

# The Rainbow Connection

**March 2010**

ACHR Board of Directors: Dave Bentlin; Peggy Burton; Gary Gletty; Margo Mendoza; Donna O'Crowly

The Rainbow Connection is published by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR). Correspondence can be sent to P.O. Box 5048, Bloomington, IL 61702-5048, or e-mail [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com)

## **New GLBT church established in Bloomington/ Normal**

Open Worship Church of Hope is new to the community. The church is a reconciling and inclusive fellowship of Christian believers welcoming all of God's children. It matters not your age, race, nationality, gender, orientation, social / economic position, education, health status, nor your faith/ church experience. The church believes that all are welcome.

Further, the church believes:

- The Bible to be the inspired, infallible Word of God. (II Tim.3:16)
- There is one true and ever-living eternal God. (Father, Son, Holy Ghost ) (Deut.6:4; Isaiah 43:11; I John 5:7)
- In the New Testament "new birth" experience for all believers. (John 3:5; Acts 2:38)
- In holiness of heart and spirit as the Bible standard for believers. (Hebrews 12:14)

- In the literal, second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In observance of Communion or Lord's Supper, open to all believers.
- In the Virgin Birth, through Immaculate conception.
- Salvation is through Christ alone. Having a personal relationship with him. (John 3:16)

For the complete list of church beliefs visit the church website at <http://www.owchonline.org/>

Church services are held every Sunday at 2pm in downtown Bloomington (207 W. Jefferson Street, Suite 405).

YES! You are invited to church! The doors to this church are open to YOU. From the pulpit, to the seats, to the door, NO ONE in this church is perfect (Romans 3:23).

## **New sponsors added to First Fridays Events**

State Farm Insurance Agent Maggi Pratt and J.P. Finley and Company Realtors are among the local businesses and organizations that are sponsoring First Fridays at the Bistro.

The next edition of the monthly series of mixers is from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 5 at the bar, 316 N. Main St. in downtown Bloomington.

Appetizers for the March event will be provided by Maggi, who has many lgbt customers and is glad to be participating in the First Fridays mixers.

Future First Fridays will be April 2; May 7; June 4; and July 2.

First Fridays is a monthly event held at the Bistro and sponsored by local LGBTQA organizations and businesses. Everyone who is LGBTQ and LGBTQ-supportive is invited to join us for food, conversation and networking.

## **Upcoming Advocacy Council 2010 activities/ programs!**

Program on Don't Ask, Don't Tell; Program on Marriage Equality; Program on LGBT Adoption; Program on Transgender Legal Concerns; Family Reunion Picnic July 11; GLBT Film Festival Oct. 7-10  
Want to help us in the planning? E-mail us at [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com) or call 309-212-4031!

## **A Buddhism group in Bloomington**

By Peggy Ann Burton

I became interested in Buddhism when looking for a meditation practice that would help me deal with everyday life. My thought was to find inner balance. Luckily, I was able to find a Mid-West Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Domo Geshe Rinpoche, and received a Green Light meditation practice that fits my needs.

Domo Geshe Rinpoche, a reincarnate Lama of the Geluk tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, teaches the "joyous path" with warmth and humor, in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century context. She facilitates our inner work of overcoming preliminary obstacles such as stress, anger, worry, and discouragement so we can reach our highest potential. Rinpoche teaches timeless and universal spiritual truths that are not restricted by language and culture. She has taught countless people worldwide. Rinpoche's teachings about getting along with others and the nature of compassion prepare us for transformation.

When I Googled Buddhism the definition I got was: Buddhism is a religion and philosophy

encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddharth Guatama - Buddha (Sanskrit "the awakened one"). Buddha lived and taught in northeastern India sometime between 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

I think of Buddhism as spiritual training, because it is not about holding a set of dogmatic beliefs. Rather it is about learning two things: 1) the true nature of compassion and, 2) how to get along with others.

There is a group that has a weekly group meditation on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m., it usually lasts no more than an hour. They meet across from Unity Church at 1100 North Beech Street in Normal, Illinois.

