



*The Monthly Newsletter  
of the First Friday  
Breakfast Club, Inc.*

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Denied and Pandering  
Exposed  
by Jonathan Wilson*

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### *Calendar*

▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,  
Friday, October 2, 2015, at Hoyt  
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,  
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by September 30, to  
[JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com),  
or phone 515-288-2500

# *First Friday News & Views*

*October, 2015*

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## **Martyrdom Denied and Pandering Exposed**

By Jonathan Wilson

Kentucky Clerk of Court Kim Davis was released from prison, she has returned to her modest but over-paid employment, and her deputies are dutifully issuing marriage licenses to every legally qualified couple, including gay couples. God is in Her heaven where She belongs, and all is right -- again -- with the world.

The thrice-divorced-four-times-married woman, admittedly guilty of gluttony (one of the seven deadly sins) and marital infidelity, has demonstrated once again that there are none so self-righteous as the (at least purportedly) recently reformed. Her idea about the way government should work is to allow for a public official's religious views to be imposed upon those citizen tax payers who disagree and seek governmental services. Her construct is that non-Apostolic (self-described) Christians should be allowed to wield the power of government that has been entrusted to them and force law-abiding citizens into shopping for public servants who will do their jobs without discriminating based on religion.

She doesn't even pose a close question. Discrimination based on religion has been unlawful in this country in both the public and private sectors for a very long time. In a pluralistic society such as ours, having it any other way would lead to nothing short of chaos. What next, an Apostolic Christian year-book faculty adviser refusing to publish pictures of gay couples attending prom? An Apostolic Christian cop declining to intercede when a gay person is being attacked? An Apostolic Christian firefighter turning his or her back on a house fire of a gay household? An Apostolic Christian trash hauler leaving gay people's trash on the curb. She has not achieved the martyrdom she appears to have sought. Rather, she has managed to give Apostolic Christianity a bad name. In the court of public opinion, the reviews she's been getting are not at all flattering.

But the spectacle she spawned has been worthwhile on several levels. It has prompted a public debate and taught some important civics lessons. It has taught, once again, that discrimination based on religion is not to be tolerated. It has taught, once again, that ours is a constitutional democracy and we have an independent judiciary to decide what the Constitution means. It has taught, once again, that what the Constitution says, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, is the law of the land no matter what politicians in the legislative or executive branches of government might prefer, what candidates might say, or what some lowly county clerk might think. And it has taught, in no uncertain terms, that you should not mess with a federal court or flaunt its orders.

Beyond that, it has exposed the flaws in some pandering politicians who rushed to Davis's defense. I'll name names: Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz, for sure. Such panders can sometimes fly below the radar and may not be readily recognized -- rather like closeted

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gay people in that respect. Those political types look pretty much like hinged people who actually have a grip. But when a Kim Davis goes off the rails with her defiance of the law in favor of theocracy, and they rally to support her misguided understanding of a truly free society, the electorate can know their real character and their incompetence to be President of the United States of America.

What did Kim Davis get to eat? Whatever is served in prison. And what do panderers eat? Crow.

The truth will set you free. The truth that freed Kim Davis from prison was the truth that -- today -- any citizen of that county can go to the county clerk's office and obtain a marriage license without someone's religion getting in the way.

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*Another in the series of reflections written by  
FFBC Members.*

### **FINDING MY WAY OUT**

By Bob Thelen

I grew up in Des Moines during the 1950s and, like most fifties boys, discovered masturbation when I was about 14. But unlike most boys that I knew, I also started to have feelings about those boys that I realized were different – and almost certainly weren't normal.

My school, my church (I went to Methodist Sunday School through high school), and my family all reinforced the fear I had of being queer. Slurs I heard like “fag,” “fairy,” “sissy,” “fem,” and “homo” told me that I simply must not allow my true self to show. Sometimes I joined my peers in laughing over queer jokes. My “heterosexual” behavior (I got decent grades, lettered in high-school tennis, even dated a girl or two) seemed to satisfy my parents, who believed that they were raising a “normal” son in every sense of the word.

I graduated from college and started a career on the west coast as a teacher, always working to conceal the feelings that came naturally to me. Finally, when I turned 25, I tried to come out to my parents and two younger siblings. But there was a definite chill in the living room that summer afternoon when I blurted out, “I’m a homosexual!” Mom was upset and dad was silent; both were in denial about having a son who was different from their image of “normal.” I can still hear my mother saying, “We’re not going to discuss this — it’s only in your imagination. That college psychiatrist must’ve put that idea in your head!” And thereafter, neither my folks nor my siblings showed any interest in talking about it.

