quiet, or formerly waffling, political and business forces. This time, the state's League of Women Voters, our conservative Democrat governor Tim Kaine, and organizations like the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce have issued public statements of opposition to the homophobic amendment.

Virginia, continued on pg. 4

InterweaveWorld ...

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The Editor welcomes contributions to future issues. Please send submissions to either of the above addresses.

Final deadline for submissions for the next issue, December/January, is November 15th. Please send material as early as possible in order to preserve the Editor's sanity!

Please send changes of address to either of the above addresses.

If you would like to receive *InterweaveWorld* electronically, in a PDF format, please e-mail the Editor at mountaingirl@vtlink.net.

Get in Touch... ...with Interweave

Our website: www.uua.org/interweave

Our e-mail list: go to <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-d>

Our e-mail list for chapters: go to <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-chapterleaders>

Contact a Board Member: listed on page 9. Check out our portfolios to see who to direct your question to.

...with the UUA

The UUA website: www.uua.org

The Office of of BGLT Concerns' website: www.uua.org/obgltc

Words from the President Revive your Interweave Chapter!

by the Rev. Jonalu Johnstone

With the church year gearing up, many congregations are reviewing their programs. That makes it a great time to look at what your church or fellowship is doing in relation to bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender (BGLT) issues. We frequently get questions about what to do after you've earned the Welcoming Congregation designation, or how to revitalize a flagging Interweave chapter. (Join the Chapter Leaders email discussion list at <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-chapterleaders> if you want to throw around some of these ideas.)

While Interweave Continental is recognized as one of the most vital affiliate organizations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the true strength of Interweave lies in local activity and action. Local Interweave chapters can remind Welcoming Congregations not only that there's more work to be done, but that their very embrace of the Welcoming Congregation status means a commitment to advance BGLT issues within the church and the community.

So, here are some ideas to think about:

▼ Do members of your congregation work with other BGLT-positive congregations in your community? If not, reach out and set up a meeting or worship. What can you learn from each other? How can you work together in the community to address issues of concern?

▼ How are BGLT youth supported in your congregation and community? Do some research—talk to students in your youth group to find out what high school is really like. Is harassment dealt with, or ignored? Is there a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) in the local schools? Can students bring the date of their choice to prom? Is there a prom offered in the community targeted to BGLT students? Are non-discrimination policies of the schools inclusive of not only in terms of sexual orientation, but gender identity and expression? Do BGLT youth have a support group outside school? How could members of your Interweave chapter work on these issues?

▼ When's the last time your chapter had fun together? Look around for community events that you might attend as a group. Or fall back on an old standard and watch a good BGLT movie together. Invite the whole congregation. And don't forget the popcorn!

*The true strength
of Interweave lies
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and action.*

President, continued on pg. 3

President, *continued from page 2*

▼ Tackle the Living the Welcoming Congregation program, available on the UUA website, if you're already a designated Welcoming Congregation. And if you're not, I guess that would be the place to start.

▼ Come to the second annual chapter leaders' training at Convo in Atlanta, February 9–11, 2007.

As you start looking at your congregation and community, you're bound to find new ideas to get you going.

Jonalu Johnstone is President of Interweave Continental. She lives in Oklahoma.

Meeting and Retreat-ing

Early November is Retreat Time for the Interweave Continental Board and the Bisexuality Curriculum Committee -- both will be gathering at The Mountain in Highlands, NC. Lots of good conversation, goal setting, and curriculum writing will happen, all enhanced by the beautiful location.

The Bisexuality Curriculum Committee, funded by the UU Funding Program, is made up of the Rev. Ann Schranz, interim minister in Aptos, CA, the Rev. Amy Zucker-Morgenstern, parish minister in Palo Alto, CA, the Rev. Jane Dwinell, former president of Interweave Continental and Small Congregation Consultant, and your board members Allyson Diane Hamm, Scott McNeill, and Dana Dwinell-Yardley.

Look for reports in the next issue!

Queer and UU: Global Rights Legal rights of BGLT folk in countries with Unitarian Universalists



Australia: Legal. But state of Queensland sets age of consent for anal sex at 18, as opposed to 16 for non-anal sex, penalty up to 14 years.

