



A Brief Message From Your Editor...

At the April meeting of the DignityUSA Board of Directors, the decision was made to send at least this issue of QV and the next to our membership electronically. We are aware, of course, that there are members who cannot receive our quarterly publication this way, and we will take steps to get hard copies to those persons.

In addition to the obvious cost savings to electronic communication, advantages to this development include not needing to deal with the inconsistencies of bulk mailing. Some members have been known to receive QV a few days after it was mailed, while others have waited a few weeks. In light of the time sensitive nature of some of the information we share in these pages, it is important that DignityUSA be an efficiently delivered voice.

This issue contains an excellent piece about Austin, Texas, the host city for our 2007 national convention. We hope you are making plans to be part of that biennial "family reunion." The convention committee has been working hard to make the event a memorable one.

Also we should acknowledge that we are blessed with five outstanding candidates for positions on the national Board of Directors. I will be going off the board on October 1, and I can attest that it is a big responsibility and an honor to serve DignityUSA in this way. Please support your leaders in prayer, especially the newly-elected board members.

Fr. Dick Young

The word from...

DignityUSA President, Sam Sinnett

The Spirit is Strong in Us

The Spirit be with you and with our Church! (It almost sounds like Star Wars' "The Force is strong in you"!)

The month of June began with the great feast of Pentecost in which the living Spirit of God descends on the Apostles and all of us to be God's presence here on earth until the end of time. The enormous importance of this divine presence and the living fire of the Spirit is probably the most feared idea among the top hierarchy of our Church. God is actually living and acting in the Church today through each of us.

We LGBT Catholics continue to witness that our lived experience of love in our lives is indeed the Spirit acting in the world and in our Church today. How this living, fire-breathing Spirit frightens our Pope and other Bishops who want to control access to a tiny "god" they almost act as if they own.

June continued and culminated with our Pride festivities as we celebrate the great gift of our sexual or gender orientation. DignityUSA has been the source and voice for much pride over many decades now and must continue to be so. Our membership numbers are up, but we need to improve our financial donations to reinstate the cut expenses like this QV going out only electronically when we need it to be a hard copy for each member. We must not falter, when the need is so great for the DignityUSA Voice. Do not let

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the cold darkness from the hierarchy put out the fire of the Spirit and of our LGBT Pride expressed through DignityUSA! Now is indeed the time to persevere.

Early June also marked the 25th anniversary of the recognition of AIDS. Perseverance is surely the name of the game against this still deadly virus. But some folks tell us this was also the time of a great spiritual awakening in the gay and lesbian community and of a clearer, broader recognition of ourselves as family and as community and as a political force to be reckoned with.

This year in early June our nation also heard our President call for a constitutional amendment to stop gay and lesbian couples from having the same equal rights to marriage as our heterosexual sisters and brothers. Sad news, indeed, but justice shall prevail.

Now is certainly a time to persevere, because July brings Independence Day. Hang in there with DignityUSA. Give us your prayers and volunteer time and financial support like never before. Our pride will overcome, and independence will be ours. The Spirit is strong in each of us and in all of us together!!

Prominent Theologian Makes Biblical Case For Equal Rights For People who are LGBT

In a powerful new book, evangelical theologian and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Jack Rogers, makes a biblical case for equal rights in the church and in society for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* describes Rogers' own change of mind and heart on the issue; charts the church's well-documented history of using biblical passages to oppress marginalized groups; argues for a Christ-centered reading of Scripture; debunks often-repeated stereotypes about gays and lesbians; and concludes with ideas for how the church can heal itself and move forward again. A fascinating combination of personal narrative, theology, and church history, this book will be a wonderful

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resource for all people working to transform their congregations and cultural attitudes towards gay and lesbian people.

“The best methods of Biblical interpretation call upon us to interpret the Scripture through the lens of Jesus Christ's life and ministry. Using this method we see clearly that Jesus and the Bible, properly understood, do not condemn people who are homosexual.” Rogers writes in a stirring conclusion.

Published in March of this year, the book is generating rave reviews:

“This is an extraordinary book, arguably the best to appear in the long, drawn-out debates within the churches over homosexuality. Rogers frames the



issues on deep biblical and theological grounds, challenging superficial readings of scripture. While addressing the issues from the standpoint of Presbyterian traditions and polity, the book is wonderfully relevant to other denominations as well. It is a gift to all of us," says J. Philip Wogaman, former senior minister at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.

