



# First Friday News & Views

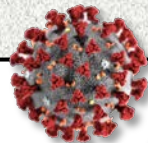
Monthly Newsletter of the *First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.*



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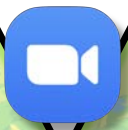
Next Meeting:

Friday,  
May 7  
7:00 a.m.



May Meeting  
Location:

zoom



May Speaker:

Pete  
Montgomery



FFBC Website:

[ffbcowa.org](http://ffbcowa.org)



## A Literary Analysis of The Story of Covid

by Wade Petersen

Let's see how many of you remember your lessons from high school English class (don't worry, there will not be a test at the end of this article). At some point, most of you were taught about the **classic plot structure** for a story (often described as a witch's hat). Can you still name its stages? I'll help you out: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Are the memories (or nightmares) starting to come back?

Teachers want students to develop critical thinking skills to apply knowledge to situations they will encounter throughout their lives. Students will often see this literary plot structure play out not only in their books, TV shows, and movies, but also in the "stories" of their own lives. Some of you may even be familiar with Joseph Campbell's theory of the Hero's Journey (I could go on for days about that). So what does all this have to do with the pandemic? Covid-19 has been the plot of our lives for the past year, and if you think about it, our experiences with it have become a metaphor for the "story" of our lives.

In the **exposition** (no, it's not called the introduction), we look at the situation that exists when the story begins. We learn about some key details to get the story up and running (there's this disease they say came from bats in China). Who are the main characters? Enter: health care workers and Dr. Fauci! (I'll let you decide whether Trump is a protagonist or antagonist). Becoming aware of the severity of the disease introduces **conflict**. We know there are internal conflicts (decisions, inner struggles) and external conflicts (person vs. person, nature, society). What a perfect example of a story with a variety of conflicts! The pandemic most definitely shows us a conflict with nature, but have you noticed how it has also brought out conflicts among people and with society (mask mandates?). People have also struggled this past year with internal conflicts (should I go out in public? should I get the vaccine?). All these conflicts have developed the **rising action** of the past year; how have we, as individuals and as a society, struggled with Covid?

Have we reached the **climax**? (stop giggling all you gay men...you're not high schoolers anymore). Yes, we have. Many think of the climax as the most exciting part in a story, when in reality, it's the point at which you realize the outcome of a story. We generally know now, with vaccines, how this story will eventually play out. The "end is in sight." What's really interesting to me is the importance of the **falling action** (where we are currently at). We are receiving our vaccines and trying to get as many people as possible vaccinated. It's a waiting game. It's a test of sacrifice, endurance, and altruism.

How will our Covid-19 story find its **resolution**? Will life return to normal or will we always have the lingering specter of vaccine boosters? Let's just hope Covid is a short story and not the first volume of an epic trilogy.

# Iowa Doesn't Feel Like Home Anymore

by Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice President

I would describe myself as an optimist -- a little too pragmatic to be Pollyannish, but excited and forward-looking nonetheless. Until a very short time ago, I considered Iowa to still be a purple state.

After all, I personally witnessed the state of Iowa protect a brave Iowa Supreme Court decision, legislatively and culturally defending marriage for gay and lesbian couples in 2009. We had a "trifecta" -- a Democratic House, Senate, and Governor. Our slide in 2010 didn't seem extraordinary in the moment, since even President Obama broadly described the cycle as a "shellacking" at the time.

But now, after the majority of residents of Iowa have twice voted for President Biden's Republican predecessor (I still cringe at the thought of him) and after Iowa has re-elected Governor Reynolds in between, I feel like our state doesn't have the same values it once did.

Within the imaginary "blue bubble" of the Des Moines area, it is easy to kid ourselves that we can quickly turn things around and be progressive again. We now seem to have lurched to the right.

This is where my optimism fades. We are going to be red for quite some time. The nasty, conspiratorial, anti-intellectual, aggrieved, and heartless "Christians" in the rural parts of our state seem ascendant and excited to exact revenge upon big evil Des Moines. To top it off, we have a constitutional amendment to protect guns on the ballot in 2022.

