



From Your President

As some of you know, I lived in Houston and was involved in DignityHouston back in the 80s. Then I lived in Austin until 2008 when I returned to Houston and became involved in DignityHouston again. When I came back, I asked the question, "What is DignityHouston? What is its purpose?" At the time, folks laughed at me and told me, "We don't know. We've never been able answer that question with any real consensus." They also tried to confuse the purpose of DignityUSA, a national, umbrella, advocacy organization with that of a chapter that provides direct services to its members and local advocacy, something that could never be done effectively at a national level.

I then began a campaign to craft, for DignityHouston, a mission, core values statement, vision and strategic plan, the stuff that you will find highlighted on the Web site of most nonprofits and churches. Your Board has promised me that we will be able to adopt those essential statements of purpose at our June Board Meeting. (Yes, it's taken that long, but we've been a little busy since last May.) Without such things, it is impossible to develop membership campaigns, Web redesigns and such for they are at the very core of an organization's message.

Remember that a mission statement does not set what every single member must believe. If you were to survey the Catholics in the pews of any parish on any Sunday Mass, you would find a enormous variety of widely diverging beliefs. Rather a mission with its core values establishes what the central beliefs are around which DignityHouston is organized. They are the consensus of the many and varied gifts each individual member brings to the organization.

Whatever we pass in June will be an interim document, a kind of temporary platform for going forward. In a very real sense, mission statements should be both durable and transitional. Ours will be especially transitional because we have added Roy Brooks-Delphin to our Board. Be sure to read the article below on that!

Of course, these documents will be transitional also because, as consensus documents, they can never even be durable until you, as members, have been widely involved. Experience has taught us that that involvement works best when we have a starting point to offer you. Once we have that, we hope that you will step up to the plate and help all of us to ensure that we have the type of consensus-building that it takes to produce inspiring and meaningful documents.

In preparation for the development of these life-sustain documents, this rather long newsletter will focus on some interesting statements on what it means to be an **LGBTQ+ Catholic**. I hope you'll take the time to click the many links to the voluminous and outstanding materials on that meaning.

Open Minds, Hearts and Doors?

George Wetzel, Vice-President

As the Roman Catholic Church continues to wrestle with and invoke jesuitical contortions of logic to form a modern view of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Catholics, the United Methodist Church is currently going through a similar reexamination but in a more public, democratic forum.

In an [article dated May 11, 2016](#), **Religious Dispatches** reporter Pamela Lightsey reports that "LGBTQ" Methodist members are "sacred" but not welcome. This seems to echo the Roman definition that we are "intrinsically disordered and worthy of mercy."

There is no democratic component in the Roman Church similar to the Methodist General Conference, but the politics is playing out in remarkably similar circumstances.

The progress of the Methodist General Conference and their relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church as well as the Episcopal Church is threatened if they cannot find a way to accept their LGBT members as fully "welcome."

I will conclude with the final sentence of this twelve paragraph article:

If this is the case, shame on us, for we will repeat our own history of segregation, bigotry and schism and will put the final nail in the coffin of the UMC expression, "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors."

Pamela Lightsey, **Religious Dispatches**, [The United Methodist Church To LGBTQ: You're "Sacred." But Not Welcome](#), May 11, 2016

LGBTQ Saints?

Every Catholic knows and believes and hopes that there are many saints in Heaven who have not been canonized by the Church. We also know that some canonized saints may be mythical creations. (Anyone remember St. Christopher?) So why do we have saints and feast days for them?

Paul refers to *living Christians* as saints; he says that all of us in the Body of Christ are saints. So why do we revere dead people?

We'll start there. We Catholics believe in life after death, so the folks who have passed from this life have gone to Heaven or Hell (if you believe in such). Of those people, we know that some were so demonstrably good that they are worth of our emulation. In a simple kind of way, they are role models for us, much like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in the political sphere.

As LGBTQ+ people faced with a Church that has labeled us *intrinsically disordered* and would deny us the Sacraments, we would look in vain for saints/role models labeled LGBTQ+ in the Church's list of 810 canonized saints. In addition, we know many who have been martyred for being gay and deserve to be canonized but are not even considered because of the Church's stance on LGBTQ+ issues.

