

QUOTES WORTH PONDERING



"I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people. ... But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, to make room at the table of brotherhood and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people."
— Coretta Scott King, 2003.

"What I know, for sure, is that dad was beyond the average person in terms of what he chose to embrace and accept. One of the most significant persons — the most significant person in fact — who helped to organize the March on Washington was Mr. Bayard Rustin. And Mr. Bayard Rustin was openly gay. The point is, if dad had problems with gays I don't think he would have embraced someone in such a significant role. I think that as he worked to advocate for civil and human rights, he was talking for everyone, not just for people of color. That's where my mom was throughout her life." — Martin Luther King III, 2013.



E-MAILS AND LETTERS RECEIVED

"David, thanks for this issue. I am excited to learn, read of our denominations' ways of talking about the passage of 1327 and what plans they have moving forward. What resources and ways are they finding most helpful. Also, recently at my ordination, I broke rainbow bread as communion bread. You would have loved hearing the excitement when the congregation gathered saw the bread. It was powerful. I recommend sharing recipes for this and other celebrative ways to lift up and support our LGBT+ brothers and sisters. Hugs and thanks again."
- **Hope A.**

"Hey David . . . thanks for the issue. PSWR is so fortunate to have you. Glad to know you signed on to do this. Blessings! - **Ben B.**

"Thanks! Philip & the Ethiopian Eunuch . . . one of the ancient saints of the church . . . have a special connection for black Episcopalians. If one wants to find a predominantly black Episcopal congregation in a city, check the phone book for the churches with Philip . . . as their namesake. There's a socially prominent St. Philip's in Harlem. LA's oldest black Episcopal congregation . . ., St. Philip, is well over a century old. Without trivializing the fine article in Confluence, an Episcopal priest friend of mine and I engage in friendly banter when I query him, in jest, about why black parishes were, in the past, so often consigned to the consecrated custody of a biblical figure with "somnolent" genitalia or to the Apostolic personality who received his confession and baptized him. It's the big testosterone question, I guess!" - **Vance M.**

Thank you for your excellent work with the newsletter. - **Jeff D.**

Loved your work with Phillip and the eunuch in Acts. I love the Confluence Magazine. My congregation reads it every month with great interest. Copies go like hot cakes! Blessings to you! - **Bill T.**

Hi David, I just saw my first copy of "Confluence" and was impressed. It was the September 2013 issue. How would I go about getting a subscription to receive it on a regular basis? Also I wanted to let you know that I have just recently had my own book published called THE SEX TEXTS, SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BIBLE. It is now available at Amazon.com. Thank you for your work. - **Bob A**

"Confluence" is a publication of GLAD-PSWR, on behalf of the GLAD-PSWR Chapter. GLAD-PSWR is related to the Church in Society Committee of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Pacific Southwest Region. It is published three or four times a year by TechTouch LLC, Jeff Wiatt, CEO, and David Downing, Editor. The name "Confluence" refers to our hope and prayer that this newsletter will be a medium through which there will be a "coming together of people" from all across the Region who will discover how we can live together in unity within the diversity that is our current reality. Our hope is to educate ourselves to our diversity, sensitizing ourselves to the variety of viewpoints, and creating, together, a movement for wholeness in our fragmented world. Do you have a story you would like to share? An event to promote? An article you have written? Suggestions and items for inclusion may be sent to David Downing, 9103 Jones Court, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240-1136 or e-mail to davidd62438@gmail.com.

A Shared
Newsletter

a coming together of people

Confluence

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Maria "Cuca" Perez
Moderator
GLAD-PSWR Council

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Confluence Newsletter

"Ending gay couples' exclusion from marriage is not a simple matter of policy options; it is a burning question of civil rights and holding America to its promise."

- "Freedom to Marry" leader **Evan Wolfson**, in a message to President-elect Barack Obama, as quoted by the Washington Blade

HAS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BEEN AROUND BEFORE?

This is the ninth of several brief articles on biblical interpretation regarding the issue of Sexual Orientation in the life of the Church

For the past several years the church, as well as our entire society, has been struggling with the issue of homosexuality. Even more divisive has been the issue of same-sex marriage. These issues have divided congregations and denominations. The discussions have alienated people from one another and even caused families to become divided. To many people, both inside and outside of the church, the very idea of the acceptance of same-sex marriage is a foreign concept, too divisive for people to even consider!

