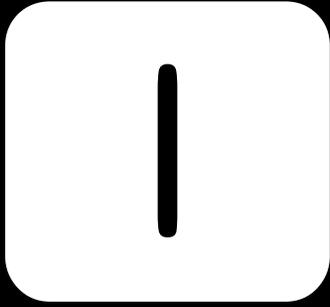


our lives



Madison's LGBTQA Magazine

May/June 2008



## Losing His Religion

**Roy Lavery** looks for answers outside of the Latter-Day Saints

## National Women's Music Festival

A preview of the acts headlining at the Alliant Energy Center

## Inside OutReach

An informal look at Executive Director **Steve Starkey**

## A Mother's Journey

**Brenda Farabaugh** assesses the affects of denial

## Eldonna Hazen

Associate Minister  
First Congregational UCC

## Finding Meaning

**Dale Decker** on an alternative happiness

Rediscovering

# Faith & Spirituality

First Congregational's **Eldonna Hazen** on reconciling faith and sexuality

**Patrick Erwin's** Open and Affirming index

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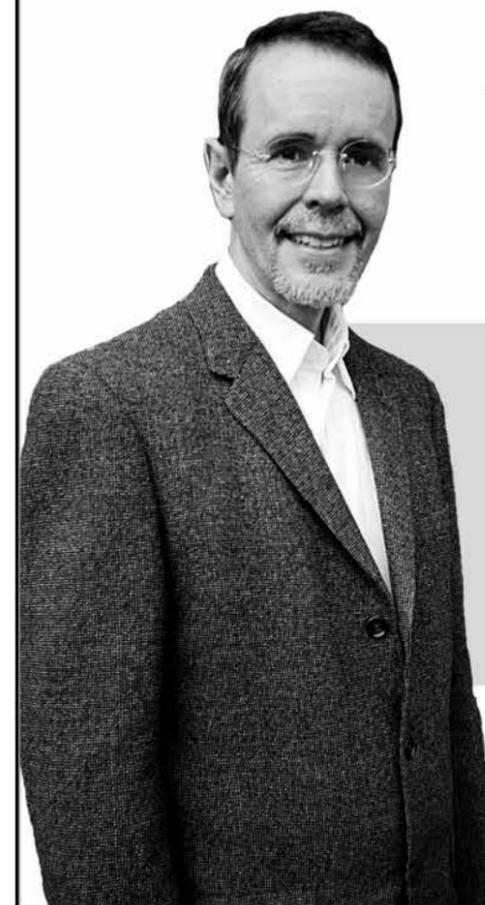
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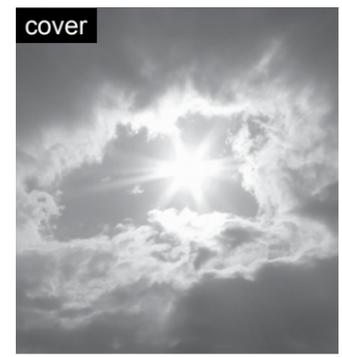
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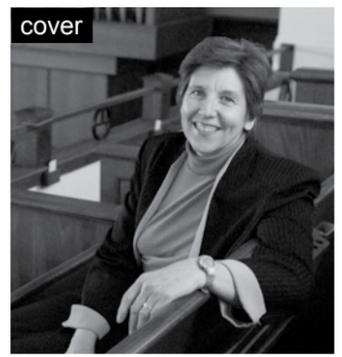
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# Features

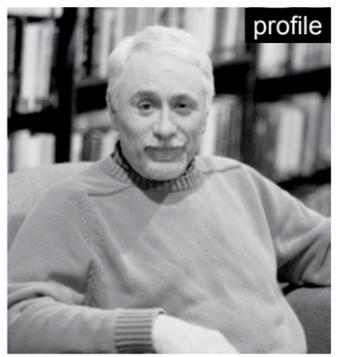
MAY / JUNE



**20 Finding Your Faith**  
Patrick Erwin takes an inventory of resources and groups that merit being called "Open and Affirming"



**22 Her Path to the Pulpit**  
Reconciling her religious and sexual identities, Eldonna Hazen traces her path to the ministry



**25 The Civil Servant**  
OutReach Executive Director Steve Starkey on balancing a home life with a professional career in community service

# Departments

- 6 Editor's Letter** Something to believe in
- 7 Contribs** The faces behind the pages of *Our Lives*

# Community

- 9 Introducing Ourselves** Meet SoulforceQ rep Justin Hager
- 10 Our Stages** Shining the spotlight on Proud Theatre
- 11 Our Pages** *Are There Closets in Heaven?*
- 12 Our Calendar** National Women's Music Festival, PrideFest
- 14 Our Thoughts** Roy Lavery on family, homosexuality and the Latter-Day Saints
- 16 Our Businesses** Residential Loan Officer Mike Fumelle

# Quality of Life

- 26 Our Rights** Tamara Packard on how religion impacts government
- 28 Our Things** Tim Foster's throwing a dinner party
- 30 Conscious Living** Dale Decker on another type of happiness
- 32 Eating Well** Amy VanKauwenberg heads to the tropics at Café Costa Rica

# Finding Pride

**34 How I Came Out**  
Brenda Farabaugh comes out about having a gay child

**our lives** News, Politics, and Social Issues Forum  
**HOORAY MERITER**  
Submitted by **marc50us**

Having only lived in the area now 5 months, I needed a primary care doctor. I went to their website last night, after learning this was one of two options I had for providers with the insurance from my company.

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[Read the entire thread online](#)

Cover Photo by **Jessica Horn**  
shooterforhire@gmail.com



## Madison's LGBTQA Magazine

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# My Two Moms

Alta with her parents, Susan & Mary Jane

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## editor

### A Return to Faith.



Lying in bed as young boy, I can remember feeling terrified by the thoughts I was starting to recognize. Silently, I would pray to Jesus asking him to fix me. Wrestling between bouts of anxiety and fear, I felt certain he couldn't hear my unspoken prayers. Still, I was too scared to say out loud what I was asking him to do.

In researching this issue, I quickly discovered that one of the largest facets of our community lays rooted in faith-based groups. As someone who is at a point in his own life where religion is just beginning to come back into the periphery, I found that incredibly interesting. As a child, identifying my sexuality created such a deep disconnect between myself and the church that the idea of a return to organized religion seemed absurd. But as I mature and reach for balance in my life, it feels like I'm on course to choosing a faith.

This issue includes a variety of people who are all at different points in their philosophy on a higher power. On one end you'll meet Roy Lavery. His need to understand why human sexuality potentially cost him his family shows you someone questioning their faith to a depth where you witness how a person loses their religion.

At the other end of the same spectrum we introduce Eldonna Hazen, associate minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ. Her testimony offers a candid account of the path she took to reconciling her identity as a lesbian with her love for her God.

In the end—no matter what path you chose to walk—I've come to understand that perhaps we all might need something to believe in.

With love,  
**Patrick Farabaugh**  
 PUBLISHER / EDITOR



**In the Next Issue** **Ad Close: June 5**

- Our First Anniversary**
- Madison Pride '08**
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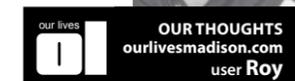
**Patrick Erwin** has been a Madison resident since 2003. He was born and raised in the Pittsburgh area. Patrick has done work for a number of non-profit arts groups, including Pittsburgh's Upstairs Theater, a company that specialized in LGBT-themed works. After many years of writing grumpy, opinionated letters-to-the-editor, Patrick's become a published freelance writer. His work has been featured in several publications, including the Wisconsin State Journal. He also maintains a blog on Madison.com's "Post" community content page.



Someday, **Jennifer Jennings** would like to write book-length profiles about activists and their relationship to religion. Next fall, she will begin working on a Masters in Religious Studies in Chicago to work towards that goal. Jennifer wishes that Madison had a LGBTQA community band where she could play her euphonium. Instead, she enjoys playing in a Madison area community band, teaches religious school and Hebrew School at Temple Beth El, and frequents popular Madison area breakfast spots seeking out the best scones.



**Robert Lavery** goes by the name Roy. He was married to his high school sweetheart, a relationship that lasted 35 years. After his son, wife and mother died within a 13 month period, Roy re-evaluated his life. As a form of therapy he started writing prose and poetry. He self published last year, *Love lost love found* and has started on a second book. Roy has adopted a motto given to him by his love found, "Live well and laugh often." Advise he thinks we should all follow.



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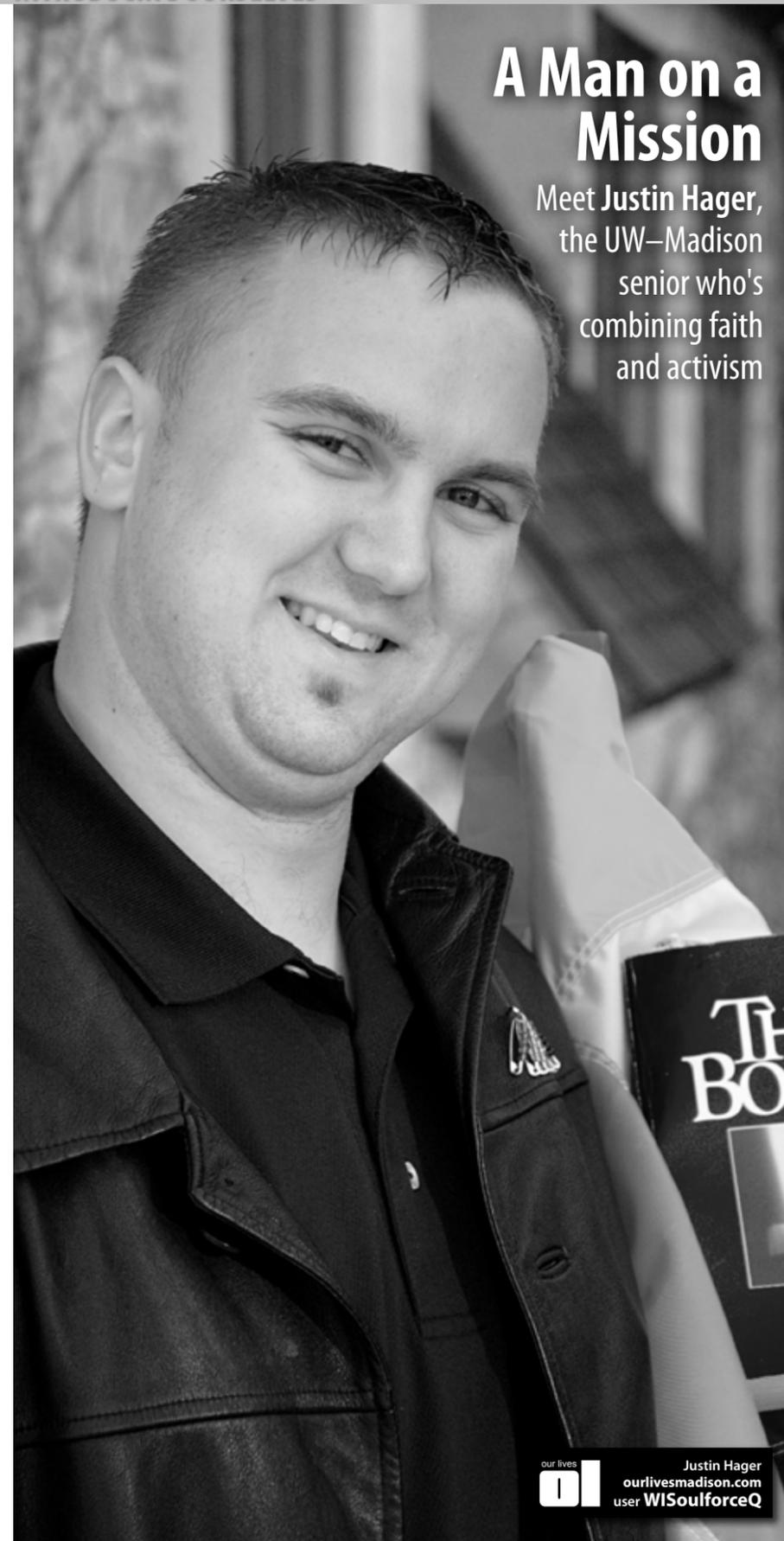
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## INTRODUCING OURSELVES



# A Man on a Mission

Meet Justin Hager,  
the UW-Madison  
senior who's  
combining faith  
and activism

**Tell us a little about yourself and where you're from?**  
I was raised in Superior, WI but being a senior at UW-Madison I now consider Madison my home. My parents are the most important thing in my life. They taught me how to truly love all people and instilled in me a love for justice and equality. Most importantly, they've always supported me in everything I've wanted to do—like opening my own DJ'ing company or starting a Gay-Straight Alliance in a rural Wisconsin high-school.

