

Interweave Connect June 2013

The focus of this issue is GLBTQ Ministers



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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.

Interweave Continental at

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JUNE 19-23, 2013 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

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Letter From Our President

Dear Interweave Members and Friends:

How many of you know a member of the LGBTQ community who is a UU minister or a ministerial candidate? Perhaps, the person you know has written an article for *Interweave Connect*. Our June newsletter focuses on our LGBTQ ministers and ministerial candidates -- their thoughts, their challenges, their joys and their discoveries. Learn how our ministers/ ministerial candidates "interweave" who they are with how they minister.

Come celebrate our LGBTQ ministers and ministerial candidates at GA on Saturday evening, 6:30-8:00 pm in the Thoroughbred Room, Downtown Marriott, just before the Ware Lecture! Keith Kron of the UUA and Interweave Continental invites you to the second annual LGBTQ Ministers' Reception for fun, food, and a chance to dialogue! See page 7 for more details.

Have you heard of Bayard Rustin? Do you know who he is? We have featured Bayard Rustin in this issue because he is an outstanding person. Bayard Rustin was the brains and the major driver behind the 1963 March on Washington. He was a gay, black man with the spirit of a UU. At Creating Change, we viewed "Brother Outsider." If you

have not seen this film, you must! "Brother Outsider" gives insight into the life of Rustin and the significant role that he played in the civil rights movement. In addition, there is actual footage of events.

On this 50th year celebration of the March on Washington, members of the LGBTQ community nationwide are raising renewed awareness of Bayard Rustin's place in history. Join us in remembering him. You will be glad you did.

Finally, if you are attending GA, put the Annual Interweave Banquet on your schedule! Friday, noon to 1:30 pm in Ballroom IX, Downtown Marriott. Buy your tickets ahead of time by paying via our website (www.interweaveuu.org), or come to the Interweave Continental Booth in the Exhibit Hall. Vote for new board members, hear our 2013 winning sermon, and meet the 2013 Mark DeWolfe Award winner! See page 7 for more details.

I wish you all a wonderful summer season and hope to see you at GA Louisville!

All good wishes,

Maryka Bhattacharyya
President, Interweave Continental



Maryka Bhattacharyya, President of Interweave Continental and J. David Macey, Jr., Secretary of Interweave Continental ready to march in the 2012 GA parade



Interweave Continental 2012 Banquet

Introducing “Transfiguring Congregations” – a new Welcoming Curriculum

Look for the new curriculum at the Interweave Continental Exhibit Hall Booth at GA 2013 in Louisville!

1. Focused on learning about the experience of transgender people and understanding shared faith community, reducing transphobia, and increasing awareness.

2. Generated for Interweave Continental by Julia Terry and Johnny Blazes

3. Reviewed by multiple colleagues connected to the trans community”

4. Supported by a grant from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

Several quotes from our new curriculum provide an idea of what to expect:

“While creating connections within and outside of your congregation, remember that being welcoming is an active process.”

“Facilitation is most helpfully provided by people who have the ability to gracefully address controversies, create a peer to peer learning environment, and keep activities moving at a pace that allows for all aspects of the workshop to be explored.”

“Experience and skill in facilitation is more important than an already deep knowledge of transgender identity and issues.”

“As you coordinate the presentation of this series of workshops, please reach out to transpeople and allies of transpeople (such as partners or family members) in your broader community as potential collaborators for this and other welcoming programs. Inviting transfolk within your congregation or town to participate in these discussions is an important part of relationship building and creates

opportunities for people to share their authentic voice.”

Four two-hour sessions each begin with an ingathering, followed by a variety of activities suited to multiple learning styles, ending with a closing message.

The four sessions address:

- Introduction/Transgender 101
- Faith and Trans Identity/Experience
- Allyship
- Moving Forward

About the writers: Johnny Blazes is a genderqueer performance artist based in Boston. Johnny is known for their genre-bending, gender-blending, tongue-in-cheek performances which challenge people to think about gender in new ways. They were raised UU and currently attends Unity church. Johnny co-created a piece titled

transcension, which was published in Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation. Johnny is a graduate of Oberlin college and serves on a number of executive boards.

Julia Terry is an advocate, educator, and facilitator who is based out of Anchorage, Alaska, but travels the country regularly. She conducts much of her work as a staff person in Unitarian Universalist congregations and focuses on intersections of identity and youth empowerment work. As the cisgender partner of a transman who is clergy, Julia has co-led workshops on trans inclusion in churches and at national conferences. She has also helped to develop a number of resources for medical professionals, advocates, and community members.

The new curriculum will be available at the Interweave Continental Exhibit Hall Booth at GA 2013 in Louisville.