However, a number of years ago a prominent Historian by the name of Dr. John Boswell, began uncovering some very interesting information. Professor Boswell earned his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in 1975 and became a full professor at Yale University in 1982.

After a twelve year search of Catholic and Orthodox Church archives, Professor Boswell discovered that a type of Christian gay marriage did exist as late as the 18th century. Contrary to myth, Christianity's concept of marriage has not been set in stone since the days of Christ, but has evolved as a concept and as a ritual. Dr. Boswell wrote about his findings in a book that he published in 1994 which was titled: "Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe" (New York: Villard, 1994) Dr. Boswell died in late December, 1994, a short time after his book was published.

According to Dr. Boswell's discoveries, there appears to have been a somewhat lengthy tradition of same sex-marriage within the Church. These discoveries would appear to indicate that the Christian attitude toward same-sex marriages may not always have been as heterosexual as it has been supposed. Boswell believed that the liturgy he discovered gives evidence that the attitude of the Christian church towards homosexuality has changed over time. The early Christians did, at least on occasion, accept same-sex unions/marriages. There are certainly those who disagree with the findings of Dr. Boswell, but his findings are fairly convincing!

Jim Duffy, an Irish political reporter and researcher from Dublin, Ireland, wrote an article regarding the findings of Dr. Boswell. It was published on August 11, 1998 in

[See **SAME-SEX**, page 2]



Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples
Pacific Southwest Region - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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CONFLUENCE EDITOR MARRIES

After having been together for over twelve years, David Downing and Eddie West were joined together in a small marriage ceremony on Saturday, October 19, 2013. The wedding was held in the backyard of their new home in Desert Hot Springs, with a few family members and several close friends in attendance. The wedding ceremony was led by Rev. Ben Bohren.

The recent actions of the United States Supreme Court made it possible for this to happen. David is quoted as saying: "I never thought that I would see this day in my lifetime! Things have progressed so rapidly that now marriages of same-sex couples who love each other can take place in 16 states, seven of which have made that decision within 2013, including Rhode Island, Delaware, Minnesota, California, New Jersey, Illinois and Hawaii."

[SAME-SEX, from page 1]

The Irish Times. In that article he indicates that "Boswell's academic study . . . is so well researched and sourced as to pose fundamental questions for both modern church leaders and heterosexual Christians concerning their attitude toward homosexuality. For the Church to ignore the evidence in its own archives would be a cowardly cop-out. The evidence shows convincingly that the modern church claim that the church has been constant in its unchanging attitude towards homosexuality is, in fact, nothing of the sort." (James Duffy, in an article titled "When Gay Marriage was a Rite" - www.GayChristian101.com/Gay-Marriage.html)

Just what were the findings of Dr. Boswell?

Well, he discovered that in addition to heterosexual marriage ceremonies in ancient church liturgical documents there were ceremonies called, among other titles, the "Office of Same Sex Union" (10th and 11th century Greek) or the "Order for Uniting Two Men" (11th and 12th century). The very idea initially seems shocking. But, it certainly sounds like gay marriage.

In an art museum in Kiev there is a curious icon from St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai. It shows two robed Christian saints. Between them is the traditional Roman "pronubus" (best man) overseeing what would normally be the wedding of a husband and wife. In the icon, Christ is the pronubus. Only one thing is unusual. The husband and wife are in fact two men.



Other sources tell us about the two men that are pictured in the icon. They are St. Serge and St. Bacchus, two Roman soldiers who became Christian martyrs.

The pairing of saints in the early church was not unusual. History tells

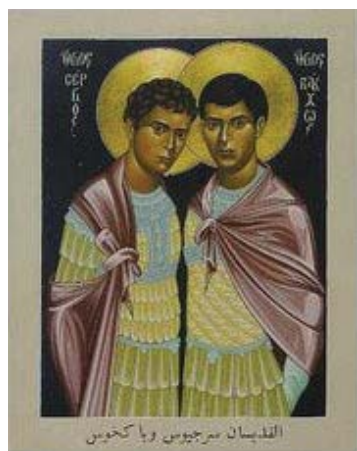
us that the friendship and association of these two men was regarded as particularly close. In the sixth century Severus of Antioch explained that "we should not separate in speech [Serge and Bacchus] who were joined in life." And in the 10th century Greek account of their lives, St. Serge is openly described as the "sweet companion and lover" of St. Bacchus.