Domo Geshe is coming to teach May 7<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and May 8<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information check at [www.white-conch.org](http://www.white-conch.org) or call White Conch Dharma Center 262-370-5974. Friday's topic is "A Good Method for Happiness is Becoming More Alive to the Present Moment", Saturday's teaching is "Awaking to the Sacred Energies around You".

## **AIDS Task Force continues fundraising**

The McLean County AIDS Task Force, which learned late last year that its state funding would be cut completely, continues to plan fundraisers to help make up the shortfall.

On Thursday, March 25 the task force will sponsor a bowling fundraiser from 6 to 8 p.m. at Circle Lanes in Bloomington.

And on Saturday, May 15 the task force will hold its annual AIDS Walk/Run for Life at the north end of Tipton Park in Bloomington.

NOTE: Details for these two events were not finalized at press time. For more specific information visit the task force's web site at [www.mcatf.org](http://www.mcatf.org).

## **Bistro plans March events**

No lambs in sight...March at the Bistro will come in like a lion and go out like a lion! Join the folks at 316 N. Main Street in downtown Bloomington for these events:

Friday, March 5 - First Fridays featuring free appetizers courtesy of State Farm Insurance Agent Maggi Pratt (see flier for details).

Friday, March 12 - Bistro Hot Spot featuring some of the best drag performers in the area!

Wednesday, March 17 - St. Patrick's Day special party hosted by the Bistro.

Every Thursday Night - Join Momma for a fun evening of bingo featuring some, ummm, interesting prizes!

Late March - Details are still being worked out, but look for updates on Jan's big birthday bash.

For more information contact the bar at 309-829-2278 or look them up on Facebook under "Bistro Bloomington."

## **BN Dining OUT Group update**

The BN Dining OUT group has gone on hiatus because of low participation. If anyone is interested in resurrecting the group please contact the Advocacy Council at [info@achr-il.com](mailto:info@achr-il.com) and we will pass along your interest to the group leader.

## **Film Festival news**

A small but dedicated group of volunteers continues to meet monthly in preparation for Bloomington/Normal's first-ever GLBT Film Festival Oct. 7-10 at the Normal Theater in Uptown Normal.

Individuals and groups are working on fundraising, film selection, publicity, and special programming.

The festival committee meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month, which means our next meeting is set for Tuesday, March 16. We meet at the Connections Community Center, 313 N. Main Street in downtown Bloomington. If you are interested in assisting us in this groundbreaking venture please feel free to join us! If you are unable to attend the meetings please contact Dave at [davebent62@hotmail.com](mailto:davebent62@hotmail.com).

## Other B/ N religious organizations maintain GLBT-inclusivity

The Open Worship Church of Hope joins an ever-growing list of religious/spiritual possibilities for GLBT people in Bloomington/Normal.

If you are looking for an LGBT welcoming church community, you are invited to come to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal at 1613 E. Emerson Street in Bloomington, the 2<sup>nd</sup> church west of S. Towanda Ave. and across the street from the grounds of Ewing Manor. It is a very inclusive congregation that does not have any creeds to which a person is required to subscribe. Please visit the church website at <http://uubn.org> to find out about this congregation and the Unitarian Universalist Association website at <http://uua.org> to learn about the principles of the faith and much more.

The services are one hour long beginning at 10 AM on Sunday mornings. Child care is provided.

New Covenant Community, in the Campus Religious Center at 210 W. Mulberry Street in Normal, is an Open and Affirming/More Light congregation which welcomes all persons into full participation, regardless of race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. NCC is also a member of The Center for Progressive Christianity (TCPC), an ecumenical coalition of like-minded congregations who embrace the search for meaning in their lives and for justice in the world, as well as a member of the Central Illinois Organizing Project (CIOP). New Covenant Community is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ.