I have never lived anywhere else, yet Iowa doesn't feel like home anymore.



Thanks to **Rick Miller** for introducing **Chris Godfrey**, our April speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** as our technology guru and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thanks to all our contributors to the newsletter!*

The next copy **deadline** for the FFBC June newsletter will be **May 24, 2021**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and email it to Wade by the copy deadline ([wadecpetersen@gmail.com](mailto:wadecpetersen@gmail.com)).

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. **United Way**



Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$400,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a tax-deductible [contribution on-line](#) or by sending a check.

Please consider a **tax-exempt testamentary gift**. Our first legacy gift to the FFBC scholarship program came from **Cliff Paulsen** who passed away last year, to the tune of over **\$67,000**! Contact **Byron Huff** for details or with any questions.







## A Statement of Faith

by Jonathan Wilson

**There's a mistake in the Bible, and I can prove it!**  
So, I have your attention; please hear me out.

The mistake I'm talking about is not about factual errors that are demonstrably erroneous, or about something inconsequential. The mistake is utterly fundamental for those of us who call ourselves Christian. It also need not diminish our faith; it can actually strengthen our faith.

Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he would give up his life for a friend" (John 15:13). I'll concede that the willingness to give up one's life for a friend shows a great deal of love, but it falls short of the truly greatest love of which we are capable: **Jesus was not a parent.**

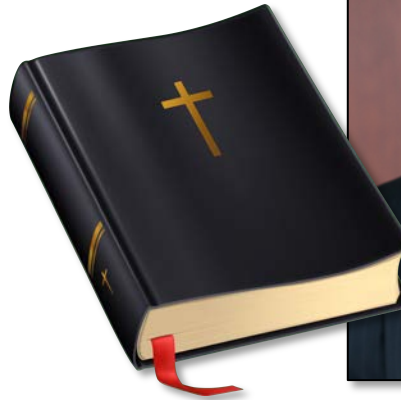
I am a parent and a grandparent. I can think of many friends and even some worthy causes for which I'd be willing to die. I cannot think of any friend or cause for which I would willingly sacrifice the life of even one of my progeny. I know intuitively that the love between parent and child is the highest temporal love of which I am -- of which we as human beings are -- capable.

Every parent among us knows that giving up one's life for a friend is relatively child's play compared to giving up the life of our child. If you're a non-parent or otherwise, don't believe me, read more in the Bible about Abraham and Isaac. God wanted Abraham to prove that he loved God above all else. He didn't ask Abraham to demonstrate that love by laying down his own life to prove it. No, God told Abraham that the way to prove that Abraham loved God above all else was for Abraham to sacrifice the life of his beloved, only son, Isaac. If you're a member of the theological jury, as we all are, what more could it take to convince you?

But, if you remain unconvinced, there is more proof. Consider the crucifixion. It is written that "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son..." (John 3:16). If that's not sufficient proof of what is and isn't the greatest love, I rest my case, and you're on your own.

For those who are following me so far, there's no need to be disheartened by the demonstrable mistake in the Bible and in the teaching of Jesus, or to compromise our faith or our confidence as Christians that the Bible is an important guide to the capital T Truth.

My purpose is not to disparage the teaching of Jesus or the authority of the Bible. Jesus was simply not a parent. Jesus was also constrained by the society and culture in which he grew up. The Bible even says that Jesus grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). Believe it. We are called upon to do the same (1 Corinthians 13:11). Grow in wisdom.



Our Creator gave us the gift of **discernment**, scriptural and otherwise, and we are called upon to use that gift to the best of our ability. With the benefit of life experience and the Spirit moving in and among us, that ability should improve as we mature (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

It is said that even the devil can quote scripture (William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*), and you might be tempted to put me in the devil's camp. Be that as it may; but, before you do, remember that the Bible also says that not all who call me Lord are being honest (Matthew 7:12) and there will be false prophets (Jeremiah 14:14 and John 4:1).