**How did you get involved in Social Justice Activism?** In high school I was kicked out of my church for being gay, so I decided to start a GSA. Then in college I was asked by my friend Derek to participate in the Soulforce "Right to Serve Campaign" protesting Don't Ask Don't Tell.

**What is Soulforce?** Soulforce ([www.Soulforce.org](http://www.Soulforce.org)) is a national organization committed to creating freedom for LGBT people from religious and political oppression through nonviolent resistance. Soulforce puts on a number of campaigns and events to combat religious violence including the Equality Ride, a two month cross country journey of young adults visiting college campuses that openly discriminate against LGBT students.

**Love is a powerful tool, one I believe is not used enough by many activists**

**What was the experience like on the Equality Ride?**  
The Equality Ride ([www.EqualityRide.com](http://www.EqualityRide.com)) was a life-changing experience. The conversations I had were amazing because I was really able to connect on a personal level with people who had never known an openly gay person. Sometimes it was scary. We would receive death threats, be shut out of schools, get arrested or the bus would get spray painted. Yet, opening people's eyes to the love and passion I have as a gay man of faith was amazing. Love is a powerful tool, one I believe is not used enough by many activists.

**What was it like getting arrested?**  
It's difficult and empowering. I hoped that I wouldn't be arrested, especially when all I wanted to do was have a conversation. Ultimately, the message of hope, love and reconciliation was too important to be silenced.

**Where do you see yourself in the future?**  
This November I'll be serving as the co-chair for the first ever national LGBT Fraternity and Sorority Conference ([www.lambda10.org](http://www.lambda10.org)) and am working to create a new "Soulforce Students" student organization for LGBT students of faith. In two years I hope to attend law school and would ultimately like to enter politics, creating change from within the system. Until then, I will continue to be a "big gay DJ" to those in need of loud music, flashing lights, and dancing. ■

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Spotlight, Playbill and Calendar edited by Callen Harty

PLAYBILL

## Proud Theater: Loud & Clear

The youth troupe to perform annual collection of shorts at the Bartell Theatre

The dream of youth activist Sol Kelley-Jones, who had an idea of changing the world through the power of theater, Proud Theater has been producing theater that changes lives for almost a decade. Called the "Oscars of youth service awards" by CNN, a 2004 Brick Award was presented to Kelley-Jones for her work with the group. The company as a whole won OutReach's Organization of the Year award in 2002 and has received numerous grants and donations.



Proud Theater was one of the earliest of the nation's queer youth theater groups and has a unique approach to its work. All the plays are written by a process in which the youth will discuss a topic, find the common threads,

and then create a piece that comes out of their own experiences as queer youth in today's world. They are guided by adult mentors, but the work is ultimately their own. Proud Theater has presented pieces on bullying, transgender issues, coming out stories, AIDS, suicide, and more, but the pieces are not so much about the topics as the characters living them.

At the end of the year a culminating performance is scheduled that collects pieces created during the year. These performances have more often than not played to sold-out houses. Under Artistic Director Brian Wild, Proud Theater will present its culminating show from May 29-31 at the Evjue Theatre in the Bartell Theater building in downtown Madison. Tickets may be ordered or reserved in advance by contacting Stage Q at [www.stageq.com](http://www.stageq.com) or Proud Theater at [www.proudtheater.org](http://www.proudtheater.org). ■

SPOTLIGHT

## Wild for Theater

A look at Proud Theatre's Artistic Director

There are few people more active in the Madison theater community than Brian Wild, who is a whirlwind of theatrical energy. Besides working a full-time job to pay the bills he is an actor, sound designer, composer, director, playwright, and Artistic Director, in addition to serving as a Board member and Treasurer for Broom Street Theater.

Wild started his theatrical career in school plays in central Wisconsin—in his hometown of Wausau and at college at Stevens Point—where he earned kudos for performances in *Play It Again, Sam* and *Tartuffe*. After moving to Madison he got involved with Madison's experimental theater, Broom Street Theater. He has appeared on stage in dozens of roles with several groups, mostly at Broom Street.

Aside from acting, he is an accomplished musician and composer. His talents have been used primarily in sound design, a field in which he has been heralded as among the best in the state. He created the sound design for First Banana's production of *Angels in America*, as well as dozens of others for several theater groups.



After many years on boards Wild decided to try his hand at writing and directing in 1997. Since that time his plays form a litany of some of the more successful plays in the history of Broom Street Theater: *Tales for a Millennium*; *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Dying*; *Pippi Long Stalking*; *Sex Kittens from Mars*; *The Ghost and Dr. Liz*; *The Dumb Ass*; *Tales for a New Millennium*; *Flowers for Dubya*; *667: The Number of the Neighbor of the Beast*; and most recently, *Dork Side of the Moon*.

Wild has been the Artistic Director of Madison's LGBTQ and allied youth theater group, Proud Theater, for the last four years. He is responsible for the overall running of the organization, as well as putting together performances throughout the year and a culminating year-end performance, which this year will be held at the end of May at the Evjue Theater. After those performances he has about a week of free time scheduled before he gets back to work on his next project. ■

## THEATRE CALENDAR

A representative sampling

### The Hot L Baltimore

by Lanford Wilson  
UW-Rock County  
Janesville, 5/1-5/4  
[rock.uw.edu](http://rock.uw.edu)

### Bus Stop

by William Inge  
Haylofters at Malt House Theater  
Burlington, 5/1-5/18  
[geocities.com/jblee46/Haylofters.html](http://geocities.com/jblee46/Haylofters.html)

### Multiple O

by John Sable  
Broom Street Theater  
Madison, 5/2-6/6  
[broomstreet.org](http://broomstreet.org)

### The Miss Firecracker Contest

by Beth Henley  
Strollers Theater  
Madison, 5/14-5/31  
[strollerstheatre.org](http://strollerstheatre.org)

### The Cover of Life

by R. T. Robinson  
Isadoora Theatre Company  
Ephraim, 5/15-5/25  
[isadoora.com](http://isadoora.com)

### Proud Theater: Loud & Clear

by Proud Theater  
Bartell Theater  
Madison, 5/29-5/31  
[proudtheater.org](http://proudtheater.org)

### The Girl in the Frame

by Jeremy Desmon  
In Tandem Theatre  
Milwaukee, 5/29-6/15  
[intandemtheatre.com](http://intandemtheatre.com)

### Into the Woods

by Stephen Sondheim  
Madison Theatre Guild  
Madison, 6/6-6/21  
[madisontheatreguild.org](http://madisontheatreguild.org)

### Celeste and Starla Save Todd and Win Back the Day

by Francesca Sanders  
Mercury Players  
Madison, 6/6-6/28  
[mercuryplayerstheatre.com](http://mercuryplayerstheatre.com)

### A Midsummer Night's Dream

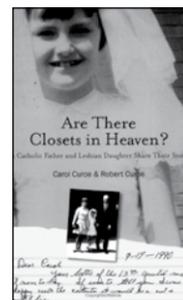
by William Shakespeare  
American Players Theater  
Spring Green, 6/7-10/5  
[playinthewoods.org](http://playinthewoods.org)

### Queer Shorts 3

by various authors  
Stage Q at the Bartell Theater  
Madison, 6/12-6/21  
[stageq.com](http://stageq.com)

## Mending the Ties that Bind

Are There Closets in Heaven? by Carol Curoe and Bob Curoe



★★★★★

ARE THERE CLOSETS IN HEAVEN? IS ONE OF those unassuming gems in the slowly expanding LGBT family memoir field. This slim book (196 pages), a collaboration between a lesbian daughter and her Catholic father, describes one family's journey from denial to acceptance. Carol Curoe and Bob Curoe alternate chapters, describing from both points of view Carol's religious upbringing on a Midwestern farm, her coming out, and the rocky road her family took toward supporting her and her partner.

Bob and Carol have different voices and perspectives on the issues, so although the book can feel repetitive as first one then the other describes events, their interpretations of these events are different enough to make both accounts valuable. Bob's words are honest and unaffected, and he doesn't shy away from examining moments where his confusion and disappointment threatened his relationship with his daughter.

The narrative also touches on the political and legal roadblocks facing gay families, as Carol describes the difficulties she and her partner, Susan, faced in having and raising children, buying a house, solemnizing their partnership, and getting health insurance. The twofold story includes valuable information for families just beginning to work through these issues as well as validation and support for the emotional confusion that a gay child may cause for some families.

This is excellent for the families of gay people, giving a heartfelt, honest, and well-written account of one family's evolution. — Gretchen Treu

our lives



YOUR COMMENTS WANTED: YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SPIRITUALITY

Your Life Forum

Submitted by Eshito

I don't think religion or spirituality does anything for people that they can't get somewhere else, and even when they think they're getting something unique out of it, they're usually lying to themselves. For example, many people say they get their "morality" from the Bible. Then you point out one of the many absolutely horrendous and immoral verses, like the ones that say women are inferior to men, or homosexuals should be killed. Then they say "oh well, that verse shouldn't be taken literally". And there you have it - they just used their own judgment to decide what verses to follow and what not to. They didn't need the Bible telling them what to think, they had a preexisting sense of morality with which to judge the situation.

I've basically learned that none of the things people think you can only get from faith - being in awe of the vastness of the universe, being aware of your own human frailty, having compassion for other people and a sense of duty to make the world a better place - none of those things have anything to do with religion or spirituality. Lately I've been seeing less and less of those qualities in religious people, and more in people who identify themselves as atheist, agnostic or freethinkers.

The passing of the marriage amendment was certainly evidence of that. My own godmother voted in favor of it because, she said, even though she loved me and supported me, she had to be true to her faith. In reality she put her own unsubstantiated beliefs ahead of other people's civil rights, other people's families. She had nothing to gain or lose by the amendment. How utterly selfish of her. I haven't spoken to her since, except to write a final letter telling her basically to F off.

