



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

First Friday News & Views

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Calendar

▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, April 4, 2014, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by April 2, 2014 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

Tribute to Fred Phelps

By Jonathan Wilson

I commemorate the passing of one of our most infamous detractors, the disgraced, ex-communicated, and disbarred "Rev." Fred Phelps. He was noted for protesting against gay people in general, and later the funerals of Matthew Shepard and then US soldiers unconnected in any known way to the gay community. His protests were characterized by headline-grabbing signs like "God Hates Fags." He drew a great deal of media attention and did get people to talking. Therein lies the power and positive contribution his lies made in advancing the cause of equality for law-abiding gay children of God. He got people talking. He drew the line between us and our detractors so far to the extreme that folks who had no idea they were on our side found themselves there thanks to the way Fred Phelps framed the debate. The gay community wins when and if folks will have dialogue about us; the truth really does set us free. *See Jesus at John 8:32.*

Beyond that big-picture, longer-range contribution made by Phelps, he also contributed on a more tangible level. Several years ago, and for two years in a row, he and his entourage showed up in central Iowa to protest the First Friday Breakfast Club, an association of gay and bisexual men. Annually it gives scholarships of \$2500 apiece to Iowa high school students who have done significant things to reduce homophobia in their schools and communities. It has awarded over \$170,000 in scholarships to students who have been busy spreading enlightenment on this subject throughout the state of Iowa. It has been making a difference -- a positive difference -- in part, thanks to Fred Phelps. The Lord truly does work in mysterious ways.

Each year he was here protesting, the First Friday Breakfast Club sponsored a fund raiser dubbed, "Phelps Helps," on the premise that if you take the "P" out of Phelps, it "helps." And help it did. We sought pledges of scholarship contributions for every minute Phelps was here protesting in the exercise of his First Amendment rights. The longer he protested, the more money we raised. The longer he exercised his rights, the more we could legitimately celebrate those rights that are so critically important to our democracy. The longer and louder he spoke evil and hatred in the public arena, the more parents of gays and lesbians declared that enough is enough, and good-hearted Iowans flocked to support us.

In the course of those two years we raised over \$22,000 in scholarship funds, making Phelps the single largest contributor to our scholarship fund ever. He and his ilk never came back again, so he was missed long before he died.

It is said that we are known by the friends we keep. The corollary is also true: we are known by the *Continued on p. 2*

A Last Ditch Stand that Also Fails

Continued from p. 1

enemies we make. I consider it a high compliment to be counted among those Fred Phelps saw as enemies.

That first year when Fred Phelps protested the First Friday Breakfast Club outside Hoyt Sherman Place where it meets on the first Friday of every month, we had all of our scholarship recipients and their supportive families there for the meeting. Our guest speaker was Ambassador James Hormel, the first openly gay person ever appointed as a US ambassador. Inside it was cozy, warm, and about as gay-supportive as it possibly could be. Outside, where Phelps and his lackeys were protesting on the sidewalk, there was a cold, pouring rain making them, literally and figuratively, all wet. The Lord works in mysterious, sometimes wonderful, ways.

We've lost one of the single best friends of the gay community. Fred Phelps violated the law against unintended consequences. The Lord really does work in mysterious ways. I hope Bob Vander Plaats, Reverend Keith Ratliff, and Father Frank Bisignano are paying attention.

Bishop Tutu has said that he'd rather go to Hell than spend eternity in an anti-gay Heaven. If I were to have the choice, I'd rather spend eternity with Bishop Tutu than Vander Plaats, Ratliff, Bisignano, or Fred Phelps.

From the Pastor's Pen

Continued from Page 3

governments. Are they to blame?

This brings me back to the concept of sin.

How do we describe the complex web of moral choices that makes up the world? How can we hold up the good in the midst of our society? Perhaps the first step is an honest acknowledgment that we are involved in bad things. We do mess up. If we can begin there,

maybe we can have a dialogue about how to move beyond it and make ourselves, and the world, better.

