

FFBC**2020**

First Friday News & Views

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

January 2020

Volume 25

Issue 1

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, January 3,
2019
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th & Woodland,
Des Moines



R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
January 1.



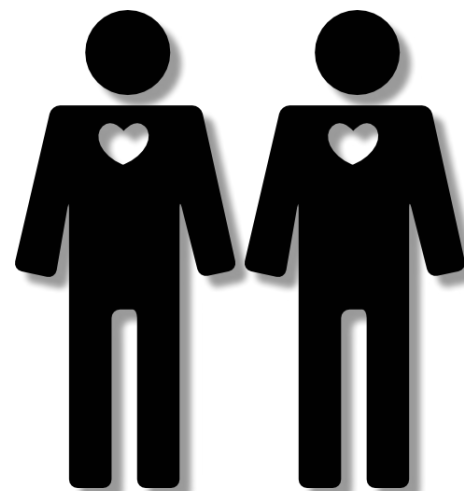
FFBC Website:
www.ffbciaowa.org



Giving Thanks

by Jonathan Wilson

*On October 24, 2019, Jonathan Wilson was among several honorees at the first Legacy Leaders Award Event sponsored by One Iowa and **dsm magazine**. Each honoree was invited to make some remarks. Several attendees asked that Jonathan's remarks be published in the FFBC Newsletter. His remarks follow:*



In 1974, the American Psychiatric Association took the position that homosexuality is not a mental illness. At that point in time I was 29 years old, married to a woman, and had one child already. It would be 22 years and another child later that I did my public coming out exercise as a longtime member of the Des Moines School Board.

Until the APA took that enlightened, professional position, same gender intimacy was illegal, sick, and sinful -- the trifecta for oppression. A crime in every state in the Union, a diagnosable mental disorder, and condemned as sin by almost all religious institutions, including the United Methodist Church where I belonged. Immoral, illegal, and insane.

Webster's Dictionary didn't figure out until the 1930s that homosexuality was a thing and gave it a name. Until then, 1930 years post-Biblical writer, everyone believed that everyone was straight or otherwise conforming. Same gender intimacy was seen as straight people acting badly. Biblical writers were wrong factually about that as surely as they were wrong factually about the earth being flat and the center of all creation.

The decision of the APA to remove homosexuality as a mental disorder carried by a vote margin of about 5 to 3. That narrow margin was achieved only after countless generations of survivors struggled in the closet, often married to unsuspecting straight women, and sometimes to suspecting straight women. They had to hide and still find a way to find one another. Hide to avoid jail, religious discrimination, or conversion therapy, all of the above, or worse. And hidden, they still were driven to find one another. And they did. They put in the thankless work of surviving in those conditions that finally enabled the vote of the APA.

[continued on page two]

I said thankless work because, with all the progress that has been made in the last 45 years thanks to them, we can't thank them directly. The only way we can thank them is to help those who are coming after us. The calling is to carry the torch, add an accelerant if the opportunity presents itself, and hand it off to a next generation that may find and continue making a smoother path. If we could ask our predecessors, they'd say that's thanks enough.

dsm

I want to thank One Iowa and *dsm magazine*. I want to thank the other honorees for their remarkable contributions in carrying the torch. I want to thank my former spouse, my son, my daughter, my son-in-law, my daughter-in-law, and my partner Scott Kuknyo. You are my secret weapon -- my support system.

And thanks to everyone here who is nonconforming in one way or another, or who is an ally of those who are.

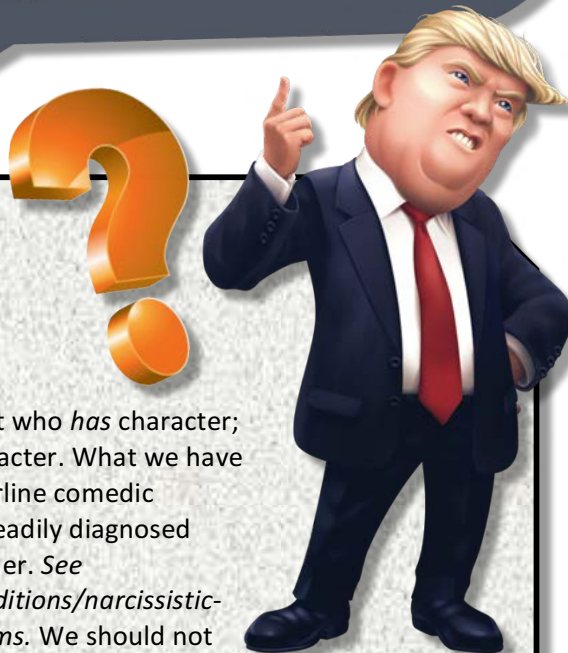
"If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door."