New Covenant Community welcomes all who wish to share their spiritual journey as followers of Christ. In light of current controversies within the churches, the church makes explicit its welcome to all persons without regard to sexual orientation. This welcome includes readiness to elect persons to all leadership offices within the congregation without regard to sexual orientation. New Covenant therefore publicly identify itself with others making similar declarations in the denominations of which we are a part, namely, "More Light" congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and "Open and Affirming" congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

Sunday School program for elementary aged children meets on Sunday mornings at 10:30am (10am in the

summer). We offer two different classes, one for 4 - 7 year olds, and another for 3rd to 8th graders, with teachers who lead on a rotating basis. We also provide nursery care for our very young children during the service. Or, if you prefer, children can join in worship.

Worship is at 10:30am on Sundays. For more information visit New Covenant's web site at <http://www.nccnormal.org/>.

## ISU charity drag show update

The annual ISU Charity Drag Show will take place at the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts, Saturday March 27. The show starts at 7:30, doors open at 7. The charity is the Mclean County Aids Task Force. Please check [www.isupride.org](http://www.isupride.org) for updates.

Proceeds from this year's drag show will go to the McLean County AIDS Task Force to help it survive after recently losing all of its state funding.

## March 21 March for Immigration Reform

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights is concerned about the rights of all people, and in that tradition we encourage GLBT folks to participate in the March 21 March on Washington for Immigration Reform.

On that day marchers will take their movement directly to the decision-makers to demonstrate to the country and elected officials the widespread sentiment for immigration reform.

Locally, Illinois Peoples Action (IPA) and Latinos United for Change (LUC) are organizing transportation so people from this region can show their concern for immigration reform. For more information please call Sonny at 309-825-6397.

## Transgender Group meets March 13

On Saturday, March 13 the local transgender group will sponsor a guest speaker who will discuss "Spirituality and Our Community".

For time and location, please contact Dana at [tginbnil@hotmail.com](mailto:tginbnil@hotmail.com), or call 217-251-3115.

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**Middle Aged Gay Guy** *continued from page 4 ...*

No, I will wage my "peaceful war" against evil by praying once again for peace and for the enlightenment of the Catholic hierarchy. I will pray that the voices of those god-loving Catholics who disagree with what the church is doing will gain strength and rise up to wrest the true meaning of Christianity away from those men who seek only to guard their power.

Until then...

## Middle Aged Gay Guy War and peace

By Tom O. McCulley

Reading the text of Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, I was moved again by our president's amazing rhetorical abilities. It is not easy to stare down a world that thinks you received such a prestigious award too soon, that you undeservedly received a peace prize in the middle of escalating a war, and to then so eloquently explain not only why you deserve the prize, but why you are in fact a peaceful person, even in the grips of battle. This gay guy thinks Obama constructed an amazing speech given the conundrum of the situation.

I find myself faced with the same kind of conundrum, though I am in no way comparing myself to the titular head of the free world. In my heart, I am a peaceful person, as I believe Mr. Obama is in his heart, though I would be in grave error if I claimed to know what another man thinks. I am a peaceful person, but I agree with our president that purely peaceful means do not always accomplish the goals of peace in the face of those who would wage war.

And I am at war, and I suspect you are too, if you are reading this missive. What follows is one battlefield in the "peaceful war" I and others are waging in the hopes of gaining fundamental human rights.

Today, I am at "peaceful war" against those who continue to try to destroy me by marginalizing my very existence. In the *Devil's Disciple* George Bernard Shaw wrote, "The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity." To make the world at large indifferent toward the suffering inflicted upon me and my loved ones and the other LGBTQ people that exist is at the very heart of what "the other side" continues to try to do on a daily basis.

"The other side" here most obviously includes fundamentalist churches, conservative politicians who try to cling to their old supremacist ways, and others who cloud their fear and hatred toward what they cannot accept in the languages of law and religion. But "the other side" can also mean something as mainstream as the Catholic Church.

I was appalled recently when the Catholic Church used its vast resources to threaten to cut off its charitable work in Washington D.C. if the District's governing body passed a gay marriage bill. Where, I wondered, was Jesus in this desire to inflict political pain on the poor? Why, I wondered, does the Catholic Church work so hard to make me invisible by vociferously opposing every instance where I am my kind seek the decency and protection of civil marriage? Why does the Church desire to crush my soul in order to flex its collective muscle? What, exactly have I done to deserve such treatment?

