



OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

President's Column

It's not often that I sit down to write this column with a Bible in one hand and a concordance in the other. (A concordance, for those who might not be familiar with the term, is an alphabetical listing of the words used in the text of the Bible – both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures – and a brief excerpt from the passages in which the word is found.) Considering how many states are trying to pass or have passed so-called religious liberty laws, I thought it might be interesting to do a study of the word "divorce."

Now, please, let me explain. I am not condemning divorce nor am I condemning the people who seek a divorce, not at all. I use the concept merely to give an example of how "religious" people quote the scriptures to their own ends, pointedly observing one precept and ignoring another. "For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel" (Malachi 2:16). How about this one: "Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32). Or this: "And he (Jesus) said to them 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery' " (Mark 10: 11-12).

There's an outcry against same-sex marriage because, "they" say, the Bible condemns it. (You know...Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve...) I wonder if Kim Davis refuses to issue marriage licenses to divorced people? I wonder if bakery shop owners Melissa and Aaron Klein of Oregon refuse to bake cakes for divorced people who are entering into second or third (or more) marriages? They're not cherry-picking, are they...They'd never do that, right? (I hope you can see the smirk on my face...)

I am appalled at the sheer hypocrisy of this "religious liberty" movement. Pick one thing you don't particularly like and make it into a religious crusade. Claim that God is on your side. Make an issue out of a non-issue. Clergy are already protected. There is absolutely no requirement that they preside at same-sex weddings. Roman Catholic clergy have NEVER been forced to preside over weddings involving divorced people. I say again, it's a non-issue!

I came across an article in the April 16 edition of *The Economist*, "Going Rogue. "I think that part of it is worth including here:

Judging by the rhetoric of the Republican presidential contest, the country is going to the dogs; in parts of the South, the infrastructure is indeed crumbling. Yet the region's politicians are concentrating on problems that, to put it mildly, are often less than pressing. Florida passed a law stopping clergy from being dragooned into conducting same-sex marriages, a threat already neutralized by America's constitution. Predatory men infiltrating women's toilets, the spectre raised in North Carolina and elsewhere, is a similarly apocryphal fear...what explains this eccentric turn? It is a reaction; most obviously, to last year's Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, of the kind that often follows dramatic social change. Melton McLaurin, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, notes that this particular "rearguard action" resembles opposition to racial desegregation in emphasizing the supposed endangerment of women and children...Religious-liberty bills and the like offer the consolation of decisive action (even if some are destined to be struck down), of a sort that, unlike new roads and bridges, requires no tax dollars.

I want to believe that the election cycle is responsible for the ramped-up discourse and that it will subside after the November elections. However, the realist in me knows that this is a battle we'll be fighting for decades to come. As long as we have family members and friends who are being negatively impacted by these "religious liberty" laws, our work isn't over.

Together let us "Move Equality Forward."

Toni

PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons. PFLAG is not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic or political group.

OPEN DOORS is a publication of the Northern Illinois PFLAG chapters. Articles that appear do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PFLAG, its Board of Directors or members. We reserve the right to edit any submissions. Priority is given to original work by the membership.

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PFLAG Council of Northern IL
on



PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois Meeting Summary from April 16, 2016

Seventeen members of the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois and one guest presenter gathered for the quarterly meeting of the council. The morning began with a presentation and discussion of the most pressing issue before us here in Illinois: promoting Greg Harris' bill that would allow gender markers to be changed on birth certificates and opposing Tom Morrison's bill that would restrict people's use of bathrooms, a bill targeted at transgender people.

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to chapter sharing and the exchange of ideas on how to make our chapters stronger and more vibrant. Chapter leader after chapter leader agreed that the parents of transgender individuals represent the fastest growing demographic in our chapters. We are fortunate to have support groups that focus on these parents, yet we also appreciate the need for having resources at our fingertips to help these parents immediately.

It's tempting to play the numbers game. If a chapter has a large membership, it must be doing something right, and the chapters with fewer people must be doing something wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. A chapter's success is measured by the people it has helped, whether or not they return and become regular attendees. If their needs have been met in one visit, the chapter has fulfilled its mission!

Another point made by chapter leaders is that it's not necessary to have a set program, i.e. a speaker or film, in order to have a good meeting. Some of the best gatherings and most successful meetings have simply been open discussion and sharing.

Following up with new people is a hallmark for success. Ask new folks to provide their contact information and then e-mail or call them within 48 hours, an action that demonstrates our care.