The Bible provides precious little guidance for figuring out who is or isn't a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Consider that scripture, particularly when listening to those who said that God was going to make sure #45 would win re-election as president of the United States. Or who build a golden idol in honor of #45. Or when considering the teaching of a "Christian" pastor who lives, not in a humble parsonage, but in a mansion, or flies round in a private jet.

Maybe, using your gift of discernment, you're thinking that I'm a false prophet for what I have written. Maybe so, but before you do, turn again to the scriptures. There you will find Jesus himself correcting mistakes that can be found in the Bible. His Sermon on the Mount is replete with corrective admonishments (Matthew 5-7). He repeatedly said there that "You have heard it said of old, *but I say to you....*" In every instance he refers to *and corrects* the law of Moses (here read: "Old Testament"). Know from that example that even Jesus did not believe that every word in the Bible is true. Remember this when someone says to you, or you are tempted to express the belief, that everything in the Bible, word-for-word, is true. In my understanding of Christianity, based on the example of Jesus, that is a decidedly *un-Christian* thing to say. "The things that you're liable to read in the Bible, ain't necessarily so" (*Porgy and Bess* opera).

May Speaker

# Pete Montgomery



The guest speaker at the virtual meeting on Friday, May 7, will be **Pete Montgomery**.

Pete is the spokesperson with the **People for the American Way**, a progressive advocacy organization founded to fight right-wing extremism and build a democratic society that implements the ideals of freedom, equality, opportunity and justice for all. The group encourages civic participation, defends fundamental rights, and fights to dismantle systemic barriers to equitable opportunity.

*You won't want to miss this meeting, and since the meeting is virtual, there's no reason why you should not be able to participate. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend virtually – simply share the Zoom participation instructions!*

## ["A Statement of Faith" continued from page three]

In Jesus's statement about what is the greatest love, He was off by about three, behind love of and for God, love between parent and child, and then love of friends and others. His mistake should serve as a lesson to all who look to the Bible for guidance. Exercising our gift of discernment is not easy. Our discernment abilities may vary because of differing levels of life experience, our culture, or from a lack of willingness to think seriously about it.

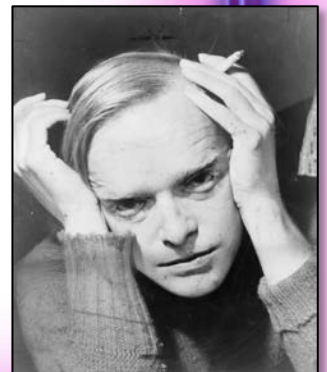
If understanding the Bible were straightforward and as easy as simply reading it like a recipe, we wouldn't need clergy or the insights of one another in order to grow, like Jesus, in wisdom. We could just teach kids how to read and hand them the Bible. It obviously doesn't work that way. Our gift of discernment grows with our growing maturity, an increase in life experiences, and interactions with fellow believers.

Check Out the Improved FFBC Website:

[ffbc Iowa.org](http://ffbc Iowa.org)

**“But I'm not a saint yet. I'm an alcoholic. I'm a drug addict. I'm homosexual. I'm a genius. Of course, I could be all four of these dubious things and still be a saint.”**

-- Truman Capote



# Retaliation and Rights

by Gary Moore

April's FFBC speaker Christopher Godfrey provided members and friends of FFBC with an inside look at what it requires to take on the most powerful of Iowa's political structures, the governor. The saga was a battle won in the courts several times over, but a decade later, is still being fought. Old prejudices die hard.

Godfrey briefly reviewed his growing up years in Sioux City (to the joy of several in attendance who hail from the northwest part of the state) as well as his pride in his public education and graduation from Drake and its law school. He noted he was lucky to learn early on from one of Iowa's premier civil rights attorneys, Roxanne Conlin. Christopher would then be employed for several years by large corporations in defending them against employee compensation suits followed by several years of defending employees in their legal suits against employers. This was a much appreciated background from both sides of the scale.