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My M.O. by Steve Person

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related to practically all the European royal houses, he accomplished a great deal to help his prime ministers in the area of foreign affairs. He became the first true constitutional monarch.

As Ridley points out in her conclusion, "As the power of the Crown declined, the monarch acquired a new role: the head of the state became the head of the nation...this was the greatest achievement of his reign."

The British monarchy of today owes much to this esteemed ancestor. They are above politics, and as the monarch does not rule, she/he has the right to encourage, question, and warn the prime minister.

In this country, we have as our head of state nothing more than a mere politician. In the United Kingdom, the prime minister has the privilege of weekly meetings with the monarch, a person who, at present, has lived through twelve prime ministers. That's a load of experience that she can lend to the politicians in power.

Did you ever wonder...

If you throw a cat out a car window does it become kitty litter?

If corn oil comes from corn, where does baby oil come from?

When a cow laughs does milk come up its nose?

How did a fool and his money GET together?

Briefs & Shorts

- Be sure to RSVP for the April 4 meeting no later than April 2. Our speaker will be Iowa State Senator Jack Hatch, Democratic candidate for governor.
- Thanks to Brad Holland for introducing our March speaker, Donna Red Wing, Executive Director of One Iowa.
- Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read.
- Book donations are always welcome.



From the Pastor's Pen
"Talking About the 'S' Word"

By Rev. Jonathan Page

Sin. There, I said it. It is a word that none of us like to hear. I cannot recall meeting anyone who likes to talk about sin, either their own or that of others. It brings up so many feelings of guilt and self-loathing. As a gay man, the word sin is particularly repulsive. Who among us has not felt some degree of shame for being gay, and how often has that been linked to the concept of sin?

It is remarkable to see how many churches today agree with that assessment. Starting in the early 20th century, liberal Christian churches began to alter or remove their confessions of sin from Sunday morning service. Today in many evangelical churches, they leave out the confession of sin in spite of the fact that they claim to embrace a robust concept of sin. Confessions of sin are inconvenient. They make us feel bad. So, leave it out.

Recently, however, I have been doing some reading that has challenged me to think some more about sin. Specifically, I have been reading about oil producing countries in West Africa. A little random, I know, but it has been fascinating. Take the example of Nigeria.

Oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956. Four years later the country secured independence from Great Britain. Initially, half the revenue from oil was going to be directed at the local communities who supplied the oil. In 1966, there was a military coup, and things took a dramatic turn for the worse. By 1990, only 3% of the oil revenue was allocated to the communities that supplied the oil, usually in the form of "development" schemes that were more of a way to enrich the government cronies who carried out the contracts. The oil region was one of the most polluted areas on the planet and one of the poorest areas in Nigeria.

Then, in the early 1990s, a non-violent, grassroots movement emerged in the Niger Delta. That movement brought international attention to the suffering of the people as a result of the oil industry.

The government played along for a while, but in 1995 they executed the leaders of this movement on trumped up charges. Through it all, the oil continued to flow uninterrupted.

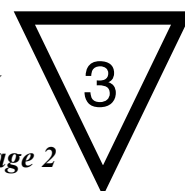
Unsurprisingly, the movement that had begun as a peaceful movement, turned violent. They did targeted kidnapping of oil workers and sabotaged the production of oil where they could. In response, the Bush administration denounced this movement as a terrorist group and showed their full support for our ally - Nigeria. In the wake of 9/11, the US needed to secure its non-Middle Eastern sources of oil. That meant supporting Nigeria, Angola, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea no matter what their level of corruption or the number of human rights violations.

Every time we go to the gas station to fill up, we support the worldwide oil industry. Who among us would advocate for higher gas prices if only we could avoid supporting corrupt and abusive regimes? The reality is that the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations have taken the same position vis-à-vis the oil producing countries of West Africa. We want their oil, and so we make moral compromises to get it.

The vast majority of us consider ourselves to be good people. We try to abide by some version of the Golden Rule: do unto others as we would have them do unto us. What does that mean for our tacit support of the oil industry? We live in the United States. We have few options. We are not actively harming others, but we are supporting a system that does bad things.