I tried again when I was 32 and working in Omaha. After one therapist tried unsuccessfully to modify my gay thoughts

## *Briefs & Shorts*

Be sure to RSVP for the October 2 meeting no later than September 30. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email him at [JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com). Our scheduled speaker will be Robby Mook, the openly gay national director of Hillary Clinton's campaign for President of the United States.

Thanks to Steve Person for his introduction of our September speaker, Mike Draper, the founder, owner, and president of Raygun.

Save the date: ACLU of Iowa 80th Birthday Bash, October 2, 2015, 5:30-8:00, World Food Prize Building, Des Moines. Cost \$70 per person. Call 243-3988 for tickets.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for helping coordinate the book exchange.



Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

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(remember snapping the rubber band on your wrist?), another helped me to see that I was not likely to become straight no matter how hard I tried. I ventured a time or two into Omaha's gay bars and started attending the Metropolitan Community Church (almost all lesbians). But I was still afraid – I still clung to the belief that I'd be happier with a wife, two kids, and a house in the suburbs.

Soon enough I moved back to Des Moines, living with my parents and employed as a social worker; my new self-image faded and I found myself willy-nilly back in the closet. I cared for my aging parents until they died (dad in 2000 and mom in 2010). I returned to my family church, but I didn't feel any more a part of the congregation than I had as a teen. The church had almost nothing to say to me or other LGBTQ members, still stuck in Old-Testament misinterpretations.

And yet -- in 2011 my pastor offered a Bible and Homosexuality discussion series in which I learned that there are other interpretations of the ancient Jewish scriptures than the ones commonly used to condemn homosexuals. And with my parents gone, I realized that there was nobody left to hide my true self from. I came out (third time!) to a very close friend, who said she was glad I told her -- even though it changed her hopes for our relationship. After that it got easier and easier. My siblings and the cousins I told at the next family reunion showed neither disapproval nor the least surprise.

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Our guest speaker on Friday morning, September 4, 2015, was Mike Draper, whose RAYGUN store opened a brand-new building in Des Moines' East Village last March. Mike's speedy outline for us of his invention

and development of the store was informative, highly entertaining (he had the grace to admit that this FFBC appearance clearly marked the zenith of his career), and even – and especially – inspiring.

Mike describes RAYGUN on his Web site as “a printing, design & clothing company owned and operated by extremely attractive Midwesterners”, and this reporter can do no better in trying to capture the sense and the character of his remarks to us than to quote from that Web site, which includes an extensive, funny, and fascinating blogsite:

“Mike started RAYGUN in college when his last hope of having a respectable life was extinguished. After selling t-shirts on the street, the store opened in downtown Des Moines in 2005 to moderate fanfare. RAYGUN Iowa City opened in 2010. We wrote a book [*The Midwest: God's Gift to Planet Earth!*] in 2012, and in 2014 we added a store in Kansas City. We're now all filthy rich but show up for work anyway. The company's goals remain unchanged: create stuff that makes people laugh, save America from 10,000 years of darkness, and find a way to get out of this t-shirt thing and into something more meaningful like pharmaceuticals or petroleum.”

Mike Draper is a Van Meter native who attended Central Academy (where he was a student of FFBC-member Steve Person – who introduced him at this FFBC meeting) and graduated from the Van Meter Schools and the University of Pennsylvania, with a year of study abroad at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He lives with his wife and three children in Des Moines, and can be reached via RAYGUN World Headquarters in Des Moines

(<<http://raygunsite.com>>). The book (\$17.50) is available there, too.



*The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered, “Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the*

*future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”*

*There are about 33,830 “Christian” denominations in the world. Almost certainly, none of them have it all figured out exactly right, but they’ve been able to identify that many differences considered sufficiently important to maintain a separate denomination. If you attended one of their worship services weekly, it would take you over 650 years to visit them all. If, from the day of your birth, you visited a different one of them **every single day**, you’d have to live to be 99 to visit*

Yeah, I love the pointed irony. Here – taken from a wide array of topics ranging from marriage equality to the Iowa Board of Regents – is a small sampling of Draper on the minimum wage:

“I own a small business and support increasing the minimum wage. As crazy as it sounds, I think work in this country should be fairly compensated! What?! I know, it's insane. I also believe in gravity. .... As a small business owner looking up toward the larger economy above me, the massive gap between rich and poor is the most imposing obstacle. Not only do ordinary Americans have less money to spend, but the hidden costs of our government subsidizing food and health-care for **working** Americans hurts us all.... Much government legislation targeted at helping “small businesses” really helps massive corporations.... But at the bottom of the ladder, 33 percent of bank tellers qualify for government assistance, as do 40 percent of big-box retail staff and over 50 percent of fast food workers.... As a retail-based small business owner, I don't want my taxes going to subsidize the low wages of my competitors in the form of government assistance.