Johnny Blazes and Julia Terry

Interweave Continental President of the Board Maryka Bhattacharyya will be on the Ballot, at the Annual Meeting, GA 2013, Louisville, KY



Maryka at the Ailkin UU Church

Maryka Bhattacharyya is a first generation American whose parents were born in Holland. She is a biochemist/toxicologist with thirty-five years of research experience at Argonne National Laboratory in the Chicago area, investigating environmental causes of osteoporosis, in particular the metal cadmium. She fell in love with the DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church (DUUC) in Naperville IL when she was looking for a church home in the late 1970s. Maryka served as member and chair of the Sunday Services Committee. In addition she was head of the Welcoming Congregation Task Force. Once the congregation achieved Welcoming status, Maryka became chair of DUUC's Interweave Committee. She loved her 25 years of

working with the BGLTQ community to effect change among persons within her church, in the neighboring community, and in the state capital of Springfield, IL. For her long-term service, Maryka received Interweave Continental's Mark DeWolfe Award in 2008. Through this work, Maryka learned much about herself and what it is to be human, becoming appreciative of the broad spectrum of diversity that opened up to her. Having recently moved to South Carolina, Maryka has joined the Church of the Larger Fellowship. She is very happy to be President of the Board of Interweave Continental and is working hard with the board members to bring new vigor to the organization, with a focus on the needs of youth, transgender persons, UU congregations located in communities with little understanding and support of

the LGBTQ community, and application of the *Interweave Connect* newsletter to enliven the interaction among Interweave Chapters and individual members.



Maryka at 2012 GA working with Immigration Registration



Maryka selling Banquet tickets at Ga 2012

Board Member Ballot, Interweave Continental Annual Meeting, GA 2013, Louisville, KY

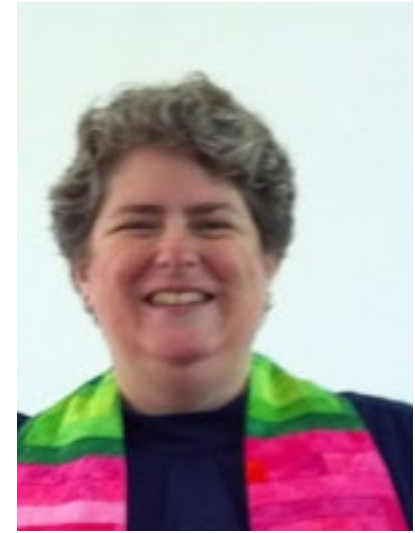


Nisco Junkins is Production Manager of Interweave Connect, Interweave Continental's monthly electronic newsletter. She has been instrumental in starting and maintaining the only active Oregon Interweave chapter at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE). UUCE's Interweave chapter has met with a potluck, movie and discussion on LGBT issues every second Friday for six years. These meetings serve as both education and outreach to the local LGBT and straight community, attracting some community members to join UUCE as a result.

Nisco is very excited about recruiting more UU churches to start Interweave chapters and raising the necessary funds to enable Interweave Continental to do their good work.



Tova Vitiello moved from New Jersey to Iowa City, Iowa in order to attend graduate school. She is a retired psychology professor and therapist. She is also a published poet. At age fifty-nine, Tova hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. She was a co-founder of Lesbian Alliance, and an active member of New Jewish Agenda and Women Against Racism. Presently, Tova is co-chair of Interweave at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City and editor of *Interweave Connect*, Interweave Continental's monthly newsletter. She enjoys kayaking, tennis, and the children in her life.



Rev Michelle LaGrave currently serves the First Congregational Parish, Unitarian in Petersham, Massachusetts, as its Developmental Minister; a short-term ministry focused on supporting a small, rural congregation in meeting its developmental goals. She received a Master of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School in 2010. Rev Michelle sees her calling to ministry as a natural culmination of her life's interest in working with and empowering people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Board Member Ballot, Interweave Continental

Annual Meeting, GA 2013, Louisville, KY continued from page 5



Rich Charbonneau has been a member of the Unitarian Society of Hartford for over fifteen years. Previous responsibilities at USH have included serving on a ministerial search committee and over the past year serving as chair of the local Interweave chapter. A Clinical Psychologist by training, Rich has been leading drug development teams in the pharmaceutical industry for the last twelve-plus years. Prior to working in the pharmaceutical industry, Rich practiced in the clinic; treating patients in both in- and out-patient settings. He also served as Director of Behavioral Health Research at a mid-size community hospital for over five years. Rich is the proud dad of his 8-year-old son and lives in Connecticut. Outside of work, some of Rich's interests include: skiing, running, biking, hiking & kayaking.



