



THE
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

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CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, January 6, 2011 at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.

▼ R.S.V.P. by January 4 to Jonathan.Wilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

First Friday
News & Views

JANUARY
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OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES AND PANDERERS

by Jonathan Wilson

In a recent exchange with presidential candidate Michele Bachman, sixteen-year-old Jane Schmidt asked innocently what Bachman, as president, would do to support GLBT citizens. As if unable to see where that was going, Bachman actually blurted out the right answer; she said she would work to guarantee the same civil rights enjoyed by all American citizens. That's the right answer in this country because the US Constitution that she, as president, would be sworn to uphold, affords citizens equal rights.

But Jane asked the obvious follow-up question, "What then about same-gender marriage?" At that point Bachman clutched with a classic non sequitur, saying, "Gay citizens have equal rights to marriage, and its attendant rights and privileges, under current law in all fifty states. She asserted that gay citizens have that equal access to the rights and privileges granted by government to married citizens, because any gay male citizen can marry a woman, and any lesbian citizen can marry a man. She's right as far as it goes. I admit that, as a closeted gay man, I married a straight woman, our marriage was duly recognized by the state, we produced two beautiful children (I was gay, not sterile or impotent), it lasted for 25 years, and we enjoyed all of the attendant rights and privileges. It didn't work out so well, however, after I was honest and came out as a gay man. If and when Bachman's husband comes out, the same might be true for their marriage as well, and they'll both be happier.

Bachman's "logic" would similarly defend a restriction of legal recognition to marriages occurring between adherents to her particular brand of supposed Christianity. By her "logic," all citizens would still have equal access to marriage and its attendant rights and privileges because all they'd need to do would be to convert to Bachman's brand of Christianity, or at least pretend to do so, and find someone in that religious tradition to marry. There are likely those who think that interfaith marriage is not all that great an idea anyway, and the institution of marriage would be strengthened by such a limitation. That might even be true, but our collective commitment to religious freedom, also guaranteed by that same Constitution, does not permit religious tests for accessing civil rights, period. There is a considerable, and growing, number who disagree with Bachman's religion-based belief about opposite-gender, versus same-gender, marriage. So long as "marriage" remains both a religious institution and a civil institution, with government-granted rights and privileges, the government cannot constitutionally take sides in that religious disagreement, giving easy access, on the one hand, to those who agree with Bachman on religious grounds, and giving more difficult, if not impossible – even unnatural – access to those who disagree, on the other.

Aside from Bachman's lack of logic, it seems to me that denying the opportunity for same-gender marriage is plain bad public policy. If the institution of marriage, characterized by a monogamous, life-long commitment, is the ideal and a foundation of our culture, as I am inclined to agree that it is, government (and organized religion) should be doing what can be done to support it, not doom it to failure. It is not supportive of such a life-long, monogamous commitment to encourage closeted gay men to marry unsuspecting straight women. It's not supportive of marriage to encourage people to be deceitful when entering into what is supposed to be a uniquely intimate relationship. Deceit is always and forever a bar to genuine intimacy. And a marriage premised upon a false intimacy is certainly less likely to endure.

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Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy

By Bruce Carr

On the first Friday of December, we were privileged and inspired to listen to the Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, president of Interfaith Alliance. Created in 1994, Interfaith Alliance, www.interfaithalliance.org, is a nationwide non-partisan grass-roots and educational organization that celebrates religious freedom by championing individual rights and challenges the bigotry and hatred arising from the religious and political extremism infiltrating American politics. A regular contributor to mainstream and religious news outlets, Dr. Gaddy is a welcome guest on such television shows as MSNBC's *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* and *The Rachel Maddow Show*, NBC's *Evening News* and *Dateline*, PBS's *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* and *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, and many others.

The separation of church from state cuts both ways, Gaddy told us. "Our founders sought to put constitutional space between religion and government because they deeply valued them both. What the authors of the Constitution knew well from their own experience is that every time religion and government became entangled institutionally, it's been bad for both institutions. Religion loses. Government loses. That's a tremendous insight into government that's even more relevant now than when it was passed," he said.

Gaddy told us how he had first begun to realize the roots of inclusiveness underlying his own faith tradition (he was an important official of the Southern Baptist Convention before its takeover by fundamentalists in the early '90s): "Every Sunday, I mean every Sunday, we sang 'Just as I am' as an altar call -- the hymn that Billy Graham used for years -- and I finally listened to the words." How can we exclude those who we think are different, when our God does not?

Gaddy's sly sense of humor shone through his deep faith and equally deep learning. "The faith I came to know and love for its comforting embrace has been wielded time and again as a club to intimidate and as a wall built to divide us. And it's funny how the path to righteousness being blazed by our various pastors of politics always seems to lead to their own enhanced power and wealth. I must have missed that night in confirmation class." And he gleefully recalled a question he got one evening at dinner with his wife and a same-sex couple they had come to know during their travels. "Welton," said one of his hosts, "How did you get to be so queer without being gay?"