With this diversified background, Godfrey was appointed by Governor Vilsack to the Iowa Workers Compensation Commission in 2006. He quickly helped to address the backlog of cases at the Commission, that at times, had lasted up to a year for resolution, down to less than a month. He quickly was recognized by several national trade groups for his accomplishments. He was then reappointed by Governor Culver to a six-year term. He had received wide support for both of those appointments and was walked down the Senate aisle by his partner during his confirmation.

In 2010 when Terry Branstad was re-elected Governor, he immediately asked Christopher to resign his post with the Worker's Compensation Commission. Branstad has said publicly that business interests raised concerns about former Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner Chris Godfrey's office. In a legal deposition, he revealed that those leaders included the Roths, who were among the top donors to Branstad's 2010 campaign with \$152,000 in contributions. Godfrey declined to resign, noting his successes as well as having given up his law practice to take on the government service position. Several other requests were turned down by Christopher until the Governor's Office informed him that his salary would be cut to the lowest level they could take it if he did not resign. This action would lead to Christopher securing Roxanne Conlin and Associates to represent him in filing a civil rights suit.

Christopher shared the anxieties and the public threats that he received during this high profile case and how he needed and received police protection. He mentioned several times the importance of the Seventh Amendment right to trial by jury and its importance of speaking truth to power. The jury found in favor of Christopher's argument. Even after two Iowa Supreme Court losses and almost a decade later, the Governor's Office has yet to give up the legal battle. The good-old-boy network is still intact with its decades-old prejudices underpinning their position of power. When it's all over, the taxpayers may end up paying eight to nine million to defend a suit that is over a \$150,000 pay cut, a pay cut that an eight-person jury ruled was the result of discrimination and retaliation against a gay department head.

As Christopher and his attorneys await finalization of court proceedings, he has moved on in his public service as Chief Judge and Chair of the United States Department of Labor's Employees' Compensation Appeals Board from 2014 to January 2021 and most recently being appointed by President Biden as Director of Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, with some 1,500 employees in three programs under his direction.



**March Speaker:**  
**Chris Godfrey**



**Introduction  
of Speaker:**  
**Rick Miller**



April Speaker



# LGBTQ OLDER ADULTS VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

The Stonewall Generation:

LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging

**TUESDAY, MAY 18TH, 2021**

**VIRTUAL EVENT - 11AM - 1 PM**



**oneiowa**

## One iowa Presents LGBTQ Older Adults Conference

by Maddie Rocha Smith, One Iowa Communications & Events Coordinator

Join us for the **LGBTQ Older Adults Conference: The Stonewall Generation – LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging** on Tuesday, May 18th, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.!

**oneiowa**

The LGBTQ Older Adults Conference is an annual event where experts can join alongside community members to share vital resources, make social and professional connections, and learn how to advocate for the unique needs of LGBTQ older adults so they can age safely, openly, and with dignity.

This year, we will be joined by Dr. Jane Fleishman, an award-winning sexuality educator and author of her most recent book: [\*The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging\*](#).

Together, we'll discuss the struggles, strengths, and sexual liberation of those who came of age during the Stonewall Riots. We'll be joined by a few of the subjects from the book for a Q&A section to discuss their life of activism.

You can register for the conference at: <https://oneiowa.org/event/olderadultsconference2021/>



# Iowa Population Numbers Spell Trouble

by Supervisor Matt McCoy  
Polk County, 5<sup>th</sup> District



As of July 1, 2020, Iowa's population was 3,163,561. Iowa's 2020 population is about 4,000 more residents than 2019. This is a growth rate of 0.12 percent. Over the past decade, Iowa's growth rate was approximately 3.7%. More than 70 percent of that growth occurred in Iowa's largest counties. Governor Reynolds recently stated that the "crisis of migrant children at the borders was not our problem." The Biden Administration's efforts to assist these unaccompanied children by calling upon the states to try to place these kids in homes of Iowans was soundly rejected by Governor Reynolds. Despite the success of cultural diversity primarily around our agriculture industry, the GOP continues to declare war on people of color who keep our economy humming.