"Rogers adds immensely to those who argue for the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the church and in the clergy," says the Right Reverend V. Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire, Episcopal Church. "For those who truly wish to know what the Bible does and does not say, this is a real find."

"This book is simply wonderful--an intelligent, well-researched, amazingly helpful contribution by a person of faith to one of the most difficult debates of our time. Jack Rogers just might change both the tenor and the content of the argument over homosexuality in the Christian church," writes Joanna M. Adams, Pastor, Morningside Presbyterian Church, Atlanta.

Here's a link to the book on Amazon.com:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0664229395/sr=8-1/qid=1143222550/ref=pd_bbs_1/102-5460959-9349736?%5Fencoding=UTF8

It can also be purchased from local bookstores or by calling Westminster John Knox Press at 1-800-227-2872.

Jack Rogers is Professor of Theology Emeritus at San Francisco Theological Seminary and was Moderator of the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) He is the author of *Reading the Bible and the Confessions; Claiming the Center: Churches and Conflicting Worldviews; and Confessions of a Conservative Evangelical*. His website is: www.drjackrogers.com.

Dignity's 2007 Convention in the Texas Hill Country Reasons to Come Early and Stay Late

Dignity is headed to Texas for the 2007 convention...and specifically, Austin. There is more to do when you come for our 2007 gathering than attend the convention. Come early...and stay late.

Austin is not your flat Texas oil town. It's the door to the lovely Texas hill country, a region of tree-covered limestone hills and clear water lakes and streams. Politically, Austin is a "blue" oasis in a "red" state, being the seat of a county that voted 60-40 to keep a ban on gay marriage out of the Texas constitution, and was the only county in Texas to do so. Culturally, Austin is a mix of laid-back Willie Nelson-hippie and high tech nerdy, with a smattering of button-down academia and bureaucracy to boot.

If you're laid-back, you'll feel at home lounging in one of the city's dozens of live-music haunts on Sixth Street, Austin's "French Quarter". (Live music is not just "Austin City Limits".) If you're enthused by the underground, they are caves in those hills around Austin, so go poking through the caverns in the area—Longhorn, Inner Space, and Natural Bridge, to name a few. If you'd rather stay above ground, some of the best inner tubing adventure happens on Texas' clear hill country rivers not far from Austin. If spirits entuse you, take the haunted Austin tour, including one of the most haunted four-star hotels in America.

Or stay in at the hotel and take it easy. Our convention hotel, the Hyatt Regency, is not haunted, but it is located right on the banks of the calm Colorado River. Just across the river from the hotel are the clean new skyscrapers of downtown Austin, so if you enjoy the G&L club scene, it's an easy walk or inexpensive taxi ride from the hotel. River tour companies dock right outside our hotel, and just outside the doors our hotel is a hike and bike trail that follows the river upstream and downstream for 14 miles. A pleasant walk along the tree-covered hike-and-bike trail brings you to Barton Springs, where you can swim in the clear cool spring water. If it's a hot summer day, the 68 degree water will cool you off quickly. If you're not up for a swim, but you still like water, there are canoes for rent. The nation's largest urban bat colony is very near the hotel and about a million of the critters fly out from the Congress Avenue Bridge every evening in the summer. They're small and cute, and if bats are not appealing to you,



you'll be happy to know that they want nothing more than to leave you alone.

The 4th of July in 2007 is the day before our convention's opening ceremonies. The Hyatt Regency Hotel is absolutely one of the best places in Austin for viewing the Texas capital city's fireworks. Thousands of people would love to be invited to your hotel room to see the spectacle on that night, as the fireworks are shot off just a few hundred feet from our hotel.