C. Welton Gaddy received his undergraduate degree from Union University in Tennessee and his doctoral degree and divinity training from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Author of over 20 books, including *Faith and Politics* and *First Freedom First: A Citizen's Guide to Protecting Religious Liberty and the Separation of Church and State*, the Rev. Dr. Gaddy also serves as the Pastor for Preaching and Worship at Northminster (Baptist) Church in Monroe, Louisiana. Also present at Dr. Gaddy's talk to us was

the President of Interfaith Alliance Iowa, Connie Ryan Terrell, well known as a local advocate for marriage equality and all civil rights. Mrs. Terrell can be contacted at connie@interfaithallianceiowa.org.

FFBC-Sponsored Forum

Community Based Cancer Prevention Partnership
Addresses Disparities in Colorectal Cancer Burden
in Iowa

A partnership between the Iowa Cancer Consortium (ICC), the Iowa Research Network, and the University of Iowa has resulted in the establishment of an Iowa Community-Based Cancer Prevention Project. The three-year project is focused on understanding and addressing the disparities in the burden of colorectal cancer in individual Iowa communities.

Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel is the Project Community Assistant for Region - 3 Central Iowa. Project Community Assistants collaborate with community members and health care representatives to focus on colorectal cancer health disparities in local communities.

Community forums are held to give citizens opportunities to discuss and provide feedback on issues relating to colorectal cancer in their communities. The infrastructure and partnerships developed through the project will eventually be applied to community-based research addressing other cancers and lifestyle issues relating to cancer burden, such as tobacco cessation, obesity, lack of physical activity, and dietary habits.

Colorectal Cancer is the second leading cause of death among all cancers. Iowa is fourth in the nation when it comes to colorectal cancer. LGBT individuals face many health disparities including low rates of health insurance, fear of discrimination, negative experience with a health care provider, higher rates of tobacco use, higher rates of substance abuse, higher rates of obesity, and many others. In addition, there is not enough data to show the LGBT population present in many studies, which is also another health disparity.

It's contemplated that a forum will be organized with the endorsement of the First Friday Breakfast Club. In this forum, Daniel will address things specific to gay men, including barriers to screening, perception of the screenings that are available, knowledge of colorectal cancer, etc. The first part of the forum will include education on colorectal cancer, data in Iowa, and screenings that are available. After the education portion, there will be a dialogue on things more specific to gay men in Iowa.

January 17, 2012

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Mercy Medical Center -- Des Moines, East Tower
Mercy Conference Center, Conference Room 2
1111 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50314

Refreshments will be provided by the Mercy Cancer Center and \$25 Casey's Gift Cards will be available to a limited number of participants. More information about the Iowa Cancer Consortium, the Iowa Research Network, and the University of Iowa can

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Next Fall Theater Review By Gary Kaufman

Next Fall is a Tony award-winning play, set in New York City, that opens with family members and friends of Luke sitting in the waiting room of the Beth Israel Hospital hoping that Luke pulls through a brain operation. Luke had never been able to muster the courage together to tell his family about being gay and having a lover/life-partner. His gay lover, Adam, played by Todd Buchacker in the StageWest production, is not allowed at his lover's bedside because that privilege is restricted to "family members only." The play is a bleak reminder of how little status a gay lover has when a couple go through such a tragedy, and how necessary it is to go through filling out the legal papers so the risk of this situation can be reduced or eliminated. It also emphasizes how important it is in Iowa that gay couples can get married and have the status of being each other's spouse. Without that legal protection, a lover could find himself in circumstances like this situation where the person is not allowed bedside during what could be the lover's last moments on earth.

The other area that gets thoroughly explored in the play, using flashbacks, is an examination of the Christian faith as it is discussed between a believer, and one who is not. In this case, Luke is the Christian believer who has to deal with his religion telling him that gay relationships are a sin, yet it is something that he must have. His lover, on the other hand, tries to point out the incongruities in Luke's set of beliefs about who goes to hell, who goes to heaven, the rapture, and other religious tenants. This might be disturbing to those who recoil at having their faith questioned.

The performances in the play were magnificent. Todd Buchacker did a wonderful job portraying a gay male who is very emotional about the fact that he cannot be near his lover during this time of crisis. I, and many other members of the audience, were crying when the production concluded. It is a very emotional piece. And Jim Benda did an excellent job portraying Luke's father who does not have a clue that Luke is a "fag" and whose repeated expressions of homophobia present a barrier that Luke cannot cross to explain to his father that he is gay and that he has a lover. Who knew that Jim could play a straight homophobe so well!! John Graham did a good job portraying the Christian lover, Luke, who steadfastly believed in his religion and desperately wanted his lover to convert so that they could both join each other in heaven someday.

