



Newsletter

August 2006

Dignity/Seattle Liturgy

Reminder

Liturgy is at 6:00 p.m. every 2nd Sunday: August 13, Sept. 10
Ravenna United Methodist Church 5751-33rd Ave NE Seattle

Divided Washington State Supreme Court upholds DOMA

In a bitterly divided 5-4 decision on July 26, 2006, the Washington State Supreme Court upheld the "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA) that was enacted by the State Legislature in 1998. The Court heard the case in March 2005 after King and Thurston County Courts found DOMA unconstitutional. At that time, Dignity/Seattle and DignityUSA issued a joint Press Release encouraging the justices to extend fair & equal treatment to all citizens and mailed copies to each justice individually.

The splintered, non-unequivocal decision makes challenges in the future likely, though none is expected in the near term. The relatively quick judicial avenue has been temporarily blocked; the next step for Marriage Equality activists is the more laborious and time-consuming legislative process. Representative Ed Murray (D), who successfully shepherded the GLBT Civil Rights Bill in January 2006, promised to introduce a Marriage Equality Bill in January 2007. Governor Christine Gregoire (D) has indicated her openness to sign such a bill, were it to reach her desk after legislative approval. The battle continues, and Dignity/Seattle and DignityUSA will be in the forefront to counter Catholic Church arguments to deny GLBT citizens civil marriage rights. *Inside: Press Release, Letters to the Editor, List of Marriage Equality Organizations.*

Dignity/Seattle Events

Dignity/Seattle Board Meeting
Wednesday, August 9th, 7:00 p.m.

Delia's. (206/282-7146)

All are welcome to attend and participate!

Annual Membership Meeting & Elections
Sunday, September 11th, 3:30 p.m.

Ravenna UMC, 5751-33rd Ave NE

Dignity/Seattle's annual Board of Directors' reports, Board elections and potluck dinner, followed by liturgy. Your participation is welcomed and encouraged.

Breakfast Proceeds Donation

The success of Dignity/Seattle's 18th Annual Pride Week Breakfast, held on June 24th, means Dignity will donate \$800 apiece to Multifaith Works (AIDS & terminal illness social services) and Verbena (women's health services), with the remaining net proceeds of \$211 added to Dignity's treasury. Thanks to everyone who helped make this breakfast & raffle the largest one in recent years!

Dignity/Vancouver BC/Dignite

Dignity/Vancouver BC

604/432-1230

Saturday-Monday, August 5-7. Vancouver Gay Pride Sunday, August 6th 12:00 noon. Pride Parade. Assemble along Denman & Alberni Streets, West End, Vancouver.

Wednesday, August 9th 7:30 p.m. Business Meeting at Al O'N's. 604/817-7005.

Friday, August 18th 7:30 p.m. Worship-Liturgy at Lee L's. 604/408-3442.

Saturday, August 26th 7:30 p.m. Potluck supper at Rob K's. 604/438-7471.

Sunday, September 3rd 5:00 p.m. Preparing & serving dinner for Friends for Life at Diamond Centre, 1459 Barclay St., West End, Vancouver.

1975 - 2006: Happy Birthday Dignity/Vancouver! D/V held its first meeting in September 1975 and chartered as a Dignity (USA) chapter in April 1976. Dignity/Vancouver and Dignity/Seattle were sister chapters in the former Pacific Region of Dignity for well over a decade.

Official Business

Dignity/Seattle Board Members
 Jim Rankin President
 Steve Kearney Vice-Pres., Social Chair
 Denise Arceneaux Secretary, Liturgy Chair
 Delia Vita Treasurer
 Paula Lavallee At-large, Membership Chair

DignityUSA Board Members from Seattle
 Paula Lavallee Secretary
 Leo Egashira At-large, Communications

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E-mail mjrankin2000@att.net

Newsletter Editor: Leo N. Egashira
 206/723-4759 Legashira@yahoo.com

We provide a safe environment for people to reconcile our God-given gifts of sexual orientation and our Catholic faith through gay-affirming liturgies. Being part of the Dignity/Seattle family means claiming ownership of our faith and living up to the responsibilities of that ownership.