Susan Gore is a life-long activist who has served Interweave in the past as the local, chapter president at First Unitarian Dallas, and as the president of Interweave Continental. She is co-editor with Keith Kron of *Coming Out in Faith: Voices of LGBTQ Unitarian Universalists* (Skinner House Books), and the study guide that will debut at GA in Louisville.

Susan is currently enrolled in the Masters of Theological Studies program at Brite Divinity School where she and they are both learning how divinity school works for a non-Christian. Her goal is to deepen the social justice work she has done since 1991 as principal of The Mentor Group. Susan lives in Ft. Worth with two rescue cats and enjoys cooking, remodeling houses and pretty much anything involving the outdoors and/or people.



Niala Terrell-Mason is a passionate activist who identifies as female, queer, black, and faithful. She has been a UU and a member of the UU Church of Riverside in Riverside, CA since 2009. At UUCR, Niala has served on the Board of

Trustees and volunteered on the Worship Arts committee, Interweave, S.A.S.S.Y. (Society of All Souls Steampunk of Yesteryear), and the new ministerial search committee. She has co-led UUCR's interfaith study and service group, Bridges, which she founded. Niala is also a S.A.L.T. fellow (Spiritual Activist Leadership Training fellow) of the first graduating cohort with the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of California. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in Sociology with a concentration in women's studies, Niala worked for Planned Parenthood. She recently left Planned Parenthood to work for Congressman Mark Takano, the first openly gay person of color elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Niala loves that our faith strongly supports marriage equality. However, she also sees that queer youth, people of color, and transgender folks have concerns like employment discrimination, hate crimes legislation, substance abuse, youth homelessness and sexual exploitation, violence against trans folk. As a member of the Interweave Continental board, Niala would like to join in fighting the good fight on multiple fronts.

Annual LGBTQ Minister's Reception

Come celebrate our LGBTQ ministers and ministerial students at the Second Annual LGBTQ Minister's Reception, co-sponsored by the UUA and Interweave Continental!!

Date/Time: Saturday, June 22, 6:30-8:00pm, just before the Ware Lecture!

Location: Thoroughbred Room, Marriott Louisville Downtown

Food: Lettuce Wrap Station, Bruschetta and Hummus Station, lemonade and coffee (decaf)

LGBTQ ministers, ministerial students, and allies are invited to join in conversation, as you provide important role models and leadership to the LGBTQ communities both within and outside of our congregations. We honor you and invite you to meet and to exchange ideas and experiences.

Interweave Continental GA Banquet

The Interweave Continental GA Banquet will once again provide a wonderful luncheon celebration!!

Date/Time: Friday, June 21, noon – 1:30pm

Location: Ballroom IX, Marriott Louisville Downtown

Menu: Choice of chicken breast or vegetarian lasagna accompanied by spinach salad, seasonal accompaniments, rolls and butter, five-layer chocolate cake and regular/decaf coffee, teas.

Suggested Donation: \$30/person (~break-even amount)

Student/Limited Income, Suggested Donation: \$20/person

NOTE: Get tickets ahead of time at our website donate page

Purchase Here and click the donate button or in person at our Exhibit Hall Booth (before Thursday noon, please).

Come hear our 2013 Award-winning sermon and meet our 2013 Mark DeWolfe Award winner (see details on next page)!

You won't want to miss the great food and the great camaraderie of your peers from so many different congregations!

Interweave Continental at

GENERAL ASSEMBLY JUNE 19-23, 2013 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

Interweave Award Recipients Announced

The Board of Directors of Interweave is pleased to announce the recipient of the 2013 Mark DeWolfe Award and the winner of the 2013 Interweave Sermon Contest.

Interweave confers the Mark DeWolfe Award each year on a Unitarian Universalist who has substantially contributed to improving the lives of LGBTQ people in Unitarian Universalist settings and within the wider community. This award was established to honor the memory of the Reverend Mark DeWolfe, the first openly gay minister in the Unitarian Universalist Association to serve a congregation.

