

OutCenter



Serving the LGBT Community in Southwest Michigan

OUT & abOUT

Newsletter

June 2013

In This Issue

[Lake Effect Pride](#)

[Anti-bullying workshop](#)

[Whirlpool Pride 2013](#)

[May potluck](#)

[Homosexuality and Christianity](#)

Affirming clergy, welcoming congregations

Not too many years ago one likely wouldn't see this headline in a newsletter like this, but the times they are a changin'. Some clergy and congregations in our three counties have come around by coming out as allies of and safe spaces for LGBT folk. A few have had open doors and hearts for several years; others are in-process; still others may wish to move in this right direction but aren't sure quite how to begin. **I'm an affirming clergy in a welcoming congregation, and here's how we did it.**

**Individual
donations now
more important
than ever**

[Donate](#)

Grant opportunity

For the first time the OutCenter applied for funding from the Frederick S. Upton Foundation to support the OutCenter's Youth Program and, guess what? **They funded it!**

This is a matching grant opportunity so we need your help! **The OutCenter needs to raise \$1,500 at least!** Will you support the ALIVE Youth Group, referrals and training activities that help make Southwest Michigan a safe home for LGBT youth? The quicker we meet this goal, the more quickly we can put these funds to GREAT use!

Be sure to add Upton Foundation Match in the comment section or on your check.

I've been a straight ally for many years in support of family, friends, seminary classmates, and clergy colleagues, and because I believe it's simply the right thing for me to do as a human being. I came out as an ally to my congregation - St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Benton Harbor - in May 2007 (has it been that long?!) in a Sunday sermon supporting the then Out and Affirmation Center's float in the Blossomtime Parade. When I started my ministry at St. A's the year before, some parishioners knew where I stood, but as the parish had gone through some conflict with my predecessor (who was decidedly not an ally) I thought it better to stay quiet - until circumstances that Sunday meant I no longer could stay quiet. My congregation surprised me at the end of my sermon by applauding. I took that as a good sign.

Not long after, I joined the board of directors of the center and was with the organization as it moved from being a program of the YWCA to full independence. I worked with my clergy and board colleague, the Rev. Kevin McLemore, in starting an affirming clergy group for progressive colleagues who were either out themselves or wished to be, but were constrained by their congregations. I preached in support of inclusion of LGBT folk in our parish and used my regular column in The Herald-Palladium to advance the notion that one could be both a person of faith and LGBT or an ally.

Last year, a parishioner asked if St. A's would become a **"Believe Out Loud"** congregation. That's what the Episcopal Church calls the formal process of becoming intentionally and openly welcome and inclusive of LGBT people. We were already close - the only question some had after ample discussion was "Aren't we already? Why do we have to make it formal?" We explained why making it official is really important, and St. A's became a Believe Out Loud parish with full congregational support and unanimous vestry (board) approval. What's great about this, beyond basic biblical, religious, and civil justice and compassion, is we're spiritually available to our community to mark life events such as the blessing of unions, baptism of children in LGBT families, pastoral counseling, and funerals for community members - all in addition to regular church membership and participation.

I'm reconnecting with the OutCenter and working to redevelop the Affirming Clergy group, both to be a resource unto ourselves and to encourage our congregations to join the handful in our area like **mine who Believe Out Loud what we hold in our hearts and minds. If you're a member of the clergy, or if you belong to a congregation and want your pastor to get involved, please send me an email (dsjscheid@gmail.com).** We're planning a meeting in mid- to late July

Quick Links

[Our Website](#)
[Programs & Services](#)
[Resources](#)

OutCenter on Facebook:



Lake Effect Pride
Save the date! Lake Effect Pride is the OutCenter's signature Pride Event. This year we will be celebrating the OutCenter's 10 year anniversary so be sure to join us and your community! It will take place on **Friday, July 26** at Harbor Shores. Stay tuned for details!

