



First Friday News & Views

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



July 2021

Volume 26

Issue 7

Next Meeting:

Friday, July 2

7:00 a.m.



July Meeting

Location:

zoom



July Speaker:

**Kevin
Newbury**



FFBC Website:

ffbc Iowa.org



Abortion Policy Revisited

by Jonathan Wilson

The United States Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal in a case brought against the state of Mississippi over a law passed by the state legislature banning intentional termination of a pregnancy after the fifteenth week of pregnancy. The Federal District Court in Mississippi ruled that the law is unconstitutional based upon nearly fifty years of precedent dating back to the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. The Federal Circuit Court for the 5th Circuit agreed with the trial court's decision. That set up the case for an appeal to the United States Supreme Court that could lead to revisiting, and potentially modifying or reversing, the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

That decision was rendered against the backdrop of a large number of illegal, "back-alley" abortions that were all too prevalent and resulting in serious medical issues for the mother, the fetus, or both, including death. I had a college-age friend from Bloomfield, Iowa, who sought an abortion prior to 1973, and her parents took her to a reputable local doctor who gave her a name and motel address in Des Moines. Back then, that was how it worked.

My friend met the man at a sleazy motel, and he purported to perform the abortion. He successfully terminated the pregnancy, but botched the procedure miserably. As a result, the woman contracted a raging infection. It was necessary for her to have a complete hysterectomy at the hospital in Bloomfield in order to save her life. She would not be able thereafter to give birth. She was denied the opportunity to have biological children, and her parents were denied the opportunity to be biological grandparents.

Roe v. Wade changed all of that. It held that, until the fetus is "viable," a woman has a constitutional right to terminate her pregnancy by a qualified healthcare provider in a medically safe environment – "viable" being the ability to draw breath and survive outside the womb. There are people of good will who believe that abortion is the killing of a human being (Rev. Jon Klaus, *Bloomfield Democrat*, January 27, 2021). To get to that conclusion based on Biblical teaching, it's easy enough to reference the Ten Commandments. The Sixth Commandment does say "Thou shall not kill or murder," (depending on the Bible translation you consult; I have multiple translations and they sometimes say "kill" and sometimes say "murder").

"Kill" is synonymous with homicide -- the killing of another human being -- it is not synonymous with murder. We all know that devout Christians have fought, killed human beings, and died in war or in the line of duty in law enforcement.



[continued on page 2]

["Abortion Policy Revisited" continued from page 1]

Absent extenuating circumstances, those aren't "murder." We also know that not every private sector homicide is a murder. If demonstrable, self-defense is an exculpation on a murder charge. Moreover, even outside of war, law enforcement, and self-defense, murder requires a specified level of inexcusable intent to kill. Depending on intent and other circumstances, homicide might be first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter, vehicular homicide, and may depend on other factors as defined by state legislatures. So, I think it's fair to conclude that the Biblical writer referencing "murder" in the Ten Commandments was not intending to reference that word as we understand it today.

If your Bible uses the term "kill," whether or not a voluntary pregnancy termination is a violation of the Sixth Commandment, still begs the question: When is a fetus to be determined by the law to be a human being entitled not to be intentionally "killed"? If the Bible is to provide guidance for that decision, we can turn again to the Bible and read it rather than merely thumping. I believe that the Bible addresses the question quite specifically and teaches that viability is the point when a fetus becomes a human being.

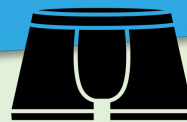
I invite you to consider, in particular, Genesis 2:7. It says, "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life; and the man became a living being*" [emphasis added]. According to my reading of that scripture, mankind is not a "living being" prior to that breath of life – i.e., viability. Notably, the scripture could have stopped with a period after "the breath of life," but no, the scripture doesn't stop there. Instead, the scripture goes on to explain what that "breath of life" means. The Bible, essentially, adopts the *Roe v. Wade* threshold. Prior to viability of the fetus, a mother has the constitutional right to make decisions about her body and pregnancy without interference by the government. Thereafter, her rights can be diminished by law, all in keeping with *Roe v. Wade*.

It may be worth noting that around 50% of human pregnancies result in miscarriage according to the research of evolutionary geneticist William Richard Rice of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Previous studies determined that about 25% of pregnancies resulted in miscarriage, but those did not include very early miscarriages that typically occur in the first few weeks of pregnancy, before the woman even knew she was pregnant. My point? Termination of a pregnancy appears to be a part of God's plan, as hard as that may be to accept. Using either percentage, miscarriage accounts for many multiples of the number of pregnancies terminated with the help of Planned Parenthood.