Read the entire thread online

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Cultural, Social, Service and Nightlife listings edited by Patrick Farabaugh



**Celebration of Leadership**

**May 17, Monona Terrace**  
Help GSAFE Celebrate the activism and courage of student and adult leaders at their 12th annual Celebration of Leadership Awards Banquet. This year's keynote speakers are Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and Executive Director Steven Goldberg of CUNA Mutual Group. [gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)



Natasha Bedingfield

**PrideFest**

**June 6-8, Milwaukee Lakefront**  
PrideFest energizes the shores of Milwaukee's lakefront with an all-star entertainment lineup for Wisconsin's largest celebration of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender culture and community. Headliners include Natasha Bedingfield, the Indigo Girls, and Waynda Sykes. [pridefest.com](http://pridefest.com)



Tret Fure

**National Women's Music Festival**

**June 19-22, Alliant Energy Center**  
The first festival was held in 1974. Over the years it has expanded to include events promoting music, art, and culture. This year it comes to Madison bringing local and national artists like Chris Williamson, Tret Fure, Sonia and Karen Williams. [wiaonline.org](http://wiaonline.org)

**Madison Area Music Awards**

**May 10, Barrymore Theatre, 2090 Atwood Ave., Madison**  
Red carpet 6 pm, awards 7-10 pm. Performances by The Motorz, Westside Andy/Mel Ford Band, Stephanie Rearick, Dear August, Profound with L'il Braugh, Jessi Lynn Band, Pale Young Gentlemen. [themamas.org](http://themamas.org)

**ACT 6 (AIDS Network Cycles Together) Informational Meetings**

**May 10, Central Library, 210 W. Mifflin St., Madison**  
Come learn about The Wisconsin AIDS Ride and how your participation impacts those living with HIV/AIDS in our community. [actride.org](http://actride.org)

**Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus, Samuel Hutchison**

**May 21, Overture Hall, Overture Center, Madison**  
"Musical Memories" offers older adults and their friends free daytime entertainment three times each year. Sam Hutchison, Madison Symphony Orchestra's resident organist and organ curator, performs a 30 minute concert at each program. [perfectharmonychorus.org](http://perfectharmonychorus.org)

**Madison Marathon Health & Fitness Expo**

**May 24, Alliant Energy Center, Madison**  
The marathon is held in conjunction with a health & fitness expo. More than 5,000 people are expected to attend. [madisonfestivals.com](http://madisonfestivals.com)

**Asparagus Dinner**

**May 28, Harvest Restaurant, 21 N. Pinckney St., Madison**  
Harvest is celebrating its local asparagus harvest and invites you to join them for Chef Derek Rowe's six-course menu. [harvest-restaurant.com](http://harvest-restaurant.com)

**Art & Architecture V**

**June 1, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art**  
Art & Architecture V returns to downtown Madison highlighting the art collections and unique architecture of distinctive Nolen Shore homes. [mmoca.org](http://mmoca.org)

**Spring Art Tour**

**June 6-8, Black Earth**  
Explore the beauty of the springtime countryside in South Central Wisconsin as you tour the Open Art Studios of Mount Horeb, Mazomanie, Black Earth, Cross Plains, Blue Mounds, Verona, and towns in between. [springarttour.com](http://springarttour.com)

**General Casualty Capitol View Triathlon**

**June 7, Governor Nelson State Park, 5140 Cty Hwy M, Waunakee**  
The inaugural triathlon will take feature sprint and olympic distance triathlons, a relay division, a collegiate division and a kid's aquathlon! This event supports: The American Lung Association, Clean Lakes and The University of Wisconsin Triathlon Club. [capitolviewtriathlon.com](http://capitolviewtriathlon.com)

**Concerts on the Square begins June 25**

Concerts on the Square will celebrate its 25th season in 2008. As usual, The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra (WCO), led by Maestro Andrew Sewell, will perform six concerts on Wednesday evenings, June 25 - July 30, at 7:00 p.m. [wcoconcerts.org](http://wcoconcerts.org)



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**ORGANIZATIONS**

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**AIDS Network**  
600 Williamson St., Madison, (608) 252-6540  
[aidsnetwork.org](http://aidsnetwork.org)

**Bowling Out Loud**  
[dand1957@earthlink.net](mailto:dand1957@earthlink.net)

**Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls**  
[dcandc.org](http://dcandc.org)

**Fair Wisconsin**  
122 State St., Madison, (608) 441-0143  
[fairwisconsin.org](http://fairwisconsin.org)

**First Congregational Church**  
1609 University Ave., Madison, (608) 233-9751  
[firstcongmadison.org](http://firstcongmadison.org)

**Frontrunners/Frontwalkers**  
[personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg](http://personalpages.tds.net/~tmcdurg)

**Gay/Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)**  
301 S. Bedford St., Madison, (608) 661-4141  
[gsaforsafeschools.org](http://gsaforsafeschools.org)

**Gay Softball League**  
[ssblmadison.com](http://ssblmadison.com)

**Gay Volleyball League**  
[madisongayvolleyball.com](http://madisongayvolleyball.com)

**Hermanos Latinos**  
[sneal@aidsnetwork.org](mailto:sneal@aidsnetwork.org)

**LGBT Business Alliance**  
[madisonbusinessalliance.com](http://madisonbusinessalliance.com)

**Madison Gay Hockey Association**  
[madisongayhockey.org](http://madisongayhockey.org)

**Madison Minotaurs Gay Rugby**  
[madisonminotaursrfc.org](http://madisonminotaursrfc.org)

**New Harvest Foundation**  
[newharvestfoundation.org](http://newharvestfoundation.org)

**OutReach Community Center**  
600 Williamson St., Madison, (608) 255-8582  
[outreachinc.com](http://outreachinc.com)

**PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**  
(608) 848-2333  
[pflag-madison.org](http://pflag-madison.org)

**Perfect Harmony Men's Chorus**  
[perfectharmonychorus.org](http://perfectharmonychorus.org)

**Proud Theatre**  
[proudtheater.org](http://proudtheater.org)

**Rural Dykes Association**  
[pswfarm@juno.com](mailto:pswfarm@juno.com)

**StageQ**  
[stageq.com](http://stageq.com)

**UW - Madison LGBT Campus Center**  
800 Langdon St., Madison, (608) 265-3344  
[wisc.edu/lgbt](http://wisc.edu/lgbt)

**Women Across Wisconsin**  
[womenacrosswisconsin.org](http://womenacrosswisconsin.org)

**Red Ribbon Affair**

Scenes from the AIDS Network gala on April 4 at the Monona Terrace



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## SPECIAL ESSAY

## The Paths We Least Expect

The untimely death of his son, followed by his wife, leaves **Roy Lavery** questioning love, faith and sexuality as he searches for answers outside of the Latter-Day Saints.

I was searching for a recipe online when I found the website for this magazine. It is strange how one action will take you on a path you didn't expect. The only reason I paused to look is because I have a friend whose son goes to school in Madison. There was a forum asking for comments on spirituality. I started to read and had to comment on some experiences I have had. One thing I read was young people who were gay, trying to find acceptance in church, or just trying to find spiritual peace.

What I am writing I have told very few people and only those I trusted. Four years ago my two sons got in a fight and my oldest son died. These were big boys, over 6' 6" and both close to 300 pounds. My son David ended up stabbed in the heart and he died in his brothers arms. Like I said—we end up going down paths we least expect. David was a tormented soul. He started acting out as a teenager, so badly we took him for counseling. We were told that David was a woman in a man's body. We were horrified, how could this be. Our son played football, rugby, he was big and tough. We took him to a counselor at our church. We had been members of the LDS (Mormons) church for about eight years at that time. It wasn't acceptable in our church to be gay much less have a sex change operation. We were told that if we let David do this he would never be accepted in the church, he could never hold the priesthood, get married and most likely would not be welcome in the presence of God. We tried to ignore the problem and work around it. David's behavior got worse and worse. I tried to talk to David but all the time I avoided what the real problem was because I just couldn't accept it.

Then one day I dropped David and his brother at the train station and gave him a hug goodbye, I never saw him alive again. A short time after that my mother died. Then my wife of 32 years developed breast cancer. The cancer spread to her bones and she slowly deteriorated. On top of this I had my younger son in jail and was trying not to abandon him. I didn't have time to cry or ponder David. Every time I would think of him, heart break would pour over me.

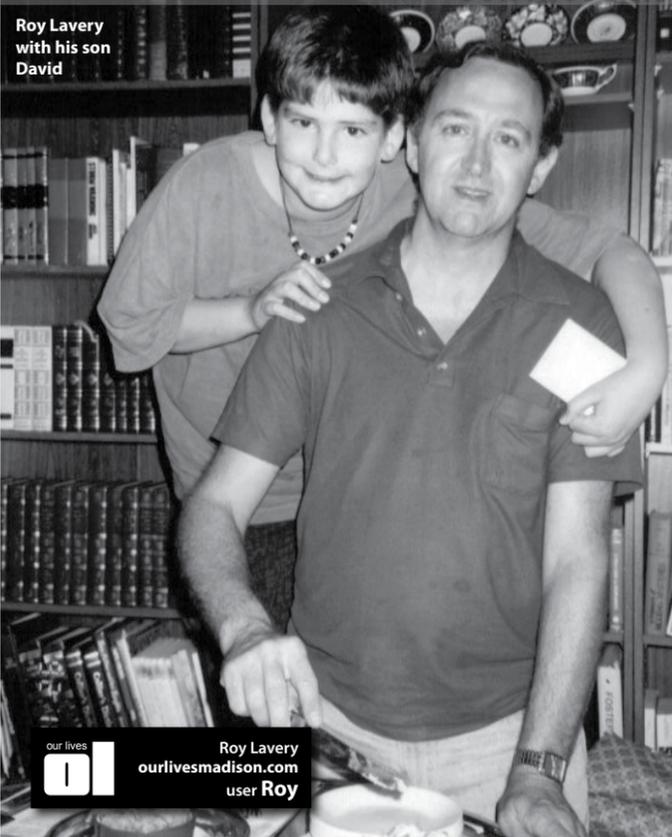
### I thought of how I had longed for someone to hold me. I asked how the church could deny someone a close physical relationship.

Linda and I had discussed some time before what would be the point when life was no longer worth living. We both agreed that it would be when we became incontinent or when pain became intolerable. Linda became incontinent, first she lost control of her bladder, then her bowels. I cleaned her and cared for her, something I thought I could never do. Then the pain got worse, the cancer had shattered two of her vertebrae and the bone fragments were pressing on her spinal cord.

Near the end someone made a comment at church about how I was going through the trials of Job. Trying to lighten the conversation I replied I could handle any thing Job had to deal with except the boils. Later that

## OUR THOUGHTS

Roy Lavery  
with his son  
David



week Linda started to get sharp pains in her side. I took her to our family doctor where after examining her said he she had shingles. He warned me that shingles were very contagious and not to touch them. Having no idea what a shingle was I asked what they looked like, boils he replied. At that moment my spirit broke, I looked heaven ward and said to myself "thank you very fucking much". Linda died a few months later.