What about the corrupt government officials in Nigeria? They are trying to support their families and get ahead while functioning within their society. They cannot singlehandedly change the system. For them, that means corruption and protecting the oil in the Niger Delta. The rebels in the Niger Delta are also trying to do what they think is right, even if it means perpetrating violence against innocent oil workers. The oil companies are merely trying to make profits for their shareholders. That means they have to work with bad

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MODERNIZING CRIMINAL LAW ON INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Iowa's criminal law relating to transmission of HIV is outdated and severely punishes people who have no criminal intent to transmit the disease. The law stigmatizes everyone who suffers from HIV and ends up discouraging people from seeking treatment. No other disease is dealt with in such a punitive way under Iowa law.

Over the years, advances in health care have resulted in big successes in controlling HIV with medication and other treatments. With the knowledge and understanding research has provided us in recent decades, it's time to update Iowa's law on infectious diseases. This week, the Iowa Senate unanimously approved [Senate File 2297](#) to do just that.

Under the bill, it is a crime to intentionally transmit or try to transmit various infectious or contagious diseases, including HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis and meningococcal disease. However, a person who has one of these diseases who does not behave in a way that would transmit the disease would not be guilty of a crime.

The bill promotes public health by encouraging those who may be carrying a disease to seek treatment rather than live fear of being charged with a crime if they have intimate relations with another person.

For more information about HIV and other infectious diseases, go to www.cdc.gov/hiv.

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.

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 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.

Why...?

- Why do you need a driver's license to buy liquor when you can't drink and drive?
- Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?
- Why are there flotation devices under plane seats instead of parachutes?
 - Why are cigarettes sold in gas stations when smoking is prohibited there?
 - Have you ever imagined a world with no hypothetical situations?
 - How does the guy who drives the snowplow get to work in the mornings?
 - If 7-11 is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, why are there locks on the doors?





Our guest speaker on Friday morning, March 7, 2014, was Donna Red Wing, Executive Director of One Iowa. It was Red Wing's third appearance before our group; she had been one of our very first speakers, in April 1999, and returned again in August 2012 shortly after she moved to Iowa. Red Wing brought with her this time her colleague Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel, LGBT Health & Wellness Coordinator for One Iowa.

Red Wing and Hoffman-Zinnel's mission on March 7 was to present to us -- as part of an informational series sponsored by the Iowa Insurance Division -- the specifics of the federal government's new Affordable Care Act as they relate to LGBT citizens (see the side panel). Starting in 2014, she noted, every individual must have minimum essential coverage, or else must pay a tax penalty. The Health Insurance Marketplace (www.HealthCare.gov) is a great way for people to explore a wide range of coverage plans with a single application. Applicants shopping for insurance on the Marketplace will have the choice of multiple insurers, and all plans offered will meet the minimal essential coverage requirement.

Red Wing was particularly excited that certain preventive services particularly important to LGBT people are to be covered by insurance as Essential Health Benefits, including HIV testing, depression screening, and tobacco use screening. In addition, subsidies will allow millions of

working-class people, including LGBT people, to

afford to buy health insurance for the first time.



by Bruce Carr

#GETCOVERED

DECEMBER 17, 2013

TOP 5 AFFORDABLE CARE ACT BENEFITS FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY

1

Plans purchased through the Marketplace can't discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

2

You can't be charged a higher premium just because you're lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

3

No denial of coverage because of pre-existing conditions like HIV/AIDS, cancer, or mental health diagnoses.

4

Legally married same-sex couples are treated equally for financial assistance when purchasing coverage in the Health Insurance Marketplace, regardless of where they live.

5

No more lifetime limits on coverage for people with chronic diseases like HIV/AIDS.

HEALTHCARE.GOV

The most moving moment of the presentation came right at the beginning, when Red Wing pointed to that very morning's front-page Iowa Poll, reporting that a plurality of Iowans now have no objection to marriage rights for all. "It's a non-issue for them," she said, "It's a Meh...!" Same-sex marriage is the New Normal in Iowa.

Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel is One Iowa's Health and Wellness Coordinator, to which he brings seven years of non-profit experience. Currently he is Chair of the LGBT Health Initiative of Iowa and has been a coalition member since 2008. In addition, he is Co-Chair of the Health Equity and Disparities Committee of the Iowa Cancer Consortium, and has worked with the Iowa Cancer Consortium on the Iowa Community-Based Cancer Prevention Project. He was the Karen Packer Spirit of Collaboration Award recipient at the 2012 Iowa Cancer Summit. Hoffman-Zinnel received his Master of Arts in Health Studies from the University of Alabama and is a Certified Health Education Specialist. He can be reached at daniel@oneiowa.org.

Donna Red Wing has decades of experience in working for full equality for LGBT people across the country, serving as Executive Director of Grassroots Leadership before she moved here to head up One Iowa two years ago. In her years as a visionary leader, she was Executive Director of Interfaith Alliance, Policy Director of The Gill Foundation, National Field Director for the Human Rights Campaign, the National Field Director for The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and Executive Director of The Lesbian Community Project. She can be reached at donna@oneiowa.org, 515-288-4019.



300: Rise of an Empire

Review by Gary Kaufman



Starring Sullivan Stapleton, Rodrigo Santoro, Eva Green, Lena Headey, Hans Matheson, David Wenham, Igal Naor, Callan Mulvey, Jack O'Connell, Andrew Tiernan, Andrew Pleavin

Directed by Naom Murro

1Hr 43 Min

300 : Rise of an Empire starts with Xerxes riding in victory over the Spartan King Leonidas, who had valiantly held off the Persian army with a mere 300 Spartan troops. But the story then goes back 10 years to a prior attempt at a Persian invasion where the Persian King was fatally struck by an arrow shot by Themistokles in front of his son, Xerxes. Artemisia had a voracious ability to deliver the severed heads of defeated kings to the Persian King. She, having risen in favor so that she was the commander of the Persian fleet and confident of the King, convinced Xerxes that in order to defeat his enemy he had to become a god-king. We are then shown the transformation of the bearded son, Xerxes, to the homo-erotic giant god-king we first saw in the film **300**.

The film then goes forward in time where Themostokles is trying to convince the city-states of Greece that they must unite to fight the Persian invasion.

droplets of blood going across the screen to dramatic effect, this film ups the ante and provides streams and rivers of blood and, in one case, a total fire hose of blood streaming slow motion from the slashed victims. However, it is done so stylized and over the top, that it really isn't gross and, in 3-D, it is quite impressive.

Also impressive in 3-D were the many battles at sea between the Persian and Greek ships. Fought in rolling seas with hundreds of vessels, I can't think of any movie that captures the scope of sea battle like this one. The success of the smaller Greek vessels in ramming the much larger Persian ships stymies the enormous Persian navy.

The film has such incredible sets they would have made Cecil B. DeMille proud! And if you like cheering for hunky men wearing next to nothing, this is the film for you! I highly recommend you see the film in 3-D – for the hunky men AND for the battles at sea and the “tidal wave of blood” necessary for freedom.

DES MOINES REGISTER POLL SHOWS MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN IOWA IS "THE NEW NORMAL"

DES MOINES--A poll from *The Des Moines Register* released today shows a plurality of Iowans--36 percent--have come to terms with marriage equality in Iowa, saying that it doesn't affect them. In addition, 28 percent of Iowans say they are proud that Iowa is a marriage equality state. Similarly, in a February, 2012 poll from *The Des Moines Register*, 56 percent of respondents said they were opposed to the legislature passing a state constitutional ban on marriage for gays and lesbians.

The following is a statement from Donna Red Wing, Executive Director of One Iowa, the state's leading lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization:

"The latest poll from *The Des Moines Register* tells us what we already know to be true--the tide for LGBT equality is turning. Month after month, we see more states embrace the freedom to marry. We see the state and federal courts knocking down marriage bans, paving the way for justice for all. We see new laws all around the country protecting our transgender brothers and sisters. We see national polling for marriage equality at its highest point.