Governor Reynolds was reelected by running a rural campaign strategy that focused on promising to help small rural counties with critical infrastructure, including broadband and housing initiatives. None of her promises addressed the population shifts occurring in our state where more than 65% of our population live in 10 Iowa counties. Governor Reynolds has toured agriculture facilities where up to 80 percent of the workforce are culturally diverse. Certainly, it is not unreasonable to expect that the Governor would understand the importance of attracting new Iowans.

Between November 2019 and November 2020, one of every 13 Iowa workers exited the labor force for retirement. Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota and Nebraska had higher labor force participation rates than Iowa. In 2018, Iowa ranked 17th nationwide in the percentage of population age 65 and older, making up 539,830 Iowans. With expected baby boomers leaving the workforce daily, this number will grow to 687,787 by 2050 or 20 percent of Iowa's population. Baby boomers make up 15% of Iowa's population and are expected to leave in large numbers over the next 10 years.

Iowa must attract new Iowans or be willing to lose the jobs that have been created in our state. **If the past decade is repeated, Iowa will shed tens of thousands of jobs due to workforce shortages.** Iowa must attract new Iowans, and we must upskill the Iowans who lack critical skills working in lower paying jobs today. Iowa must welcome new Iowans. Attracting new immigrants requires a mindset that acknowledges Iowa's workforce shortage and understands the baby boom cliff over which Iowa is about to go. People do not move to Iowa for our weather, oceans, or mountains.

The Iowa GOP-controlled legislature and Governor Reynolds are failing at growing Iowa's workforce. **Policies that are being pursued in the Iowa legislature are forcing educated Iowans to look towards other states for employment.** This year alone, more than 15 anti-LGBTQ bills were introduced in the Iowa legislature. Gun ownership rights were greatly expanded, and efforts to control women's bodies were passed. Measures to destroy tenure at Iowa's universities were debated. Recent surveys in *Technology Today* indicated that about 85% of Iowans educated in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are leaving Iowa for higher paying positions in other states.

If Iowa does not reverse our current course, we will continue to see Iowa's population grow older, less skilled, and less diverse. Those with critical skills and higher education will continue to opt to live in states that value diversity, educational opportunities, and a creative economy. The Governor and the GOP-controlled legislature are holding the door for these Iowans, and in doing so, ignore the peril they are creating for our state.

## May Virtual Meeting



There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in **May**. The announcement with the Zoom login information will be circulated on-line. Make sure we have your current email address so you don't miss out on future announcements. You can contact David Cotton ([Davidcotton@me.com](mailto:Davidcotton@me.com)) for help figuring out how to participate if you need any personal assistance.





# Minari

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage



It's Oscar season, and for the next couple months, I'll be reviewing a couple of Best Picture nominees for your consideration! When one thinks of moving to a new home, one can usually find themselves both inspired by the promise of new adventure and concerned about what realities the move entails: cost, uncertain happiness, and ultimately that uneasy fear of "What if the new place isn't better than the old one?" Lee Isaac Chung's *Minari* is a "slice-of-life" film following a Korean family's transplant to rural Arkansas farmland in the mid-80s. Its family's struggles are urgent and small-scale, yet relatable and heartfelt--the portrait *Minari* paints is of a home that endures wherever it's planted, even if it may not thrive at first.