“The low minimum wage actually keeps RAYGUN wages even lower than I'd like. Our starting full time wage is \$12.50 per hour, plus money for benefits. Our starting part-timers are paid \$9.50 per hour. We also make sure that our suppliers treat employees fairly: our shirts are cut and sewn in Los Angeles then printed (by us) in Des Moines and Kansas City, our glassware is made in the USA and printed in West Des Moines, our paper products are milled in the Midwest and then printed by union labor in Des Moines.

Wow. Mike Draper's words have inspired me to believe, once again, that the future just might be in good hands....

*them all. With more of them popping up all the time, you'd never visit all of them and, just your luck, you'd die just before visiting that one that has it all figured out accurately. Not worth the effort.*

*If you put off doing something for somebody because you can't do something for everybody, you'll end up doing nothing for anybody.*

*Work for a cause and not for applause.*

*“You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.”—Brigham Young*

*It's a bad day when the best thing that happens is relieving your bladder.*

*Secret to a happier life: Measure with a micrometer, mark with chalk, cut with an axe, and move on. J. Wilson*





## IOWA SCHOOLCHILDREN DESERVE BETTER

As a new school year gets under way, I know teachers, staff, administrators and school boards will provide great educational opportunities for our students. However, they will face a challenge because funding is much less than they expected.

Iowa education funding has fallen behind the increasing investments made by other states. We are now in the bottom third of states for K-12 per-pupil funding, investing \$1,612 less per student than the national average.

We planned to reverse that trend this year, until Governor Branstad's last-minute veto of a bipartisan compromise. Now our K-12 schools will be out \$56 million that they would have hoped to use this fall for updated textbooks, computers, lab equipment and other teaching tools.

Here's what our local school districts are missing out on:

- Des Moines Independent - \$3,612,916
- Norwalk - \$285,377
- West Des Moines - \$1,020,002
- Winterset - \$192,433

A recent poll shows the majority of Iowans oppose the Governor's veto. They know Iowa has enough money to make the necessary investments in our students and schools while balancing the state budget responsibly. The state's nonpartisan Revenue Estimating Conference projects state revenues will grow by 6 percent this year. In addition, we have a budget surplus of more than \$300 million and almost \$700 million in our reserve funds, the largest amount in state history.

Years of not helping our schools keep up with the cost of inflation is taking its toll. The loss of funds this year is resulting in staff layoffs, program cuts, larger class sizes and higher property taxes.

Senate Democrats are committed to making Iowa schools No. 1 again. We respect the work of teachers, administrators and school board members, and will fight again next session for the kind of increase that Iowa students deserve. We need to ensure that Iowa's next generation will be at a competitive advantage when it comes to education and job opportunities.

### **Additional information**

*This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to [www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy](http://www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy).*

*To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at [matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov).*



*Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.*

## RICKI AND THE FLASH

Review by Gary Kaufman

Meryl Streep does an incredible job of acting in **Ricki and the Flash**. She plays the title character, Ricki, a semi burnt-out rocker who left her family in Indianapolis long ago to follow her dream of being a rock 'n' roll star. She only had limited success, only one album had ever been released of their band, but the band, that you see perform early in the film, is a fantastic rock 'n' roll band. Ricki was called back to the family that she had abandoned in order to help her former husband deal with their daughter whose husband had just left her for another woman and the couple had only been married a few months. Ricki's former husband, played by Kevin Kline, was incredibly rich, lived in an enormous house and, although he was quite civil, the children were not. They all hated Ricki for leaving the

family when they were quite small. She was never there for them. Ricki really had her work cut out in trying to reestablish the family ties, and incorporating the new wife into her world as well.

The movie really takes off when it follows the band performing in a small bar. The performance they show is breathtaking, and Meryl even out does Bette Midler in **The Rose**. And Meryl's romantic opposite in the band was the lead guitarist played by Rick Springfield, who did a surprisingly good job of acting. The chemistry between Meryl and Rick when onstage was beautiful to behold. They really rocked.

And music, the one thing Meryl could give to her children, ended up saving the day in a very triumphant ending to the film.

I highly recommend seeing this movie, and the sound track should be pretty darn good too!

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### Some Mental Health Conditions are Easy to Diagnose

By Jonathan Wilson

I don't agree with much that Louisiana Governor Jindal has had to say in the Republican presidential sweepstakes and, apparently, not many in his political base do either. He's polling about where undeclared candidates do.

