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WHY THERE'S NO GOING BACK

By Jonathan Wilson

The United States Supreme Court has announced that it will hear the Prop 8 decision that would legalize gay marriage in California, and another that tests the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The fact is, gay marriage and gay adoption are both virtually a "done deal" in the United States of America regardless of the Supreme Court. Here's why:

Assume a worst case scenario, one in which the United States Supreme Court -- for the time being at least -- improbably refuses to find DOMA unconstitutional, and overturns the Prop 8 decision that would otherwise have legalized gay marriage in California. Despite the unconstitutionality of both DOMA and Prop 8, that worst case scenario is legally possible. The Supreme Court has the raw power to make that scenario materialize. No question about that.

Assume further that you're a religious ideologue enamored with achieving a theocracy in this country for at least as long as your particular brand of religion remains in the majority. You would doubtless be cheering for that worst case scenario; you'd be hoping against hope that the Supreme Court would rule your way on both issues. Where does that worst case scenario get you?

Now for the reality check. The United States Supreme Court, whatever its considerable power, undeniably lacks the power to outlaw gay marriage in those states that have legalized it by popular vote, such as Maine, Massachusetts, and Washington. It's been legalized in six other states, including Iowa, by other means. It's also legal in the nation's capital. Whatever the number of states in which it is legalized, with it being legal in multiple jurisdictions and with the Supreme Court powerless to prevent it, the question becomes an easy one: are we going to have one country, indivisible, or not? Is our mutual Pledge of Allegiance real or mere rhetoric?

Let me make the point this way. Suppose the patchwork of legality were to persist and you and your lawful same-gendered spouse, decided to take a road trip across the United States of America. And suppose further that your spouse falls ill or there's an automobile accident and your spouse is injured. Can we really have *one country* when, within that country your rights and privileges regarding your lawful spouse depend upon the happenstance of the state in which the misfortune befalls you?

If it happens in Iowa, no problem. You'll be able to visit your spouse in the hospital; you'll be able to make medical decisions for your spouse. You'll enjoy unfettered rights on a par with

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, January 4, 2013, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by January 2nd to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

FFBC Annual Red Party Scholarship Fundraiser

Friday, Feb. 1, 2013
6-9pm
Hoyt Sherman Place
15th and Woodland
Des Moines

Please join us for our annual Red Party--a night of music, food, wine and fun. Money raised will provide scholarships for college-bound students who've made significant efforts to reduce homophobia in their schools and communities. For more details and ticket information, click on the Red Party link at www.ffbciowa.org.

...No Going Back (cont.)

those you enjoy in your home state. But if the misfortune occurs in Nebraska, Oklahoma, or any other state that hasn't progressed to a 21st Century enlightenment toward gay marriage, your life could get incredibly complicated. See DOMA. Can we really have *one country* if your spousal rights fluctuate from some to none depending on where you are on a cross-country interstate highway? Can we really have *one country* when you need to rewrite your estate planning documents every time you cross a state line? Can we really have *one country* when law-abiding citizens are vulnerable to such disparate treatment?

If that's not sufficiently compelling, pretend you're a CEO of a multi-state company with offices and stores in multiple states. Pretend further that, for the sake of the company's success, you want to transfer a particularly capable employee from Massachusetts to a management position in one of those unenlightened states. And just suppose that employee is legally married to a same-gender spouse and has a couple of legally adopted kids. Now what? Can we really have *one country* when the CEOs of multi-state companies cannot freely engage in interstate commerce and freely transfer employees from state-to-state without taking such factors as the legality of gay marriage or the legality of gay adoption into account before acting?

Can we really have *one country* when law-abiding citizens can serve in the military with their lives on the line to protect our freedoms and, at the same time, face such discrimination and mistreatment by several of the states?

And the answer is: we cannot have *one country* under such circumstances and the United States Supreme Court -- with all its considerable power -- is utterly powerless to prevent that unworkable patchwork of state laws on the legality of gay marriage and gay adoption. Even the dimmer lights on the United States Supreme Court should be able to see that reality.

The reality is, it's over. It's done. The proverbial "fat lady" is not just warming up; she began singing on November 6, 2012.

Sharing a Search for Self and Meaning

By Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker at the December 7 meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club was The Reverend Dr. Jonathan C. Page, since October 2011 the minister of the United Church of Christ - Congregational (UCCC) in Ames. His talk, ranging from the personal/historical to the theological/political, was

appealing, fascinating, and thoroughly rewarding.