-- Harvey Milk

Question of Character

By Jonathan Wilson

What is needed is a president who *has* character; not a president who *is* a character. What we have is a president who is a borderline comedic character. A caricature of a readily diagnosed narcissistic personality disorder. See MayoClinic.org/diseases-conditions/narcissistic-personality-disorder/symptoms. We should not give power to a such characterless, chaotic clown.



January's Speaker:

**Claire
Celsi**



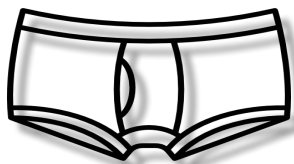
Our speaker in January will be Iowa State Senator Claire Celsi. You won't want to miss this. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!! Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.



"Whoever doesn't get that we're already in a fight is not going to win that fight."

Senator E. Warren

Briefs ✓ & Shorts:



Thanks to **John Chaplin** for introducing our December speaker, **Matt Unger**, Executive Director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council. Thanks also to **Jordan Duesenberg** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **January 13, 2020**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

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.

Don't Miss the

DEADLINE!

Happy New Year

Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

Good-Night

By Bernard C. Clausen

Not without practice do we die.
But every night, with trustful sigh,
We close out sights and sounds -- let go --
And in a moment, nothing know.

We might dread death, if it were strange.
But we have slept; so without change,
We can let go, and buried deep,
Unwaking, through the aeons, sleep.



2020

— HAPPY NEW YEAR —

Feeding the Spiritually and Physically Hungry

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, December 6, 2019, was Matt Unger, who was appointed CEO of the Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) last July, after working several years with the Food Bank of Iowa. DMARC, Unger told us, has been at the forefront of community action and advocacy in Greater Des Moines for nearly six decades, leading interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and responding to basic human needs. Founded in 1952 as a Protestant-based organization, DMARC has grown to include over 130 member congregations and comprises relationships with members of Baha'ism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Unitarian-Universalism, and Native American faith traditions.

Almost 50,000 people annually are currently served through DMARC programs including, among others, Interfaith Engagement and the DMARC Food Pantry Network. This coming July, for example, DMARC will co-host the third annual Interfaith Youth Leadership Camp, in which 20 high school students representing a diverse array of religious traditions and communities will spend five days and four nights at Drake University, learning about each other's religious beliefs and practices, and discussing with each other the principles and practices of interfaith leadership. Interfaith Youth Leaders receive an honorarium for their participation in the camp.

As for the food pantry, people seeking assistance in the Des Moines metro area can go once per month to one of fourteen partner food pantry sites, to receive a three-day supply of food for themselves and their families at no cost. In FY2016-2017, the DMARC Food Pantry Network assisted over 48,000 unique individuals in nearly 20,000 unique households, and distributed over 1.8 million food items. Unger noted that 11% of Iowans – that's 300,000 people – are food insecure. Unger further elaborated on some of his personal goals for the pantry network, including increased emphasis on nutrition. (Already at DMARC pantries, snacks and other processed foods "cost" more -- in terms of "points" -- than do fresh fruits and vegetables). He is also very focused on data collection and analysis, using survey results to evaluate how well distribution is meeting the needs of the people served. And he encouraged us to "stay tuned" for the imminent announcement of plans for a much-needed new headquarters building for DMARC.

You can listen to an audio recording of Matt Unger's complete remarks by clicking on the Speakers tab at our Web site, <ffbc Iowa.org>.