It was a very moving play, and a reminder that a lot of us need to get our legal work done to protect our relationship status should we ever find ourselves in a similar situation. It is another excellent production by StageWest which has consistently put on a strong series of thought-provoking and cutting-edge plays.

Money can't buy happiness, but it makes misery easier to endure.

Is a crazy cowboy deranged? Is a forlorn dry cleaner depressed? Is a fired musician denoted?

My M.O. (cont.)

House. Even more surprising was that the reclusive Miss Garbo accepted.

It's a good read. Go for it.

Babes and Panderers. (cont.)

Finally, Bachman is not, despite some evidence, a stupid or illogical person. That fact, and the stated rationale for her defense of traditional male/female marriage, betrays the depth of her cynical disrespect for the electorate whose support she covets. Her contrived, illogical answer to a legitimate, innocent question from Jane is a perfect example of a presidential candidate pandering to the least among us who may not even know that they are un-American theocrats.

Cancer Forum (cont.)

be found at the following websites:

www.CancerIowa.org

www.uihealthcare.com/depts/med/familymedicine/research/irene/index.html

www.uiowa.edu

RSVP by calling Jonathan Wilson (515-288-2500) or by email (jonathanwilson@davisbrownlaw.com)

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the January 6 meeting no later than January 4. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be the newly elected state senator from District 18, **Liz Mathis**.

Thanks to the **Rev. Jonathan Page** for his introduction of our December speaker, Rev. Welton Gaddy, President of the National Interfaith Alliance.

We mourn the death of long-time member **Karl Mohr**.

Mark your calendar for the next Red Party event. It will be **February 3**. Details to follow.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to **Fred Mount** and **Barry McGriff** for coordinating the book exchange.

Consider a tax deductible year-end contribution to the **FFBC Scholarship Fund**; 100% of your contribution will go to scholarships.

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa*

JANUARY 2012

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

A Man of His Time

Steve Person

It must be that 2011 is the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Kennedy administration that so many books and articles about the former President abound. The latest, and perhaps the best, is **Jack Kennedy: Elusive Hero**, by Chris Matthews.

Matthews does not disguise his admiration for the former President but likewise is not afraid to point out errors and faults that Kennedy displayed during his all-too-short life. Perhaps Matthews captures more than other Kennedy biographer the extraordinary manner in which Kennedy compartmentalized his life. The man had the uncanny ability to separate his many selves and act accordingly within the bounds of each existence.

What many people fail to realize today is how close the world came to mass destruction during the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. It was Kennedy who kept what could have been the end of the world as we know it from coming to fruition. With the spy photos showing the existence of ICBM bases in Cuba, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the majority of the President's cabinet urged Kennedy to send American bombers to Cuba and destroy the bases. It was Kennedy's ability to separate himself from his advisors that literally saved the planet. Says Matthews, "Here was the perfect affirmation of the Founding Fathers' reasoning, which had led them to place ultimate constitutional authority in the hands of the person elected by the American people." Kennedy's decision to set up a naval blockade of Cuba rather than attack it proved to be the winning strategy.

As dramatic as the Cuban Missile Crisis was, it was Kennedy's nuclear test ban treaty that he himself considered his greatest achievement. Kennedy had the talent for getting the right people to do the most difficult jobs. By sending Averell Harriman to Moscow to negotiate with Nikita Khrushchev, the treaty became a reality.

We are all aware of Kennedy's philandering, another one of those "compartments" that he was so adept at keeping in its place. Mrs. Kennedy was certainly aware of his adultery and dealt with it in her own way. Even more aware was J. Edgar Hoover, who warned Kennedy that some of his liaisons could be related to organized crime. Kennedy heeded the message.

"Ted Sorensen offered this moral verdict on Jack. 'An American President, commander in chief of the world's greatest military power, who during his presidency did not send one combat troop division abroad or drop one bomb, who used his presidency to break down the barriers of religious and racial equality and harmony in this country and to reach out to the victims of poverty and illiteracy and mental illness in his own country, and who restored the appeal of politics for the young and sent Peace Corps volunteers overseas to work with the poor and untrained in other countries—was in my book a moral president, regardless of his personal conduct.'"

Whenever I read a well-written biography, I always come away with some detail that I did not know before. In this one, I was surprised to learn that the Kennedys had invited Greta Garbo to a private dinner at the White

(See My M. O., page 3)

*Never judge someone until you've walked a mile in his shoes.
Then, if you decide you dislike them there's already a mile between you and you have his shoes.*