"Nearly 5 years after the historic *Varnum v. Brien* Iowa Supreme Court ruling, *The Des Moines Register* poll reaffirms that Iowans accept marriage equality as 'the new normal.' LGBT people are not so different from anyone else. We are your neighbors, your friends, your family, and your co-workers. We pay our taxes, we worship, and we take care of our families.

"We know we are winning, but our work is far from over. With the help of Community HIV/Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa Network (CHAIN), we will continue to educate legislators on the need to reform Iowa's discriminatory HIV law. We will continue to create a space to have civil dialogue with our opponents so that there might be a sense of understanding, even amid disagreement. We will continue to advocate for a healthier and happier LGBT community. Together, we are One Iowa."

"The only time you shouldn't play the stock market is when you can't afford it, and when you can."

Let's eat, grandma; let's eat grandma; commas save lives and avoid arrests.

Sometimes you feel like the bottom brick in a tall building; made just like all the other bricks but under a lot more pressure. J. Wilson

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. African Proverb

Confidence is silent; insecurities are loud. Kushand

Sometimes it seems like your guardian angel has a drinking problem.

Remember when teachers, public employees, Planned Parenthood, NPR and PBS crashed the stock market, wiped out half of our 401Ks, took trillions in taxpayer funded bail outs, spilled oil in the Gulf of Mexico, gave themselves billions in bonuses, and paid no taxes? Yeah, me either . . .

Pretend for just a moment that you believe literally in the Biblical account of creation and that the reason women suffer pain in child birth is because of Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden. Now ask yourself why other female animals suffer pain in giving birth; what did they do to piss God off?

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

April 2014

*First Friday
Breakfast Club*

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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

by Steve Person

“A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke.” Rudyard Kipling

The Heir Apparent: A Life of Edward VII, The Playboy Prince

The dust jacket on Jane Ridley’s fascinating biography of Edward VII shows a jaunty Alexander Bassano photographic portrait of Edward Albert (known more familiarly as Bertie), Prince of Wales, sitting astride a chair with his right hand in his trouser pocket. He sports a top hat and tokes on one of his legendary cigars. He is obviously one of the mid-nineteenth century’s more interesting personalities.

Jane Ridley recounts in vivid detail the life of the playboy prince and later the much respected King Edward VII. If ever a personality evolved from a rake to a rarefied royal, it was Edward VII.

Born as the eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Bertie’s future was set before he ever had any idea of it. Unfortunately, his mother was far from an ideal person, who found childbirth distressing and resented especially the birth of her heir apparent. He could never do much of anything to gain her approval. He rebelled.

Victoria blamed Bertie for the death of her beloved Prince Albert because Bertie caused “disgrace” by having illicit relations with a woman named Nellie Clifden while he was in training for the army. When the Queen and Prince Albert found out about his indiscretion, they were livid—especially Albert. These events happened in September 1861, and Albert died in December of typhoid fever. Victoria, however, refused to accept the real reason for Albert’s death and, instead, heaped disgrace upon her eldest son. What’s a boy to do?

Bertie tried numerous times to gain his mother’s approval but was, for the most part, rebuffed. For a family that prided itself as a role model of middle class values, the dysfunction was devastating for all concerned.

While the events of 1861 were taking place, Victoria and Albert arranged for Bertie to marry Alexandra, a Danish royal princess. They kept Bertie in the dark about the marriage negotiations and finally informed him of a marriage of which he had no idea.

While Prince of Wales, Bertie gambled frequently, entertained many mistresses, and even was called into court proceedings involving a divorce. He was the nineteenth century version of Shakespeare’s Prince Hal.

When his eldest son, Prince Eddy, died, Bertie changed his behavior, and by the time he inherited the throne in 1901, he was a much beloved royal. As king, he was a micromanager and took great pains to work assiduously to be king to all his people, not just the upper classes. Since he was

Continued on Page 2