I had been faithful to my wife since we had met as teenagers. I had never been with another woman. After she was gone I craved human contact, someone to hold me. Because I had sex with several women I felt guilty, so I talked to my bishop. I knew that as a priesthood holder I was being a hypocrite doing what I was doing. When people asked me to fulfill priesthood duties like giving blessings, I avoided them by making some excuse. I asked the bishop to take away my priesthood and explained why. He was more interested in who I was having sex with and if they were church members. I wouldn't agree to change my errant ways and remain celibate so I was excommunicated from the church.

This left me free to look for God on my own. I have always been a spiritual person seeking God in many ways through my whole life. I think the closest I have ever been to him was not in a church but in a forest of Silver Birch in northern Canada, by myself with the sun streaming through the branches. I don't remember ever having that feeling in a church.

Two things happened since my son died that have convinced me that there is a life after this one and that higher existence is for everyone. The night David died his brother sat in a prison cell, breaking his heart, knowing he had hurt his brother. He hadn't been told that David was dead. He looked up and David was beside him, he hugged him and David let him cry on his shoulder. David told him that he was okay and that he had to take care of his mother. It wasn't until almost two months later that we knew Linda had cancer.

After Linda died I was like a zombie, just going the motions of living. I had only slept fitfully since the funeral. I had no energy to do anything. One morning while lying in bed I heard Linda call my name.

At first I thought I'd fallen asleep and was dreaming. Then I heard it again—only louder. I jumped out of bed to go to her, hoping against all hope. Then I felt her hug me, I felt the touch of her skin, her smell, her hair brush against me. She was there and just as suddenly she was gone. I talked to friends about this and was surprised at how many people had the same experience or knew someone who had the same experience. All I knew was that she was safe and we would be together again.

After I read this forum on the website last week I went to the bishop in my old church and asked him some questions. The first was about David. Looking back now I can see that David was probably gay, my wife and I both agreed on this but it took his death for us to even consider it. I still had trouble with the idea until I met my friend's son, the one who lives in Madison. He had been one of my cub scouts years before, I knew this kid. I was shocked when I found out he was gay. I hadn't seen him in at least ten years. When I met him and his friends, what did I think then? I was shocked to find that they were normal. I realized that I had caused my son to suppress all those feelings and how it had tortured him, it broke my heart all over again. I asked the bishop why God would create someone who was genetically predisposed to being gay or through some event in their lives became gay. Whichever it was, how could he create this situation and then condemn it.

He told me the church would accept someone as gay but only if they were celibate. I thought of how I had craved that human contact after Linda died. I had longed for someone to hold me, to be close physically to another person. I asked how the church could deny someone a close physical relationship. His answer was that they could only have a relationship like brothers or sisters. As with my own situation, I couldn't accept this.

Then I asked him about Linda. You see she was a good person. I don't mean she was a good housewife, baking cookies and keeping the house clean. She was a really good person. She was always there for her family and friends, even strangers. She had been a foster mother to 22 kids plus our own three. Twenty years spent as a guide, brownie and cub leader. She worked as a guidance secretary at a school for special needs kids... Kids who would act out for anyone else, always listened to her; they knew she really cared about them. I asked the bishop why she had to suffer so much. If it was her time to go then why not just take her.

It seemed that when the things we feared most, incontinence, pain and boils only happened when it was brought to a higher powers attention. The bishop had to think about this for a few days and his answer surprised me. He explained to me that in the atonement Christ suffered for the sins of the world because he loved us. After reading my book he could see that Linda would do anything for her children. He explained that she was atoning for David's sins, giving him the ability to progress in the next life. Although it is better than just suffering for no reason at all, I have trouble accepting this.

I had always truly believed that Christ was my savior and I also believed that he was my friend. I have trouble understanding how my friend could let David and Linda suffer so much pain, so much hurt before he took them. I have had too many experiences both before I joined the church, while in the church and after I left the church to deny that there is another level of existence beyond ours. I have not stopped looking for answers. I think I need to find that grove of Silver Birch again.

When I do, I will let nature and life flow over me. Perhaps then I will find an understanding. ■

## First Congregational United Church of Christ

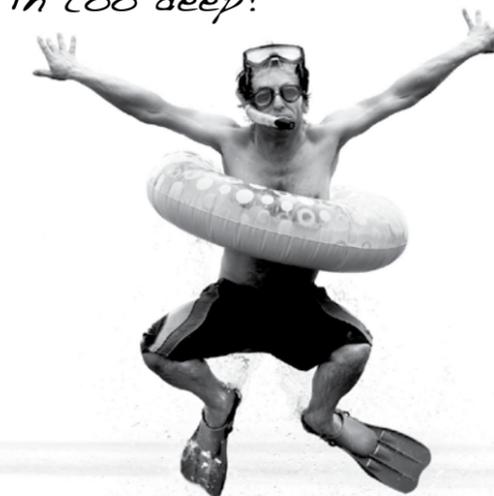


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## Home is Where His Heart is

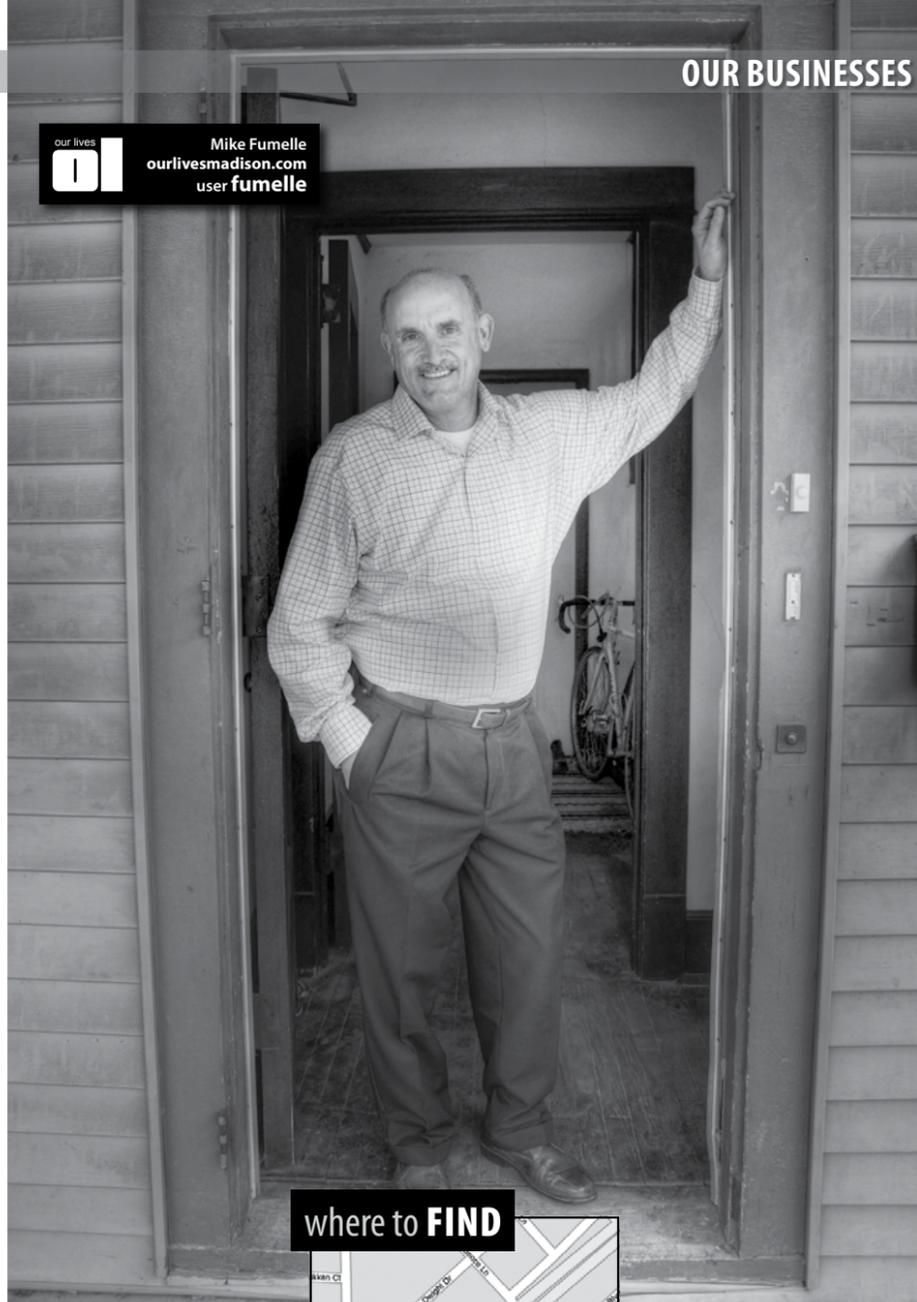
Associated Bank residential loan officer **Mike Fumelle** uses his profession as his form of activism

**m**ike Fumelle didn't understand why he was chosen to be featured in this column. "I don't know that you'll have much to write about," he confessed on the phone as we scheduled an interview time. But from an outsider's perspective, it's blatantly obvious that his contributions as a businessman and a concerned community member are widely felt throughout Madison's LGBT community.

A native of Wisconsin, Mike grew up in a Catholic family in Sun Prairie. He described himself as the "sensitive one" in his family and spoke of struggling to be himself in a time not as accepting as the one we live in today. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he studied geology. A semester shy of graduation, he followed his heart (and a man) to Alaska. While that relationship would last only a few years, it was in the "Last Frontier" where Mike took his first steps into a career that has spanned almost three decades.

**While he appreciates how well LGBT people are integrated into Madison society, he believes it is important that the community ensures that it is sustaining and making a space for itself**

For almost 15 years, Mike worked in the home mortgage business in different regions of Alaska. The one-on-one personal relationships he cultivated with his clients during the very personal process of buying and financing a home have always been what fuel his work. His passion is for helping people find a plan that works for them rather than forcing them into whatever happens to be trendy at the moment. His philosophy and work ethic quickly catapulted him up the chain of command, but his ascension led to less



our lives Mike Fumelle ourlivesmadison.com user fumelle

### where to FIND



direct contact with people. Becoming increasingly discontented with his job and the hardships of living a closeted life in a none-too-gay-friendly community convinced Mike to move back to Wisconsin.

In 1995, he made his way back to Madison. After taking some time off, he reentered the mortgage business, this time back at the "street level," working once again directly with people. He also started to come out in his professional life. In fact, when he started working with Associated Bank as a residential loan officer a few years ago, it marked the first time that he came out from his first day on the job.

Mike is a member of the LGBT Business Alliance. He also advertises with the New Harvest Foundation, the Madison Gay Hockey Association, and this publication. He sees it as his way to support the community.

While he appreciates how well LGBT people are integrated into Madison society, he believes it is important that the community ensures that it is sustaining and making a space for itself. Contributions like his help make certain that LGBT Madisonians have a place to call their own. —**Sam Stiegler**

A Madison native, Sam Stiegler currently lives in New York City where he works for the Hetrick-Martin Institute.



