

Feb. 24, 2018

St. Francis House, Madison, Wis.

## Segment 1: PAST

### Initial need for DignityUSA and our initial “engine fuel?”

Importance of being True to Ourselves & any historic Dignity connection?

How has Dignity changed individual lives, community, movement?

Most chapters were relatively high church at first, providing a safe place to be gay, a spiritual home.

The hierarchy, many members of which initially supported Dignity, has changed, but Dignity continues. Most bishops, such as in Madison, Wis., have proved simply irrelevant nowadays.

In the early days the majority of people were ignorant of what it meant to be gay, even some newly out LTBGs ourselves. Chapters brought information to people who weren't finding it elsewhere.

Initially most chapters met in facilities owned by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but after the mid-1980s most dioceses forbade official meetings of Dignity, so now chapters meet elsewhere. Now there are caucuses for Defenders, Women, Trans-people, Youth, Friends. There are many avenues in the Dignity movement.

In the early years some I/D-Madison members wanted to identify a priest or chaplain to lead the community. Most, however, preferred inviting a broad array of clergy to preside, including Diocesan-credentialed as well as married, Old Catholic, and Women priests in both the Catholic tradition and other, Eucharistic, traditions. At least once a year we have sponsored a Priestly People mass, during which our Holy Spirit filled community consecrates the Eucharistic bread and wine.

In the early years I/D defined two important roles to lead worship: worship **convener** and worship **presider**. The convener is a member of I/D-Madison, who welcomes attendees, leads the prayers of the people, and helps with logistics. The invited presider offers blessings, reads the gospel, usually delivers the homily, and presides over sacraments, and offers us Wisdom from their tradition. We explicitly sought to bring in liturgical presiders from many faith traditions, as a ministry *to them*, allowing them to meet and interact with an open, GLBT community. In recent years LGBT people are a less mysterious group, so we invite our known, friendly presiders with a goal of broadening our own exposure.