I understand that people can have a visceral, negative reaction to the very idea of abortion, at any time in a pregnancy. Some would even go so far as to oppose birth control. That's fair, but people of good will – good Christians – can hold contrary views on the subject. That fact should create a need for striking a reasonable balance of competing interests. After viability of the

[continued on page 3]

Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **John Chaplain** for introducing **Rev. Jim Conrad**, our June speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing all of our Microsoft IT infrastructure. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the newsletter!*

The next copy **deadline** for the FFBC **August newsletter** will be **July 26**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and email it to Wade by the copy deadline (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

Thanks also to all those **Amazon shoppers** who designate FFBC as the beneficiary when shopping smile.amazon.com. Your shopping with smile.amazon.com means that a small contribution to FFBC will be made with every purchase. Proverbial, found money.



Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$450,000** 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 online** 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.



**["Abortion Policy Revisited"
continued from page 2]**

fetus, the balance shifts away from the mother according *Roe v. Wade*, and myriad cases decided since then.

If you have a visceral, negative reaction to abortion, at any time in a pregnancy, what is your visceral reaction to brutal "back-alley" abortions and the injuries and deaths that the illegality of abortions would almost certainly spawn? Those of us knowledgeable of the situation that undeniably existed before the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, find it an untenable place to be.

Moreover, given the number of countries where abortion is perfectly legal and safe, if *Roe v. Wade* were to be reversed, the only difference would be that affluent citizens would have the ability to travel to a place where the procedure is legal and safe; the poor would be relegated to "back-alleys" and clothes hangers.

We need to be honest students of history and learn from, and avoid repeating, mistakes of the past. It's not okay to parcel out the consequences of a repeated mistake based on a citizen's financial resources, where the rich can do as they please and the poor are simply left to figure it out on their own with few if any meaningful options.

Scholarships



On May 26th, 2021, Aureon's Chief Information Officer and FFBC board member, **David Cotton**, presented FFBC President, **Byron Huff**, with Aureon's second **\$3,000** donation to the 2021-2022 FFBC Scholarship Fund. Aureon had previously donated \$3,000 to the 2020-2021 Scholarship Fund.

Aureon, also known as Iowa Network Services, provides information technology solutions to business and government customers with its roots in providing connectivity to the switched telephone network for the 130+ independent telephone companies (ITC) in Iowa. They also provide internet and streaming digital video services for the ITCs for their clients. The company is also a major provider of connectivity services for wireless carriers to their cell phone towers. Aureon provides consulting services and contact center services for clients as well. Learn more at www.Aureon.com

Thank you!

"What is straight? A line can be straight, or a street, but the human heart, oh, no, it's curved like a road through mountains."

(Tennessee Williams)

July Speaker

Kevin Newbury



Kevin Newbury is a theater, opera, and film director based in New York City. Kevin's work focuses on issues of community, empathy, and social justice, with a particular focus on our shared LGBTQAI+ history and education.

After extensive research into the Lavender Scare and this neglected period in American history, Kevin developed a new opera, *Fellow Travelers*, based on that learning and around Thomas Mallon's book of the same name. Kevin will speak to the First Friday Breakfast Club about turning this powerful, tragic, and ultimately beautiful chapter in queer history into an award-winning work of art for all to learn from and enjoy.

You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend virtually – simply share the Zoom participation instructions!

First Friday Breakfast Club

Scholarship Awards Presentation Program

July Meeting



DES MOINES GAY MEN'S CHORUS

20TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF

*music
that matters*

They're back -- singing live and in person!

Join the 20th Anniversary party and celebrate with the **Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus**. They've got two very special guests and can't wait to perform for you again!



Friday, July 30; 7:30 p.m.
The Lauridsen Amphitheater
Water Works Park, Des Moines

**Concert is complimentary.
Donations are welcome.**

R.S.V.P. at www.dmgmc.org for FREE tickets!

They Call Him Pastor Jim

by Gary Moore

They call him Pastor Jim at the small congregation of 200 on the northwest side of metro Atlanta in Kennesaw, Georgia. This small-town pastor, **Jim Conrad**, was June's First Friday Breakfast Club speaker via Zoom, with attendees from as far away as Chicago and Iowa City and as well as out-of-town family members. Also in attendance were two of the six LGBTQ *DSM Magazine* Legacy Leader Award winners, John Schmacker and Randy Mayer from Ames. Pastor Jim spoke to us while on his vacation with his family of four grown children along with all the grandkids (all under the age of 3) along the eastern coast.

Pastor Jim Conrad's Georgia church was expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention for accepting a queer couple and their kids as members. About 30% of the congregation left after Conrad took this stance, which meant the church's budget shrunk and the pastor took a pay cut. The Southern Baptist Convention's executive committee announced that it was kicking Towne View Baptist out of its network of churches for "affirming homosexuality." The SBC, which was founded in 1845 in defense of slavery, views itself as a network of over 50,000 independent and self-governing Baptist churches.

"We are guilty as charged," the pastor said.



Pastor Jim led us through the course of events and the journey that led him and his congregation to become a "welcoming" church to all. The journey started when a gay couple approached Pastor Jim about whether the Towne View Baptist Church would be welcoming to them and their three children.

He mentioned he had been raised in the typical Southern Baptist religious tradition, that homosexuals were choosing sin and were an abomination. His experience, once in college, during the 70s and 80s when he finally was meeting gay persons did not support what he had been taught. Those persons he was meeting spoke as if there was no choice to be made and they were not the horrible sinning person that had been portrayed to him. He noted it was clear he did not know enough to loudly bash gays from the pulpit.

He noted that another significant influence in his journey was the mass shooting at Pulse, the gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. He noted the tragedy that occurred the day before Father's Day. During his sermon the following day, it was difficult to think of all the grieving fathers who lost their children for no other reason than that they were gay or gay allies. He knew with the young gay family searching for a church that was welcoming, it was time for him and his congregation to start having a conversation. They studied and read and discussed. It led them to revisit their stated mission and resulted in a statement that all were welcome in their participation with God in creating a community of faith, hope, and love, to welcome all God's people, believing that diversity is a gift to be celebrated.

Pastor Jim spoke about how he felt this was his "coming out." Like the struggle of so many in the gay family, he feared how people would respond. Even though he lost about 30 percent of the congregation, it also meant that 70 percent voted to accept the welcoming of all to worship and to grow in community with each other. Pastor Jim noted we make the worst decisions when we do so out of fear. A continual theme was his request to be patient with him and with his congregation. We will make mistakes but we can talk and learn together.

It is hard to put on paper the kind words of acceptance and welcoming those in attendance this First Friday of June felt with Pastor Jim. I know some of us had tears as the pain of years gone by was dredged up with the acceptance so long sought by those needing the community of their faith.



June Speaker:

Rev. Jim Conrad



June Speaker
Introduced by

John Chaplain

Feature Article

60 Miles in Six Days in the Needle District of Utah's Canyonlands National Park

by Friedhelm Brinkhaus



The adventure was supposed to go in April 2020, but like many plans for so many people, our permits were revoked because of the pandemic. In order to lessen the environmental impact and avoid overcrowding, almost all sensitive regions in national parks require permits. In a lottery-type process, thousands of people compete for a few permits when the lottery opens at midnight on a particular day. My friend Karla has mastered the process, and our permits transferred into April 2021. Preparations are critical, and it helps to have some bag-packing experience and to be organized. My backpack held a sleeping bag, a light-weight tent, a bag of clothing (extra layers, rain gear etc.), a white-gas cooker and white-gas, cooking utensils, and of course food and water. Our destination was bear country and the National Park Service requires all hikers to protect all food items in a bear vault – extra weight. In addition, southern Utah is very dry, and it had hardly rained in the last two years in the Canyonlands. So we expected to carry water for up to two days at a time adding another 12 pounds. When everything was packed and done, we each carried 50 plus pounds.

We were a team of four. I have known Karla and her husband, Jim, for 25 years. With few exceptions, we have skied together every year, and many times Karla and I split off to hit the “blacks.” Our recent hiking trips took us to the Havasupai Falls (in a side canyon of the Grand Canyon in Arizona) and last year we bag-packed the remote southeast section of Yellowstone National Park featuring many beautiful waterfalls. Kirk, who hails from Madison and had joined us on the Yellowstone trip, completed our team.

Day 1: From Grand Junction, we drove through Moab to our trail exit at Squaw Flat Campground in the Canyonlands National Park. Since our route was not a circular one, we parked our cars at the trail exit and had us shuttled to our trail head at Cathedral Butte, a two-hour drive over dirt roads and along some steep cliffs. Shouldering our bag packs we got a good taste of what was to come – lots of hauling. Fortunately, Karla had planned the route such that with a four-mile hike to our first campground, we had a relatively easy day. We descended from higher up and hiked through the Salt Creek Valley with towering rock formations in pink and sand colors surrounding us. We carried enough water for the night but needed to refill the next day. The sun set and temps dropped into the 30s thanks to a cold front coming through the day before. Soon after a dehydrated dinner meal, we hit the sleeping bags mostly to escape the cold.

Day 2: We had breakfast in down coats. After breaking camp we immediately hit the trail again continuing along Salt Creek Valley, all the while admiring the breathtaking landscape. We saw very few other hikers, and trails were reasonably visible except for rocky areas where the Park Service designated the trail within line of sight with so-called cairns, stacked rock piles. Nevertheless, several times we lost our trail and had to backtrack. Both Jim and Kirk kept us on trail. They had GPS service and had downloaded very detailed trail maps through services like National Geographic or Gaia. We had an 8.5 mile hike on relatively flat ground to our next campground. Water and the freeze-thaw cycle provide ever-changing rock forma-

tions, the most popular and attractive are the arches. Arches come in many shapes and forms and sometimes are delicately cut into thin rock walls. We hiked past Kirk's cabin, one of the few signs that people tried to settle here and make a living.

Day 3: Another unseasonably cold night awaited us, colder than before as highlighted by the frozen water in our water bladders. We stayed warm with extra layers of clothing and our sleeping bags. Our goal for the day was Peakaboo Springs, a 10.5 mile hike, where, as the name shows, water was supposedly available. The southern Utah area is dry anyway, but to exacerbate the problem, the region had only had ¼ inch rain in two years. We each carried 12 pounds of water just in case, since reliable information about the water situation was difficult to come by. On the way to camp this day, we had more rocky terrain than the days before, again hiking through Salt Creek with beautiful vistas on the landscape from higher up. Sunrise and sunset added the backdrop for amazing photography (I was carrying my Nikon 7500 armed with a 400 mm zoom). Like the day before, we encountered signs of early settlements by native people. We found cliff dwellings, small shelters built into the rocks via mud brick walls and pictographs and rock art. The attraction is the “All American Man” carved and painted into a smooth rock wall. We were lucky. Peakaboo Springs had water and we were able to replenish our water supply.

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Feature Article

60 Miles in Six Days

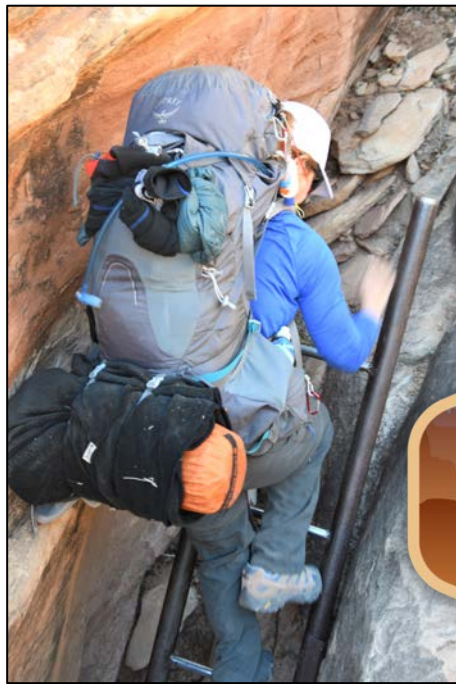
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Day 4: The night was warmer. Little did we know, however, what this day would bring. We had breakfast, with Kirk preparing pancakes on a camping stove, and topped off our water supply. The goal for the day was campground Elephant Canyon 2, requiring us to climb out of Salt Creek Canyon and cross Dead Horse Canyon into Elephant canyon. It was a spectacular hike with stunning vistas, but by the end of the day at around 6 P.M., we were all happy to drop our backpacks. In between we had accomplished a total of 4000 feet altitude, squeezed through narrow cracks, climbed ladders installed by the Park Service for safety, balanced along exposed ledges, slid down smooth rock faces, and acquired plenty of blisters. This was certainly the most challenging day of the entire trip. Later that evening a weak cold front swept through and brought us some high wind gusts, but the sunset was memorable.

Day 5: Today, we finally would see the needle rock formations that give the district the name. After the usual breakfast, by 8:30 A.M., we were on the move again. The plan was to hike up a small side canyon to Druid Arch, backtrack a few miles, and hike back to our same camp through Chesler Park. No heavy backpack! Instead, we were carrying just water and lunch. Druid Arch turned out to be a highlight of the trip. At canyon's end we found an enormous arch rock feature.



Climbing up a safety ladder and after some scrambling, we summited a viewing platform with a great view on the arch and the surrounding landscape. Chesler Park was a comparatively easy hike over mostly flat terrain, surrounded by the well-known needle rock features – hundreds of tall yellow-pink and sand-colored rock needles.



Days 6-8: Kirk had a plane to catch out and left camp early. We were looking forward to some of the trappings of civilization – like a shower, softer bed, and a good meal. The final hike out took five hours, and we reached our cars, tired but awed by the experience. However, that was not the end of our trip. To top it off, we drove to Page in Arizona and hiked Buckskin Gulch (total of 28 miles that day) and kayaked Lake Powell to Antelope Canyon. Buckskin Gulch is a slot canyon with rock walls several hundred feet high and closing in on the hiker. The light effects are amazing. The canyon was running completely dry due to the drought condition. Antelope Canyon is also a slot canyon and well known for the wavy and undulating rock features.



**“We need, in every community,
a group of angelic troublemakers.”**

(Bayard Rustin)

Majority of Republicans Now Support Same-Sex Marriage

by Muri Assunção, *New York Daily News*, June 9, 2021



More than half of Republicans now say that same-sex marriages should be recognized as legal, with the same rights as opposite-sex marriages, according to a new poll released by Gallup. In its latest annual Values and Beliefs poll, conducted May 3-18, 2021, Gallup also found that overall, support of legalized same-sex unions continues to increase, reaching an all-time high of 70 percent. The figure represents a dramatic evolution of people's support for gay marriages, in a trend that has pointed upward for the last 25 years.

In 1996, the first year when the organization asked respondents if they supported legal recognition of marriages between same-sex partners, only 27 percent said yes. Nearly two decades later, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples in June 26, 2015, support for gay marriage reached 60 percent. "Since then, the issue has been less prominent in U.S. politics, and public support for same-sex marriage has continued to increase," Gallup wrote.

This year's data also shows that more than half (55 percent) of Republicans are now in favor of the legal recognition of gay marriage — a for the first time. Support among independents, currently at 73 percent, is slightly higher than previous years, when it stayed in a 68 percent to 71 percent range from 2017 to 2020. Support among Democrats, historically the biggest supporters of same-sex unions, might have "reached a ceiling for this group, at least for now," according to Gallup. Its current 83 percent approval rate is on par with figures from previous years. The poll also showed growth in approval of same-sex marriages among all age groups, with 84 percent of young adults, 72 percent of middle-aged adults, and 60 percent of older adults saying they should be legally recognized as valid.

The percentage among older adults, which Gallup defines as those age 55 and older, more than doubled in the last 16 years. In 2004, only 20 percent of those in that age group showed support for gay marriages. "Once opponents of legalization, Republicans have mostly come to back it," Gallup concluded. "Meanwhile, older U.S. adults, who were once holdouts in support for gay marriage, now come down on the same side of the issue as young adults."

FFBC Member David Cotton Interviewed for *Graying Rainbows* Podcast

Ginger Campbell, a previous FFBC speaker, interviewed FFBC member, David Cotton, for her *Graying Rainbows* podcast.

Retired Air Force Brig. General **David Cotton** shares his story of coming out LGBTQ+ after leaving his military career. He struggled with depression and with ending his marriage, but he shares how he learned how to embrace vulnerability and discovered new ways to connect with others.



Graying Rainbows is a podcast community devoted to those who are coming out LGBTQ+ later in life. It was launched in November 2018. Coming out is a life-long process, but coming out later in life presents its own unique challenges. Since few books and resources are devoted to this topic, a goal of *Graying Rainbows* is to provide useful information and a place where people from diverse backgrounds can share their stories.

In her show notes, she provides a link to the FFBC website, and to the video recording of her FFBC presentation that is posted on FFBC's new YouTube channel.

Listen to the full podcast interview at:

<https://grayingrainbows.com/brig-general-david-cotton>



Fulton v. City of Philadelphia

by Supervisor Matt McCoy

Polk County, 5th District



The unanimous decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* case essentially allows for religious-based foster and adoptive agencies to discriminate for religious objections as long as it's not taxpayer funded. While the first reading of their decision was shocking and disappointing, further analysis indicates that this is by no means a blank check to discriminate for religious-based convictions. Here are some of the talking points shared with me by the Victory Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on this decision.

- The U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Fulton* case allows governments to enforce non-discrimination laws as long as they do so consistently and fairly. The ruling does not create a broad new license to discriminate or create a right for taxpayer-funded foster and adoptive care agencies to discriminate. One of the reasons why we have laws governing child service agencies on behalf of children is to support with taxpayer dollars agencies that ensure children are placed in loving homes.
- Most agencies that do this type of work rely on taxpayer-based subsidies, and without these subsidies, most would not be able to operate in this area. Therefore, an agency relying upon these taxpayer dollars would never be able to withstand non-discrimination scrutiny as long as the state or governmental subdivision was effectively and fairly enforcing non-discrimination laws.
- Freedom of religion is important and is already protected by the First Amendment. Freedom of religion does not give the right to impose beliefs upon others or to discriminate.

- There are countless ways where LGBTQ+ face discrimination, and 29 states do not have laws that explicitly protect LGBTQ+ from being evicted from homes, kicked out of business that's open to the public, denied healthcare, or denied government service. That is why Congress needs to pass the Equality Act on the federal level (it was passed in the U.S. House and is waiting for U.S. Senate action).

In Iowa, I was proud to help lead the effort to champion non-discrimination for LGBTQ+ Iowans with the passage of the Iowa Non-Discrimination Act of 2007, which prohibits this type of discrimination. It is tragic to think that a person can be legally married on Friday and fired on Monday for marrying the person they love in 29 states. Iowa is not one of them. This case helps us recognize that our civil and human rights are fragile and that political environments and courts change over time. With change, consequences impacting LGBTQ+ Americans are constantly on the ballot. It is imperative that our community continue to focus on supporting marginalized communities, including trans Americans who have been targeted and killed at a higher rate, especially those in the black and brown communities. July 4th is a time to celebrate independence as a nation and the values and rights that Americans cherish. Make no mistake, our values and rights are under constant attack. We simply must recognize this and work to focus on supporting candidates who work to ensure equality, equity, and fairness in our legal and political systems, which are oftentimes stacked against marginalized individuals.



GALA POP-UP PARTY

THURSDAY, JULY 22ND
5-7 PM AT ART TERRARIUM
ONEIOWA.ORG/GALA2021
oneiowa

**Gala Pop-Up Party
Art Terrarium**

**106 11th St, Des Moines, IA 50309
Thursday, July 22, 5 - 7 p.m.**

Join One Iowa for a pop-up party at Art Terrarium in Des Moines to celebrate the One Iowa Gala!

We'll have items from the silent auction that will go live that night, a disco ball and plant-filled photo booth set up by LGBTQ photographer Jenni Chung, pride flags from Flag of Des Moines, and the Art Terrarium shop will be open with a featured One Iowa plant on sale to take home!

We have missed hosting in-person events and are excited to see you all again! No registration or fee is required to join us. If you haven't already, make sure to check out all the amazing things we have planned for the Gala that will be held virtually on Thursday, August 5th!

oneiowa

Halston

A Netflix Limited Series Review by Mark Turnage

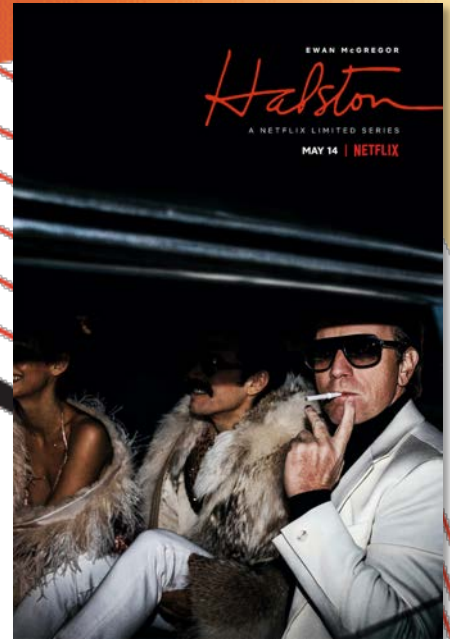
I became fascinated with Roy Halston Frowick, known mononymously as Halston, when I found out the gay fashion designer spent the first fourteen years of his life in Des Moines. How many Des Moines-born LGBT celebrities can you just name off-hand, right? When I began to learn more about the man behind the fashion, I was just as intrigued by how often his creative process and volcanic personality burned bridges with most of his closest collaborators. Director Daniel Minahan's *Halston* Netflix limited miniseries, starring Ewan McGregor, is a five-episode view into the latter half of the man's life. While a stellar performance by McGregor and lush production value certainly make the show engaging, the script's hands-off approach to approaching Halston the man can make this series feel more stylish than groundbreaking, and results in a conclusion that's more wistful than it is satisfying.

We join Halston at the twilight of his career with high-end NYC department store Bergdorf Goodman, gloating over his success as the man responsible for crafting Jackie Kennedy's iconic pillbox hat. His pride doesn't last long—hats have become yesterday's news, so with the support of his old wealthy clientele, he begins to build Halston the fashion brand, and as a result, takes the opportunity to rebrand himself, adopting a slicked-back 'do and incorporating mock black turtlenecks as a wardrobe staple. McGregor magnificently captures Halston's meticulously crafted sense of self—a superficial veneer of wit and snobbish superiority that can suck the air out of a room if contradicted or curbed. Halston in public is incredibly particular, victimizing his fashion house staff with perfectionist rages. He frames this attitude as a zealous commitment to his own artistic integrity, yet beneath this demeanor lies an anxious and emotionally turbulent creative genius who best thrives on equal parts simplicity and sensation. With increasing fame after a successful show at Versailles, he becomes a staple of Studio 54 and attracts men like Victor Hugo, a male escort who ironically mirrors many of Halston's worst personality traits. Halston's world exists between glamour and seediness—we see him successfully cruise a truck stop and grittier neighborhoods of NYC for sex and drugs, and bring his lover's used jockstrap to a parfumer when trying to create a women's fragrance, in one humorous (yet sensual) scene.

Halston is a difficult person to like and love: to balance this, the series highlights his real-life friendship with Liza Minelli (a scene-stealing Krysta Rodriguez) to humanize him. But even in these scenes, the show doesn't present us with enough reasons why we should empathize with Halston outside his wit and personal loneliness, preferring to highlight the A-List lifestyle he leads before it all comes crashing down in a hail of cocaine addiction, a disastrous multi-million-dollar deal with then-giant JC Penney, and broken friendships. What is heartbreaking, and the show does capture, is the dilution of an artist into money, drugs, and creative bankruptcy.

The series is broken into five one-hour episodes, and Halston's early life is mostly skipped over in favor of showcasing his time as head of his own fashion house. The show doesn't say it, but he moved from Des Moines with his family to Indiana at age 14—flashbacks to his childhood are minimal but allude to a rural upbringing with an abusive father, and a very young Halston creating makeshift hats out of household materials to comfort himself and his mother after his father's brutal tirades. We see this trauma resurface only twice, but it's the most human and vulnerable we see Halston aside from his HIV diagnosis towards the end of the series. The connection of this trauma to his own personality "rebrand" and his repeated behavior of verbally abusing people to distract from his own vulnerability is something this reviewer wishes was explored further. The final episode attempts to cash in on that vulnerability and spin it into a positive without the emotional capital to back it up, and as a result, what should be a moving finale ends up feeling forced.

Halston can often feel pessimistic and vain, but McGregor slays that runway with a fascinating tale of a titan undone by his own flaws. See it for the runway looks and that star-power performance.



Thank You Donors

In last month's newsletter, we recognized all our donors to the scholarship fund. This month, we recognize the other valuable contributions that help First Friday Breakfast Club thrive as an organization.

General Fund Donors

- Kevin Chorniak
- Paul Dark
- Ken Hanson & Wade Petersen
- Paulina Massey
- Jonathan Wilson & Scott Kuknyo



In Kind Services

- David Cotton
- Brad Holland & Joe Raetz
- John Schmacker
- Nicholas Williams



“When you look at the breadth and the scope of his support for LGBTQ rights, I think it's fair to say that Joe Biden is the most pro-equality president that we've ever had.”

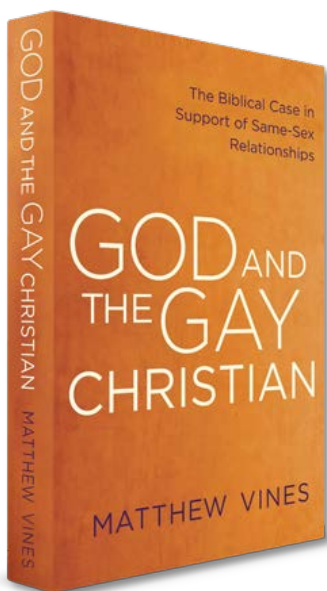


(Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ advocacy group)



Book Recommendations

Two books were mentioned during the June meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club as being particularly helpful for some members in reconciling religious issues and being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Both are available at amazon.com.

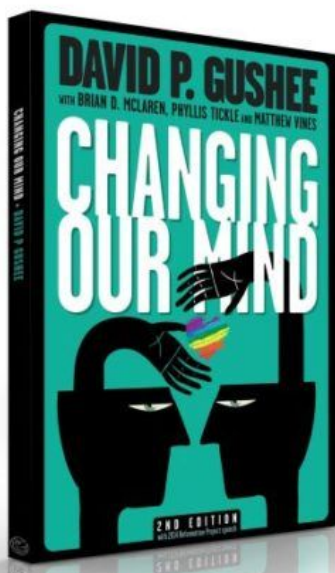


As a young Christian man, Matthew Vines harbored the same basic hopes of most young people: to someday share his life with someone, to build a family of his own, to give and receive love. But when he realized he was gay, those hopes were called into question. The Bible, he'd been taught, condemned gay relationships.

Feeling the tension between his understanding of the Bible and the reality of his same-sex orientation, Vines devoted years of intensive research into what the Bible says about homosexuality. With care and precision, Vines asked questions such as:

- Do biblical teachings on the marriage covenant preclude same-sex marriage or not?
- How should we apply the teachings of Jesus to the gay debate?
- Can celibacy be a calling when it is mandated, not chosen?
- What did Paul have in mind when he warned against same-sex relations?

Unique in its affirmation of both an orthodox faith and sexual diversity, *God and the Gay Christian* has sparked heated debate, sincere soul searching, and widespread cultural change on the issue of what it means to be a faithful gay Christian.



Christian denominations and churches everywhere struggle with the issue of LGBTQ inclusion. With growing scientific evidence, our wider society has taken big steps, but too many religious families and communities have not kept up. As much as ever, many people still experience deep condemnation by evangelical and other churches, getting kicked out or altogether leaving. Dr. David Gushee offers a powerful, inspiring message of hope and healing by helping Christians to return to Bible study, prayer, and reflection in a way that creates a vision for a more inclusive church.

From his own careful Bible study, research, and prayer, Gushee takes us along an conversational theological journey. In one book, he concisely marks out every single component of historic Christian sexual morality. He covers all of the relevant biblical passages and all the theological positions, including the key argument of creation. With a careful study of context and biblical language, he walks us through a principled discussion that is respectful of traditionalists while calling for inclusion and the end of contempt.

Mark Your Calendars!

Future FFBC
Speaker Announced

August 6:

Ian
Lawrence-
Tourinho

Director of the
Bi Foundation and founder
of the amBi network, a
growing, international
collaborative of socially-
focused bi communities.

There are
worse
things in
life than
kissing
boys.

(Benjamin Alire Sáenz)



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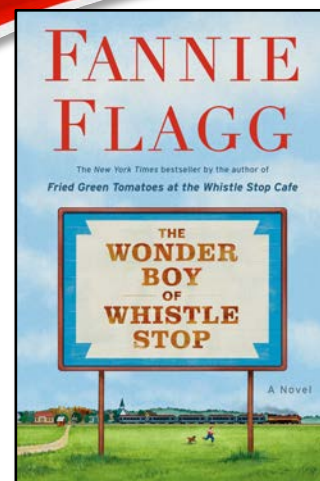
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First Friday Breakfast Club
P.O. Box 41611
Des Moines, IA 50311

The Wonder Boy of Whistle Stop

by Fannie Flag

**A Book
Review by
Steve Person**



In December of last year, the building I live in switched Internet and television providers. The Internet provider hasn't resulted in any noticeable difference between what we had and what we are now stuck with, but the loss of DirecTV was no big deal. The new television provider, ICS Advanced Technologies, might just be somewhat of a stretch of the imagination by calling itself "advanced," but it does have one channel that we didn't have before. It is called Buzzr TV. The format for Buzzr TV is the reruns of old game shows from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. It resulted in re-introducing me to Fannie Flag who was a regular on *The Match Game* during the 1970s.

I read Fannie Flag's novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* when it first appeared in 1987 and subsequently enjoyed the film version in 1991. *The Wonder Boy of Whistle Stop* blends a few of the characters from the original book with some fascinating new ones. Flag chronicles the life of The Wonder Boy, in actuality Buddy Threadgoode, Jr., also known as Bud, from his birth in 1939 through his eighty-sixth year—and still going strong—at the book's end.

Flag weaves her tale of Whistle Stop and its residents over the span of nine decades. Each short, readable chapter begins with a place name—and usually a date—and then weaves the lives of the characters as they leave Whistle Stop once the passenger railroads stopped running in the 1960s and the café went out of business.

Bud, at age six, gets involved in a railroad accident and loses an arm. Through perseverance and hard work, he grows into an accomplished athlete in high school and led Whistle Stop to the state championship in football as the team's quarterback. After all, a person needs only one arm to throw a football. He earns a college scholarship and becomes a successful veterinarian. After a stint in the military where he worked as an army veterinarian, he marries the love of his life and establishes an animal clinic in Maryland. He and Peg have an only child, Ruth, named after her grandmother.

One of the characters from the original *Fried Green Tomatoes* is Dot Weems, who, in her role of the town's newspaper chronicler, keeps the small population of Whistle Stop up on the weekly events around town. Eventually Whistle Stop ceases to exist as a town, and the people scatter to points around the country but mainly in Alabama and Georgia. Another holdover from the original is Evelyn Couch, a woman who befriends Ninny Threadgoode in a nursing home many years previously. It is from this friendship that Evelyn emerges from her drab, humdrum life and becomes phenomenally successful in selling Mary Kay Cosmetics.

In his old age, Bud escapes his nursing home and takes a train from Atlanta to Birmingham in an effort to see for the last time what's left of Whistle Stop. He fails in his quest, and the ensuing events lead to a surprising and delightful ending to the book.

Flag, by tying all these people together over the decades, provides the essential ideas of the importance of one's roots and the irreplaceable gift of family and friends.