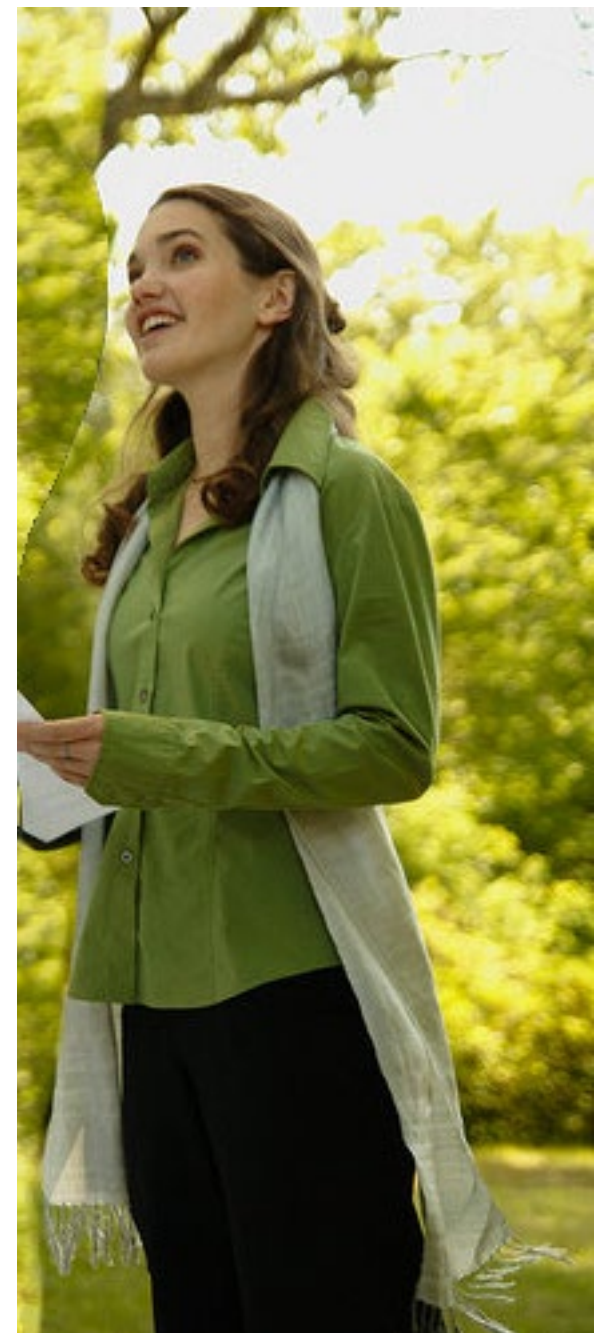
The recipient of this year's Mark DeWolfe Award is Larry Kitchen. Mr. Kitchen, a member of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., plays a crucial role in advocating and developing programming for the LGBTQ community. This spring he organized a group of church members and friends to participate in "Advancing Equality on the Hill" with the Tennessee Equality Project in Nashville, where he mentored youth and taught them how to talk to legislators and lobby against discriminatory legislation. He also helped to promote a candlelight vigil in downtown Knoxville so members of the community could gather in support of Marriage Equality. Most recently, Mr. Kitchen supported

the University of Tennessee's Sex Week by distributing educational flyers to students inquiring about LGBTQ issues. He has also served as President and Chief Organizer of Knoxville's PFLAG chapter and helped to organize his congregation in support of Knoxville PRIDE and the National Day of Silence.

Each year, the Interweave also conducts a Sermon Contest that recognizes the best sermon in support of LGBTQ issues delivered to a Unitarian Universalist congregation or at a Unitarian Universalist seminary during the previous year. This year's winning sermon, "Spaces Between: A Theology of Rainbows," was written by Caitlin S. Cotter, a seminarian at the Starr King School of Ministry and the Director of Religious Exploration at the Berkeley, Calif., Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists. Ms Cotter is preparing to begin a ministerial internship at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis, Calif..



Larry Kitchen



Caitlin S. Cotter

Detailed profiles of Ms Cotter and Mr. Kitchen, as well as the complete text of Ms Cotter's award-winning sermon, will be published in *Interweave Connect* this summer.

Aiken Unitarian Universalist Church Celebrates Welcoming Congregation Designation



On May 19th, the Aiken, S.C. Unitarian Universalist Church celebrated their official recognition as a Welcoming Congregation. After completing all the requirements (services, activities and workshops), they received their official designation from the UUA. Maryka Bhattacharyya, President of our national Interweave, participated with the Reverend Doctor Gaye Ortiz in the Sunday service that acknowledged their Welcoming Congregation status. The morning service included all the members of the Welcoming Congregation Committee, and was attended by a few of the people who assisted with our workshops. One of those was Maryka!!

During my internship at AUUC, I helped the congregation to complete the Welcoming Congregation program. I was ordained on May 11 by both the Aiken UU Church (my internship congregation) and the Augusta UU Church (my sponsoring congregation). This was my first Sunday service as the Reverend Doctor Gaye Ortiz.

Thanks, Maryka, for sharing this special day with us.

Reverend Doctor Gaye W. Ortiz
Aiken Unitarian Universalist Church



Maryka and Rev. Ortiz



Members of UUCA Welcoming Congregation Committee



When I started seminary, I was told by a mentor not to allow the fact that I was gay to “define” my ministry. “Don’t let anyone ever call you a “gay minister.” You are a minister first and foremost,” he reminded me. Toward the end of seminary, another mentor urged me to diversify my portfolio. She explained: “if congregations think that you are a single issue minister, they will be less likely to hire you. Churches do not want a gay minister.