Canada: Legal. Gay marriage allowed, although government is bringing forward motion to reconsider. Age for anal sex is 18, as opposed to 14 for non-anal sex.

Czech Republic: Legal.

Denmark: Legal.

Finland: Legal.

Germany: Legal. In some states, homosexuality is protected in the constitution.

Hungary: Legal

India: Lesbianism may not be prohibited. Gay men face up to 10 years imprisonment, but usually it's a much lighter sentence.

New Zealand: Legal.

Nigeria: Illegal. Up to 14 years imprisonment. But with much of country under sharia law, gays and lesbians can both be stoned to death. A new law to prevent gay marriage will make it illegal even to support homosexuality in the country

Pakistan: Illegal. Penalties up to death, especially if sharia law is applied, as is allowed, or depending on part of country.

Philippines: Legal.

Poland: Legal.

Romania: Legal.

Russia: Legal. But gays face harassment, violence and even murder from police, Christian fundamentalists and neo-Nazis. Moscow's Gay Pride parade in May was attacked by Orthodox Christians and fascists, while police stood by or even helped the attackers. Homosexuality is illegal in the Chechen Republic and the penalty may be death.

South Africa: Legal.

Homosexuality protected in constitution. But age of consent for homosexuality is 19, as opposed to 16 for heterosexuality. Same-sex marriage will be legal by the end of this year.

Spain: Legal. Gay marriage is legal.

Sri Lanka: Lesbianism not prohibited. Gay men face up to 12 years imprisonment.

United Kingdom: Legal.

United States of America:

Legal. Age of consent varies. Some states or towns prohibit gay marriage, domestic partnerships, adoption and anti-gay legislation. Vermont and Connecticut allow civil unions; Massachusetts allows gay marriage.

This information excerpted from an article entitled "Gay Around the World," published in the August 17, 2006 issue of Capital Xtra. Thanks to Art Brewer of Toronto, Ontario, for bringing it to our attention on the interweave-d email list.

Virginia, continued from page 1

Now mind you, our amendment may be easier to oppose than yours. Ours has been described by legal experts as the most sweeping, most draconian, and most vague of any such amendment ever put up on a state ballot. Indeed, its killer second paragraph is bound to be used to challenge straight unmarried women's right to seek protective orders against violently abusive former boyfriends. Two state courts in Ohio, where a similarly sweeping amendment passed last year, reached exactly that conclusion themselves.

When you think about it, what good law or contract connecting any two people might not be viewed as a "benefit," "quality," or "effect" of marriage? The argument that the amendment would undermine dozens of established laws and clog our courts is quite sound. It is the argument that our own governor, a devout Catholic who told voters during his campaign last year that he opposed both same-sex marriage and civil unions, has made several times, as have two former attorneys general and, just this week, the Washington Post. In short, our amendment is so terrible that even merchants of the status-quo can oppose it. The delicious irony here may be that our right-wing legislators are so right-wing, they've cooked up an amendment too toxic to pass.

Where does all this leave us Unitarian Universalists? Many of us, certainly in my congregation at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, want nothing more than to stand on the rooftop—from which, incidentally, we have hung four enormous rainbow flags—and shout to the whole state, "Don't you get it? Marriage is a civil right, for God's sake!" But beat-

ing a referendum measure requires recruiting the largest number of votes, and that means appealing to all kinds of people and doing coalition politics. This can be uncomfortable. You're not only sleeping with strange bedfellows (the Libertarian Party of Virginia, for example), you have to make them coffee in the morning.

So that's what we're doing. We are not compromising our principles, either. We always include the full UU message—we believe in full marriage equality—in our public statements on the amendment. But we do not always place that message in front. One month ago, we wrote up an "Open Letter to the People of Virginia," signed by our ministers, and sent it out to the local media. (A copy is now posted on the UUA website.) The letter begins by spelling out how the amendment could weaken protections for single women and unmarried couples. Then it goes on to spell out the economic argument; in northern Virginia this is especially powerful, because the 250-odd top corporations in the country that offer domestic-partner benefits all have offices here and many of them can relocate across the river where BGLT employment equality is respected or protected. Only toward the end of our Open Letter do we spell out how we understand marriage equality to be a fundamental civil rights matter.