OK, let's say you don't like water or fireworks or hiking or music or bars or bats or ghosts or caves. You can take the free "Dillo" buses a mile up Congress Avenue to the state capitol grounds and the University of Texas. There are several theaters and museums in the area, including the distinguished Ransom Center and Blanton Museum of Art. Esther's Follies, a theater group, thrives on political parody. How about shopping? For one, there is the world headquarters of Whole Foods Corporation in the downtown area, and their huge signature store is worthy of a stroll. Also within a mile of our hotel—south on Congress Avenue—is the funkiest shopping area in Texas. Known as SoCo (for South Congress), the street shops are full of arts, antiques, costumes, books, and indoor/outdoor restaurants. It's all flavored with just a touch of Austin's weirdness. If you're a traditionalist and coming to Texas means you just have to buy boots, you can still find a wide selection of them there.

If your exhibitionism takes over, head a few miles west of Austin to Hippie Hollow, one of America's best-loved nude beaches, on Lake Travis. It is a legal county park, and there are some absolutely gorgeous bodies there, but there are others that make it clear that you don't have to be gorgeous yourself to strip down.

If the nerdier side of you wants to come out, you can go see how a Dell computer is assembled at Dell's headquarters in the Austin suburb of Round Rock. Or watch computer microprocessor chips being fabricated at AMD-Spansion.

Farther afield, how about heading down to San Antonio? It's 79 miles from downtown Austin on Interstate 35. If you have the time, avoid the

interstate and take the scenic roads through Wimberley and trek along the Devil's Backbone, skirting Canyon Lake and lots of blue swimming holes. For a bit of Hawaii in the Texas Hill Country, Hamilton Pool has a clear waterfall pummeling about fifty feet down into the clear pool below. Stop at the Salt Lick "restaurant" near Driftwood for some authentic Texas Bar-B-Q in a rustic rural setting. Or join the tubing crowd to eat at Gruene, in a historic wooden building overlooking the white-water Guadalupe River below. Once you get to San Antonio, stroll and shop along the River Walk, and perhaps step into the Alamo.

On the way back to Austin, you might want to check out the nation's top-rated water park, Schlitterbahn, in the old German community of New Braunfels. The park is built in a natural setting to take advantage of the Comal River. If you're a history buff, detour a bit to tour the LBJ Ranch near Stonewall.

OK. July weather. It's probably gonna be hot in Austin in July, but being located more than 150 miles inland and having a bit of elevation, the city's summer weather is certainly more comfortable than coastal cities on the Gulf of Mexico. Before you come, though, say a prayer that a July cool front -- which Austin occasionally gets -- settles in for a few days during the convention. One the positive, though, air conditioning is plentiful, and unless there are some temperature records broken, we can guarantee that the weather won't be as high as it was for our convention in Las Vegas.

Austin is certainly not the largest city in Texas. In fact, it is fourth behind Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio. Still, it's one of the state's more attractive cities and is quite gay-friendly. The metro area has 1.3 million residents, and a recent Census-based article notes that, among cities of more than 500,000 residents, San Francisco and Washington, D. C. are the only two U.S. cities with a higher percentage of gay couples.

We hope you come to Dignity's 2007 family get-together. Consider coming early and staying late—to the city of the annual Pandemonious Potted Pork Festival (Spam-a-rama), the O'Henry



Pun Off Contest, and Eeyore's Birthday Party. Top it off by seeing the site where George W. Bush, then governor, nearly got covered by the contents of an overturning garbage truck. If you come early or stay late, let your odd side show, because oddness is still a virtue in the quirky state capital of Texas.

Amplifying the Voice – new options for your support!

When you make a donation on the secure DignityUSA website or by mail, you can now do so using American Express, Diner's Club, Visa, MasterCard, or Discover, in addition to personal checks.

Consider becoming a DignityUSA Angel at one of the annual donor levels, or become a DignityUSA Guardian Angel by making a monthly gift to DignityUSA. Angels are vital to our ability to amplify our message and crucial for our continued stability and growth. Go to http://www.dignityusa.org/mem_reg/index.html.

House Parties Anyone in DignityUSA can have a house party to raise money and awareness for DignityUSA. The party can be small and intimate or large and loud. All you need to do is raise some money, help people to learn what DignityUSA is doing, and HAVE FUN doing it.

House events have come in the form of cocktail parties, buffet dinners, sit-down dinners, or pot lucks and have used anniversaries as themes, invited guest speakers, or found just about any excuse to gather family and friends to ask them to support our important mission. The possibilities are endless. If you are interested in hosting a house party contact the national office at info@dignityusa.org.