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**INDEX:**

- Congregation Directory p.20
- Campus Resources p.20
- LGBT Clergy p.21
- Eldonna Hazen p.22
- Gender & Faith p.23
- Bibliography p.23

# Finding Your Faith

Taking inventory of the local faith-based groups and resources, Patrick Erwin sets out to find the shape "Open and Affirming" takes in our community

WE'VE COMPILED A LIST OF CHURCHES, CONGREGATIONS, and spiritual communities that have visibly identified themselves as open and affirming to LGBTQ people. An open and affirming congregation is accepting of you as you are, and it validates you, your life, and your relationships. This list was compiled over the course of several months and drawn from several sources, including the research of the "Coming Out, Coming Together" coalition.

If you do not see a particular congregation on the list, this doesn't necessarily mean that it is not welcoming. Some groups are welcoming and affirming in essence, but have never debated the issue or created a public, wide-reaching statement about LGBTQ people in their community. If your church or community is not on this list, be sure to ask what the congregation's position is. Some may be tolerant, but ask that you remain quiet about your personal life – a "don't ask, don't tell" proposition. And some conservative denominations have appeared to be welcoming to all, but attempt to convince LGBTQ people to be celibate or to "convert" to heterosexuality.

We hope that this list will encourage you to revisit your spiritual past or embark on an exciting journey of discovering what faith and spirituality mean to you today.

**Advent Lutheran Church and Community of Hope United Church of Christ**  
7118 Old Sauk Rd., Madison  
**608-836-1455** madisonchristiancommunity.org  
Advent Lutheran and Community of Hope UCC share worship space at the Madison Christian Community. Both are open and affirming congregations, and Community of Hope is led by openly LGBT pastor Rev. Tisha Brown.

**Baraboo First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
131 Sixth Ave., Baraboo  
**608-356-4300** uccbboo.org  
Founded in 1847, First Congregational UCC has a long history of social justice witness, including supporting the suffrage and abolitionist movements. The membership includes several gay and lesbian members and adapted its open and affirming statement in 2001.

**Benedictine Women of Madison**  
4200 County Highway M, Middleton  
**608-836-1631** benedictinewomen.org  
The Benedictine Women of Madison are at Holy Wisdom Monastery and are an "ecumenical" community, which means they are

open to all. Although historically tied to the Catholic Church, it refers to itself as a Christian community on its website. Among the nuns is an ordained Presbyterian minister.

**Bethany United Methodist Church**  
3910 Mineral Point Rd., Madison  
**608-238-6381** bethanymadison.org  
According to Pastor Sharon L. S. Cook, Bethany United Methodist is open and affirming to LGBTQ congregants, and the pride flag is prominently displayed on Bethany's website.

**First Baptist Church**  
518 North Franklin Ave., Madison  
**608-233-1800** firstbaptistmadison.org  
First Baptist is a liberal Baptist congrega-

## Spirituality on Campus

A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLING

Spiritual organizations have always had a place on university campuses. Organizations like the Catholic-centric Newman Center have been around for decades. But over the last several years, churches and other spiritual groups have emerged as a significant part of campus life.

Madison's colleges have experienced this trend as well, particularly the **UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN**, which has seen the expansion of two large student centers and worship spaces near campus. Although not every church or spiritual group on Madison's campus openly welcomes LGBT students or affirms them as spiritual individuals, there are still options and resources for LGBT students.



**HILLEL**, the international group for Jewish campus life, is one option. UW Hillel's student group **ONE IN A MINYAN** provides support and resources to LGBT members. The group's name refers to both Jewish culture (a minyan is a quorum of ten adult Jews) as well as LGBT culture (one in ten is the 10 percent of the population LGBT people are said to represent). Erik Trezell, director of UW's LGBT Campus Center, said he appreciates the visibility of Hillel's efforts, and he notes Hillel always "keeps the doors open."

UW students are also welcome at **ST. FRANCIS HOUSE**, the Episcopal Student Center. St. Francis House is not simply a place of worship, but also a residence hall. Students who live there can immerse themselves in their exploration of faith. According to Rev. Shannon Ferguson Kelly, "We are open to gay and lesbian people in our student programming." Rev. Kelly says that the group currently has several LGBT students involved.

tion and is one of the largest congregations in Madison. In addition to its status as an open and affirming congregation, First Baptist is also one of the most culturally diverse congregations, with a wide range of cultural backgrounds and outreach programs for youth and elderly members.

**First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
1609 University Avenue, Madison  
**608-233-9751** firstcongmadison.org  
First Congregational has a long history of being an open and affirming congregation. It adopted its affirmation statement in 1992. Rev. Curt Anderson was a visible leader on the "No" vote during the marriage amendment debate, and he has been profiled in a previous issue of *Our Lives*, as Rev. Eldonna Hazen, also at First Congregational, is profiled in this issue.

**First Unitarian Society**  
**608-233-9774** fusmadison.org  
First Unitarian Society is a liberal religious community that encourages individual spiritual growth and community action in an atmosphere of warmth, freedom of belief, intellectual curiosity, and open dialogue. The Society, the third largest Unitarian Universalist congregation in the country, meets in the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

**First United Methodist Church**  
203 Wisconsin Ave., Madison  
**608-256-9061** wisconsinumc.org/madison-firstumc  
First United Methodist Church is an open and affirming congregation in downtown. It offers an LGBT young-adult program that explores the issues surrounding faith and homosexuality. FUMC also works with a statewide United Methodist group, and will host an event in 2009 on the changing concept of family.

**Integrity/Dignity**  
**608-836-8886** idmadison.org  
Integrity/Dignity is a coalition of LGBT Christians and LGBT members of the Roman Catholic Church. In Madison, the groups meets at St. Dunstan's on most Saturdays from September to June for fellowship and worship.

**James Reeb Unitarian Universalist**  
2146 East Johnson St., Madison  
**608-242-8887** jruec.org  
Reeb is one of the youngest congregations in Madison, having been a "spinoff" from the First Unitarian Society in 1993. Reeb has about 120 members and maintains its worship space in a former T-shirt printing facility. The congregation is culturally diverse and includes every aspect of the LGBT community.

**Lake Edge Lutheran Church**  
4032 Monona Dr., Madison  
**608-222-7339** lel.org  
The congregation is a member of the group Reconciling in Christ/Lutherans Concerned,

**LGBT Clergy**

## Of the Cloth

While some traditional churches and congregations are still trying to reconcile differences of opinion about LGBT members, others have been welcoming us for years and decades. In many of these denominations, LGBT people have taken on leadership roles and have become clergy.



Rev. Darrel Richey is one such leader. He's been the minister at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation since 2005. For Darrel, it was a journey that

encompassed spirituality and geography that landed him in Madison. He was born in Texas and spent nearly 20 years in a successful career as an interior designer. Darrel says that he'd had what he called an "irresistible urging" and a call towards ministry. He did resist it for a time, channeling that desire into lay work at his local church, but eventually decided that he needed to take the next step.



Rev. Douglas Fauth followed a similar path to his leadership role. Douglas spent several years as an advertising copywriter, but as he says, "There has never been a time

in my life where I have not had a close connection to the church." Douglas began seminary studies in 1993 and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1996. Today, he is the minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Baraboo. His pathway was not without challenges; Douglas came out to the congregation he grew up in and was rejected by the members there. "With a very supportive family, I persevered, laying claim to the baptismal promise made to me and to all children in UCC, that of unconditional love, support and care."



In Madison, there is LGBT leadership in the Jewish community as well. **Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman** is the leader of Shaarei Shamayim, a progressive Jewish community. One

of the members notes that "when Rabbi Laurie officiates at life cycle events in the LGBT community, she is particularly sensitive to create sacred rituals which are grounded in Jewish tradition and which also reflect the complexity and individuality of that particular person." ■

**EDGEWOOD COLLEGE**, a Dominican Catholic college, also has a resource for spirituality – and for LGBT student life – with the **FRIENDS LIKE US** student group. Student advisor Kasey DeWitt, who is pursuing a doctorate in religious studies, is part of the leadership of the group. She has coordinated efforts to link Campus Ministries with LGBT students and has worked to create relationships with other student groups and with the college. "This past fall, Friends Like Us did a program with College Ministries, but it was the first time the two have worked together."

At UW, Trezell says that the center "always looks for opportunities to collaborate with the community." One successful collaboration was the appearance in Madison of the Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, a transgendered United Church of Christ minister. The LGBTCC worked with the First Congregational United Church of Christ to bring Himschoot on-campus for a screening of the documentary about his life and journey, "Call Me Malcolm."

UW students will also have the opportunity to become further invested on a spiritual journey when the organization **SOULFORCE STUDENTS** is launched. The group, led by LGBTCC staff member Justin Hager, will officially launch in the fall 2008 semester. Soulforce Students intends to take the work of Soulforce – a national group that fights anti-gay bigotry within a spiritual context – and apply it to campus life. UW is the first university to have a Soulforce Students group.



Any UW students interested in the planning sessions for Soulforce Students can contact Justin Hager at [jhager@wisc.edu](mailto:jhager@wisc.edu) for more information.

Email Kasey Dewitt at [dewitt@edgewood.edu](mailto:dewitt@edgewood.edu) for more information about Friends Like Us. ■

which affirms people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

#### Madison Jewish Community Council

6434 Enterprise Ln., Madison

608-278-1808 jewishmadison.org

The MJCC is the Jewish Federation of South Central Wisconsin. According to executive director Steven H. Morrison, the MJCC, while not a congregation per se, is “fully committed to being open and affirming and to full and equal rights for all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals and couples.”

#### McFarland United Church of Christ

5710 Anthony St., McFarland

608-838-9322 mcfarlanducc.org

McFarland United Church of Christ is, like many UCC member churches, an open and affirming congregation. Members of the congregation represented McFarland UCC during the ACT 5 AIDS Ride in 2007.

#### More Light Presbyterians mlp.org

Covenant Presbyterian covent.madison.wi.us

Dale Heights Presbyterian daleheightspc.org

Parkside Presbyterian myparkside.org

The national Presbyterian Church as an organization is not currently affirming or welcoming. However, “More Light Presbyterians” is a coalition of Presbyterian congregations

and individuals working to make the Church more welcoming.

In Madison, there are three More Light congregations: Covenant Presbyterian, 326 South Segoe Road; Dale Heights Presbyterian, 5501 University Avenue; and Parkside Presbyterian, 4002 Lien Road.

#### Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ

1501 Gilbert Rd., Madison

608-271-7212 orucc.org

Orchard Ridge’s mission statement is “Spiritually Alive, Joyfully Inclusive, Committed to Justice.” There are LGBT people in every group, ministry, and leadership team at Orchard Ridge. The congregation voted to be open and affirming in 1993. One group that ministers to many LGBT members is called

SAFE (Spiritually Affirming Friends Everywhere.) A member of SAFE recently said to the congregation, “LGBT people are so fully integrated into the leadership and activities of the church that we hardly need a social group for people to feel accepted.”

#### Plymouth United Church of Christ

2401 Atwood Ave., Madison

608-249-1537 pcucc.org

Under the leadership of Rev. Charles Wolfe, Plymouth UCC is one of the most visible open and affirming congregations in Madison since 1996. Rev. Wolfe is also an instrumental force in “Coming Out, Coming Together,” a local coalition of open and affirming congregations and groups from all walks of spiritual life.