For every group or subgroup of thinkers and citizens there is a different aspect of this amendment—and perhaps of most such amendments—where

we can find common ground to talk about. And as for the politically depressed BGLT community in Virginia, our message right now is simple: Let go of your cynicism, because this time the battle is winnable. A recent poll showed 54 percent of Virginians

now opposed or undecided about the amendment once shown its full text.

Within our congregation, we have found that once you articulate how political advo-

cacy work will directly translate a UU ethical principle into action and you show your own passion on the subject, people come out of the woodwork. One woman showed up at a volunteer meeting and explained that she wanted to do something because her daughter is lesbian. And every time I turn around, I receive yet another email from a senior, some over age 70, not only asking me how they can volunteer in this effort but lately informing me of discussion groups and pamphleteering that they've just gotten up and started on their own, and could I please hurry and get them some more materials?

Maybe that's one of the best things about taking up arms against a heartless new piece of legislation or ballot measure—that it invariably draws us closer to all kinds of people whose gut instinct for justice has been there all along, just waiting to be asked out onto the dance floor. I'm taking all comers.

Marc co-chairs the Vote No! Task Force at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington.

“Many of us want nothing more than to stand on the rooftop and shout to the whole state, “Don’t you get it?””

Learn ▼ Worship ▼ Play ▼ Network ▼ Relax ▼ Build Community ▼ Create Justice

CONVOCAATION 2007!

Interweave Continental's annual gathering

February 9-11, 2007

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta

Co-hosted by Atlanta area congregations



SAVE THE DATE... MORE INFO SOON!

Learn ▼ Worship ▼ Play ▼ Network ▼ Relax ▼ Build Community ▼ Create Justice ▼ Grow

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Chapter Chatter

gatherings and good works, joys and concerns, questions and support from Interweave Chapters, for Interweave Chapters

from Columbus, Ohio

Our chapter met Sunday, September 17 with 20 in attendance. We had been inactive the last four months due to unavoidable cancellation of some events. We elected new officers and discussed events, activities, and service for the upcoming year.

We planned a “Saints, Souls & Soup Pot Luck” at the home of a member on Friday, November 3 at 7 pm. Our next meeting is Sunday December 3 at 1 pm at the church. We also have a Holiday Cheer Gathering at Club Diversity (a piano bar) on Friday December 8 at 8 pm. We encourage all BGLTs and their friends and allies to join us!

Paul Lockwood

from Venice, Florida

Interweave of Venice has been showing movies once a month. September’s film was *Crash*; October’s, *Brokeback Mountain* (in honor of National Coming Out Day). In November we’ll be showing *Big Eden* and in December, *Philadelphia* (in honor of AIDS Awareness Day).

Interweave of Venice walked in the first Sarasota AIDS Walk fundraiser on October 14. We are also collecting signatures for equal marriage for same sex couples for a 2008 vote.

*Patrick Eaton
Interweave of Venice*

from Spartanburg, South Carolina

On behalf of the Interweave Chapter of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spartanburg (UUCS), I would like to invite you to visit our web presence at www.uucs.org/interweave.

We had a weekend of events around National Coming Out Day (Oct. 11). On October 8th, our sermon was on “Taking the Next Step,” our theme for National Coming Out Day. This year we encouraged our Straight Allies to take the next step as well. Check it out at www.uucs.org/sermons. [Ed. note: You can see a PDF schedule of the whole weekend’s events at www.uucs.org/interweave.]

Also, our Chapter is participating with PFLAG of Spartanburg and the Social Concerns Committee of UUCS to sponsor a booth at the Upstate Fair. The main purpose of the booth is to educate voters on the issues surrounding the proposed South Carolina Amendment to define marriage.

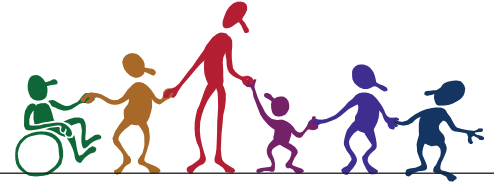
*Kim Danner
Interweave Chair
UU Church of Spartanburg, SC*

Join the discussion...check out these e-mail lists!