In future issues of QV, we'd like to highlight some of our fundraising ideas and successes. If you have an idea to share or have held a successful fundraising event, send your story to the national office and request that it be forwarded to the QV editor.

The fundraising committee is always looking for

new ideas. If you are interested in joining the committee, contact fundraising chair, Marty Grochala, at mjgrochala@yahoo.com.

Mundane Mysteries of DignityUSA Board Meetings Unveiled!

By Leo N. Egashira

Several weeks ago, a Dignity member e-mailed me and commented that Board Meeting "minutes read like an Altar and Rosary Society luncheon!" He didn't get it quite right, but I must admit that the levels of excitement at either meeting would be similar. Our DignityUSA Board Meetings primarily address budgetary, administrative, and operational issues that are essential to the smooth running of the organization.

Much of the advocacy and public profile work of Dignity (which seems to have been the reader's concern) occurs within the various committees and at the National Office, where networking and joint work with allied organizations (NGLTF, HRC, etc.) take place.

I will primarily address the communications aspect of Dignity's work, since I chair that committee. If you look at the DignityUSA website's News Index, <http://www.dignityusa.org/news/index.html>, you will notice that DignityUSA has issued FIFTEEN press releases over the past three years on Same-Sex Marriage. In 2005 alone, DignityUSA issued over TWO DOZEN press releases covering a gamut of political, social, and religious issues of concern to the GLBT community. All of this work is done outside of Board Meetings and would not appear in Board Minutes. The same could be said for any of the over one dozen committees and task forces that work autonomously within the organizational framework.

Did you know that DignityUSA participated in the "Creating Change" conference of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force in Oakland, California last November? Or that DignityUSA always takes a high visibility role at the annual Call to Action conferences in Milwaukee/Chicago? Or that DignityUSA regularly partners with the HRC,



NGLTF, Soulforce, and other national organizations in Washington D.C. to effect change in both church and society?

For an organization of our size, we get quite a bit of press coverage. Both Sam Sinnett, President, and Debbie Weill, Executive Director, have been sought for comment by national media. In individual chapters, Dignity activists have taken the lead and appeared on local television stations. Currently, the Communications Committee, Advocacy Committee, and the National Office are working on and coordinating DignityUSA's response to the constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. The bishops have entered the fray, and DignityUSA will counter and fight back.

What we do at the Board Meetings is facilitate these actions by framing them within budgetary, administrative, and operational protocols. We make sure that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, and that there are enough resources to implement policies. Mundane, perhaps. Essential, absolutely.

The importance of this work is underscored by the frequency of meetings and the not inconsiderable expenses willingly borne by every dedicated Board Member. We meet three times annually, usually in Washington, D.C., where our National Office is located. These weekend meetings last for 2-3 hours Friday evening, 10 hours Saturday, and 3-4 hours Sunday morning. For Board Members from the West Coast like me, the total weekend can cost anywhere from \$600 to \$900 (airfare + hotel + food + surface transportation + incidentals), all of which are considered "in-kind" donations to DignityUSA. That's on top of the two full days necessary for travel to/from the West Coast to D.C. Board Members from the East Coast and Midwest have it a bit easier financially and time-wise, but the sacrifice is still considerable.

That's not all. While the Board has traditionally conducted one meeting per year via teleconference, this year, we agreed to have MONTHLY "check-in" teleconferences as a means of encouraging Board Members to keep up with the tasks they have volunteered to undertake. These tasks obviously include the assigned committee work, but they also include mandatory fundraising work and actively increasing the donor and active participation base.

As the preceding paragraphs make clear, the vast majority of the Board's work occurs outside the confines of Board Meetings. When all that energy comes together at our meetings, the synergy and cross-fertilization of ideas can be incredible. So, yes, there are flashes of wisdom, inspiration, camaraderie, and even humor at these heavily task-oriented meetings.

Non-profit advocacy organizations such as DignityUSA are seeing a greater and greater need to rely upon an active membership to carry out their missions in an environment of scarce resources. Tapping the membership for talent and treasure is one area where DignityUSA can do better. If you have ideas to make DignityUSA a stronger, "leaner and meaner" advocate for GLBT Catholics, you will be welcomed with open arms to advocate your ideas by joining or heading a committee or task force.