Jonathan began with an account, both admiring and wry, of his high school -- an all-male, public day school in Boston with needs-blind admission -- and its extraordinary headmaster, who was also an Episcopal priest. In the time-honored New England tradition, he noted, the school prided itself on teaching morality to young men. There he learned, and began to absorb, two basic life lessons: "We shall all die," and "Money does not define success."

Page describes himself as having been a "fairly intense teenager." "I was always asking big questions about meaning," he says. "What do I believe in? How far would I push it? Do my beliefs really go to the core of my being?" At Harvard, he started as a Comparative Religion concentrator, but eventually transferred to the History department to focus on the roots of early Christianity. After graduation, he served as a Fellow of Eton College in England, before returning to Boston to work at a small start-up investment bank; it was then that he experienced a strong pull to the ministry. "After that moment, I sat back and thought, 'Well, I'm crazy!' But religious questions have always dogged me in my life, so I decided worst case scenario, I go to divinity school and I figure out what I believe -- and maybe I don't believe anything, but at least I'll know."

At Yale Page did reaffirm his faith, and he made the acquaintance of Peter J. Gomes, the minister at Harvard, who encouraged him to become chaplain to Harvard's undergraduates for two years. Page says it was a dream job. "If you're going to be an associate in a church, why not do it at a place like Harvard with Peter Gomes as your boss and all those great resources and great students to work with?"

Later in this talk, Jonathan was engagingly frank about the theological problem of human desire and the implications to be drawn from the Christian god's incarnation as a human. Clearly he knows his Bible, and clearly he echoes his mentor Peter Gomes (also an out gay man) that "one can read into the Bible almost any interpretation of morality ... its passages have been used to defend both slavery and the liberation of slaves; to support racism, anti-Semitism and patriotism; to enshrine a dominance of men over women; and to condemn homosexuality as immoral." Take that, o ye cherry-pickers of scriptures.

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Jonathan Page grew up in suburban Boston and is a graduate of Roxbury Latin, Harvard College (*magna cum laude* in History), and Yale Divinity School. He worked for three years as the undergraduate chaplain at Harvard's Memorial Church where he served under Peter Gomes (1942-2011), the long-time minister and chaplain at Harvard. Jonathan has served on a national board of the UCC and is the author of a book on missionaries entitled *Ringing the Gotchnag: Two American Missionary Families in Turkey, 1855-1922*. Jonathan also taught at Eton College in England, the Groton School in Massachusetts, and was a teaching assistant in the history department at Yale. He was an avid rower in college and coached rowing at Eton, Yale, and Groton. He maintains a blog at <theflamingeretic.com>, and writes a regular column, "From the Pastor's Pen," for the FFBC Newsletter and *ACCESSline Iowa*. He can be reached at jon@amesucc.org.



If you're reading this the Mayan predicted "end of time" on 12/21/12 didn't happen. Best wishes during your continued existence. J. Wilson

At the beach there's a fine line between rubbing lotion on your body and rubbing your body with lotion. Avoid crossing it.

Skyfall, Flight and Lincoln

Three Reviews By Gary Kaufman

This is the time of year that Hollywood releases its best movies as the various studios jockey for positioning of films they deem worthy of Oscar consideration and families spend more time going to movies as well. So instead of picking just one of the films and writing an expanded review of the film I consider the best or most likely to interest our readers, I thought I would write three shorter movie reviews to give you a glimpse of the pallet that is out there should you decide to venture into the theaters.



It is hard to believe that it has been almost 50 years since I and my best friend bemused what it would be like to be a spy after we saw **From Russia With Love** (we liked the sex, but thought the hazards of the job would be a little too intense and would offset the positives), or that I fell in love with the way Sean Connery said “Pooooosy” in **Goldfinger**, and I pondered the difficulty of