Be Yourself in Ministry

They want a minister who is a generalist and maybe just so happens to be gay.”

Believing that these mentors had my best interest at heart, I took their advice. I intentionally chose internship sites that would not allow future congregations to accuse me of being “the gay minister,” including a ministry for people recently released from prison. I participated as actively on the seminary’s Worship and Justice committees as I did the GLBTQ committee.

I downplayed my experience with the GLBTQ community during my first search and call process and completely ignored that which first called me into ministry --- outreach and relationships with those marginalized by exclusive communities. I nearly ignored my leadership in my home congregation and seminary’s GLBTQ groups, fearful that this one aspect of my ministry would prevent me from being able to become a minister at all.

It was with this concern that I started at the UU Society of Wellesley Hills three years ago, a Welcoming Congregation with a long history of supporting GLBTQ causes locally and in the denomination. Still concerned though about being pigeon-holed and taking my mentor’s advice to heart, I downplayed my interest in GLBTQ issues when I began. I chose not to become immediately involved in logical opportunities in the congregation and community.

But this all changed one day when I received a phone call from a local parent in the community who was looking for a partner in creating a safe place for high school GLBTQ youth to meet and connect. My initial reaction was to refer her to someone else, not wanting to become the “token gay minister”

in town. And to be honest, I tried, but then the phone rang again. This time it was a different parent, asking for the same support, and while I could hear my mentor’s voice in the back of my head warning me, I instead responded: “How can I be of assistance?” It was from those two conversations that WAGLY (West Surburan Alliance of GLBTQ Youth) was launched, a program that provides a weekly, safe place for GLBTQ youth from over 30 high schools in the MetroWest Boston area.

WAGLY has been going strong for over two years now, expanding beyond the simple safe meeting place we originally imagined. I now serve, in addition to my role as Assistant Minister, as the Executive Director of this active program. My role with WAGLY would not have been possible if I had allowed my concern about other’s perceptions to prevent me from saying yes. If I had allowed other’s perceptions to influence me, it would have also prevented me from being a fully present minister with all of my interests and abilities utilized.

My mentors was right. I am not only a gay minister, but I am happily a gay minister. My commitment to GLBTQ youth and rights does not prevent me from being a minister to the larger congregation and community. Being fully present and honest helps me to be their minister. It is my hope that seminarians and those considering ministry ignore advice from well intended mentors about what kind of minister they will become, and instead learn to be themselves in ministry. I am happy I did, and am thankful for the doors that have opened because of it.
submitted by Rev. Jack Patrick Lewis

Everything Broken and Whole

Rev. Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe

Excerpted from "Coming Out in Faith"

You cannot have wholeness without brokenness. To have a complete universe, what some call G-d, is to encompass all- the broken and the whole. I am genderqueer. To even be able to say that or describe what that means for me, I had to become a Unitarian Universalist and through this powerful religion discover that as broken and afraid as I was, all of my being is welcomed there.

I grew up in rural Indiana where gender deviation is not accepted. That said, I had strong female role models, including my grandmother and mother. I learned that I could play with and be whoever I wanted in my parent's home. I learned what I was "supposed" to be from other family members, school, media, and society.

Students and teachers made fun of me for being the only 'girl' in the Small Engine Repair class in high school. Television told me that to trouble the gender waters was not only bad, but it was dangerous to my physical well-being.

In college, I came out as bisexual and fell in love with a woman for the first time. The relationship terrified me. I knew if I kept on this path, I would lose my family. So, I decided to just not deal with it. I buried myself in drugs and alcohol for a

couple of years. When I sobered up I became a workaholic. There were no solid images, words, or examples of what I was; I was lost.

My friend Ulysses once told me about a conversation with a Christian friend of his. Our UU church was at the height of conflict and he was speaking with her about his

concerns. She asked, "What keeps you in the community?" He said, "We are a community that is committed to one another. I have faith that people can work it out." She commented, "Wow, I couldn't do that. I have to have faith in God because I don't have faith that people can work it out."

Our Unitarian Universalist communities also have growing edges. I believe we make a mistake in assuming education about sexual orientation leads to understanding transgender identity.

Often the two intersect,

but to understand one is not to understand the other.

I have visited many churches. In every one I have met someone who is genderqueer and/or transgender. They sneak me business



cards or e-mail me after church to maintain their safety. That says a lot, doesn't it?

Transgender ministers have had difficulty succeeding in UU congregations. I have had people walk out of worship when I talk about gender neutral pronouns. My financial future is far from secure simply because of who I am.