Let me see, maybe the Catholic hierarchy hates me because I actually make love with my husband. I suppose such a love frightens those men who have worked so hard to cover up their well documented, age-old molestation of innocents by trying to label my form of joyous sexual expression as somehow wrong or defective. Or maybe they want to make me invisible because yesterday I built a snow fort with my grandchildren and we made snow angels. I suppose my co-opting of something "holy" like angel wings must disturb those who use references to avenging angels to frighten their followers into submission. Oh, I know—I prayed to the goddesses and gods of my understanding last night that the world might find a way to live in peace. I guess that since I didn't pray to their god, which in the case of the Catholic Church might be the god of power and money, that I somehow gave affront to a Catholic sense of the exact nature of the deity.

Let me see then—I loved my husband, brought joy into the lives of my grandsons, and prayed—and for this the Catholic Church wants to make sure that I disappear! For the above "sins" the Catholic Church, perhaps the most powerful religious force in the world, continues to declare war on my very existence! In essence then, the Catholic Church, which claims to be the voice of Jesus and his mother Mary, seeks to rip me from my husband, to erase my homosexuality from the minds of my grandchildren by erasing me, and to prevent me from finding spiritual enlightenment through my own form of prayer and meditation.

Forgive me, dear reader, my sense of righteous indignation here.

For those Catholics reading this and by now becoming, I suspect, somewhat distressed, I do not hate you. In fact, I love you with all the love I can muster. But I am angry at the power base that you buy into when you attend services at this particular institution. Yes, I know, far-right churches act in all the same ways I have noted above, and often do worse. However, such bad behavior is expected from that particular ilk. Their form of warfare against my life is more blatant and more easily confronted than the form being employed by the Catholic Church. The Catholic hierarchy is using its claim to represent life to destroy lives, it is using subtlety to protect its power and wealth by seeking to erase me and mine from the face of the earth.

What to do, then? Should I go out and blow up Catholic Churches? Although the thought has crossed my mind from time to time, the answer, of course, is no. For one thing, I would never want to hurt a living person; I do not seek to destroy those who seek to destroy me. For another, I am a gay man and too many Catholic churches have lovely pieces of art that would be lost forever.

*continued on page 3 ...*

# Thanatos

By Gene Naden

Portland, Oregon, is situated near the mouth of the great Columbia River 50 miles from where I grew up. In the summer of 1983 there was a gay bar there known as the Family Zoo. One night, Bobby Griffith left the Zoo alone but didn't make it home. This pretty white boy probably had no trouble finding a trick that night but may have felt guilty afterwards. My best guess is that he found the contrast between his own black mood and that of his partying companions to be too painful. We know that he was neither drunk nor stoned and we know from his diary that he had been miserable and guilt-ridden for years. That night, Bobby opted for an immediate, permanent solution to his chronic problem; he leapt to his death from a freeway overpass. Part of me envies him for the anesthesia he bought himself. Even now, I imagine that we are lovers, adrift together somewhere beyond the moons of Jupiter.

The thing about the space out there, the so-called outer space, is that shadows are colder than Antarctica. And shadows are everywhere because the sun is lost; it is nothing but a bright star. Earth itself is just a speck. You are in a vacuum, meaning that there is utter and total silence. If you could scream at the top of your lungs, your buddy would not hear you. Actually you couldn't scream because the air would be sucked out of your lungs instantly.

And when you die out there you are really, really dead. There is no code blue team to resuscitate you, no CPR, no shock to restart your heart. And there is no chaplain to pray over you, no family to grieve, no burial plot, no headstone.

My earliest clear memories of childhood are of the comic book ritual. Every Saturday my parents would give me a quarter and I would walk from drugstore to drugstore

buying up Superman comics and reading them as I walked. There were many variations on a theme: Superwoman, Supergirl, Superboy. I remember that I seldom spoke to anyone those days. I tried to explain the importance of what I was doing to someone in my family, perhaps my older brother Coordes or my sister Rose, but they didn't get it. I was afraid to talk about it much because I figured they might make me stop.