fighting an enormous automaton with a killer derby in the Asian character, Odd Job. But the franchise has evolved and the current incarnation has proved to be so successful that it can bill itself, at least for a few weeks, as the “the most popular movie in the world”. **Skyfall**, with Daniel Craig as James Bond, has a lot of elements of the old Bond films, but also has a more heady feel in that the arch nemesis is not a megalomaniac determined to take over the world, but a computer nerd with a purpose. The old characters are still there, the beautiful but expendable and dangerous girls, but with a different type of mold than in the old Bond films. M is a woman, of course, Ms. Judi Dench, but Q is now a young and rather cute computer nerd, Ben Whishaw. Toward the end, new cast members are revealed for the subsequent films. There are some twists that never occurred in the old Bond films, such as a homo-erotic scene between Bond and his nemesis. Of course, the incredible exotic locations are still there, and one of the star locations is Scotland which I had no idea could be so beautiful. Also apparently there is an island that has been allowed to remain unchanged near Hiroshima to show the utter consequences of the release of the atomic bomb. This film, like **Goldfinger**, does not end when you think it is ending. It is rather long for a Bond film, but still quite a ride for those who decide to check it out.

I had a lot of discomfort about seeing the movie,



Flight. A good part of the movie is about Denzel Washington’s inability to cope with his alcoholism and the toll that it takes on his relationships and job performance. I have been in a relationship with an alcoholic myself, and the film brought out so much of the feelings I had as my relationship deteriorated, at times it was tough to endure. The film’s characters have a wide assortment of addictions, so it does not dwell only on people

with problems with alcohol. And like **Turk182**, it involves a character that was drunk at the time it was necessary for that person to take control and save many lives, in this case by showing probably one of the most harrowing air flights ever shown on film. It involves whether or not a person should be made a hero because he performed when in that situation or made a villain because he was in that inebriated condition when his time to be heroic arrived. The title, **Flight**, not only represents the physical flight of the aircraft, but Denzel’s eventual flight from alcoholism when he becomes finally “free.”

Lincoln, the Steven Spielberg film, is a tough one to figure out if it will be popular. Although it is entitled **Lin-**

(Continued on page 4)

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the January 4 meeting no later than January 2. Email JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Iowa Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal.

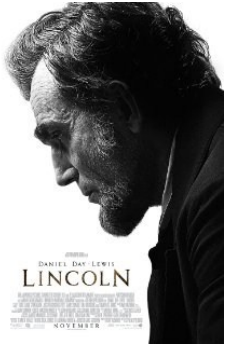
Thanks to Phil Williams for his introduction of our December speaker, The Reverend Jonathan Page.

Consider making an end-of-year tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund.

Save the date: February 1 will be the FFBC Annual Red Party. Already \$17,500 have been pledged for the FFBC scholarship fund. 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 Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange

Skyfall, Flight & Lincoln (cont).



coln it deals primarily with the passage of the 13th amendment to the Constitution which abolished for all time slavery and indentured servitude. The war was winding down, and because of procedural restraints in the Constitution—to adopt an amendment that would end slavery—the amendment had to be passed prior to the Confederate states re-entering the Union such states would surely not ratify the amendment, and it would fail. The task was left to a lame duck session of Congress, which used to last months longer than the current ones, and the Democrats suffered many defeats, so the members of the House would no longer have their jobs. A lot of the film deals with the nitty gritty of passing legislation in the 1860s. With the renewed term of President Lincoln, there would be a lot of government positions to be appointed, and as was the practice of the period, these were openly used as bribes to get favorable votes from members of the opposition. The Republicans were torn between two factions – the conservative Republicans who were only interested in the amendment as a means to end the war with the South and the radical Republicans who wanted people of all races to be treated as equals in the United States. The cast is outstanding. At no point would I have recognized Daniel Day Lewis as Lincoln, nor Sally Field as Mrs. Lincoln. The film portrays the wit and divisiveness that was common in political debate during that era. Visit the Lincoln museum sometime in Springfield, Illinois, and see the caricatures the press would make of Lincoln during that era – makes our current stuff look mighty tame in comparison. The film also illustrates the rush of unbelievable joy when the amendment is passed, and the film makes us realize how rare democracy was back then. Until after World War I, most countries were led by monarchies – where the privileged few ruled. By passing this amendment, the United States showed the world that through a democracy, people could actually establish freedom! How precious that concept is. And even today we are establishing new expressions of what that means in this country and ways of protecting it. Let freedom continue to ring!

In times of change, learners inherit the earth; while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists. Eric Hoffer, American Social Writer

Serving You into the New Year

By Sen. Matt McCoy

As 2012 comes to an end, I want to thank everyone who shared their concerns, ideas, and hopes with me. You've made a positive difference by helping to shape Iowa's future.