- ▼ **Interweave-sponsored general BGLT discussion**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-d>
- ▼ **Interweave-sponsored Interweave Chapter leader list**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-chapterleaders>
- ▼ **Interweave-sponsored UU bisexual list**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/interweave-bi>
- ▼ **BGILT news list**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/bgilt-news>
- ▼ **BGLTQQ youth list**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/bgltqq-youth>
- ▼ **Welcoming Congregation discussion list**
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/wc-d>

Interweave Chapters

Affiliated groups across the continent



Arkansas

Fayetteville
UU Fellowship of Fayetteville

Little Rock
Unitarian Universalist Church

California

Kensington
UU Church of Berkeley

Los Angeles
First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles

Montclair
Monte Vista UU Congregation

Ranchos Palos Verdes
Pacific Unitarian Church

Sacramento
UU Society of Sacramento

Santa Barbara
Live Oak UU Congregation

Santa Monica
UU Comm. Church of Santa Monica

Colorado

Denver
First Unitarian Society of Denver

Fort Collins
Foothills Unitarian Church

Florida

Boca Raton
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Clearwater
Unitarian Universalist Church

Gainesville
UU Church of Gainesville

Tampa
UU Church of Tampa

★ Venice
UU Congregation of Venice

Indiana

Indianapolis
UU Church of Indianapolis

Iowa

Des Moines
First Unitarian Church

Iowa City
UU Society of Iowa City

Massachusetts

North Andover
North Parish

Minnesota

Saint Paul
Unity Church – Unitarian

Missouri

Columbia
UU Church of Columbia

Kansas City
All Souls Unitarian Church

Springfield
First UU Church

New Jersey

East Brunswick
Unitarian Society of East Brunswick

Summit
The Unitarian Society in Summit

Titusville
UUC at Washington Crossing

New York

Bellport
UU Fellowship of Bellport

Brooklyn
First Unitarian Congregational Society

Manhasset
UU Congregation at Shelter Rock

New York
Unitarian Church of All Souls

North Carolina

Winston-Salem
UU Fellowship of Winston-Salem

Ohio

★ Cleveland/Rocky River
West Shore UU Church

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City
First Unitarian Church

Pennsylvania

Bethlehem
UU Church of the Lehigh Valley

Pittsburgh
First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Warrington
Bux-Mont UU Fellowship

Rhode Island

East Greenwich
Westminster Unitarian Church

South Carolina

Greenville
UU Fellowship

★ Spartanburg
UU Church of Spartanburg

Texas

Houston
Bay Area UU Church

Virginia

Blacksburg
UU Congregation of Blacksburg

Wisconsin

Milwaukee
First Unitarian Society

District-wide chapters

Joseph Priestly District
JPD Interweave

★ indicates a Chapter featured in this issue's Chapter Chatter.

Only Chapters currently affiliated with Interweave Continental appear in this listing.

Is your Chapter missing? Time to renew your membership!

Questions? E-mail mountaingirl@vtlink.net.



An Untold Chapter in BGLT History

by James Waller

On Christmas Eve in 1946, in Atlanta, Georgia, a young clergyman named George Augustine Hyde started something that has, until now, earned him little more than a footnote in American bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender (BGLT) history. That obscurity is undeserved, for the Rev. Hyde's activity may represent the first successful US attempt to organize homosexual men and women and to help them carve out a space for themselves—a space free of judgment and censure—within the wider society. What Hyde started was a church.

The full story of the founding of Hyde's Holy Eucharist Church—and of his further career—can now be found on the website of the LGBT Religious Archives Network (www.lgbtran.org). As part of its mission to capture and preserve queer religious history internationally and across all faith traditions, LGBT-RAN recently began an oral history project aimed at recording the voices and memories of early leaders of LGBT religious movements. In July 2006, Hyde joined the first group of participants in this project, inviting religious historian J. Gordon Melton and LGBT-RAN advisory board member Jim Anderson into his Belleaire, Florida, home for a several-hour-long interview. Edited audio files and a transcript of that interview are available at www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/Hyde/Bio.htm.

Hyde's story is an inspiring one. Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1923 and raised largely in Atlanta, Hyde in his teens decided that he wanted to become a Roman Catholic priest. He enrolled in a Catholic seminary in Missouri but was booted out after being accused by a fellow student of "immoral" behavior. Returning to Atlanta, he began attending services at a downtown Catholic church, Sacred Heart, where he learned that another young parishioner was being denied communion after having confessed to Sacred Heart's priest that he was a homosexual. In a brave and unprecedented act of solidarity, Hyde organized a silent protest in which he and eventually seven other parishioners stood beside the ostracized young man at the communion rail during Sunday Mass. All were denied the sacrament, and the protest—to the priest's consternation—continued for weeks.