Patty Dillon Medairy, our Equality Illinois liaison, promoted EqualityCon 2016, a policy summit to be held May 13-14 at the UIC Student Center. The Friday evening session will focus on federal issues, and the Saturday program will zero in on state matters such as empowerment in healthcare, advocacy, criminal justice reform, and youth homelessness. For more information, please see either the Face Book page for Equality Illinois or for the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois. Have you "liked" both pages?

We're looking forward to the Mother's Day "Kisses from Mom" event at Sidetrack, 3349 North Halsted, coordinated by Hinsdale member Marcia Prichason. It's not only a fund-raising event but an opportunity to spread love and good will within the LGBT community. Who can resist a hug and kiss from Mom?

The Chicago Pride Parade will be on Sunday, June 26, the first anniversary of the landmark SCOTUS decision that brought marriage equality to the entire country! PFLAG's float accommodates people who aren't able to walk the entire parade route. Paid members will be given priority, and their reservations must be turned in to Toni (twweaver@earthlink.net) by June 5. After that, non-members may make a reservation if there is space and will be asked to contribute \$10 to help defray the cost of the float.

COUNCIL NEWS

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW!! in Our Chapters?

HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Our April speaker was Carolyn Wahlskog, Program Director for 360 Youth Services. Carolyn has been our guest before, so she came to give us an update on 360 and Youth Outlook. 360 Youth Services provides drug abuse counseling and prevention programs, mentoring, and housing for homeless youth. They received a five-year grant in 2014. Their housing program has served 25 young people in two years. There are now eight, ranging from 18-22 years old. 40% of homeless youth are LGBT, and most are transgender. The tenants stay in one of 15 Naperville apartments that 360 Youth Services has rented. Their number one priority is education – they must work on their high school diplomas or GEDs. Their second priority is employment, and the main challenge is teaching stability in order to keep a job. They learn social skills and live with roommates. A challenge faced by those in the program is public transportation, which is not as plentiful as the city. We asked what we could do, and Carolyn gave us a list of things they always need. We decided to throw a “shower” at our May meeting. We will be donating twin bedding sets, pillows, eating utensils, toilet paper, toiletries, and quarters for laundry.

Carolyn then provided an update about Youth Outlook, which provides drop-in centers for youth based on age groups. The minimum age was 14, but they are seeing pre-teens as young as 12. They now host a transgender group on Wednesday evenings, including a parent group twice a month. It is always wonderful hearing from Carolyn about all the great work she and her organizations are doing for our young people. How she accomplishes so much is amazing and heartwarming!

Our May speaker is Fran Zucco, RN. Clinical Leader at Linden Oaks Behavioral Health, who works with transgender individuals at Edward-Elmhurst Health.



PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Arlene Collins

Our April PTI Meeting was very well attended and there

were 4 new families.

Our guest speaker was Candice Hart, a member of the Board at Center on Halsted and a past member of PTI starting in 2009. Candice came out after she retired from a Management position at a company in Chicago. She lived as a man during the day and in the evenings presented as a female. She knew she would not be accepted where she was employed and waited to retire so she would not lose her benefits. She was married with grown children and had a tough decision to make. But, she made that decision to live in her true identity. She spoke of the challenges with her family and issues she faced along the way. She went back to school and is a Licenced Professional Counselor. She is very active in the trans community. We asked many questions pertaining to our kids and she had lots of information to impart to the group. It was very interesting for the group to meet a trans woman who waited as long as she did to come out. In her life, she put everyone ahead of her. She is such a delightful person and I would recommend her as a speaker.

May 12th is our next meeting and we will welcome Myles Brady from the Howard Brown Center who will discuss their Outreach Trans Program. Hope you can join us.



Deerfield CHAPTER

By Janet Svatos & Sue Ginsburg

We welcomed Darren Ostmeyer, from Gay Fathers of Greater Chicago (gayfatherschicago.org). They meet the second Monday of every month, 7:00-9:00 pm, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted in Chicago. The group is comprised of fathers who are both in and out of the closet, gay and bisexual men, providing support and a network of men who are similar circumstances. The meetings are unstructured and they do have social functions, such as book discussions, pot luck meals, and theatre outings. Darren provided a great deal of insight into the challenges these men face and he was so supportive of our PFLAG parents as well!

In June, we plan to partner with "Angles" to provide parental support to those students who take advantage

of the programs available at Angles in Northfield. We are also looking forward to partnering with a pediatric physicians group to help support parents of young children who have come out to their doctors.

Reminder: Mosque Alert (Ground Zero Mosque), the play written by Malik Khoury, PFlag's October guest speaker, is being presented through May 1st at the Silk Road Rising Theater (Chicago Temple Building at 77 W. Washington St.) When ordering tickets on line, if you mention PFLAG, you will get a discounted price!!!