The Lesbian and Gay Religious Studies Center

"Religion has been hijacked to justify homophobia. It's time to take it back."

The Chicago Theological Seminary is proud to announce the January, 2006 launch of the Lesbian and Gay Religious Studies Center at CTS, funded, in part, by the Gill Foundation. The LGRSC's mission is to generate intellectual capital in religion, which not only provides analysis needed to counter distorted religion, but also offers sound religious arguments for equal rights for LGBT people from religious perspectives.

The LGRSC will have one dedicated research "Fellow" each semester, one or more student research assistants, and a "Center Director". These will, through on-going dialogue with LGBT activists and leaders, research seminars, publications, and conferences and increase collaboration of LGBT religious studies with concrete social change. The LGRSC also has an advisory board of activists and religious and societal leaders.

Religion in the United States, particularly



Christianity, has been hijacked for crass political ends. Through manipulated, and often distorted, readings of sacred texts, a reactionary political agenda has overwhelmed religious voices for equality; and, in many areas, has warped religious energy into supporting inequality and prejudice.

At the same time, the movement to secure rights of LGBT people at all levels of American society is building momentum. Like any movement for social and political revolution, this effort is rooted in the deep spirituality of people who say “enough” to efforts that degrade their full humanity, and deny them equal rights. And, like any social movement for change, the movement for LGBT rights needs the strong partnership of religious communities who should be in the forefront of any human rights campaign.

A “think tank” at a premier educational institution is essential to movement building because it will provide research, publications and young leadership that will, step-by-step and inexorably, re-define the religious center in the United States. We are proud to announce that Dr. Scott Haldeman-- B.A., Oberlin College; M.Div., Ph. D., Union Theological Seminary; and Assistant Professor of Worship at Chicago Theological Seminary-- will be the Spring 2006 semester

Research Fellow. Specializing in US Protestant worship, he is also interested in the less formal ways humans use rituals in relation to areas of identity. Two recent publications include: “*Receptivity and Revelation: a Spirituality of Gay Male Sex*” in Marvin Ellison and Sylvia Thorson-Smith-- editors, *Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003), 218-231; and “*The Welcome Table: Worship That Does Justice and Makes Peace*” in *Liturgy 17:1* (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, Summer 2001), 4-13.

Dr. Haldeman will dedicate his research fellowship to examining questions arising from the 25th General Synod of the United Church of Christ’s resolution “In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All”. He also posed the research question “Are we sure about this? Three questions to ask about marriage”. Research products will include preparing material that responds to (quoting his research proposal) the challenge to bring “the realities of queer lives into dialogue with

the tradition” and recognize “the real opportunity presented to the church as same-gender weddings are sanctioned and celebrated widely. Perhaps we can together imagine a way to marry that ‘wed well,’ lasts, that will foster life and hope and joy. What a gift to all people that would be.”

New Spiritual Resource From HRC

Harry Knox, who was a speaker at our most recent national convention, is the Director of the Human Rights Campaign's Religion and Faith Program, and he is inviting us to sign up to receive updates on a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender preaching and devotional resource called "Out In Scripture." All you have to do is go to the web site <http://www.hrc.org/scripture> and provide your e-mail address in the top left column.

Like some resources already available from DignityUSA, these additional offerings can be valuable to anyone, for example, who has felt called to preach sermons faithful to the Bible and the authentic lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people. Perhaps you are looking for an affirming, thoughtful resource to expand your understanding of Scripture and deepen your spiritual practice. If for these or other reasons you feel compelled to deepen your study of Scripture and reflect further on the ways the biblical text speaks to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, then you will want to sign up for "Out In Scripture."

"Out In Scripture" is a weekly preaching and devotional resource written from a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight-allied perspective. It is written and reviewed by some of the most well-respected scholars from around the country and across the variety of Christian denominations. "Out In Scripture" is guided by the Revised Common Lectionary, a listing of Bible passages for the church year that ministers use to determine which Scripture they will preach on in a given week. When appropriate "Out In Scripture" will also offer subscribers important links to other stories and resources.

Harry hopes that you will not only sign up for it but that you will encourage others to do so as well. Together we can change the conversation about religion and LGBT people.