Photo by Gary Moore



John Chaplin introduces the December speaker
Photo by Gary Moore

A native of Wisconsin, Matt Unger came to Des Moines some twenty years ago to attend Drake University, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, minoring in philosophy and history. Prior to joining the non-profit sector, he spent more than a dozen years working in the world of political campaigns and management of state government. His political career spanned multiple Iowa Caucus campaigns, Iowa gubernatorial campaigns, and a four-year stint (2007-2011) as Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Patty Judge. He and Judge then partnered in a consulting firm, PJJ Solutions, where they focused not just on political campaigns, but business and organizational strategy as well as public policy.

In 2012, Matt joined the Food Bank of Iowa, starting as Program Manager and finishing as Chief Operating Officer, leading the Food Bank to record distribution including an overall increase of more than 45% and a record one-month distribution of 1.5 million pounds. His leadership at the Food Bank also included the implementation of three new programs, as well as a merger with the Food Bank of Southern Iowa, and oversight of the Food Bank's warehouse re-model. In mid-2019 he was invited to become CEO of the Des Moines Area Religious Council. Matt and his wife, Anita, have made their home in Beavertown for the last 10 years. He can be reached professionally at DMARC, 1435 Mulberry Street, Des Moines IA 50309, telephone (515)277-6969; email manager@dmarcunited.org

Jobriath: Rock's Truest Fairy

By Jordan Duesenberg

Glam rock has always fascinated me. The bubblegum power riffs, the heavy makeup, the obscure costumes, and the performative androgyny made everything so epic and theatric and most importantly super gay. Glam had stars like Marc Bolan (of T. Rex), Bryan Ferry (most notably of Roxy Music), and of course David Bowie during his Ziggy Stardust run. This was the time period where Bowie claimed to be Bisexual (which he would later take back), yet for all the gaybaiting and emphasis put on androgyny, not a single glam star was openly gay besides Jobriath who would truly come in and out of the public consciousness with a bang.

Jobriath, born Bruce Wayne Campbell, was always set to be a star. He is often mentioned as a child prodigy of piano throughout his youth which would eventually lead to him getting a part in a West Coast production of *Hair* in the late 60s as the character Woof (fun fact, Donna Summer got her original start in a German production of *Hair*).

Getting his first taste of the high life that fame can bring, he left the production to form a folk-rock band known as Pidgeon in 1969, which would break-up shortly after their debut album. He would then go through a series of unfortunate events that would lead him to becoming his next musical incarnation the glam rock star Jobriath, including lots of drugs, getting arrested and spending 6 months in a military psychiatric hospital, and living as a gay prostitute in California. However Jobriath never gave up on his dream to become a star, and one way or another, Clive Davis played a demo tape from Jobriath that he had received and loathed, but thankfully Jerry Brandt (Carly Simon's former manager who discovered her) stepped in and would end up signing Jobriath in a 2 album deal for \$500,000 in 1972, which was huge back then.

Perhaps what most people remember about what went down next is what made Jobriath so infamous but also immediately led to his demise, and that was the massive marketing campaign that took place before the star had ever performed anywhere, we're talking massive billboards, magazine spreads, posters, buses that featured a naked Jobriath made to resemble a Roman statue. He was called America's David Bowie without any proof. There were promises of lavish European opera debut performances, and most infamously promises that Jobriath made to the press to at these performances he would be dressed as King Kong going up on a mini set of the Empire State Building which would then turn into a penis and he would come out of the penis transformed into Marlene Dietrich. I would literally do anything to see someone do that!

Obviously these lavish promises never came to fruition due to budget. But when Jobriath's much hyped debut album, *Jobriath*, was released in 1973, most of the reviews were positive, although it never had a chance of living up to the hype that the album built, which is a shame because it is an amazing album – and most of all it is super unashamedly gay. The first song is called, "Take Me I'm Yours," which is essentially an S&M love song. There is also "I'm a Man," his most famous song, which I interpret as the original queer pride song. Honestly the whole album is great and way ahead of its time – which should be mentioned with all of the other great glam albums of its time. Unfortunately the album didn't sell as well as was desired, this may have also had to do with the fact that Jobriath claimed to the press that he was "rock's truest fairy." People loved artists that pretended to be part of the LGBTQ community, yet ultimately shunned those that legitimately were and were proud of it. There are numerous reports of outward homophobia directed at Jobriath during shows, and yet he persisted.