Don't forget our Mothers' Day fundraiser at Sidetracks in Boys Town. We are still looking for help from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, the busiest time. It's so much fun offering "hugs and kisses" to the patrons. They love PFLAG and we love those bear hugs!!!

The Pride Parade will take place on Sunday, June 26! We will not get our place in line until one week before, so please check your emails with that information.



McHenry CHAPTER

By Toni Weaver

It is with great sadness that we bid farewell to Jill Hartman, one of the original members of our chapter when it was founded in 1999. She will be moving to Maryland to be closer to her daughters. Jill described how the chapter came to be. The pastor of the Unitarian Church in Woodstock, Dan Larsen, became aware of a teen that had been kicked out of his house, and he approached Bob and Joan Coleman with the request that they foster this young man. Church members along with their pastor started a PFLAG chapter to help other parents who were struggling with the sexual orientation of their children. The rest, as they say, is history!

The meeting provided the opportunity to not only honor Jill but also the chance to share what brought each and every one present to PFLAG. It was a time of looking back and a time of looking forward to what the chapter has accomplished and what it has meant in the lives of so many people.

The Pride Club of McHenry County College shared its drag show proceeds with PFLAG McHenry, and Toni Weaver, representing the chapter, gave a mini-presentation on the history of PFLAG at both performances. Carol Nightingale, Carol Fetzner, and Cate Becker staffed a PFLAG

information table.

Barbara Marian, Jerry Powers, and Toni Weaver staffed an information table at "Take Back the Night," an evening devoted to domestic violence presented by the Student Peace Action Network at McHenry County College. Various community organizations were represented at the resource fair. We had a marvelous opportunity to speak about the services and support we offer as a PFLAG chapter.



Tinley Park CHAPTER

By Deborah Medina

PFLAG Tinley Park is going strong with new attendees each meeting. We plan on welcoming some guest speakers in the coming months. Our meetings are held on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 2pm at Zion Lutheran Church, 17100 S. 69th Ave., Tinley Park. Enter the glass doors at the south entrance. Also follow us on Facebook, PFLAG Tinley Park!



Oak Park CHAPTER

By Nancy Johnson

We didn't have a speaker for our March meeting, but we did have a good discussion about up coming events. We got a bake sale date in the bake sale lottery. It'll be on July 2, which was one of our preferred date.

Several of us are going to Harbor 57 on May 5. Harbor 57 is a drop in center for homeless youth at St. Michaels Episcopal Church at 5700 Midway in Chicago. The church is only 3 blocks from Oak Park. We hope to arrange a joint potluck at the church with the volunteers and anyone else who wants to come too!

We have Day in Our Village coming up on June 5, Fourth of July parade, and we've been invited by the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association to help with their donut day at the Farmers Market in exchange for a share of the sales.



Staffing at table at "TAKE BACK THE NIGHT" event
at McHenry College - April 21, 2016
Barbara Marian, Jeff Powers, Toni Weaver

A RESPONSE FROM A PFLAG HINSDALE MOM, PATRICIA VASILJ TO SUZANNE BAKER, A REPORTER FOR THE TRIBUNE

Amoris Laetitia has been released. It is the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. It is a large treatise and a discouraging one to a PFLAG Mom. We are composed of Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. This group has been expanded to include bi-sexuals and transgendered. Our members come from a broad spectrum of religious beliefs. I am Roman Catholic and as such was particularly interested in the results of the synods on the family. There was very little commentary in the report regarding our gay, lesbian, transgendered and bi-sexual children. There was no evidence that the participants in the synods perused current scientific studies or used modern exegesis in applying numerous scripture quotes to the commentary.

Pages and pages are devoted to promulgating love between husbands and wives. Children are to be nurtured and protected. All this is applied to heterosexual unions, which give birth to heterosexual children. Children are gifts from God, unless they are found to be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered. When a child "comes out", the whole climate changes. Same sex marriage, closed to the transmission of life, is not acceptable. Human identity becomes the choice of the individual. In Chapter Two, diversely, it is stated "...there is no stereo-type of the ideal family."

In Chapter Five, paragraph 170, it is stated "Yet only the Father, the Creator, fully knows the child; he alone knows his or her deepest identity and worth. Expectant mothers need to ask God for the wisdom fully to know their children and to accept them as they are." And further it is stated, "The love of parents is the means by which God our Father shows his own love. He awaits the birth of each child, accepts that child unconditionally, and welcomes him or her freely."

In the same Chapter, paragraph 183, it is stated "God has given the family the job of 'domesticating' the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters."