This appears to confirm what the icon implies: that Serge and Bacchus were recognized as both being homosexual and had experienced a celebrated gay marriage. Their orientation and relationship appears to be openly accepted by early Christian writers. It is amazing that in the image of the icon, Christ himself as their best man overseeing their marriage.

Professor Boswell describes that what took place in that "gay" marriage included: (1) a community gathered in a place of worship; (2) the blessing of the couple before the altar; (3) their right hands joined just like in a heterosexual ceremony; (4) the participation of a priest; (5) the partaking of the Eucharist (Communion); and (6) a wedding banquet following the ceremony.

There is a 13th century Greek document called the "Order for Solemnization of Same Sex Unions," referring to Saint Serge and Saint Bacchus, that called on God to "vouchsafe unto these Thy servants grace to love another and to abide unhated and not cause of scandal all the days of their lives, with the help of the Holy Mother of God and all Thy saints." The ceremony concludes: "And they shall kiss the Holy Gospel and each other, and it shall be concluded."

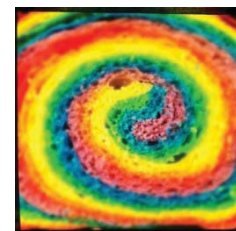
This appears not to have been just an isolated incident! Professor Boswell lists in detail some other same sex



TRANSGENDERED AND THE CHURCH

Rev. Dr Justin Tanis facilitated an introductory workshop on transgendered issues at the MCC congregation at 5730 Cahuenga Blvd., North Hollywood, CA, on November 9th. Justin Tanis is a gay Transgendered male clergy in the Unitarian Universalist Association and Executive Director of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion (Berkeley, CA). Justin earned his M. Divinity from Harvard Divinity School and his D. Ministry from San Francisco Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Trans-Gendered Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. This was an opportunity to learn more about transgendered folks and inclusion in our churches. The event was open to clergy and lay folks alike.

RAINBOW BREAD RECIPE



Ingredients: Basic Bread Dough

Several different colors of food dye

1. Divide the dough into separate pieces, based on how many colors of food dye you have.
2. Add about 10 drops of food coloring to each piece of dough. Knead through it with your hands until the color is evenly distributed.
3. Place the different pieces into bowls. Cover and let the dough rise.
4. Roll each dough ball into a thin rectangle using a lightly floured surface. Stack the colors on top of each other.
5. Starting on one side, roll the entire stack into one big loaf. Place it in a greased pan and let it rise one more time.
6. Bake the bread for about half an hour or until the top turns golden brown. A thermometer inserted into the center of the loaf should read 190 degrees Fahrenheit.
7. Let the loaf cool completely before slicing in.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/eats/church-celebrates-gay-marriage-rainbow-communion-bread-article-1.1347952#ixzz2dQ2n08v1>



[SAME-SEX, continued]

union ceremonies found in ancient church liturgical documents. The reality of these same-sex unions were also shown in contemporary drawings in 867-886 of the Byzantine Emperor Basil and his companion John. It also appears that such unions took place in Ireland in the late 12th to early 13th centuries, as chronicled by Gerald of Wales (Gerardus Cambrensis).

There are ancient marriage records that have been found in libraries all across Europe. Dr. Boswell found records of same sex unions in such diverse archives as those in the Vatican, in St. Petersburg, in Paris, Istanbul, and in Sinai, covering a period from the 8th to 18th centuries. Nor is he the first to make such a discovery. The Dominican Jacques Goar (1601-1653) includes such ceremonies in a printed collection of Greek prayer books.

Homosexuality was illegal from late Roman times. It was only from about the 14th century that anti-homosexual feelings began to sweep Western Europe. Yet Dr. Boswell indicates that same sex unions

continued to take place during that time.

This background certainly indicates that gay people have partnered for thousands of years! Many times this was done in secret and kept very private. However, other times it was made very public, as is indicted here. It appears that for much of the last two millennia, homosexual relationships in parish churches and cathedrals throughout Christendom from Ireland to Istanbul and in the heart of Rome itself, homosexual relationships were accepted as valid expressions of a God-given ability to love and commit to another person, a love that could be celebrated, honored and blessed both in the name of and through the Eucharist in the presence of Jesus Christ.

The above material is based, in part, on the writings of James Duffy, from an article titled "A Long Tradition of Same-Sex Marriage" as found on the website www.GayChristian101.com/Gay-Marriage.html