Jacob Yi (Steven Yeun) is a young Korean father who moves his family—wife Monica (Yeri Han), 10-year-old daughter Anne (Noel Kate Cho), and 7-year-old son David (Alan Kim) to rural Arkansas to become a supplier of Korean vegetables for Midwestern-based markets. This isn't an impulsive move for Jacob, who has methodically researched and scrounged savings over the course of a decade to infer that there's a business opportunity more beneficial than him and his wife's existing work hand-separating chicks for chicken hatcheries. He proudly shows his family their new land and mobile home, comparing it to the Garden of Eden and a new promised land, but Monica is far less than enthused. Despite Jacob's efforts, she comes to see her family's new life in Arkansas as more of a setback than a home, chief among her concerns is financial support of their son's chronic heart condition, placement in a remote location far from a hospital, and David's medical bills. In the first act of the film, it seems like the Yi family is doomed to fail. Jacob and Monica fight regularly and with unreliable suppliers as their farm's irrigation system runs dry again and again. Yet in an unexpected truce, Jacob and Monica arrange for Monica's mother Soon-ja to move in as a live-in babysitter. When she arrives, the narrative shifts to focus on her relationship with David, who is forced to reconcile his Westernized image of a grandmother with Soon-ja as a person. To David, she smells "like Korea" (where he's never been), gambles, curses, and worst of all, drinks all of David's Mountain Dew. In these interactions, the film warms to its own comedy and balances the misfortune of the first act, including a hilarious practical joke David plays with his grandmother's Mountain Dew. As more challenges face the Yi family and test their resolve as a unit, Jacob must make choices between his family and his business, and David begins to see that although Soon-ja may not be a typical grandmother figure; the love she has for David and his family is real.

*Minari* has plentiful opportunity to dramatize the events of its story, especially when the primary focus shifts to David after the first act, but director Chung refuses to let spectacle distract from the emotional threads and humor his characters weave. Every time you expect to brace for the worst, you're pleasantly surprised, and it's evidence of this film's excellent writing. There is a bit of *Little House on the Prairie* ambience—that modern rugged survivalism in the first and final chapters when it's helping the farm make it, but it never cheapens the familial experience the Yis share. A viewer can connect to the conflicts presented in *Minari* as something more universal because they could easily make appearances in our own stories: a water outage, supporting a struggling business, or marital problems, for example. You may ask if this everyday quality makes *Minari* a boring Oscar movie, but each member of the Yi family has enough interesting (and authentic) character development that you become invested in their well-being, because they feel like a person you know. This is especially evident in the scene from which the movie takes its title: Soon-ja takes David and Anne to plant Minari, a watercress plant used in Korean dishes, in a nearby riverbank, telling the kids the seeds she used were from her hometown and how they can grow nearly anywhere they're planted. In the same way, the Yi family reminds us how powerful the act of a family starting fresh can be.

\*\*\* *Minari* is available on Amazon Prime





# Feature Article

## 10 Flirting Tips for Socially Awkward Gay/Bi Guys

by Zachary Zane, [www.pride.com](http://www.pride.com)



Flirting comes naturally to many of us. We all have that one friend who can literally charm the pants off of every single guy he talks to. But this piece isn't for him. He's annoying and we hate him (just kidding, we love him...but like...he's literally the worst). This is for the gay and bi men who have been relying on Grindr, dare I say it, a little too much. This is for the queer guys out there who don't feel comfortable flirting with other men in real-life social settings. So here it is: **10 flirting tips for socially awkward queer guys.**

### 1. Turn that resting bitchface upside-down

In case you were wondering, this is also known as a **smile**. Smiling is crucial. It makes you so much more approachable and likable. Don't force an awkward joker-esque smile, but make sure that you don't look like you're scowling.



### 2. Erect...posture

Stand up straight. You'll feel more confident when you do.



### 3. Keep Your Hands at your side

Don't cross your hands over your chest or have them in your pockets. This makes you look very unapproachable. Always have your hands at your sides. No fidgeting either.

### 4. Talk about *Drag Race* if you're not sure what to talk about

*RuPaul's Drag Race* is a gift to every single socially awkward gay man out there. It is such an easy conversation starter. Everyone watches it. Everyone has opinions on their favorite and least favorite queens. And if they don't watch it, it's like, do you even want to be talking to them?



### 5. "What about you?"

Whenever he asks you a question, make sure to follow up by asking something about him. If you don't, the conversation dies.

### 6. Get comfortable standing alone

This is easier said than done, but this is crucial. I used to feel so awkward standing alone at a bar or event. I used to think everyone noticed how much of a loser I was for not talking to anyone. The truth is, nobody's eyes are on you. Nobody cares. You're not that important. When you start to feel comfortable while standing alone in party settings, you won't feel pressured to talk to other people, which means you'll be less nervous when you actually do.