But in a demonstration that even a blind hog finds an occasional acorn, the governor got one thing exactly right when he declared that Donald Trump is an unabashed narcissist. As it turns out, using that label to describe Trump is not the usual use of unwarranted superlative or mere name calling. It's a diagnosis -- a diagnosis of "**narcissistic personality disorder**" according to none other than the staff at Mayo Clinic, relying on the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). The DSM-5 criteria for narcissistic personality disorder include these features:

- Having an exaggerated sense of self-importance
- Expecting to be recognized as superior even without achievements that warrant it
- Exaggerating your achievements and talents
- Being preoccupied with fantasies about success, power, brilliance, beauty or the perfect mate
- Believing that you are superior and can only be understood by or associate with equally special people
- Requiring constant admiration
- Having a sense of entitlement
- Expecting special favors and unquestioning compliance with your expectations

- Taking advantage of others to get what you want
- Having an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others
- Believing others envy you
- Behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner

Mind you, having two or three of those characteristics would probably not be enough to diagnose this mental health condition. But having every single one of them, and having them in spades and on public display, it doesn't take a professionally trained shrink to make the diagnosis. Even Governor Jindal could do it, and did.

The Mayo Clinic staff goes on to observe that those with the disorder "may come across as conceited, boastful or pretentious." They "often monopolize conversations." They "may belittle or look down on people perceived as inferior." They "may feel a sense of entitlement" and become impatient or angry if they don't receive special treatment. At the same time, they "have trouble handling anything that may be perceived as criticism," and -- get this -- they "may have secret feelings of insecurity, shame, vulnerability and humiliation." To feel better, they "may react with rage or contempt and try to belittle [others in order] to appear superior." That has Donald Trump written all over it.

If, as some have proposed, we tighten up background checks to include confirmation of emotional stability as a pre-condition for buying a gun, I'm thinking Donald Trump won't qualify. And he's for sure not qualified to be Commander in Chief of the most powerful military with the largest stockpile of mass destruction weapons in the world.

I'm embarrassed for him. He should not be seeking support of the electorate; he should be seeking help from a mental health professional, the best that money can buy.

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### FINDING MY WAY OUT, Cont'd from p. 2

I went, openly by god, to an FFBC breakfast and to a PROS party -- where I found a gay lover. Who knew??

I've even joined the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus, but there are still several gay markers that I need to notch my belt with. Most of *Queer as Folk*. All of *Will and Grace*. I've never been to the Castro (though I've sung about it) or even the Gay Nineties. But these can all be dealt with, now that I'm out and proud at last.

So, next on my list: *Priscilla. Queen of the Desert!*

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*October, 2015*

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MADE ON A  MAC

## MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

### **Behaving Oneself**

By Steve Person

Now that Elizabeth II has become the longest reigning monarch in British history, it seems fitting and proper that Caroline Taggart's book, **How to Greet the Queen and Other Questions of Modern Etiquette**, (Pavilion Books, London, 2014) should come to the fore. The author, using the rather tongue-in-cheek third person self reference as "Her Ladyship," promotes correct behavior in the early years of the twenty-first century. The book is aimed at British readers, but almost all of her prescriptions for modern behavior could as well be useful to Americans.

I found the title to be a little misleading. Almost all of the handbook's 153 pages are devoted to behaviors that affect the day-to-day existence of ordinary people, not royalty. The occasional insert about royal protocol is sometimes amusing but always correct. Taggart has a keen sense of dry humor perfectly illustrated by a reference to getting into and alighting from a carriage, a feat that almost all of us will never have to face: "Surprising though it may sound, this is easier than getting out of a sports car, partly because you are sitting in a more natural and comfortable position in the first place and partly because you are likely to have a footman help you...." The reader can almost picture the quiet glee the author must have had when writing of such things.

The chapter entitled, "Eating Out," brought back vivid memories of my younger days when, as a joke, former FFBC member John Tompkins and I read **Tiffany's Table Manners for Teenagers** before a double date we were going to go on to give our girlfriends at the time a sense of inferiority compared to our artful table manners. Perhaps Taggart's best piece of advice regarding eating out involved corn on the cob. Says she, "Corn on the cob is so awkward to eat elegantly that it's probably best not to attempt it in public." Obviously she never attended the Iowa State Fair or the Downtown Farmers' Market!

I thought her advice about forgetting people's names to be forthright and proper: "You can't introduce someone whose name or don't know, so simply apologize politely and confess that you have forgotten." Likewise, in the chapter, "What to Wear," Her Ladyship's recommendation regarding male attire was spot on: "Bear in mind that classic tailoring does not quickly go out of fashion and buy the best you can afford."

And what if you should one day find yourself being introduced to the Queen? Says Taggart: "On being introduced to Royalty, a man should bow from the neck rather than the waist; a woman should bob a slight curtsy. The deep reverence with wide-sweeping skirt once required of debutantes is now suitable only for theatrical curtain calls...It is bad form to offer to shake hands...The Queen should be addressed in the first instance as Your Majesty, thereafter, should the conversation be prolonged, as Ma'am—pronounced 'mam', not 'marm'."

There you have it. It's actually quite a fun little book and its advice to today's world of behavior is less formal than the etiquette books of old.