Physical safety is always a concern. Once, I was confronted by a man in a parking garage. If his son hadn't asked him to stop, I am sure he would have hit me. My doctor freaked out when I told her I was genderqueer transgender and made errors on several routine procedures. I have friends who have committed suicide because they are genderqueer and/or transgender. A friend's loved one was murdered for being transgender.

Long ago, I asked the question: What does my body tell me about spirituality? It tells me that either/or thinking can divide something that is both/and in nature. It teaches me that being in-between is a sacred place just as much as being on one side or another. It constantly reminds me of the importance of love.

If we come from a place of listening and humbleness, our bodies can be guides to the spiritual truths of the universe- billions of answers to what it means to be alive, holy, broken, and whole.

This article with permission of Rev Wolfe was submitted by Susan Gore, an Editor Of "Coming Out In Faith"

Queer reflections

I was once asked by a UU, “Don’t you think it is amazing how we embrace LGBTQ people in our churches?” I responded, “Yes, in some ways, but there is more --- when people show up, our religious work is to join their journey, to believe and tenderly hold the dread and pain experienced every day by queer people, rather than respond with some version of “What do you mean you experience oppression? Tell me more.” We laughed because she understood what it meant to be proactively present to one another’s lives.

As a minister, I am surrounded by liberal religious voices and this comes with some level of disorientation to the depths of homophobia and marginalization both within and outside our community. As a queer (I have all kinds of personal and intimate relationships with



people of many genders, identities, and expressions.), femme-ish (My butch friends would laugh that I write the “ish” on femme.), politically conscious, single, plus size, woman of color, minister, I am often misplaced. Each identity offers an opportunity for people to invisibilize the other identities. Sometimes, this misplacement can feel as though the entirety of my being (I try not to parcel my identity because I believe all identity expression is interdependent.) is too much for the normative

LGBTQ community, UU community, as well as general society.

My ministry has caused me to move several times and in each new city I go to the local LGBTQ center, wanting to get involved and hoping to make friends. Every time I walked into one of these centers, I am either told to go somewhere else or I am ignored all together. Then once the LGBTQ community finds out I am a minister, people back away. Just a couple of weeks ago, I met my new neighbors, two gay men. In conversation, I told them I

was a minister and there was a silence. I quickly tried to build a bridge by sharing that I was part of “the family.” Their dropped jaws and furrowed brows were so intense that the conversation quickly came to an end. In that moment, there was a lot of emotional

triggering, on both sides.

The misplacement also happens in UU circles. In all my congregations, I have always been out as queer. Some people believe me, some don’t, and some imply that I am not queer enough (The same experience is true as a person of color. Some believe, some don’t, and some imply that I am not a person of color enough.)

The misplacement came through loud and clear a year ago when I was asked to write

an article for the Interweave allies-themed newsletter. Initially, I thought it was a joke, but what followed was a deep sense of sadness.

Lastly, I struggle with the same racism in the queer communities that one would experience in general society. I find this ironic because the queer community is centralized on a beautiful emphasis of belonging among the shared experience of marginalization. In all these instances, I do understand how the misplacement individually and innocently comes to be, but that does not ease the heartbreak or make navigating it any smoother.

Recently in my ministry, I misplaced my own self and became guilty of what I critique. I was fully immersed in the fast-paced, disorientating, stress-filled, and privileged (and fantastically, beautifully, wonderful!) life of ministry and found myself in what could be perceived as that person saying: “Tell me more?” There was tension in the congregation. Some LGBTQ and ally members had been deeply hurt by fellow friends and members who wanted me, their minister, to grant a Cub Scout badge award to one of our youth, which I agreed to do. The pain that surfaced was, of course, about more than the badge. It was about all the ways we are marginalized every day, and the longing to be held in the religious community.

¹I have all kinds of personal and intimate relationships with people of many genders, identities, and expressions.

²My butch friends would laugh that I write the “ish” on femme.

³I try not to parcel my identity because I believe all identity expression is interdependent.

⁴The same experience is true as a person of color. Some believe, some don’t, and some imply that I am not a person of color enough.

⁵And fantastically beautifully wonderful!

continued on page 13

The pain was about the workplace where your colleagues keep their distance or don't care when you marry your partner, or in schools when they can't seem to figure out "who is the mom," or with the neighbors who make kids cross the street when they walk in front of their house, or institutions debating if LGBTQ people can be in leadership, or politics where one's identity is framed as an issue that you either believe in or not, or even when you are afraid to kiss your loved one goodbye at the airport. The list can go on and on.... All of it adds up and takes an emotional toll. So, when that was brought home in my welcoming congregation --- and tears of pain, wounds from childhood and adulthood, anger from the overwhelming feeling of powerlessness came flowing into our congregational conversations, board meetings, and dinners -- I have to admit, at first, I tilted my head and said, "Tell me more." My shocked congregants appropriately responded with some version of "What are you doing? You have misplaced us!" The pain experienced by so many people left a permanent mark on my heart.