#### Prairie Unitarian Universalist

2010 Whenona Dr., Madison

608-271-8218 uuprairie.org

Formed when First Unitarian Society’s growth showed a clear need for expansion in Madison, Prairie UU is led by its members and it starts each service with a welcoming, affirming statement to its members.

#### Shaarei Shamayin

2010 Whenona Dr., Madison

608-245-3775 shamayim.org

Shaarei Shamayim is a progressive Jewish community. The congregation shares space of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist congregation. Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman is the spiritual leader here; she and her partner, Rabbi Renee Bauer, live on the east side of Madison.

#### St. Mark’s Lutheran

605 Spruce St., Madison

608-256-8463 madison.com/communities/stmarks

In the words of Pastor Mary Pharmer, “St. Mark’s endeavors to be defined by Hospitality and Welcome. This is made real in the congregation’s willingness to welcome those who are seeking blessings of unions and those who are LGBT. The community, especially on the south side, knows that we are a place of good food and welcome friendship.”

#### St. John’s Lutheran Church

322 East Washington Ave., Madison

608-256-2337 stjohnsmadison.org

Like Lake Edge Lutheran, St. John’s is also a member of Reconciling in Christ/Lutherans Concerned. The congregation voted to be part



## Her Path to the Pulpit

Answering the call for the Reverend Eldonna Hazen first meant reconciling her sexuality with her faith. In her own words, First Congregational United Church of Christ’s Associate Minister talks about why she’s returned to the church

Photo by Melody Hanson  
Imagine Photography  
melhanson@yahoo.com

Is it realistic to be a lesbian and want to be a minister? No... maybe... no... and yes! Those four answers, in that order, are exactly what I have experienced in my life.

I was raised in a small town in Nebraska, part of a family that not only attended worship regularly, but made the Lutheran church a cornerstone of their lives. My parents were both active in the church, and therefore I, as a youth, also became active. My church activities were as important to me as any of my school activities. I participated at the local, conference, and district levels in my denomination. I even had an interest in becoming a minister! I found God to be someone who seemed to love me in spite of all my inadequacies. But – and this is a big “but” – I had not yet found myself as a sexual being. I was too interested in my activities in sports, music, drama, and socializing during my high school years to deal with this all-important issue.

Then came college. Oh my, how my life changed. I found myself being attracted to a woman! How could this be? I was sure that God had made a huge mistake. Had God put the wrong body and mind together? Whatever the cause, I couldn’t get over the attraction to a particular woman. I wanted to spend every possible moment with her. She excited me in a way I had never experienced before.

So what kind of funny game was God playing with me? Remember, I came from a small town. I really wasn’t even sure what being gay or lesbian was. And the only things I could connect with those two words were jokes I had heard. I certainly had never heard anyone in my church talk about homosexuality, which I didn’t take to be a good sign. Even having all of these thoughts, I continued my relationship with this young woman. It felt good. It felt right. This was the love and passion I had never known. My freshman year at college held more new experiences than I ever could have imagined!

But the summer after my freshman year, things changed. Throughout that summer, I was again immersed in a church that not only didn’t talk about homosexuality, but didn’t talk about sexuality at all. I began to feel guilty. Anything I could get my hands on to read told me that I could not both love God and love another female. I had to make a choice. I had been so steeped in my religion that there seemed to be only one choice: I could not live my life as a lesbian.

Is it realistic to be a lesbian and want to be a minister? No! And having made that decision, I knew that I wanted to be a minister. I even told my family that I had made the decision to go to seminary after completing my undergraduate degree.

After breaking my own heart and the heart of the person I loved most, I attempted to live a life that would be acceptable to both God and society. I was closeted, so this struggle was very much internal. But that struggle continued and intensified. As much as I tried to live a life that society and the church approved of, it made my life empty. The relationships I found to be most fulfilling and meaningful to me were with women!

An important thing for me to mention at this point is that I never blamed God for any of these feelings. As I stated earlier, I thought God might have

made a mistake in my creation, but I didn’t believe the God I loved would ever abandon me. What I did feel strongly were the voices of the institution of the church – either a total lack of conversation or the loud “You’re going to hell!” voice. Luckily, I rarely had to deal with anyone saying anything to my face, but I certainly heard and witnessed the powerful voices of the church.

One of the reasons I believe that I didn’t blame God is because I continued to be surrounded by people who loved and cared for me. I wasn’t out as a lesbian, but I now believe that there were people who knew my secret and still did not judge me. The most disappointing part of this reality was that I no longer felt comfortable in the the institution of the church. There was a disconnect for me. I didn’t believe the institution was representing God as I knew God. I stepped away from the church for ten years, believing that I could continue my relationship with God outside the religious community.

I entered another relationship with a female. Words cannot adequately express the difference between the relationships I had with women and those I tried with men. It was during this second major female relationship that I realized the nature of my sexuality, that God not only loved me for who I was but had indeed molded and shaped me. I was starting to feel comfortable in “my skin,” but I continued to feel a longing to be connected to a faith community.

**I never blamed God for any of these feelings. I thought God might have made a mistake in my creation, but I didn’t believe the God I loved would ever abandon me.**

After nearly 16 years in this relationship, the relationship itself was becoming more challenging. I’m still not sure I can lay my finger on one cause for this, but it was eroding and I needed a community to support me for who I was. Through friends – straight friends, I might add – I found a Methodist minister who embraced me as a child of God and a church that, for the most part, welcomed me into the congregation. I again found a community in which to reconnect more wholly with God. This congregation nurtured me as a valued child of God, and I again felt the pull that God was calling me to the ministry.

I began a new, healthy relationship with Cathy, who is my lifelong partner. We found hope and strength in a religious community supported by our church family and our minister. I was given the strength, through this community and Cathy, to come out to my family and friends (at the age of 34!). It was my mother’s first words to me – “Well, we’re all God’s children” – that assured me of God’s love. It was my parents and friends who not only

didn’t turn their backs on me, but loved me and assured me of God’s love, too. Despite this, coming out did come with challenges, for one member of my family vowed never to talk to me again and cut me off from his family. Unfortunately, he has held to his vow to this day.

The Methodist minister performed a union ceremony for Cathy and me in the church. We had been blessed and reunited with a God who loved us for how we had been molded and shaped. The blessings we received were overpowering. An enduring relationship with the church had been restored, and healing was in full swing. Cathy and my minister encouraged me to think again about the possibility of attending a seminary. Is it realistic to be a lesbian and want to be a minister? The answer this time was – maybe. I lived in the hope of answering the call from God that I had heard so long ago.

I was attending a Methodist church. Could I be ordained as a lesbian? Well, yes, but I couldn’t be a “practicing lesbian,” the church said. We used to joke that we didn’t need practice, but the fact was that I wasn’t going to be “ordainable” by Methodists as a lesbian in an open relationship. I was raised in the Lutheran church. What was its stand? Could I be ordained? There had been a few such cases, but they had occurred under protest. This was yet another slap into reality. Is it realistic to be a lesbian and want to be a minister? The answer this time? No!

It was not until I talked with the wife of one of my former ministers that I again considered the possibility of answering a call to ministry. She encouraged me to visit a United Church of Christ seminary in the Twin Cities. When Cathy and I visited this seminary, we were embraced for what we were: an openly lesbian couple with a one-year-old son.

Is it realistic to be a lesbian and want to be a minister? This time, at last, YES! I was ordained into the ministry on July 29, 2006 by the United Church of Christ. My family and I have been embraced by the community of the First Congregational United Church of Christ of Madison. We are not merely tolerated here, we are affirmed.

Not only is it realistic for a lesbian to want to be a minister, it is imperative that I follow God’s call to model the behavior to love one another. LGBTQA all hear the loud voices of the institution of the church. The may not always be audible, but the messages can be loud and clear without anyone speaking.

Let me be honest in saying that I have not had to endure the pain and torture, physical or mental, that many LGBTQA people have encountered. I continually had people around me who did not judge me because of my sexuality. That is the very reason that I embrace the ministry today.

I see and hear of people who are mistreated by their fellow human beings. I want to make sure that we surround people in all walks of life to let them know that they are God’s children, too. That even when someone abandons them, there are those, like us, who are willing to pick them up and show them God’s love. Thankfully, I had people in my life who showed God’s love to me. It is my goal not only to be one who shows love, but to be one of the loud voices that says, “Whoever you are or wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” ■

## Gender &amp; Faith

## 'Peace' of Mind

Linking her spiritual journey and her trans journey, Heather Field uses a faith community to find serenity in living her personal truth



There are several journeys, both literal and metaphorical, that brought Heather Field to life, and to Madison.

One of those journeys began in 1998, when she was still living as a man. Living as a misgendered person had an impact on every area of her life. But in 1998, Heather's then-wife introduced her to a Catholic Newman Center near their home. Heather had always been spiritually curious, and developed a relationship with God as she understood him through years of sobriety at AA. But this immersion into faith led to a spiritual coming out.

As Heather says, "My spiritual journey and my trans journey are inextricably linked." On several occasions, she heard a voice that she describes as "not of me". Those instincts led her to join the congregation, and also served as an important voice in her trans journey.

Through prayer, Heather says she "felt that the shame and the otherness of crossdressing was gone overnight."

Heather moved to Madison in 2004, and was living part-time as a man, and part-time as Heather. The stress of such a schizophrenic experience led her to become suicidal. Through prayer, Heather says she "felt that the shame and the otherness of crossdressing was gone overnight." Soon after this transformative event, she started living as a woman full-time. As she says, "My spiritual coming out led to my coming out in terms of gender."

Heather is a member of the ecumenical faith community that is guided by the Benedictine Women of Madison, and attends Sunday Assembly at Holy Wisdom.

For the past several years, she's been reconciling the various chapters of her life. She's maintained sobriety and has a successful career. She has contact with some members of her family, but is estranged from her children. She cherishes the spiritual community she's found, and appreciates how welcome she feels. When she began attending church in Madison, she was asked by one congregation leader: "Do you know why you stand out at church?" Heather responded: "Because I'm so tall?" She laughed at the eventual answer: "Because you're always so early!" ■

of the organization in 2006. St. John's openly affirms its members, and it has developed a "household covenant" to address its congregants' wishes for blessings of their unions.

#### Sufi Order of Madison Spiritual Community

Rev. Nano Boye Nagle

608-290-4443 [sufiorder.org](http://sufiorder.org)

Sufi followers define spirituality as the "religion of the heart." LGBT people who are part of the Sufi religion can take active roles, including spiritual leadership. Sufi ministers

officiate at same-sex weddings and commitment ceremonies.

#### Temple Beth El

2702 Arbor Dr., Madison

608-238-3123 [templebethelmadison.org](http://templebethelmadison.org)

Temple Beth El is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, which has, as a national organization, been open and affirming since 1987. The temple was one of the most visible opponents to the marriage amendment, and it hosted a town hall meeting on the amendment in 2006. ■

## Recommended Reading

A bibliography of LGBT spirituality

**A Call to Radical Faithfulness: Same-Gender Relationships through the Eyes and the Heart of Christ.** by Rick Alan Alderfer (Strategic Press, 2006). Alderfer analyzes Scripture in the context of same-sex relationships and what verses mean from the perspective of a loving Christ.