Board Minutes Summary, July 12, 2006

(Edited: For complete minutes, see Secretary)
 Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at Delia Vita's home. Dignity prayer was said. All board members were present, except for Steve Kearney.

Minutes were read.

M/M/S/C: To approve the minutes as submitted.

President's report (Jim Rankin)

- Sent "Thank You" letters to people who donated items.
- Said he had not yet received a letter from Paula, DUSA Secretary, verifying addresses and inquiring as to how the chapters are doing.

Treasurer's report: (Delia Vita)

Checking Acct.	
Beginning Balance	\$1,816.97
Collections/Donations June-July	275.00
Donation: M. Bert	535.00
Breakfast & Raffle	
Prepaid donations	255.00

Saturday donations	1,680.00
Food donations	160.00
Total Deposits	\$2,905.00
Sub-total	\$4,721.97

Expenses

Admin: Telephone July	37.00
Advertising: SGN June-July	300.00
Liturgy: Presider's Stipend June-July	90.00
Rent: RUMC June Pride-July	150.00
Printing & postage	38.45
Seattle GLBT Community Center	150.00
Subtotal	\$765.45
Breakfast expenses: Food	\$133.00
Total Expenses	\$898.45
Ending Balance	\$3,823.52

Savings Acct.

Beginning Balance	\$2,085.76
Interest income	0.75
Ending Balance	\$2,086.51

M/M/S/C: To accept financial report as submitted.

Committee Chairs' reports

Liturgy Committee: (Denise Arceneaux)

Denise is planning to ask Pastor Crystal to preside in August. If she cannot preside then, she will ask Rev. Philip to preside.

Old Business:

- Pride Breakfast: The Board agreed to donate \$800 to both Verbena and Multifaith leaving Dignity Seattle with approximately \$211 from the proceeds of the Breakfast.
- House Party: The Board has yet to decide on when and where fundraising House Party for DignityUSA will take place. Some tentative dates are August 26th, September 16th, and September 30th. The Board decided to use the proceeds from the Breakfast for the House Party. The host will simply provide the venue. The Board will do the rest of the work.

New Business:

Annual Membership Meeting with Board Elections will be held on September 10th before Mass/Service. Notices and absentee ballots to be sent out by August 15th. Jim R. will contact election chair.

Next meeting: Wednesday, August 9th at Delia Vita's house at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.
 Respectfully submitted by:
 Denise Arceneaux, Secretary

The following article was submitted to the Seattle Gay News

July 28, 2006

To: Seattle Gay News

Cc: Religious Coalition for Equality

Religious Coalition for Equality (RCE) Deserves Strong GLBT Community Support in Marriage Equality Struggle

Last Wednesday, July 26th, I attended the "Day of Decision" rally at Seattle First Baptist Church, as did hundreds of others in the standing-room only crowd. The anger and utter disappointment of the day were gradually transformed into a community-wide resolve to continue working for marriage equality no matter how long it takes.

Following the 75-minute rally and 10-minute break, an Interfaith Service sponsored by the Religious Coalition for Equality (RCE) commenced at 7:00 p.m. It was a beautiful, thought-provoking service that put into perspective the day's difficult events in the context of hope over a much longer time frame. Unfortunately, over 80% of the rally attendees chose not to attend the service and left the church during the break. (Granted, it was hot and stifling in the church, but . . .)

To some degree, avoidance of religious services is understandable. Given the prominent role some organized religions play in the oppression of GLBT people, religion is often viewed in our community as irrelevant at best and evil at worst.

However, in the struggle for the hearts and minds of John & Jane Q. Public, which is absolutely essential for legislative passage of marriage equality, it is often religious beliefs and the Bible where the common language of dialogue exists. Who else can better provide convincing Biblical and pastoral grounds for GLBT civil rights and marriage equality than the clergy members of RCE?