This propelled me into what some might call an existential crisis. It did not matter if I walked in the pride parade, spoke out in the

pulpit, remained committed to the queering of theology, wrote inclusively in articles. It did not matter that I try to be an ally to and am fiercely protective of gender expressions (butch, gender-queer, gender non-conformist, and transgender community) that can result in uncertainty about using the bathroom, applying for a job, or even opening the door for a woman! (Yes you can open the door for me anytime.) My queerness really did become irrelevant because solidarity requires more than just being part of "the family."

In this moment in time, we all needed to join the journey of a particular experience of pain; our own and others. To join that journey is to hear it, carry it in our lives, think of others when they are not there, and do things differently in the world. What is at stake when we don't is a betrayal of our religious practice and subsequent doubt about committing ourselves to this faith.

In this world, in many small ways, we are

told not to care for, love, or honor same-gender people, queer people, transgender people, people of color, plus size people, single people, undocumented people, unemployed people, homeless people, disabled people, or

those who have broken laws. Yet, in Unitarian Universalism, we remind each other that we need one another in spoken and in unspoken, intimate ways.

In my congregation, those on the margins needed others to join the journey of homophobic hurt as well as the celebration of liberation. Some of that happened and some of it did not. We are left with stronger relationships and broken ones. I am guilty of some of those breaks and I will continue to contend with the doubt, concern and pain that I am part of in the years ahead. I pray that my own depth of sorrow from the experience of misplacement does not get in the way. For Unitarian Universalism, I hope our individual journeys do not get in the way of joining the larger journey of those on the margins, and the even larger ministry that is building the creative beauty of solidarity in the world. The journey continues and I don't know where we will land, but I do know that it will take all of who we are to move through, or into, our placement of one another.

Reverend Mitra Rahnema
UU Church of Long Beach, CA

⁶⁶EG: butch, gender-queer, gender non-conformist, and transgender community

⁷Yes you can open the door for me anytime.



Coming Out and Keeping the Faith ~ A Community Event



How strong do people have to be to reconcile their GLBTQ identity and their faith in the face of family, religious and community rejection? The short answer is: incredibly strong.

On April 3, 2013, that strength was demonstrated at the “Coming Out and Keeping the Faith” a community event at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, MA. Eighty plus attendees listened to six panelists speak. There were three young adults from the GLBTQ community and three religious leaders from the community.

The event was sponsored by LGBTQ Welcoming Communities of Faith (Welcoming Faiths), a coalition of open and affirming congregations in the Merrimack Valley, MA, and PFLAG Greater Boston. The evening’s discussion addressed one of the biggest and most divisive issues facing the GLBTQ community: bullying in the name of religion.

The three young adult GLBTQ panelists illustrated how religion factored into the anguish and rejection they felt from family, community, and even themselves, as they struggled to reconcile their faith and their sexuality. Kate spoke about her conservative parents who rejected her based on their religion. Carlo talked of being afraid he would “burn in hell” for his growing realization of his sexuality. Zach prayed nightly that God would “make him straight.” He also shared examples of the abuse he experienced from his peers that ultimately lead him to attempt suicide.

In response to these emotional stories, the religious leaders on the panel offered perspectives on how their faiths focus on acceptance, inclusion and understanding. Reverend Lara Hoke of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Andover and Rabbi Karen Landy of Havurat Shalom, Andover talked about their congregations’ long-time acceptance of the GLBTQ community. Bill Henson, founder of “Lead Them Home,” spoke of his evangelical beliefs and his commitment to including all people who want to embrace his faith, regardless of sexual orientation. Personally and professionally, they expressed their own stories and reiterated their belief that all people, no matter who they are, deserve a chance to embrace a faith. As Reverend Lara Hoke put it, “God loves diversity.”

It is the ongoing mission of Welcoming Faiths to build upon the strength of the open and accepting spirit of their member congregations so that we can be as strong as the people who choose to join us. To find out more about Welcoming Faiths, find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/Welcoming Faiths](https://www.facebook.com/WelcomingFaiths), or email us at welcomingfaiths@gmail.com
Tad Bickford
UU Congregation in Andover, MA



Tad with his Little Brother at his brother’s graduation

Coming Out



Subsequent to coming out, my greatest ministerial joy is being able to celebrate legal, same-gender weddings, as opposed to “commitment ceremonies.” Also, it was an honor to arrange for the Canadian Unitarian Council to be represented before the Supreme Court of Canada in support of equal marriage rights. Forgoing a new car, allowed me to devote \$6,000 to the expense of the Supreme Court appearance; however, the lawyer represented the CUC for free.