It was during that same year—1946—that Hyde discovered that there was a way for him to realize his vocation and become a priest. He met a Greek Orthodox bishop in Atlanta, John Kazantks, who himself had been dismissed from his church position following accusations of homosexual behavior. Kazantks ordained Hyde, encouraging the younger man to take on what Hyde today refers to as a "rather unique outreach": the forming of a church in which openly homosexual people would feel welcome. And so it was that on December 24, 1946, in Hyde's ramshackle rented house not far from Atlanta's central business district, the Holy Eucharist Church held its first liturgy. The congregation numbered about thirty, including both gay and nongay people—and, remarkably for Atlanta in the mid-1940s, African-Americans as well as whites. (Neighborhood vigilantes enraged by the group's racial integration sometimes threw stones at the churchgoers as they left.)

George Hyde's oral history takes us far beyond these early events, tracing the growth of Hyde's little church into a several-parish denomination, which he named the Eucharistic Catholic Church, and detailing Hyde's rise to a national leadership role in the independent Catholic/independent Orthodox movement. For anyone interested in contemporary American religious history or the history of the LGBT rights movement, Hyde's first-person account of his life and work will be fascinating.

But Hyde's life story is as instructive as it is engaging. Most people who are at all conversant in LGBT history assume that the postwar gay and lesbian rights movement didn't really begin until the 1950s, with the founding of the "homophile" organizations known as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis. As Hyde's oral history demonstrates, this assumption is very much open to debate. Beyond this, the story of Hyde's career—and of many other leaders of the independent Catholic/independent Orthodox churches with whom he worked and interacted—provides an illustration of the important, if largely unsung, role that religious people and religious institutions have played in LGBT people's decades-long struggle for acceptance and equality. And, finally, it raises essential questions for LGBT history: How unique was Hyde's experience, really? Might not there be other, similarly surprising and equally compelling, stories out there, just waiting to be told?

James Waller is a freelance writer in New York City and a member of the LGBT-RAN Advisory Committee.

Interweave Membership Form

Personal Information

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Congregation _____

I/we want to receive *InterweaveWorld* as: PDF, via e-mail Paper copy

For Chapters: Contact person _____
 Their e-mail _____ Phone _____
 Chapter size: less than 10 people 10-25 people over 25 people

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- Basic Membership \$35 US
 - Family Membership \$55 US
 - Sustaining Membership \$75 US
 - Low Income/Student/Senior Membership \$20 US
 - Chapter Membership \$100 US
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Fill out, enclose payment, and mail to:

Interweave, 45 State Street #380, Montpelier, VT 05602.

*Canadian Residents – Send equivalent in Canadian funds to: Interweave, c/o Canadian Unitarian Council, B018-1179 King Street West, Toronto ON, M6K 3C5. Please send only US funds to the Montpelier address.

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Last Word



*Go in peace. Live simply, gently, at home in yourselves.
Act justly.*

Speak justly.

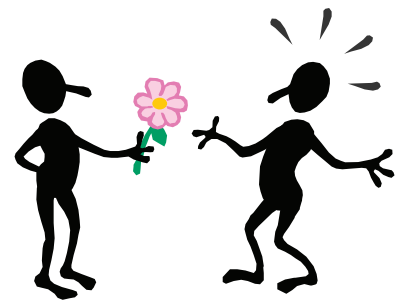
Remember the depth of your own compassion.

Forget not your power in the days of your powerlessness.

—the Rev. Mark Belletini, queer UU minister

Many thanks to our contributors
who made this issue possible:

**Art Brewer, Mark Bowman, Kim Danner,
Marc DeFrancis, Jane Dwinell, Patrick Eaton,
Jonalu Johnstone, and Paul Lockwood.**

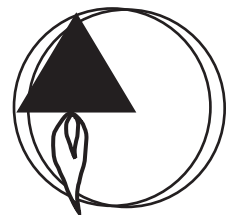


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