In Chapter 6, paragraph, 275 it is stated: "...one of the most important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope."

The Catholic Church is sadly lacking, at the parish level, of seeing all members as part of the Body of Christ. We see the results at PFLAG meetings and in the faces of children who fear rejection not only from their Church family but their human families. Some children run away from their home environment and are forced to live on the street. Some children, not able to cope with religious or societal pressures, end their own lives. A mother will come to a meeting with a framed photograph of a loved son or daughter who chose this course. Why, she wants to know, why.

Our GLBTQ children are not just inconveniences. It was also mentioned that the Bishops want "them" to stop putting pressure on their churches to solemnize their wedding; such compassion, gentlemen. We are way beyond the "Don't ask, don't tell" era. Our GLBTQ children deserve more than a few paragraphs in a 264-page report. You, the Church, have left many of them shattered. The Church and Faith are intertwined. When the Church turns away, they believe God has gone with it. Their Father in heaven has not left them, but one certainly can't tell that from the tone of this treatise. I am saddened and angry that once again those who should know better have hurt our children.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO BECOME A MEMBER...SUPPORT PFLAG

By becoming a PFLAG member, you will help provide support, education and advocacy. All information we collect from you on this form will remain confidential, and we will only share it within PFLAG.

Membership runs from October 1 to September 30; no partial-year membership is available.

Please check:

New Membership Renewal Membership Donation



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PFLAG Hero \$250 Supporting Membership \$60 Donation \$ _____

SELECT A CHAPTER:

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Check enclosed payable to PFLAG

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(Exp Date DD/MM) _____ (CVV – V/MC/D 3 digits on the back – AX 4 digits on the front) _____

(Name on Card) _____

Please return form to your chapter representative or mail form and to:

PFLAG Membership P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126

PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley

Meetings held 2nd Sunday – 2 pm
 New England Congregational Church
 406 W Galena Blvd, Aurora 60506
 pflagaurorafoxvalley@pflagillinois.com

PFLAG Metro Chicago

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 pm
 Center on Halsted (Senior Room)
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613
 pflagchicagometro@pflagillinois

PFLAG Deerfield

Meetings held 2nd Thursday – 7:15 pm
 Congregation BJBE
 1201 Lake Cook Rd, Deerfield 60015
 pflagdeerfield@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG DeKalb County

Meetings held LAST Tuesday – 7 pm
 Federated Church of Sycamore
 612 W State St
 Sycamore, IL 60178
 pflagdekalbcounty@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG DuPage

Meetings held 3rd Sunday – 2 pm
 St Paul Lutheran Church
 515 S Wheaton Ave, Wheaton 60187
 pflagdupage@yahoo.com
 www.pflagdupage.org

PFLAG Tinley Park - NEW

Meetings held 2nd Sunday – 2-4 pm
 Zion Lutheran Church
 17100 69th Ave.
 Tinley Park, IL 60477

PFLAG Downers Grove

Meetings held 2nd Wednesday – 7p.m.
 First Congregational UCC
 1047 Curtiss
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

PFLAG Hinsdale

Meetings held 1st Sunday – 2 pm
 Unitarian Church Hinsdale
 11 W Maple, Hinsdale 60521
 pflaghinsdale@pflagillinois

PFLAG Joliet

Contact Lea Anne Stoughton
 lastoughton@gmail.com
 815-793-5138

PFLAG Will, Kankakee, Iroquois

Meetings held 3rd Sunday, 2-4 pm
 1045 W River St
 Kankakee, IL
 plagkankakee@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG McHenry

Meetings held 2nd Tuesday – 7 pm
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd
 McHenry 60050
 pflagwoodstockmchenry@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Oak Park

Meetings held 4th Sunday – 3 pm
 First United Church
 848 Lake St, Oak Park 60304
 pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org

PFLAG Palatine

Contact Deirdre O'Connell
 herself68@yahoo.com

Parents of Transgender (Chicago)

Meetings are held the 2nd Thursday – 7 pm
 Center on Halsted
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613
 parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org

Parents of Transgender (McHenry)

Meetings are held the 1st Monday – 7 p.m.
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050
 flynnmb12@gmail.com
 marygenzler@hotmail.com

Parents of Transgender (North Shore) - NEW

Meetings are held the 3rd Sunday – 6 p.m.
 Winnetka Presbyterian Church
 1255 Winnetka Rd
 Winnetka, IL 60093

Please join us for any chapter meeting.

If you are not comfortable meeting in a large group, arrangements can be made to meet one-on-one.
 Contact any one of our chapters for more information.