BULLYING HARASSMENT.
 What kind of climate is being cultivated in your child's school?
 Here are the facts about what students experience in schools:
 • In 2009, nearly 1 in 3 students between the ages of 12-18 reported being bullied in school.
 • Youth are being bullied for being different— appearance, religion, sexual orientation, class, and race are all factors that make kids "fun targets" for being harassed.
 • Students who report being harassed in school have lower GPA, higher rates of absenteeism, and are more likely to withdraw from school than those who aren't harassed.
 You can change these statistics and cultivate respect in schools:
 • Learn about what is really happening to students in your school.
 • Understand how to talk to your children about bullying and know how to identify where there may be problems.
 • Find out how to determine what your children's school policies on bullying are and what you need to do to ensure that they protect all students.
 Sponsored by: **PRIDE**
 Presented by: **PFLAG**
 Join us for a workshop on how to learn to cultivate respect in schools where you live
Thursday, June 27, 2013
5:30pm - 7:00pm
 Provesence Campus / RID A130 & A131
 Whirlpool Corporation
 100 W. Main Street, Benton Harbor, Michigan
 Reservations will be provided.
 June 2013

Anti-bullying workshop
 Join in a workshop to cultivate respect in schools

where you live.
 Thursday, June 27
 5:30-7 p.m.
 600 W Main Street
 Benton Harbor

info@outcenter.org
269.925.8330

Foundation Support



West Shore Aware



to hear from clergy what their needs are and will have a one-day conference in mid October or early November based on what we hear.

**In faith, hope, and love,
 Fr. Dan Scheid**

Whirlpool Pride 2013
 A great opportunity to celebrate Pride and visit Chicago. Whirlpool Pride 2013 will be held **Saturday, June 29** from 1-5 p.m. (CDT) at 325 N. Salle St. in Chicago. For only \$40, enjoy food, have fun in the city, meet new people and celebrate in the company of friends. To buy tickets, click on flyer at right. **All proceeds benefit the OutCenter.**

2ND ANNUAL PRIDE CELEBRATION
SATURDAY, JUNE 29, 2013
 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
 WORLD OF WHIRLPOOL
 325 N. LASSALLE ST., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60654
FOOD NETWORK HOSTS & CHEFS THE HEARTY BOYS
 PLUS HONEY LABRONIX: THE VEGAN DRAG QUEEN
 TO WHOOSE: A BENT AUCTION & MORE
 FOR TICKETS: whirlpoolpride2013.eventbrite.com
 CONTACT INFO: whirlpool_pride@whirlpool.com
 SPONSORED BY: PRIDE
 PROCEEDS BENEFIT: OUTCENTER



May potluck

A great group of community members showed up for the OutCenter's community potluck on May 19. In fact, the board room was full and people had to sit out in the hall. Along with breaking bread and sharing a meal together, folks listened to updates about the OutCenter provided by Mary Jo Schnell and Brian Savage, as well as shared their insights and ideas. Some of the gems: communicate more often, provide opportunities for volunteers to get involved, re-do the website, and provide more opportunities like this potluck.

The next potluck will be a pancake breakfast **Saturday, September 7**, at 10 a.m. either at the OutCenter or, weather permitting, in the park area in the Arts District. John Willming will be leading the effort on this AND providing the pancakes! Put it in your calendar now!

Homosexuality and Christianity

By **MacKenzie Carlock** and **Claire Postelli**

On May 30, Gay Christian Therapy sponsored a presentation by Dr. Matthew Clark, Dr. Stephanie Sandberg, Daniel Dobson, Rev. Jim Lucas, and Ruth Bell Olsson. The presentation all focused on one main idea: the verses in the Bible "condemning" homosexuality really have nothing to do with homosexuality at all.

"The idea of homosexuality is pretty new," said Dobson, a Cornerstone University alumni and writer. "The word itself is very new to the English language. It was brought about in the last hundred years and didn't appear in any translation of the Bible until about 1946."

Almost everyone has heard that the Bible is up for interpretation and people can pick and chose what dogmas to follow. However, the idea that some of these sins have simply been mistranslated and aren't sins at all isn't as heard of.

"While many Christians will argue that homosexuality itself is a sin, the simple fact is that the Bible doesn't speak to that at all," Dobson said.

Clark, a psychologist in Grand Rapids, said he hopes that, "...someday it'll be seen as common knowledge that none of these verses have anything to do with being gay, they've been completely mistranslated and taken out of their cultural context."

For LGBTQ members the message given on May 30 offers support, protection and hope. If someone is struggling with their sexuality and faith, Clark recommends reaching out to gay/Christian organizations such as The Gay Christian Network, Gays in Faith Together, The Gay Christian Yes Campaign, his own site gaychristiantherapy.com, and *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak.

"Anyone that argues that they have the answers, usually don't. The people with the most questions are usually the most right," Dobson said.

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