Unfortunately Jobriath's record label no longer believed in him and due to poor album sales of his debut, they quickly pumped out a second album, *Creatures of the Street*, with no promotion to get Jobriath off the label. They were successful as this album was a commercial failure. Jobriath would publicly retire from the music industry in 1975. He attempted to act, but ultimately ended up becoming a cabaret singer known as Cole Berlin as well as doing sex work on the side to supplement his income for the rest of his short life before succumbing to AIDS in 1983. Listen to any of Jobriath's music and tell me that he wasn't talented enough to go to the heights that artists like David Bowie, Freddie Mercury, or Elton John went to, the only difference was that Jobriath was always unashamedly gay and never tried to hide it. The world just wasn't ready.



Knives Out

A Film Review by Mark Turnage



The mystery-comedy is a subgenre that thrives on its campy tone to keep you entertained (and possibly distracted) while also clever enough to keep you guessing: *Clue*, *High Anxiety*, and *Murder by Death*, are just a few examples. Creating a mystery tale is a lot like working backward: you know how you want it to end, but how does the detective piece together the evidence? In director Rian Johnson's *Knives Out*, this detective concept is taken one step further by layering a mystery inside a mystery that only the audience is in on, resulting in two detective characters working "against" each other to comedic effect, supported by a powerhouse ensemble cast.

Superficially, the plot of *Knives Out* appears straightforward: on the eve of his 85th birthday, wealthy murder mystery author Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer) invites his family to celebrate. The next morning, Harlan is found dead in his home by his housekeeper, and his entire family tree becomes suspects: Harlan's savagely witty real estate mogul daughter Linda (Jamie Lee Curtis), her politically incorrect husband, Richard (Don Johnson), and their entitled son, Ransom (Chris Evans); Harlan's financially troubled publisher son Walt (Michael Shannon); and Harlan's daughter-in-law Joni (Toni Collette), a vapid lifestyle "influencer" with a slight embezzling problem. On the scene is Detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig), a New Orleans "gentleman detective" who was anonymously hired to solve Harlan's murder, and Harlan's nurse Marta Cabrera (a fantastic Ana de Armas), who vomits uncontrollably when she's forced to lie. Each of these personalities is bred for conflict, motive, and hilarious interplay, and getting them all in a room together to squabble provides some of the best one-liners in the film.

Craig as Detective Blanc is a thrill to watch, and his enthusiasm shines at having goofy character moments to play. Marta, convinced of her own "guilt" over Harlan's death, works around and with Blanc to steer him off her trail, while navigating the treacherous family secrets of the Thrombey family. This is the real center of the plot: her attempts to keep the master detective guessing, because she's determined her own guilt falsely. Is Blanc playing along or losing his touch? You might think the film may feel cluttered with characters, but if anything, I found myself wanting *more* screen time with each of them--the film is smart enough to give you enough but keep you wanting to find out more. The pacing of *Knives Out* is perhaps where Rian Johnson's talent shows most--at no point did I feel like the film slowed down or became sluggish with exposition from the opening scene. Johnson isn't a fan of exposition, as evidenced by his previous works: the high school neo-noir *Brick*, a controversial but twisty *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and the similarly cerebral sci-fi film *Looper*. Dropping you into the middle of his world is Johnson's MO, for better or for worse, and we're just along for the roller coaster ride.



If you like your mysteries with a dash of dark humor, dry-wit dialogue, a memorable ensemble cast and a charismatic lead, see *Knives Out* and sharpen your detective instincts.



Here Come The Iowa Caucuses

By Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy

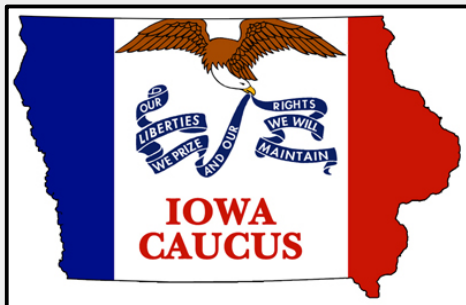
America is running out of time to solve the most urgent challenges waiting on our nation's doorstep. From health care and the economy to climate change and LGBTQ rights, Donald Trump and his administration have worsened the problems facing our country while dividing us in profound and harmful ways. We need a President with a vision for our country bold enough to meet the moment and unifying enough to bring us together to actually get it done.