When my money ran out and there were comics I hadn't read I would go to the stores and sit down by the magazine racks and read what they had. I knew this was against the rules and I always expected some adult to come along and scold me. One time I was reading in the Greyhound bus station and a friend of Rose's was working the soda fountain. He came over and spoke to me. I panicked immediately and ran out of the station. I never went back. Later Rose told me the boy had just wanted to say hello. I was ashamed at my mistake.

Someone gave me a diode radio. Having no battery or other power source, it nevertheless had a sufficiently strong output to power a small earphone, an earbud they would call it now days. At night I would lie in bed listening for hours because this was a time when I could enjoy myself without being interrupted. I didn't even try to explain to my family what the radio meant to me - friendship, comfort, even love.

I heard from the other first and second graders that the older kids, who acted as street crossing guards, could get you "in trouble" and take you to the school principal's office. Getting "in trouble" was supposed to be an extremely serious and negative experience although no one explained why. One time I broke some street-crossing rule and a crossing guard shouted at me from a block away. I fled and for weeks afterward I walked several blocks out of my way to avoid that intersection

and thus avoid getting "taken up."

By the time I was ten I had heard of suicide and had a general idea what it was although no concept of how it was actually done. I am sure I knew about it because I talked about it to my first friend, a boy named Danny. Whoever told me that people actually took their own lives, it was a poisonous remark that had to have been deliberately calculated to frighten me. When I consider this from an adult point of view I just feel cold and empty inside, exactly as if I were floating around in the afore-mentioned outer space. I just block out the feelings because they are too much to bear. I think that if I ever let go I would just scream and scream until my voice gave out or an ambulance came. It is bizarre almost beyond belief.

The conversation with Danny is what I remember best. We were in the front yard of the little house my folks rented. I told him that I would like to kill myself so that I could go to heaven and be happy. I didn't know what was involved and didn't really want to do it, but I had to say something and that is how it came out. I was looking for some emotional response but he didn't say anything.

But Danny told his mother, who told my mother. She took me aside - my father wasn't there - and told me that they didn't want me to "do that." I was extremely embarrassed and afraid that I would be scolded. That was the end of the conversation. I was sure that my fear had prevented her from explaining the situation to me. I know now that it was her fear, not mine, that stopped the discussion.

*Note: Bobby Griffith was a real person and his story, and that of his mother, is told in the book **Prayers for Bobby** by Leroy Aarons.*

## Asclepius

Think of **Asclepius**, the God of Medicine.

Who can argue with an agent of God?

The Doctor of Psychiatry.

The Doctor.

I trusted him, needed him because

-

I trusted him.

Doctor gave me bad advice.

Doctor said I was not gay if I didn't...

do anything.

Doctor.

Do anything.

He knew better.

I knew he knew better.

I knew he lied.

Or was he...

Stupid?

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		<h2>New Covenant Community</h2>
		
<p>An Open and Affirming/More Light congregation which welcomes all persons into full participation in the life of our community, regardless of race, gender, age or sexual orientation.</p>		
<p><b>Worship Sundays, 10:30 a.m.</b> Sunday School and childcare provided during worship</p>		
<p>Chapel of the Campus Religious Center 210 W. Mulberry St., Normal, IL 61761   (309) 454-7362 <a href="http://www.nccnormal.org">www.nccnormal.org</a></p>		

## THE BISTRO

316 North Main  
Bloomington, Illinois 61701  
309/829-2278

M-TH: 8p.m.-1a.m.,  
FRI: 4:30p.m.-2a.m.  
SAT: 8p.m.-2a.m.



316 N Main St. in Downtown Bloomington

**5pm - ??**

**2010 Dates**

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| February 5 | August 6    |
| March 5    | September 3 |
| April 2    | October 1   |
| May 7      | November 5  |
| June 4     | December 3  |
| July 2     |             |

First Fridays is a monthly event held at our local LGBTQA bar and sponsored by local LGBTQA organizations and businesses. Everyone who is LGBTQ and LGBTQ-supportive is invited to join us!

**Sponsors**



Advocacy Council  
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