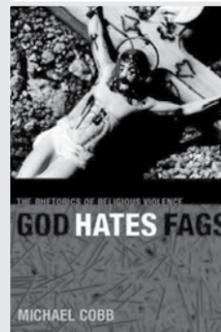
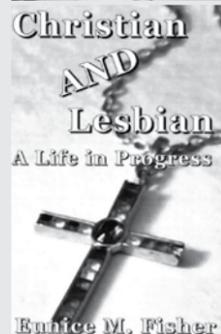
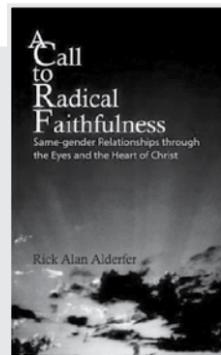
**Christian AND Lesbian: A Life in Progress.** by Eunice M. Fisher (Rockford, IL: RWG Press/Rockford Writers' Guild, 2006). Fisher, a Wisconsin native who grew up in Milwaukee, has compiled an anthology of her work as a Christian, a lesbian, and a gay rights activist.

**Coming Out Spiritually: The Next Step.** by Christian de la Huerta (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1999). A great foundation for LGBT spiritual education. The author examines traditional roles, talks about ways that LGBT people have had to manage their spiritual and sexual lives, and suggests ways to integrate those aspects of our lives.

**God Hates Fags: The Rhetorics of Religious Violence.** by Michael Cobb (New York: New York University Press, 2006). The most comprehensive documentation of antigay religious violence. The book is an academic, intellectual look at the effects of religious intolerance on LGBT lives, from the pulpit to the Supreme Court.

No mention of works on LGBT spirituality could be complete without the late John Boswell, who was a prominent historian, a professor at Yale, and an openly gay man. Two of the most important texts were **Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, hc; 2005, pbk) and **Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe** (New York: Villard Books, 1994, hc; Vintage Books, 2005, pbk). Boswell's work was incredibly important because it challenged traditional thinking and did so with data that supported Boswell's contentions about our role in history.

Finally, there are several contemporary texts by Daniel Helminiak, an LGBT theologian. Among his books are **The Transcended Christian: Spiritual Lessons for the Twenty-First Century** (New York: Alyson Books, 2007); **What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality** (San Francisco: Alamo Square Distributors, 2000); and **Meditation without Myth: Things I Wish They'd Taught Me in Church about Prayer, Meditation, and the Quest for Peace** (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2005). These books, and other books by Helminiak, delve deeply into today's spiritual world, and what impact that world has on LGBT people. ■



## The Civil Servant

Over the past two decades, **Steve Starkey** has built a professional career in community service. In 2006 he began using that experience to steer OutReach as its Executive Director.

From co-op member to publishing Wisconsin's first statewide gay and lesbian newspaper to sitting on nonprofit boards and running OutReach – Madison's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender center – Steve Starkey has maintained involvement in Madison's activist and nonprofit world since attending Madison Memorial High School during the Vietnam War.

Steve got involved in activist causes in 1981, the year that he graduated from Madison Area Technical College with a degree in commercial art. It was also in 1981 that Starkey came out. At that time, the Madison queer community was small and isolated. Most were closeted, and few gay organizations existed. "I had a couple of friends who wanted to create community and get information out," says Steve. They founded Wisconsin's first gay newspaper, *OUT!*, without any money. For five years, funded by donations, grants, and community shares, the *OUT!* staff distributed 10,000 free copies throughout the state through a network of volunteers.

The *OUT!* staff collectively burned out in 1987. Fortunately, Steve had begun working for Wisconsin Community Fund (WCF), which gives grant money to grassroots organizations. "I was attracted to the idea of wealthy urbanites working with farmers," says Steve, who ended up working at WCF for 20 years as its fund administrator and then, in 1994, as the executive director.

While working at WCF, Steve continued to work on LGBT issues. He explains that gay issues are what he's most passionate about, because although much progress has been made, the LGBT community is in worse health and has a higher suicide rate than the rest of the population. "It's about building culture," says Steve. "Providing alternatives to the bars, other social opportunities. And it's about working on political rights, like the protection laws in the 1980s and [Wisconsin's Marriage Protection] Amendment in 2006."

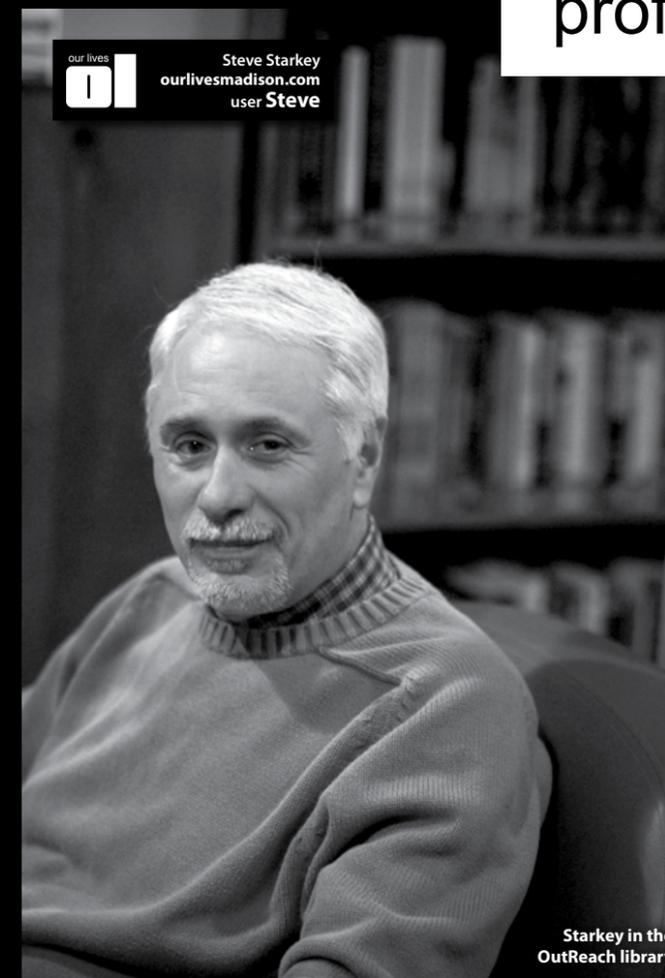
GALVANize – Gay and Lesbian Visibility Alliance – put on its first pride marches in 1989 and 1991. Steve and other community members resurrected the organization between 1994 and 1998. After 1998, the leadership burned out and the organization morphed into Madison Pride.

Starkey joined OutReach as its executive director in 2006. "OutReach was the most successful LGBT organization in town, but it struggled to be sustainable. I thought that I could help," says Steve.

**We need you!**  
Our Lives is looking for Love Stories  
for our first annual Love Issue.

This is about you, sharing stories from the moments that make you feel alive. Happy, sad, endearing moments from friends to life partners. We are looking to showcase love across our community.

For details, visit: [OURLIVESMADISON.COM/LOVE](http://OURLIVESMADISON.COM/LOVE)



Starkey in the OutReach library

It's important to volunteer with something that you're passionate about

For Steve, the most challenging part of working in the nonprofit sector is functioning on a shoestring budget. He says that it is a challenge to figure out what the most important programs are and what will be the most effective. "A nonprofit is like a small business, and there is a lot of competition [for grants and donations] in Dane County," he says. He also finds working with people a challenge, but Steve credits his easygoing personality for success with his staff and the board members. "I'm a Gemini, so a communicator... on the unflappable side."

OutReach serves many needs in Madison's queer community, including support groups, library, community space, and a speaker's bureau. More than 75 volunteers run OutReach. If anyone is interested in working with the LGBT community, OutReach offers several volunteer opportunities. It also provides a referral service to other nonprofits that could use assistance. "It's important to volunteer with something that you're passionate about," says Steve.

Steve points to the sacredness of his weekend as the secret to balance in his life. He enjoys gardening with his partner at their home and playing with their two dogs. They also own two horses that are boarded in the country. "I enjoy being out in the country and focusing on their care," says Steve. ■

Story by Jennifer Jennings • Photo by Melody Hanson

# Faith and the First Amendment

Even laws can't keep religion away from politics. **Tamara Packard** looks at the struggles created when there isn't a clear separation between church and state

**W**hen I was told that this issue would focus on faith, I struggled with what to write about. What can a lawyer – raised as a Unitarian with deep-seated values but not participating in any organized religion – contribute to a forum on faith from a legal standpoint? Doesn't the Constitution require the separation of religion from governmental laws, that is, the separation of church and state?

Then it hit me: It isn't that simple, much as I might wish it to be. Today, some people use religion to justify governmental oppression of LGBT people, while others use it to support equality under the law for our families. As we work for equality, it helps to understand the complex relationship between the faiths of our citizens and the laws of our land.



**In the first half of the 20th century, only a handful of organized religions did not condemn homosexuality outright.**



The First Amendment to the United States Constitution begins: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." The first part, the "Establishment Clause," means, in its purest state, that the American government cannot have an official faith, unlike England, which takes the Episcopal faith as their official Church.

The second part, the "Free Exercise Clause," means that the government cannot regulate religious bodies in ways that hinder them. For instance, they cannot be taxed. Religious bodies are even free to discriminate on the basis of religion at times. Likewise, under both of these clauses, governmental officials must leave their faith at the door: If a judge who is also Christian feels there is a conflict between the government's law and her faith, she must follow the law rather than her religion's teaching in deciding the case before her.

On the other hand, the First Amendment does not require citizens to leave faith out of political decisions. We all take our personal experiences, knowledge, and values into the voting booth with us. We each decide how much the moral teachings of a religion should become public policy and how much we should leave room for people to follow a different morality path.

As Americans, this can be a complex calculation, for while our faith may set certain rules, such as abstinence from alcohol, we also know that our nation comprises people from many religions – as well as people who choose to follow no religion – and our government is designed to allow for that. If we create laws that veer too far from our commitment to the free practice of religion or too close to imposing the beliefs of a particular religion on the general citizenry, those laws will violate the First Amendment to our Constitution.

The Constitution is at the core of what it means to be an American, just as truly as the Bible is at the core of what it means to be a Christian.

How each citizen's calculation involving American and faith principles impacts LGBT people in the early 21st century is quite significant. In the first half of the 20th century, only a handful of organized religions did not condemn homosexuality outright. Throughout that same period, LGBT people were at best invisible under the law, and, when recognized, they were punished for it (e.g., antisodomy laws and laws prohibiting homosexuals from working for the government).

Laws have evolved over the past 50 years to eliminate most government-mandated discrimination, to require (in many places) equal housing and employment, and (in some places) to grant same-sex relationships some measure of governmental protection.

These significant legal advances happened, in great part, because of growing disagreement among different faiths, and even within faiths, about the morality of our sexualities. Unitarian-Universalist churches are no longer one of the very few places where a same-sex couple might obtain religious blessings. The United Church of Christ, as well as many Presbyterian, Evangelical Lutheran, Jewish, and other religious bodies, celebrate commitments made by same-sex couples. Some even call that bond "holy matrimony," just as they do for heterosexual couples. That is but one sign that understanding and acceptance of LGBT people and families has been growing within faith communities.