Likewise, in the battle against homophobic fundamentalists, fire must be fought with fire to be effective, or, more literally, Bible quotes must be countered by opposing Bible quotes. Who else is better equipped to wage the good fight tit-for-tat against "pastors" (sic) Ken Hutcherson and Joe Fuiten than the ordained Protestant ministers of RCE?

I don't want to minimize the role of non-Protestant religious leaders, and indeed, the coalition includes representatives from a plethora of faith traditions. The largest religious group in the state, Roman Catholics, is woefully underrepresented in the RCE, but that's because of the tight control exercised by the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic clerical involvement has to be behind the scenes. While the Catholic hierarchy is a strong opponent of GLBT rights, fortunately, polls have shown that the Catholic laity in Washington is much more liberal than the population at large.

I posit that a legislative or electoral victory for marriage equality will be impossible without the large network of socially progressive Protestant ministers of the RCE, strongly supported by the GLBT community and working on that community's behalf. It is incumbent upon all GLBT people, whether agnostic, atheist, pagan or even anti-religious, to support the RCE with your funds, presence, and yes, hymn-singing, hand-clapping and prayers.

Our side's greatest asset in the struggle for marriage equality may be the very same Scriptures that are used hypocritically against us.

For more information about the Religious Coalition for Equality, visit:

<http://www.religiouscoalition-wa.org/>

Yours,
Leo N. Egashira
National Board Member
DignityUSA (GLBT Roman Catholics)

If you have written letters to the media and would like to have them published in the September 2006 Newsletter, please e-mail a "Word" copy to the editor: Legashira@yahoo.com .
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Sam Sinnett – *President*
Margaret M. Burns – *Vice President*
Paula Lavallee – *Secretary*
Christopher Lawrence – *Treasurer*

For immediate release

July 28, 2006

*Dignity/Seattle Contact:
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Debbie Weill
Executive Director
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Washington State Gay Catholics to continue working for Marriage Equality despite disappointing State Supreme Court ruling

DignityUSA, the foremost organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) Catholics along with our families, friends, straight allies, and other supportive people of faith, and Dignity/Seattle, the local chapter, expressed profound disappointment over the Washington State Supreme Court decision on July 26, 2006, upholding the 1998 state “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA). The decision overruled previous rulings by King County and Thurston County Courts in 2004 that found DOMA unconstitutional.

“After this bitter disappointment, we have to channel our anger into constructive, forward-looking action,” commented Leo Egashira, spokesperson for Dignity/Seattle. The close 5-4 decision and the extreme range of positions represented by the six written opinions strongly suggest that the matter will be open to judicial scrutiny again in the future. In the near term, however, Marriage Equality advocates will refocus the struggle from the judiciary to the legislative arena, which will require a much more concerted effort to line up supporters against considerable Republican opposition. State Representative Ed Murray (D-Seattle), who successfully shepherded the GLBT Civil Rights Bill in January 2006, promised to introduce a Marriage Equality Bill in January 2007. Governor Christine Gregoire (D) has indicated her openness to sign such a bill, were it to reach her desk after legislative approval.

Egashira said that, in this next legislative stage of the struggle, “Dignity/Seattle will work proactively with organizations such as the Religious Coalition for Equality—a network of

over 200 Washington State religious leaders—to protect newly won GLBT civil rights and to advocate for marriage equality rights. As the **only** Catholic voice in the state with the conviction and courage to challenge the church hierarchy publicly, Dignity/Seattle has an important role to play in the on-going effort to make marriage equality a reality in Washington.”

Just one week prior to the court’s decision, the Archbishop of Seattle filed an amicus (friend of the court) brief supporting DOMA. Countering some of the Archbishop’s points, which will undoubtedly be raised again, Egashira asserted: “The best way for a progressive, caring society to avoid the ‘inevitable collision with religion’ is to separate the two completely: Allow consenting adults to enter into civil marriage, while at the same time, continue to allow churches to sanction only those marriages which meet their particular religious criteria. How can such an arrangement be construed as an infringement of ‘the free practice of religion in Washington State?’” Egashira asked.