That is why I am supporting Mayor Pete Buttigieg for President of the United States and will caucus for him on February 3, 2020. Mayor Pete has demonstrated that he has the leadership skills and vision to unite Americans around our shared set of values.

So many Americans are frustrated with Washington's inaction on important issues from health care and the economy to gun safety and climate change. Pete will bring a new way of doing things to the White House. He is offering ideas bold enough to meet the challenges we face and big enough to bring people together to get them done.

For example, when Pete talks about freedom, he reframes it to show how it has serious progressive implications. Members of the LGBTQ community should have the freedom to live openly and with the same set of civil rights as any other American. But under the Trump Administration the LGBTQ people have experienced unprecedented attacks on basic rights. As a human rights movement, our progress has stalled under this administration's regressive policies. From the appointment of anti-equality judges to the ban on transgender Americans serving in the military, there has been deliberate action taken to erode the progress we have made. There is no end in sight to the lengths to which this administration will go to discriminate against LGBTQ Americans. The Equality Act, that would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people, passed the United States House of Representatives but is stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate.

In addition to the problems we will be facing at home, on the first day after the sun sets on the Trump presidency, our nation will need to begin to repair our relationships around the globe. As a veteran of Afghanistan, Pete has a unique understanding of the role America plays in leading the free world. And as president, Pete will restore our credibility on the world stage and keep our commitments to our allies.



On a personal note, as Iowa's first openly gay State Senator I have seen the power of having a seat at the table. The LGBTQ community has this opportunity to help place Mayor Pete in the highest office in the land. I never dreamed that I would see this happen in my lifetime. I want to be clear, I am supporting and caucusing for Mayor Pete Buttigieg because he is the best candidate running for President. The fact that he has authored the most comprehensive and thoughtful LGBTQ platform in the entire field of candidates matters greatly to me. I hope you will join me in making history in Iowa by caucusing for Mayor Pete on February 3.



**Making a good economy
(that Trump inherited)
even better is child's play
if you borrow a couple
trillion dollars, as has
happened during the
Trump administration.
Better only in the short
term.**



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Redemption

By David Baldacci

A Book Review by Steve Person

Redemption is the latest in the Memory Man series. The main character, Amos Decker, has a truly photographic memory, the result of a nearly fatal head injury when he played his first game of professional football after graduation from Ohio State. The brain injury he suffered resulted in a condition known as hyperthymesia, perfect recall.

This Memory Man novel follows 2018's **The Fallen**, a dark and brooding tale of a Pennsylvania town that was drowning in the opioid epidemic. **Redemption** begins with Decker back in his hometown of Burlington, Ohio, to visit the graves of his wife and daughter, both brutally murdered while Decker worked on a case as a detective for the Burlington police force. As he sits by the graves, Meryl Hawkins, recently released from prison and Decker's first conviction as a detective, approaches him. Hawkins was found guilty of four murders in Burlington and sentenced to life without parole. Suffering from terminal cancer, the prison authorities released him to live out his final days as a free man. He tells Decker he was mistakenly found guilty and wants his name cleared. When Hawkins is found with a bullet hole in his head a few days later, Decker begins to believe the man told him the truth.

The ensuing events revolve around Hawkins's daughter and her husband; the widows of two men Hawkins supposedly killed; and witnesses who have trouble recalling details from murders that happened thirteen years earlier. The body counts escalate the closer Decker gets to the truth of why the original four murders occurred.

Burlington, Ohio, is a factory town that suffered decades of decline after the town's major industries pulled out. It is now enjoying some success as a center of the technology revolution, and many of the old factory buildings get repurposed as upscale condominiums and restaurants. The American Grill, a restaurant built shortly after Decker left town all those years ago, fascinates Decker. A blue-collar hangout, it remains in business even though it doesn't do nearly the business of the other upscale restaurants that one of the main characters owns. Why she keeps it is a mystery.

Baldacci is a master at writing thrillers. This book is no exception. Even though it is filled with murders and mayhem—who would really want to live in a town with so many brutal killings—the book keeps the reader's interest. He keeps current with other national events, too that while not actually part of the plot, give him a chance to make a few indirect digs to the goings on in Washington, D.C. I certainly recommend this book.