We have many reasons to look forward to 2013. Iowa's economy is growing. To build a lasting recovery, I'll keep speaking up for Iowa's middle-class families and Main Street businesses. When the Legislature convenes in January, my focus will be strengthening our state's economy and building the strongest job training system in the United States.

Much of that work happens in committees. In addition to serving as an Assistant Majority Leader in the Senate, I will chair the Commerce Committee and the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget. I will also sit on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation, Ways & Means Committees.

By participating on these committees, I will serve as voice and advocate for my 66,000 constituents in Cumming, Des Moines, Norwalk and West Des Moines.

The 85th General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature will convene on Monday, January 14. I'm getting ready for the session by meeting with and listening to as many people as I can. If you have ideas and concerns, please share them with me.

Thanks again to all who take an active part in making our state a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Additional information

This is a legislative column by Senator Matt McCoy, representing western and southern portions of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and parts of Norwalk. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/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.

Senator McCoy is the chair of the Commerce Committee and the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget and vice-chair of the Appropriations Committee. He also serves on the State Government, Transportation, and Ways & Means committees.

To heck with being on the right side of history; strive to be on the left side of history.

At the beach there's a fine line between rubbing lotion on your body and rubbing your body with lotion. Avoid crossing it.

From the Pastor's Pen

The Curious Case of Gay Evangelicals

By Rev. Jonathan Page

My first week in Des Moines, some friends told me that I needed to see the city, the important sites; we ended up at the Garden. The weather was gorgeous, so we took our drinks out to the back patio to enjoy the evening air. While lounging outside, I struck up a conversation with a guy who told me he lived in Ames. "Really?" I asked. "By any chance do you go to church?" (from what I am told, this is not the typical way to begin a conversation at the Garden) "Why, yes, I do," he replied. "I go to Cornerstone."

It is at this point that I nearly spat the remainder of my drink onto the patio floor. "What?" I asked, incredulously. "You go to Cornerstone? I thought that was an evangelical church." "It is. I go with my roommate." The guy nodded over his shoulder to an extremely attractive guy talking to someone nearby. It was then that I realized I was no longer in Massachusetts. You see, in Massachusetts there are barely any evangelical churches, and I certainly did not know any gays who went to them. "Um, right," I stammered, still at a loss for words. "Well, if you are ever looking for a church that welcomes gays, be sure to give us a ring." I handed him one of my newly minted business cards that I happened to have in my wallet. Looking at his hot roommate, I added, "Feel free to bring your friend as well." Sadly, they have yet to cross the threshold of Ames United Church of Christ.

Gay evangelicals. Hmm. How can this be? Evangelical churches like Cornerstone are explicitly anti-gay. There is no ambiguity in their positions regarding LGBT persons. We are sinners, destined for the eternal fires of hell as long as we insist on living our "lifestyle." What amazes me is that since that conversation at the Garden, I have met several gay men who attend evangelical churches, usually without apology. It has to be more than the appeal of rock bands in church. What on earth is going on here amid the cornfields and pigpens of Iowa?

Evangelical Christianity depends on a worldview derived from a particular reading of the New Testament. Specifically, it relies on the Apostle Paul's notion, found in Romans, that human beings are hopeless sinners. As a consequence of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, our will has been perverted by concupiscence and pride, and we are now captive to the power of sin. To find salvation we must be "born again," a concept found in John 3. Stirred by our own sinfulness, we commit fully to Jesus Christ as our only Lord and Savior, and, once we fall to our knees and confess our sinful nature to him, we will receive salvation. The gay writer James Baldwin described his own conversion experience thus:

"I became more guilty and more frightened, and kept all this bottled up inside me, and naturally, inescapably, one

night, when this woman had finished preaching, everything came roaring, screaming, crying out, and I fell to the ground before the altar. It was the strangest sensation I have ever had in my life—up to that time, or since. One moment I was on my feet, singing and clapping and, at the same time working out in my head the plot of a play I was working on then; the next moment, with no transition, no sensation of falling, I was on my back, with the lights beating down into my face and all the vertical saints above me. I did not know what I was doing down so low, or how I had got there. And the anguish that filled me cannot be described. It moved in me like one of those floods that devastate counties, tearing everything down, tearing children from their parents and lovers from each other, and making everything an unrecognizable waste... for I was utterly drained and exhausted and released, for the first time, from all my guilty torment." (From James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*)

While Baldwin's conversion, later repudiated, is more intense than most, a moment of decision for Jesus has a profound impact on any individual. It is no wonder then, if someone makes a commitment to Christ, that that person is reluctant to give it up because he is gay. Evangelical Christianity provides a level of certainty and commitment that more liberal churches, like the one I serve, lack. After having relished in the anxiety-relieving sureness of evangelicalism, a church that proclaims that the religious experience is nuanced and develops over time can seem watered-down by comparison.