At the same time, conservative religious communities are pushing back. This year, a strong showing was made by a presidential candidate who stated a desire to amend the Constitution to be "in God's standards." In 2006, Bishop Morlino, the highest Catholic official in Wisconsin, instructed Catholics to vote "yes" to amend the Wisconsin Constitution by banning marriage for same-sex couples and anything "substantially similar." Members of a group called Watchmen on the Walls routinely picket gay pride events and harass gays on the street. One of the group's leaders, Scott Lively, has been quoted saying, "There is a war that is going on in the world ... It's a war between Christians and homosexuals ... And in the United States, ... it was the homosexual political movement that designed this strategy to attack Christianity." In addition, Topeka, Kansas preacher Fred Phelps and his family continue to spew their unique brand of religion-laced hate toward LGBT people.

The manner in which each of us reconciles our identity as an American with our moral values (religion-based or otherwise) is complex, especially where LGBT rights are concerned. The better we understand this, the better we will fare in our struggle for legal equality and social acceptance. ■

Tamara Packard is a Madison civil rights lawyer, activist, and partner in the law firm of Cullen Weston Pines & Bach LLP, [www.cwpb.com](http://www.cwpb.com).

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# Another Path to Happiness

What can you do if the traditional forms of happiness feel beyond your reach?  
**Dale Decker** suggests ways to create the presence of meaning

**S**ince many queer people come into conflict with the religion they were brought up in, we are far more likely to end up without a formal way to explore the meaning of life. For many people a counselor has replaced the clergy as a source of advice and guidance. Certainly counseling can help people to relieve their suffering and be happier. Unfortunately, it's easy to get caught up in feeling better and ignore the largest question on the table: What exactly is happiness?



Those who accepted these symptoms as a normal experience of life coped better than those who railed against their suffering as unfair



The majority of Americans define happiness as the presence of pleasure and absence of pain. We all know that fine food, a comfortable house, romance, money, and good health can create happiness in humans. In fact, research shows that if depressed people start doing the things that used to bring them pleasure, their depression improves. Hopefully we will have plenty of pleasure and comfort in our lives from start to finish, but what if life circumstances make feeling pleasure difficult? How are we to be happy then?

There is a second form of happiness that

shouldn't be controversial if we consider it carefully—the presence of meaning. Even pain and suffering can produce joy if there is a meaningful reason to endure it; child birth is a perfect example. Mothers are willing to undergo extreme suffering to give life to their child because of the importance of the action. The presence of meaning in our lives provides protection even when the harsh realities of life are unavoidable. The loss of meaning isn't merely an intellectual problem, it affects both mental and physical health. These concepts don't seem to fit into modern psychology but the pioneers in this field were no strangers to this discussion.

Dr. Victor Frankl was a respected psychiatrist and a contemporary of Sigmund Freud (the two had a spirited correspondence since their theories were so different.) Dr. Frankl specialized in treating suicidal people which provided him a unique perspective when he was detained in a Nazi concentration camp. He noticed that some prisoners survived while others quickly died of disease or committed suicide. He found that people who had meaning in their lives, such as wanting to survive to be reunited with family, were able to endure. Those who became despondent literally lost the will to live.

Modern research about trauma also sheds light on the importance of meaning. Researchers set out to find out why some people who are exposed to traumatic events have very little impact on their functioning while others become disabled by their experience. Both groups had the same level of symptoms and similar exposure to trauma. However, those who accepted these symptoms as a normal experience of life coped better than those who railed against their suffering as unfair. The healthy individuals were still suffering from their trauma but that experience was contained in the larger view of their lives and therefore had less hold over them.

At this point, you may be wondering what this has to do with you. Well, think of the search for meaning as an insurance policy. Reinforcing your ability to find meaning in all aspects of your life will

**Reinforcing your ability to find meaning in all aspects of your life will provide you with the strength to endure whatever life brings.**

provide you with the strength to endure whatever life brings. Of course, I can't prescribe a belief system for you but I can suggest some mental habits that will encourage you to find your own path.

### How We Can Help Ourselves

**Set your motivation.** Before you start your day, remind yourself of your intention. Focus on your purpose (perhaps putting food on the table for your family) rather than the daily frustration of work. The hassles don't seem so important when compared to the real purpose.

**Take an inventory.** I'll bet you already do many things that are meaningful each day but you don't give it much thought. Encourage yourself to look forward to good deeds as much as you anticipate the purely fun activities of the week.

**Know your limits.** We all know someone overextended by numerous political and volunteer duties. Eventually exhaustion wins and that driven enthusiasm turns to apathy. Do what you can and rejoice in it no matter how small it may seem.

**Enjoy your good fortune.** Experiencing the pleasure available to you is far from a decadent waste of time. Rather it is essential for giving us energy and joy to work on more lasting happiness.

**Don't fall into the guilt trap.** You can waste a lot of energy picking each action apart and examining it. This leads to resentment and eventually the urge to throw the whole activity out to avoid the guilt. You'll get a lot further if you set realistic expectations and celebrate your accomplishments.

**Share your experience.** It's important to have guidance and support from outside yourself. It might be a congregation, an inspiring person or a sympathetic group of friends. ■

Dale Decker has been a psychotherapist and substance abuse counselor in our community since 1994. He can be found online at [www.daledecker.net](http://www.daledecker.net)

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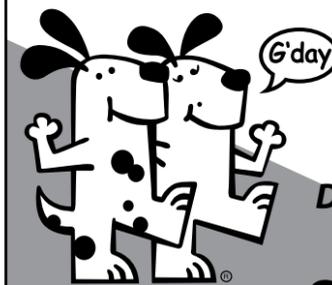


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## Caribbean Calling

Bringing island entrees with him to the States, Thony Clarke makes authenticity and atmosphere a priority at Café Costa Rica

THOUGH HE HASN'T BEEN IN THE CITY (OR THE COUNTRY) for long, "Mango Man" Thony Clarke has already made quite an impression on Madison foodies. For several years, Thony has supplied smoothies and smiles to his downtown food cart patrons. Now the Mango Man has upgraded his space – although not by too much! – in a more permanent spot: Café Costa Rica.

The café is tucked a half flight of stairs below street level, just one block east of the Capitol Loop. Inside, the stylized surroundings tell you instantly that this tiny space is going to deliver BIG flavors . . . and the food does not disappoint.

Authentic Latin/Caribbean flavor permeates every dish on the menu, revealing the owner's Costa Rican and Jamaican heritage. The coconut shrimp appetizer is a must-try, lightly sweet and wonderfully crispy. For entrees, the Curried Chicken is a tried-and-true favorite: tender chicken in a mild yellow curry. Another great selection is the Cena Criolla: made with steak, pork or chicken, topped with grilled onions and peppers, this dish imparts a great char-grilled flavor. Both are served with rice and beans, grilled plantains and a shredded green salad.

For those of you who, like me, don't normally reach for the hot sauce: do yourself a favor and try these house-made salsas. Available in a green version called Monteverde and a red version called simply Mango Man Salsa, both are amazing. The Monteverde has a lively, piquant flavor that dances on the tip of the tongue, while the Mango Man Salsa has a complex flavor which turns up the heat at the back of the throat. While definitely on the spicy side, both add more flavor than heat and are absolutely delicious. For the fearful, there is a milder, kid-friendly version of the red salsa available.

A half-dozen varieties of empanadas are available, with fillings that range from savory to sweet. Try the strawberry version, or any of the house-made bakery selections available daily, for a delectable finish to your meal.

If you don't have room for dessert, you still absolutely must make room for a cup of Café con Leche. Richly brewed with fair trade coffee beans and sweetened condensed milk, the creamy concoction is dangerously delicious . . . and highly habit-forming. I'm looking forward to my next cup already! —Amy VanKauwenbergh

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## Coming Out of Denial

Brenda Farabaugh opens up about how she first reacted when her son Patrick came out to her, and where she is at with it now.

One must ask, what is the difference between denial and realism? Denial is telling oneself that your son/daughter is as “normal” as his/her straight friends, especially when you come from a small town. It was just unheard of knowing a gay person; they just didn’t exist in our town. They were considered social outcasts, as well as their parents for bringing them up in this world. When my son Patrick entered junior high school, he encountered many differences with his fellow classmates. He would always come home upset and ask why was he was so different. As a parent I would console him and explain that kids are cruel and that he shouldn’t buckle under peer pressure. I used to wonder what type of female would be a compatible match for him, totally naive of his sexual orientation. After graduation Patrick was off to college and as a typical mother, my heart was broken when he moved out. He seemed painfully unhappy but wouldn’t tell me what was troubling him. So, I took it for granted that he was just homesick and missed his family. He then decided to leave school to do an internship with *Entertainment Weekly* in New York City.

Wow, what an eye opener moving him was. I remember a call from Pat on his first day at work and him saying “Mom—you won’t believe all the drag queens that just walked past my office.” I should have recognized the sign from the enthusiasm in his voice, but again—denial, I told everyone he was “star struck”. Patrick convinced me to fly to New York to visit him. He came out in a weak moment and told me I just didn’t understand that he was gay and struggling with his own emotions. But there again – denial – I brushed it off and blamed his mood swings on New York, and under no circumstances was I going to tell my husband or family members. That just wasn’t going to happen. When Patrick’s internship was up at *Entertainment Weekly* he went to work for *Out Magazine*. I was so upset. I never told anyone he worked for a gay magazine. Patrick could never stay long in one place. He was always moving. In 1999 he made a trip driving around North America, then moved back to New York to start working for *Condé Nast Traveler*. He also joined a LGBT hockey league there. He told me it wasn’t all gay people, so I went back to New York to watch him play. I was really impressed—especially because he never

put on a pair of ice skates growing up. At that time I noticed a difference in Patrick, I wasn’t really sure what was going on in him. On a bright spring morning, 10 years after he left home, Patrick called me to say he had decided to move to Madison, Wisconsin so he could be closer to home and could visit me more often. I was elated, especially when I found out it was only a three hour drive from our home. As the conversation went on, he asked if I told his father yet about his sexuality. I said no. He was hurt and our conversation ended on a very bad note. So before Thanksgiving that year, I told his father and much to my surprise he already suspected it.

### I don’t care what people think—he is our son. If they don’t like it then they are not worth calling a friend

In 2006, I went to visit Patrick in Madison and we started talking about hockey. That night we went to a Badger hockey game. Then a few weeks later Pat called to say he was starting a LGBT league in Madison. My first impression was “this should be interesting”. That year, I went to see the league play twice as well as their championships. I just sat back and felt impressed and extremely proud of Patrick for all he had accomplished. His interaction with all the players was phenomenal. I always knew Patrick had leadership ability within him. I also went to the association’s fundraiser “Blades Against AIDS.” The look on his face said it all. I came home and finally started telling my family and friends. I’ve come to the conclusion that I am no longer in denial. Now I realize I have the attitude that I don’t care what people think—he is our son. If they don’t like it then they are not worth calling a friend. The sad conclusion is I never took Patrick’s feelings into consideration in the past. I never considered what he was enduring. The mere fact of coming out wasn’t enough on his plate, the struggles in daily living, being lonely, and society’s prejudices were added to that. It’s no wonder why these young people are an emotional mess today. My advise to other parents of LGBT young adults is to support your loved one and try to smooth the transition for them the best way possible. If I had to do it over, I would have been a realist. That is the difference between denial and realism. Society is cruel enough, but the individual is truly struggling to find peace within him/her self. ■

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