### 7. Get the guy who's great at socializing to be your wingman

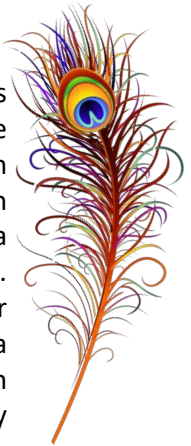
Remember that friend I spoke about in the introduction? Hopefully you didn't cuss him out already. You should use him. If he's a great socializer, have him be your wingman. He'll help you play to your strengths. He'll break the ice. He's literally the best person to have on your side.

### 8. Wear what you're most comfortable in...

Be comfortable. Be you. Yes, it's corny, but don't wear something to try to fit in. God knows I used to do that. Now I just dress like a THOT and feel a lot more comfortable.

### 9. ...but also peacock with one item

Okay, so dress comfortably, but at the same time, wear one item that's a conversation starter. A feather earring, a big necklace, something. Peacocking makes it easier for other guys to start a conversation with you. "Oh my god, I love your [gaudy article of clothing]!"



### 10. Seriously, smile

I don't think I emphasized this enough. Those pearly whites are your best weapon. Use them.



# Spotlight on Local LGBTQ+ Organizations: The Pride Center

by Rick Miller

The Board of Directors at the **Des Moines Pride Center** sends you greetings and hope during what we think will be the waning months of the Covid pandemic. What does a community center do when restrictions against socializing and meetings come into play? We have managed to do a lot.

First, we offered information and help to those seeking assistance through our website and Facebook page. We kept offering meeting space using CDC guidelines and kept sanitizing wipes and masks available in our meeting and conference rooms. We offered possible ZOOM options for those that meet at our facility on a monthly basis. Also, the board continued to meet one-on-one to keep the operations of the library and zoom meetings with IPOC during monthly on-line discussions.



Second, we continue to work in the library. Board members have met weekly to reorganize and catalogue the collection so it is up-to-date. The volunteers have also removed multiple copies. Some of the extra books were donated to an LGBTQIA+ library in Iowa City so they could start their own collection. We are fortunate to have a librarian on our Board of Directors.

Third, we actively engage with other community members and their organizations to keep lines of communication open. Our board has recently had our issues published in the business news along with representatives from other LGBTQIA+ organizations. Did you know there are over 21 different organizations that are active in Des Moines? Many people think this is amazing and realize we have an active and engaging community. Our fight for freedom is far from over. Women now serve as leaders in most of the larger LGBTQIA+ organizations in Des Moines. We congratulate all these incredible emerging leaders.

The archives continue to grow and all pieces from the "Evolution of the Revolution: 50 Years Since Stonewall" have now been inventoried. A meeting with State Historical Society officials has been helpful in documenting these items.

Having one of the finest community center facilities in the history of our city is an awesome responsibility and the board is steadfast in its goal of making the center a respected-connected-protected space for all. For more information check out our Facebook page and see the kinds of information and resources we provide. If you are interested in being a member of our board, please let us know. You may also want a tour of our facilities which we can arrange for small groups.

**Please call Rick Miller at 515-274-5518 for information.**

- **Diana Prince** - President
- **Helena Mica** - Vice President
- **Kay Grigsby** - Secretary
- **Rick Miller** - Treasurer (with assistance from John Schmacker)
- **Erika Hendel** - Programming Coordinator/Technology



## Mark Your Calendars!

### Future FFBC Speakers Announced

**June 4:**

**Rev. Jim Conrad**

(Towne View Baptist Church in Georgia is an open and welcoming congregation...and expelled by the Southern Baptist Convention)

**July 2:**

**Scholarship Awards**

(\*note that our scholarship awards are normally held at the June meeting, but this year will take place in July)



**I am a  
Froot Loop  
in a World  
of Cheerios.**





## Board of Directors

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Brad Holland	Randy Swarts
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Contact Us At: [info@ffbcwiowa.org](mailto:info@ffbcwiowa.org)