The gay community’s far ranging network has been a delight to experience. In addition to the free legal representation mentioned, a refugee pair, who were sponsored by the Unitarian congregation I was then serving, were robbed and stranded in Chicago. It was a gay Chicagoan whom I met at a UUA AGM who rescued them, after the Chicago congregation refused to help.

There is a warmth among us, which cuts across lines of socio-economic status and ethnicity, unlike any I have experienced elsewhere. Doctors and lawyers mingle with welfare recipients at the quarterly gay men’s pot-lucks that I have hosted for more than three decades. I suspect this universalism amongst us accounts for government homophobia in totalitarian societies, which depend on divisiveness for control.

Something which we might have to teach the larger society, is keeping our ex’s and their ex’s as part of our network of friends and extended families, as well as being more open to all classes and races.

Rev. J. McRee (Mac) Elrod
(Retired on Vancouver Island)
Victoria BC V9C 3Y1 Canada



Prior to my coming out to myself and others at age 40, I suspect my feeling of “difference” created the empathy which led to working in Korea for five years, participating in the Southern Civil Rights Movement, and ministering to a Black congregation which could not afford to pay me.



First Unitarian Church of Victoria

Pride in June and Pride in August

During the month of June, many individuals and organizations gather together to celebrate LGBTQ pride. In August of this year, we have another reason to be proud.

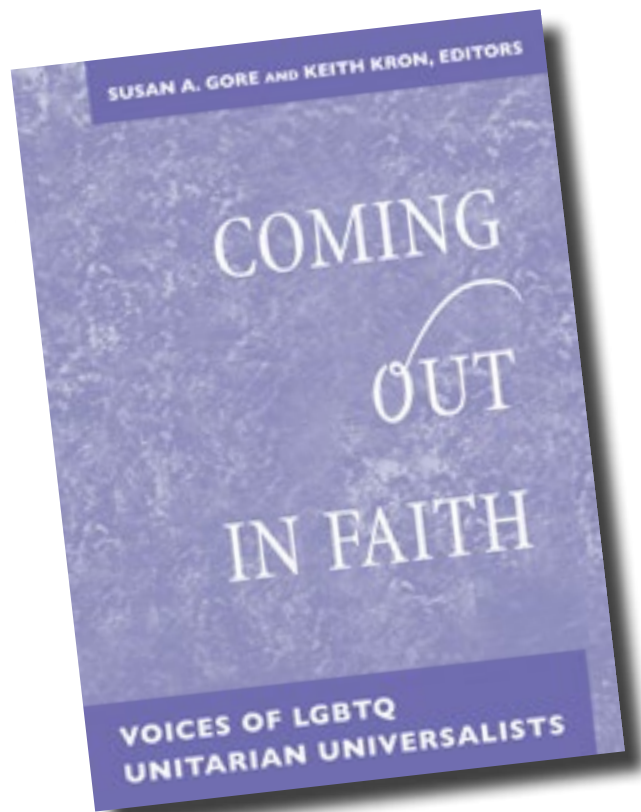
Many people will celebrate the 50th anniversary of "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. August is also the twenty-six anniversary of the death of Bayard Rustin.

Bayard Rustin was the man who envisioned and organized the largest nonviolent protest in United States history. Bayard Rustin was the genius behind the March on Washington. Bayard Rustin was a gay man. He died on August 24, 1987.

Because of heterosexism and homophobia, Rustin's dedication to equality and human rights has been silenced for years. However, people are beginning to acknowledge him and his work. Interweave Connect wants to recognize his achievements and his struggles in this issue, so you can consider learning more about him and perhaps organize an event in August to honor Bayard Rustin.

Tova Vitiello
Interweave Connect, Editor





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

Discussion Guide Coming!

June GLBTQ News

Boy Scouts Vote
to End Ban on Gay Scouts;
Gay Adults Still Barred
See the video



These Are Our Friends

Left: Dave Burnett, Gov. Lincoln Chafee, and on the right Larry Bacon. David and Larry have been together for 37 years. They worked for Marriage Equality in ME and they worked in RI as IW members of Channing Mem. Church in Newport, RI. This photo was taken after the Governor signed the Marriage Equality Bill into law on the steps of the RI Statehouse in Providence. Dave & Larry are now engaged with a wedding planned at Channing Church in Oct.

Submitted by Pam Goff



Check out the Interweave shirt!!



Channing RI Interweave Chapter at Marriage Equality Rally at the State House

Rhode Island Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage