



First Friday News & Views

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



January 2022

Volume 27

Issue 1

Next Meeting

January 7

7:00 a.m.



Meeting Location

**Hoyt Sherman Place
15th & Woodland
Des Moines**



January Speaker

**Loren
Olson**



FFBC Website

ffbc-iowa.org



Life-Changing Yoga

by Byron Huff, Board President

We all hear that physical activity is beneficial to our health, but statistics show that the majority of us are not active. I have tried to make physical activity an important part of my life, in part to overcome the health deficiencies that could impact my daily life.

As covered in my November article, I was born with severe allergies and asthma that impacted my early life, both physically and mentally (bullying). When I moved away from home to Des Moines, I was determined to improve my physical well-being by running. I had a rescue inhaler which I used before heading out to help me breathe and to prevent an exercised-induced asthma attack. When I first started running, I could only go for less than a mile, but over the years, I was able to increase the distance and even carried weights with me to build full body strength.

I eventually had to give up running and other workouts due to spinal issues; that is when I found yoga. To say that yoga was life-changing is an understatement. What I found was a supportive community that offered physical and mental health. I started with the basic Power 1 class where beginners (and some who just like the ease of this class) learn the basics of yoga poses along with some challenges (typical of most classes) that push you to work toward that next level of strength, flexibility, and balance.

After over four years and 1,500 classes, I can see the significant improvement in my quality of life. I see yogis of all ages who may not be able to do all the poses, but they show up because they are also witnessing the life-changing benefits. As we age, balance can become a challenge as we lose muscle mass; yoga can slow or reverse that by building core strength, ultimately providing a better quality of life.

Whether you are physically active or not, I encourage you to try some basic yoga classes. Start slow and keep going because the benefits will take time.

Namaste.



Thanks to Brad Holland and Joe Raetz, the Ascendant Wealth Management sponsorship helps FFBC to cover its website hosting costs, as well as its website e-commerce technology which allows for online scholarship donations and dues payments.



Brad Holland

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Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor
Ascendant Wealth Management Group

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A private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC

THANKS BRAD & JOE !

"For last year's words belong to
last year's language and next year's
words await another voice."

-- T.S. Eliot



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Brad Holland** for introducing **Bishop William Joensen**, our December 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 **deadline** for the **February newsletter** will be **January 24**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the copy deadline.

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.

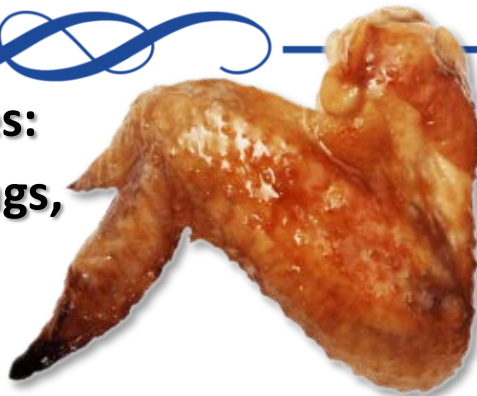
Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$450,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. 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** to the tune of over **\$67,000**! Contact **Byron Huff** for details or with questions.



Unsung and Unnamed Heroes: Of Train Brakes, Chicken Wings, and Pepper

by Jonathan Wilson



There are lots of well-known heroes in history, and we rightly celebrate their courage and accomplishments; often the latter is a product, at least in part, of the former. But there are people who have courageously accomplished meaningfully, but have not been identified and celebrated for their accomplishments.

Lately, I've been thinking about unsung, unnamed heroes – three of them.

The first I'll mention is the inventor of hydraulic brakes for train engines. Whoever he was, he came up with the first design for hydraulic brakes and presented the concept to a railroad company, only to be rejected because of safety concerns -- if the hydraulics were to fail, there would be no way to stop the train. A runaway train is an obvious danger, and the proposal was rightly rejected. But he didn't give up. The use of hydraulics was good in concept, so he made one, significant change in the proposal. He proposed that the power of hydraulics be used to keep the brakes from engaging; in order to apply the brakes, the train engineer simply had to release the hydraulics gradually or quickly, depending on how urgently the engineer needed to stop the train. If the hydraulics were to fail for any reason, the brakes would, by default, engage, and the train would come to a screeching halt. Westinghouse patented the revised proposal, but the engineer/designer who came up with the revised proposal remains unknown and unnamed. His recognition of the value of hydraulics, and his willingness to rethink the design, distinguishes him without so much as a mention in our history books. He figured out how to use hydraulics *and* avoid runaway trains. The design is still used today in trains and also on many large capacity vehicles like trucks and buses.

The second I'll mention has to do with chicken wings. Chicken wings? Yes. There was a day when chicken wings were not popular parts of a dead chicken. You'd get them if you bought a "whole chicken," but they were hardly considered the best part of your purchase; you could boil them for chicken broth after the whole chicken had been roasted and they were part of the leftovers, but that was about it. And how many folks make their own chicken broth – not many, so there was certainly not much of a market for just chicken wings. Chicken breasts, chicken thighs, and drumsticks, yes. Chicken wings, no. But sometime, in a chicken production facility somewhere, there had to have

been a guy in marketing who figured out that chicken wings are delicious when deep fat fried and combined with a variety of rubs and sauces. They have become a staple among "bar foods"; more than 4,000 pounds of wings are sold *daily* in the United States. In 2019, that translated into one billion servings of wings in a single year according to the National Purchase Diary. That person in marketing remains unsung and unnamed, but I love chicken wings, and he's one of my heroes.

The third I'll mention has to do with pepper. Yes, pepper. Imagine, if you will, a spice salesman back in the day. His boss calls him in – maybe because he was new and the one lowest in seniority among the spice salespeople. The boss says that there's a new spice he wants the guy to market; it's black like dirt and has no known nutritional value. But, there's lots of it available and the boss wants to find a market. So, what does the guy do? He designs his marketing plan to tie pepper to salt, the latter being something everyone needs and likes. He made it a matter of good manners that, if someone asks for the salt to be passed, it would be considered impolite not to pass pepper along with the salt. I was eating at a favorite chicken wings place recently, and a somewhat lowlife couple was seated at an adjoining table, and one of the couple asked the other to pass the salt. Both salt AND pepper were passed. Now THAT is the product of effective salesmanship. I don't know how, when, where, or who did it, but the fact is that pepper really has no culinary connection to salt. To this day, however, proper etiquette includes passing a dirt-like spice with salt when only salt is requested.

I mention these three examples to make the point that accomplishments and one's worthwhile contribution to society are not measured by our failures, our challenges, or societal recognition, but by our resilience. The Bible identifies nine fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I posit a tenth: **tenacity** -- tenacity to accomplish a worthy goal with or without recognition or acclaim.



In The Kitchen

with Brian Carlson



This Month's Recipe:

CHICKEN AND PINTO BEAN STEW

Packed with protein, this easy-to-throw-together stew is perfect for those cold, snowy days – it's comforting and it won't ruin your health goals for the new year. Feel free to use any kind of bean you enjoy. I used pintos here, but great northern, cannellini, and kidneys will work. Serve with crusty whole grain bread and a tossed green salad.

Chicken and Pinto Bean Stew

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cooked and sliced thin
2 14.5 oz. cans diced tomatoes
2 16 oz. cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups low sodium chicken broth
2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
4 cloves garlic, finely minced
1/2 medium onion, finely diced
1/2 tsp dried thyme leaves
1/2 tsp dried parsley
1 sprig fresh rosemary
Salt and pepper to taste



Directions

1. In 4-quart pot, cook the garlic and onion in olive oil over medium heat until just translucent. Add thyme and parsley and mix well. Stir in broth and tomatoes. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to simmer.
2. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add chicken breast and beans and stir to incorporate. Add rosemary sprig. Let simmer until hot and flavors meld. Add salt and pepper to desired taste. Ladle stew into bowls. (Serves 4)





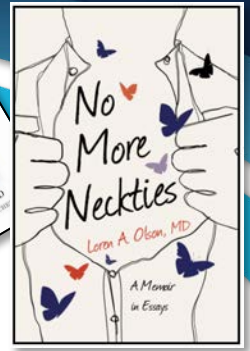
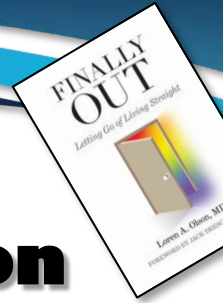
January Speaker

Loren Olson



Dr. Loren A. Olson was born in Nebraska in 1943, and as former Nebraska senator Bob Kerry said, "Do you think anyone in his right mind would choose to be gay in Nebraska?" Olson struggled to be straight but eventually lost that fight at forty years old, when he left his wife and kids to declare - somewhat quietly at first - that he is gay. Loren speaks about his life experiences to any group that promises to laugh at his jokes.

Dr. Olson counseled his friends for years before realizing that it was possible to make a living practicing psychiatry. Although he sought to maintain a low profile as a psychiatrist, his colleagues made him a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, the National Alliance for Mental Illness named him an Exemplary Psychiatrist, and he inexplicably received awards for his writing. Loren is the author of *Finally Out: Letting Go of Living Straight* and the soon-to-be-released memoir *No More Neckties*.



January In-Person Meeting Guidelines

We strongly recommend that members or guests who attend in person should be vaccinated for the safety of all. Board member Gary Moore stated it best, "Individual choices have community consequences. In regard to our community, state, and country's Delta variant pandemic spread, we encourage all who attend to have had their Covid vaccinations and wear their masks as appropriate during our meetings."

We also will require that all participants wear a mask when not eating. We will reduce the number of chairs at various tables to provide for some social distancing. Wearing a mask will also be required as you move through the food line (we will work to distance members while in line). If any member goes through the food line a second time, we ask that a clean plate is used.

This procedure is not just for the safety of our members, but out of respect for the safety of our speaker and food providers.

DES MOINES GAY MEN'S CHORUS

MUSIC THAT MATTERS

DMGMC.ORG

Interested in joining the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus?

Rehearsals for our March 25 concert begin on Monday, January 10, at Plymouth UCC Church (4126 Ingersoll Avenue) at 6:30 PM.

You do not have to be gay or a male to sing with us! You just have to be able to sing in the tenor or bass range. **Come sing with us!**

Contact **Wade Petersen**, Operations Manager at admin@dmgmc.org for more details!

A Visit from the Bishop

by Gary Moore

The Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D, Bishop for the Des Moines Archdiocese, was the speaker for First Friday Breakfast Club this morning at Hoyt Sherman Place. The art galleries, where our gatherings are held, were decked out in their Christmas finery. For the December meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club, members got to hear the Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D. Born in Waterloo and the eldest of five children, the most Rev. Joensen grew up in Ames where his father taught. Although his father has passed, his mother still resides in Ames. A good deal of his pastoral history is in Dubuque, Iowa's stronghold of the Catholic faith along the banks of the Mississippi River (where I was also raised). Besides his seminary training, the Bishop holds a doctorate in philosophy. He was installed as the 10th Bishop of the Des Moines Archdiocese in 2019.

The Most Rev. Bishop handed out a few pages containing paragraphs from Pope Francis' letter, "*Fratelli Tutti*, On Fraternity and Social Friendship" of 3 October 2020 as well as quotations from other philosophers. I am lucky to have those few pages for I fear, like in college, philosophy was not my strong point. It was the only course I ever dropped even though the professor said I was one of the few who grasped what he was lecturing on. I must confess, the Bishop's academic discussion of the need to force ourselves to communicate our "mystery of authentic human existence" left me a little underwhelmed with support. Although his presentation was thoughtful, and not meant to offend, it seemed to fall short for me. There is no doubt the Bishop was walking and talking a fine line as he navigated what must be a different and difficult audience. He seemed more relaxed when answering a few politely asked questions. What still remains in my mind is that **Dignity**, a group that existed in Des Moines in the middle 70s, today has no such existence in Des Moines. Most of those church officials who tried to minister to gay Catholics were either silenced or forced to leave the religious order in which they had been a part. Although mentioning Dignity, the Bishop noted there was no Dignity group in Des Moines, and there was a pastoral need. <https://www.dignityusa.org/history>



December Speaker:

The Most Rev. William M. Joensen



**FFBC Board Member Brad Holland
Introduces the Speaker**

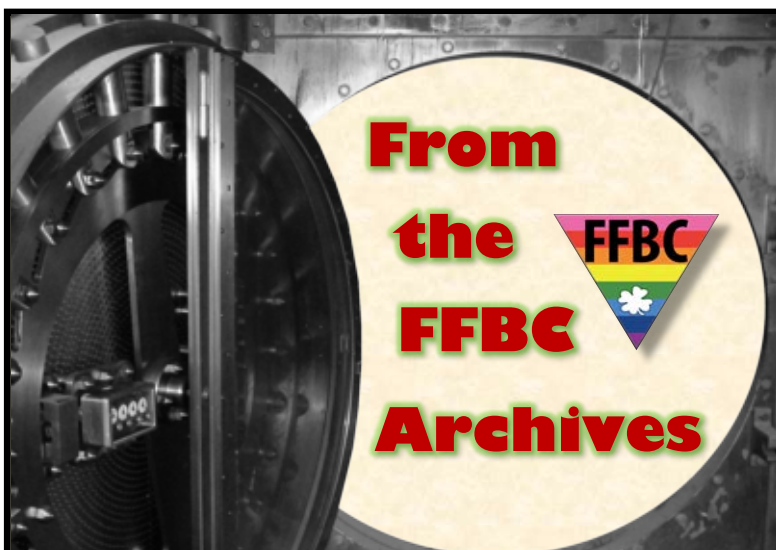


**The Most Rev. William M. Joensen
Speaks to FFBC Members**

December Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos by
Gary Moore



5 Years Ago: January 2017

* In "Refilling the Swamp," Jonathan describes how Trump's cabinet choices are less than impressive. Despite Trump's promise to "drain the swamp" in Washington, D.C., his approach seems to be to repopulate the swamp with establishment types.

* Jordan Duesenberg discusses the interesting lessons of *How To Be Gay* (David M. Halperin) and how even those in the LGBTQ community still have to learn to be a part of the gay culture.

* Bruce Carr summarizes the December 2016 speaker, Mel Duncan, co-founder of Nonviolent Peaceforce. This is an international organization that sends unarmed, paid civilian protection forces into conflict areas to foster dialogue between conflicting parties.

* Former FFBC member and continuing supporter, John Tompkins, writes in his article "Never Too Late...To Meet Family for the First Time," about his struggles as an adopted child to find his birth family.

10 Years Ago: January 2012

* "Out of the Mouths of Babes and Panderers" has Jonathan describing the exchange between a sixteen year old and presidential candidate, Michelle Bachman. The teen asks Bachman what she would do to support LGBT citizens; to which Bachman responds she would work to protect the rights of all citizens. In response to the follow-up question about same-sex marriage, Bachman states that gay citizens have equal rights to marriage under *current* law in 50 states.

* Bruce Carr talks of the December 2011 speaker, Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, president of Interfaith Alliance. Gaddy's sly sense of humor shone through his deep faith and equally deep learning.

* Steve Person's book review of *Jack Kennedy, Elusive Hero*, author Chris Matthews does not disguise his admiration for Kennedy, but is also not afraid to point out his errors and faults.

15 Years Ago: January 2007

* "The Great Fence of America" by Jonathan Wilson describes the law that establishes the 700-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. The comparisons to the Berlin Wall don't stack up.

* Bruce Carr writes about Beryl Padorr, the new rabbi of Tifereth Israel Synagogue, and how her presentation dealt with her personal, professional, and spiritual journey to the rabbinate.

* Gary Kaufman reviews the movie *Bobby* (starring a variety of big Hollywood names).

* Editor Steve Person describes his mid-November vacation and his opportunity to experience the State Opening of Parliament.

2022 LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

oneiowa

One Iowa Hosts 2022 Virtual Legislative Preview

by Maddie Rocha Smith

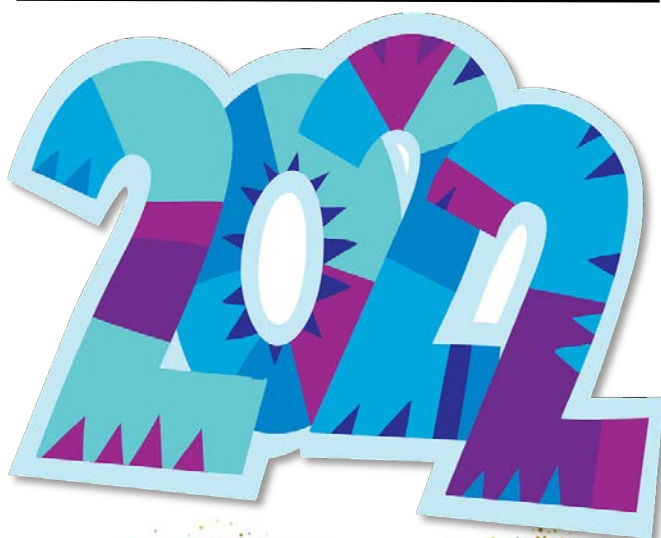
Join One Iowa for a preview of the upcoming legislative session: How the session works, what good bills we're working on, what bad bills we're expecting to see, and what you can do to help.

January 6, 2022
6:00 to 7:00 PM

one
iowa

Sign up at:

<https://oneiowa.org/events/>



HAPPY NEW YEAR

**by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 5th District**



The chart below outlines the growing trend of fentanyl and fentanyl synthetics on deaths certificates in Polk County.



President Biden has a new plan to counter this national healthcare crisis. Secretary of Health & Human Services, Xavier Becerra, has rolled out a four-part plan that includes measures to prevent drug addiction by cracking down on inappropriate prescribing of opioids, including federal support for distribution of clean syringes and test strips to identify hidden fentanyl in street drugs. The Administration's policy is to treat addicts less like criminals and more like people in need of treatment. Biden's plan also includes greater access to drug treatment, accompanied by a request for \$11.2 billion to counter the opioid crisis to pay for treatment, pending congressional approval. Regardless of your stance on the impact that opioids have had in America, we simply cannot ignore the fact that a 30% increase represents more than 30,000 new lives lost to drug overdoses.

9



**Mark
Your
Calendar!**

Future Speakers

February 4

Edward Kelly

From Anti-gay Activist
to LGBTQ+ Ally

March 4

Mark Babcock

Carillon Player at St. Paul's
Episcopal Church DSM

April 1

David Miglin

Broadlawns Board Member
Who Visited Every Iowa Town

May 6

Eric Shepard

Artistic Director & Conductor
Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus

June 3

Becky Smith

Executive Director
Iowa Safe Schools

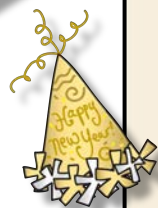
July 16

FFBC Party

Home of FFBC Member,
John Schmacker

**“Hope smiles from the
threshold of the year
to come, whispering,
‘It will be happier’...”**

-- Alfred Lord Tennyson



CHECK OUT THE REDESIGNED FFBC

**SCHOLARSHIP
BROCHURE**

ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES !



About the Scholarship

One-time scholarships of at least \$3,000 are awarded. Scholarships are paid in two installments upon receipt of the student's "proof of enrollment" in the institution of secondary education.

Accomplishments of previous scholarship recipients include:

- ☐ Founded Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or diversity club and/or provided leadership in the organization
- ☐ Organized day of silence activities
- ☐ Organized support to include gender orientation in local civil rights ordinances and school district non-discrimination policies
- ☐ Discussed issues facing LGBTQ youth with school faculty, administration and/or community groups
- ☐ Wrote articles in community and school papers addressing LGBTQ issues
- ☐ Addressed LGBTQ issues in school debates, speeches and forums
- ☐ Actively affirmed and advocated for LGBTQ students in their school
- ☐ Provided positive image and role model as an out and open LGBTQ student/ally

For tax-deductible donations, designate *'FFBC Scholarship Fund'* on your check and mail contributions to:

**First Friday Breakfast Club
Scholarship Committee**
PO Box 41611, Des Moines, IA 50311

Who We Are

FFBC is an educational, non-profit group for gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer men. Members and guests gather the first Friday of every month for breakfast, fellowship, and a speaker. As Iowa's largest independent breakfast club, we are active, dynamic, and engaging. We educate ourselves on LGBTQ and other issues in a safe and supportive environment. We contribute to a variety of community organizations. FFBC works to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

The FFBC scholarship is funded through the generous contributions of our members and supporters in both the LGBTQ and straight communities.

For more information, visit online at:

<https://ffbcIowa.org/>



Previous Recipients

Previous recipients of the scholarship have included students from the following Iowa communities:

Altoona	Fort Dodge
Ames	Hampton-Dumont
Ankeny	Iowa City
Asbury	Macedonia
Bettendorf	Marshalltown
Boone	Muscatine
Carroll	Newton
Cedar Falls	Ogden
Clinton	Pella
Council Bluffs	Persia
Davenport	Robins
Des Moines	Sioux City
Dubuque	Waterloo
East Sac County	West Burlington
Eldridge	

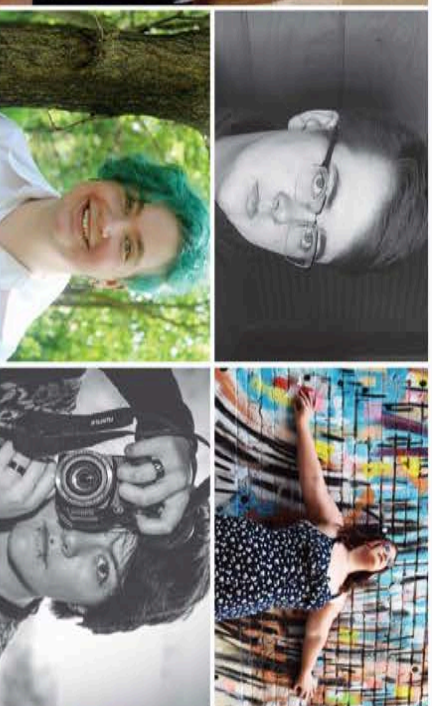


Qualifications

- ☐ Graduating senior from an Iowa high school
- ☐ Resident of the State of Iowa and planning to pursue post-secondary education
- ☐ Participated in significant activities to promote LGBTQ acceptance in his/her/their school and/or community
- ☐ Awards are made without regard to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, marital status or employment status

Selection Process

Scholarships are awarded to outstanding Iowa high school seniors who have distinguished themselves with significant efforts to counter homophobia, promote LGBTQ acceptance and educate their schools/communities on LGBTQ issues. Academic achievement and extra-curricular activities are also considered.



Apply Today!

Download the application at <https://ffbc.iowa.org/scholarships/>, fill out and submit to FFBC by mail or email.

**First Friday Breakfast Club
Scholarship Committee**
PO Box 41611, Des Moines, IA 50311
Email: info@FFBCIowa.org

Application Timeline

Application Deadline	Postmarked, emailed, or uploaded by March 15
Recipients Announced	On, or about, May 1
Recipients Recognized	FFBC June Meeting



The Matrix Resurrections

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

When a new sequel in a high-profile film franchise is announced, it can be challenging to balance audience expectations with narrative predictability in comparison to the new movie's predecessors. Picture a kind of uncanny valley: expecting enough familiarity to connect the current film to its prequels, but also having enough unpredictability to take us by surprise. With 1999's *The Matrix*, a combination of cyberpunk aesthetics, philosophical dialogues, and mind-bending action cinematography spawned four Academy Awards for technical achievements, two additional sequels, and a fashion moment for leather, PVC, and tiny sunglasses. After its directors Lana and Lily Wachowski both came out as transgender, the film series gained new context as an analogue for transitioning. The fourth *Matrix* is helmed solo by Lana Wachowski and is a more explicitly queer piece of sci-fi cinema, an achievement in itself. *The Matrix Resurrections*' meta-satirical plot has an abundance of queer representation, self-aware insights, and philosophical duels, but too often ends up slowing the story's pace to "bullet time" by rehashing previous installments and cutting back on the trippy action and sci-fi intrigue that made the earlier entries in the franchise so engaging with their audiences.

It goes without saying that as the fourth film in the series, the plot won't make much sense without some familiarity with the first three movies, but for the accessibility of this review, I won't be delving into the plot too deeply, and will instead focus on the general plot structure and queer themes present in *Resurrections* and how they are executed. The central mystery is how Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves), a.k.a. Neo, a.k.a. superpowered savior of humanity in a war against sentient machines, wound up living a normal but lonely life as a successful videogame designer. Thomas suspects he is the unwitting prisoner of a new *Matrix*, a lifelike computer simulation masterminded by villainous machine programs (that look human) with a chip on their shoulder against humanity. He also thinks this sounds crazy and is prescribed "blue pills" by his therapist (Neal Patrick Harris). His partner and love interest Trinity (Carrie-Ann Moss) doesn't recognize him and has traded in her vinyl suit (but not the Ducati motorcycle) for her new life as Tiffany, a married mother of two. The audience is aware that they both *must* be stuck in the Matrix, and both Thomas and Tiffany suspect something is off with their lives. But it isn't until an intrepid team from "the real world" led by Bugs (Jessica Henwick) discovers him that Thomas starts to piece together who he really is ... and resurrect a nemesis who knows him all too well.

Too often when LGBT characters appear in movies, there is a separation between having queer characters front and center (visibility) and telling a story authentic to LGBTQ+ identities (relatability). *Resurrections* does both, hammering home the real villain of its story: binary conformity, whether it be with destiny, morality, or gender. Its ragtag team of people "freed from the Matrix" are nearly all explicitly queer, evidenced through lines of dialogue but also with more vibrant wardrobe and bolder gender expression. We see lesbian couples worried about the future, and a gay character casually hit on Neo in passing. These are the people who help both Neo and Trinity find themselves again, but aside from Bugs, they're unfortunately not particularly memorable.

There's an over-reliance on rehashing the original *Matrix* through clips from the film or near-copies of its major set pieces—although *déjà vu* is a major theme of this movie, one wishes it was taken a step beyond a mere revisiting to jog Neo's memory. The narrative hoops explaining the return and recast of Morpheus (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) are also a bit high to jump through, and some of his lines are laugh-out-loud awkward, as opposed to Laurence Fishburne's conviction and gravitas in the original trilogy. This is the flipside of the "meta" moments in *Resurrections*: the writing can get self-aware to the point of indulgence, like a college student fresh out of a postmodernity & philosophy class. An example of this is a game-development meeting scene with Thomas that's clearly talking about making a new *Matrix* movie to make more money, but also the importance of having a groundbreaking message that "speaks to the fans." It's important to note that the people who actually look up to Thomas (and Tiffany) encourage them to evolve and grow, where the people who claim to be their "biggest fans" are still plugged into The Matrix and want to keep them there. There's strong queer subtext with that theme too.

Ultimately, *The Matrix Resurrections* is a sci-fi romance about missed connection and breaking free of barriers to living one's authentic self: whether they be repressed traumatic experiences, stifling people or situations, or our shadow-self sabotaging our potential for healing and constructive change. If the queer stories of its "away team" were given more substance in place of meta-dialogue, it could be an even more powerful statement of queer sci-fi film.

***The Matrix Resurrections* is in theaters and available for streaming on HBO Max.**



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Publication



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

The President is Missing

by Bill Clinton and
James Patterson

A Book Review by Steve Person

To paraphrase Bette Davis in *All About Eve*, "Fasten your seatbelt, it's going to be a thrilling read!" When a former President takes to writing a mystery thriller with one of the genre's best-selling authors, the reader can expect an inside account, even if it's fictional, into the cut-throat world of Washington politics.

As I read this well-crafted story, I kept trying to figure out which man wrote which parts of the book. I don't know if the two got together and wrote simultaneously or if they exchanged ideas via Zoom or some other mode of communication. Needless to say, the plot involves around an international terrorist named Suliman Cindoruk. His aim is to destroy the United States but not via warfare weapons. His scheme is well financed, and he employs the best minds he can find in the world of cyber crimes.

President Jon Duncan faces imminent impeachment by the House of Representatives and being found guilty in the trial by the Senate for his allowing Cindoruk to escape from capture in Algeria. Both the House and the Senate hold strong majorities by the opposing party of the President. Duncan agrees to allow himself to be interrogated by the Speaker of the House, Lester Rhodes, who is an especially disagreeable man intent on topping Duncan's administration and having Vice President Kathy Brandt take the reins of government. Brandt took an early lead in the primary elections until Duncan entered the race. An Iraq War hero, Duncan went on to win the nomination and chose Brandt as his Vice President. Was that a wise decision?

Duncan, a widower in his mid 50s, suffers from a rare blood disorder and is ordered by his doctor to take time off to rest and recuperate. Presidents just can not do that he explains to her. His rare condition could stop his Presidency in its tracks.

Enter Nina, a young woman formerly in the employ of the Sons of Jihad, a rogue organization headed by Cindoruk. She is one half of a duo who has information that can bring the United States to its knees. Her counterpart is a young man named Augie. Both he and she have vital information, but what one has is no good unless the other can employ what he/she knows. They carry this information only in their heads with no paper trail.

Duncan agrees to meet Augie at a baseball game in order to convince the young man to come to America's rescue. At the baseball game, all hell breaks loose when an electrical blackout plunges all concerned into darkness. Bullets fly, vehicles get destroyed in the chaos, and the President goes missing.

Clinton and Patterson plant plenty of red herrings in the story when the Prime Minister of Israel, the German Chancellor, and the Russian Prime Minister all descend on a secret meeting place in rural Virginia, complete with blackout trappings where information cannot be hacked. There's lots of murder and mayhem, tense moments with timetables playing a vital part, and treachery at every turn.

It's a very readable and exciting book.