The tricky part of being a gay evangelical is that it forces that person to confront the one thing his religion resists most: uncertainty. If you can question what the Bible "says" about same-sex relationships, can you question everything else as well? As soon as you undermine the certainty of the Bible, where does that leave you?

As personally uncomfortable as I am with gay evangelicals, I do see their crucial role for the larger gay rights movement. A gay evangelical is forced either to hopelessly compartmentalize his life (think of our dear friend Ted Haggard) or to wrestle with the complexity of biblical interpretation. Ideally, the latter happens within a community of evangelicals. We already see this happening in a younger generation of evangelicals, gay or straight, who are far more open to gays in the church than ever before.

FFBC member Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6th Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at jon@Amesucc.org.



Told by a fortune teller that she'd soon be widowed because her husband was going to be brutally murdered, she had one question, "Will I be acquitted?"

Convictions are more dangerous foes of truth than lies. Nietzsche

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

JANUARY 2013

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

At Random

By Steve Person

December is a mighty month, not to mention a busy one. I have made many discoveries this month, and they are almost all positive.

The month kicked off with an especially pleasing FFBC meeting on December 7. There really wouldn't be a need to schedule any further FFBC speakers if The Reverend Jonathan Page spoke to us every month! I found his message to be humorous yet meaningful, witty yet deep. His skill as a communicator is nothing short of amazing, and this is coming from an old heathen who does not believe in any organized religion. Good job, Jonathan!

I went to a few movies during December. I am not trying to take anything away from our resident movie reviewer, Gary Kaufman, but Daniel Day Lewis in **Lincoln** was nothing short of phenomenal. The entire movie is a gem. A week later, I went to see the latest version of **Anna Karenina** starring Keira Knightley and Jude Law. It was visually stunning with costumes and sets that defy description. The two leads were beautiful—literally—and Tom Stoppard's script was intriguing. It was sort of like Tolstoy meets Gilbert and Sullivan with inventive staging that see-sawed back and forth between proscenium arched sets and vivid exteriors. For an equally stunning and yet more traditional version of the ill-fated Russian aristocratic lovers, see the 1935 black and white version starring Greta Garbo and Frederic March. Both versions are treats for the eye and stimulation for the mind. I am going to get the book and give it a careful reading.

Mid-month I went to the Civic Center to see the national touring company's presentation of **War Horse**. What a moving play it is! I purposely avoided seeing Steven Spielberg's movie version last year in hopes of seeing the stage play first. Fortunately, the Civic Center brought the play to us. The ingenious use of puppets for the horses made for creative and compelling drama. Now I feel I can look at the movie version. Sometimes a film can enhance a stage production, and sometimes the result is flat and stilted. I hope the movie makes the play proud.

As of this writing, **Les Miserables** and **The Guilt Trip** (starring Barbra Streisand and Seth Rogen) have not yet been released to the public. The former has garnered rave reviews for some of its stars, and the latter prompted Dr. Phil to devote an entire program to mother/son relationships with Streisand and Rogen appearing for an interview for half of his hour-long show.

On Saturday, December 15, I went to the downtown farmers' market in Capital Square. It was overwhelmingly crowded, but it was nice to see so many folks spending their dollars with local merchants rather than at some tarted up mall debasing itself to lure customers in to spend their money that does not stay within the community. After that, my friend and I attended the open house at the newly renovated World Food Prize Headquarters in the former Des Moines Public Library downtown facility. I was mostly pleased with what the renovation did for the building, but we both agreed it was pretty and somewhat pompous. Still, the 1900 structure is saved, and that makes the \$30,000,000 spent on the renovation worth it.

The saddest event, of course, was the senseless murders in Newtown, Connecticut. I know gun control in this society will never happen, but it would be possible to control the ammunition that is used in such unnecessary weapons. That would be a place to start.

Here's hoping for the best in 2013.