Egashira continued, “The Archbishop’s assertion that ‘the state has the responsibility for the common good’ is the perfect reason for legalizing marriage equality. Inviting and welcoming the increasing numbers of committed same-sex couples and families into the institution of marriage is the best exemplar of ensuring the common good. I’m mystified why the hierarchy fears that a more inclusive definition of marriage weakens the institution. Increasing the number of heretofore excluded couples, children, and families as stakeholders can only strengthen the role and importance of marriage in society.”

Debbie Weill, Executive Director of the national organization DignityUSA, also expressed disappointment in the ruling. She stated: “We have been working for many years in DignityUSA and our local Dignity chapters for the right to civil marriage. We believe that as Americans who fulfill our obligations in every way as citizens, we are entitled to the fundamental human right to marry a partner of our choosing. This mistaken court decision in Washington State will delay the cause of full equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people across the nation.”

Weill continued: “As Catholics, we also believe that our love has a divine source, that it is sacramental in nature, and that it should be celebrated as such by our Church. Along with many others, we are working to spread the news that there are millions of GLBT people of faith who believe that their sexuality and their relationships are a gift from God. But we also believe in the separation of church and state, and that religious views must not be used to deny gay people their fundamental civil rights as American citizens.”

DignityUSA is the nation's foremost organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics, their families, friends and supporters. Founded in 1969, it is an independent nonprofit organization with members and chapters across the country. DignityUSA works for full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the life of the Church and Society. www.dignityusa.org

Dignity/Seattle has served GLBT Catholics and their supporters in Seattle and Western Washington since 1973. It sponsors a liturgy on the second Sunday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at Ravenna United Methodist Church, 5751-33rd Ave NE in Seattle. www.dignityseattle.org

*Letter to the Editor, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Sunday, July 30, 2006
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Adhere to separation of church and state

Regarding the comments made by Roman Catholic Seattle Archbishop Alex Brunett on the state Supreme Court decision on the gay marriage ban, the archbishop got his wish. The Supreme Court sustained the gay marriage ban. Nonetheless, his argument on behalf of his church is seriously flawed. Brunett argued that overturning the ban would set up an "inevitable collision with religion." The Roman Catholic Church is not the only "church" in this country. On the contrary, the state's denial of the right of marriage to gays and lesbians is a violation of my First Amendment right to exercise my religion. My church, the United Church of Christ, a mainline Protestant denomination, not only allows but affirms marriage between loving, committed adults regardless of gender.

Brunett also argued that the church could lose its civil authority to perform marriages. The clergy's involvement in functioning as an agent of the state, performing civil marriages, is a relatively recent development. It began with the Protestants in the Reformation. In most European countries today, clergy do not perform civil marriages. It is in the U.S., with our tradition of separation of church and state, that clergy perform civil marriages.

A civil marriage is a legal contract between two adults. A religious marriage is a covenant and a blessing performed within one's chosen faith tradition. Those are two very different actions and we should have the right to choose either, both, or none in terms of how we live in relationship with another person.

The U.S. should return to a separation of church and state on the issue of marriage.

Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune
United Church of Christ
FaithTrust Institute, Seattle

Get Involved!

Here is a partial list of

Marriage Equality Advocacy Organizations

Equal Rights Washington
<http://www.equalrightswashington.org/>

ACLU of Washington
<http://www.aclu-wa.org/>

Religious Coalition for Equality
<http://www.religiouscoalition-wa.org/>

Northwest Women's Law Center
<http://www.nwwlc.org/>

Don't Amend.Com
<http://www.dontamend.com/>

Lambda Legal
<http://www.lambdalegal.org/>

Legal Marriage Alliance of WA
<http://www.lmaw.org/>

Human Rights Campaign
<http://www.hrc.org/>

Marriage Equality Now
<http://www.marriageequalitynow.org/>

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
<http://www.thetaskforce.org/>

Freedom to Marry
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/>

PFLAG
<http://www.pflag.org/>

Marriage Equality USA
http://www.marriageequality.org

Pride Foundation
<http://www.pridefoundation.org/>