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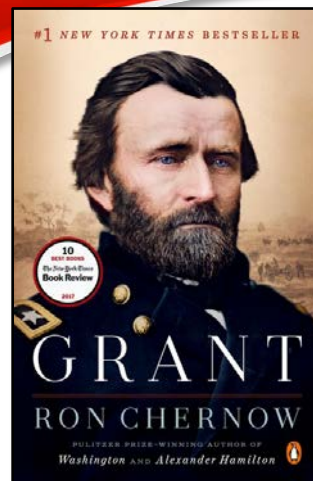
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**FFBC Board  
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First Friday Breakfast Club  
P.O. Box 41611  
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## Grant by Ron Chernow

A Book Review by  
**Steve Person**



Ron Chernow's biography of Ulysses S. Grant is a tour de force in historical biography. Chernow explores one of America's most misunderstood presidents. Grant's rise to the highest office in this land could never have been predicted from his humble, rural Ohio beginnings. With a bombastic, self-promoting father and a demure, self-effacing mother, Grant's personality resembled her. As an adult, Grant trusted too easily and found it difficult to speak ill of people. He disliked coarse language and proved to be a loyal friend even to those who took advantage of his good nature.

By his father's insistence and intervention, an unsuspecting Grant found himself as a West Point cadet in 1839. Interestingly, it was West Point that mistakenly gave him the name of Ulysses Simpson Grant when in fact he was born Hiram Ulysses Grant. A clerical error at the Academy left the diffident young man with a name he was too timid to ask to be corrected. Upon graduation from West Point—where he schooled with some of those he would fight against in the Civil War—Grant found himself enamored with Julia Dent, the daughter of a slave-owning Missouri planter. The Mexican War of 1846-48 interfered with his wooing of young Julia, but on August 22, 1848, the pair wed in St. Louis. (Of note to Iowa readers, the Mexican War provided the nascent state of Iowa with many names of its eventual 99 counties—Ringgold, Taylor, Cerro Gordo, Buena Vista—to name a few). After posting to the Northwest Territories, Grant failed miserably and was forced out of the army because of his drinking problem. Finding himself in Galena, Illinois, where he worked for his father's leather goods shop, he made little headway.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Grant applied to have his army credentials re-established, and he served valiantly in the western sector of that war, his most impressive victory coming at Vicksburg after winning Fort Donelson and Shiloh. President Lincoln eventually brought him back east to head the Army of the Potomac. After wearing down the Confederates in Virginia, their commanding general, Robert E. Lee, surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. It was here that Grant showed his great humanity by providing Lee's starving army with food, allowing the officers to keep their side arms, and even providing free train transportation for the Confederate soldiers to their homes in the South.

With Lincoln's assassination on April 15, 1865, Grant struggled with the administration of President Andrew Johnson, and Grant became the Republican nominee for President in 1868 and again in 1872. Grant's desire to see the freed slaves treated with dignity and enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution allowing them the right to vote, reinforced his humanity. Of special note to those of us in central Iowa, Grant's visit to Des Moines in September 1875 registered his firm commitment to supporting public education. "At a time when some Protestants wanted to Christianize the country and some Catholics lobbied for state funding of parochial schools, he produced a landmark statement reaffirming the separation of church and state."

After his second term ended, the Grants went on an around-the-world tour where he was feted in country after country. Upon his return, talk of a third term developed, but the nomination of the Republican Convention in 1880 went instead to James Garfield on the thirty-sixth ballot. After making what he thought would make him a rich man so he could retire in comfort, his trust in a man who took advantage of his good nature ruined him and his family financially. By this time, Grant developed cancer of the throat and tongue—at some times smoking more than twenty cigars in a day. He decided to make sure his family would thrive after his death, and he undertook writing his memoirs. Living in constant pain and unable to eat or drink with some comfort, he died just days after completing his last installment. The two-volume memoir sold over 300,000 copies and insured that Julia and family would live comfortably.

Frederick Douglass wrote of the deceased Grant, "In him the Negro found a protector, the Indian a friend, a vanquished foe a brother, an imperiled nation a savior."