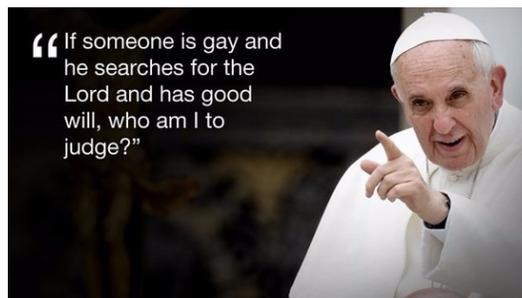
Our New Board Member

In May, 2016, Trustee At-Large Eric Narvaez resigned from our Board. At the Board Meeting in that same month, your Board of Trustees unanimously and enthusiastically elected its youngest and arguably most enthusiastic Board Member, Roy Brooks-Delphin. Roy is currently working on his Ph.D. dissertation on the nexus of Catholicism and performance art.

Roy brings a fantastic counterbalance to your President's task-orientation and commitment to behavioral contracting. He embraces a kind of reflective approach that will be new to the Board but very welcome.

He also brings a much more orthodox, old-time Catholic belief counterbalancing your President's more liberal approach to our faith.

Those kinds of contrasts will, no doubt, create all kinds of sparks and conflict — the very kind of debate that is essential to a well-functioning, effective Board. Without reasoned and educated debate, meaningful change will not occur. Let the sparks fly!



Yet, there are some who still strive to wed the goodness and wholesomeness that can be found in the LGBTQ+ lifestyle to the Church's teachings. And some of those have tried to identify canonized saints who may have been LGBTQ+. St. Joan of Arc, when confronted with being burned at the stake, for instance, demanded that she be dressed in masculine clothes when she died. Others, like Harvey Milk, personified what it means to be holy and die for others, so we seek to include them in any list of LGBTQ+ saints until the Church opens its eyes and begins to accept such saints.

Take a look at the following resources on LGBTQ+ saints and find your role models!

- [JesusInLove. LGBT Saints](#) (Kittredge Cherry)
- [Calendar of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Saints](#) (Paul Halsall)
- [Queer Saints and Martyrs: Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans in Church history](#)

A Dignity Litany of Saints

This [Litany of Saints](#) was commissioned by DignityUSA as our replacement for the Roman Catholic **Litany of Saints**, a prayer that is said at the most solemn and holy of events when the Church needs all the guidance it can get from its

Queer Theology ?\$@!

Many of us have grown up viewing the word *queer* as pejorative, negative, in fact an almost exact parallel to the word *racist*. Yet, one of the fastest advancing, strongest movements in theology is called [Queer Theology](#). How can we embrace a term like *queer theology*? Or *queer saints*? Well, the meaning of words do change over time and that meaning grows, often to encompass meanings that can be subsumed under no other word. Let's take a look at one set of meanings for *queer* provided to us by our friends at the Unitarian Universalist Association.

1. **Queer (adj): attracted to people of many genders**
Although dominant culture tends to dictate that there are only two genders, gender is actually far more complex. Queer can be a label claimed by a person who is attracted to men, women, genderqueer people, and/or other gender nonconforming people.
2. **Queer (adj): not fitting cultural norms around sexuality and/or gender identity/expression**
Similarly to the above, queer can be a label claimed by a person who feels that they personally don't fit into dominant norms, due to their own gender

holiest members, such as at the start of a Papal Conclave.

Lord have Mercy
Christ have Mercy
Lord have Mercy

Mary, Mother of God; Pray for us

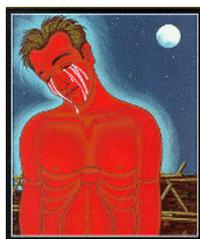


Harvey Milk; Pray for us



St. Joan of Arc; Pray for us

Our brothers and sisters who died at the hands of strangers; Pray for us



Matthew Shepard; Pray for us

Our sisters and brothers who died in concentration camps; Pray for us

St. Anselm, who called another man “Beloved”; Pray for us

All those who died not knowing their worth; Pray for us

St. George, the androgynous warrior; Pray for us

Our sisters and brothers who died at the hands of loved ones; Pray for us

Mary, Mother of us all; Pray for us

Saints Perpetua and Felicity, who

identity/expression, their sexual practices, their relationship style, etc.

3. **Queer (adj): non-heterosexual**

Queer is sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to all people with non-heterosexual sexual orientations or all people who are marginalized on the basis of sexual orientation.

4. **Queer (adj): transgressive, revolutionary, anti-assimilation, challenging of status quo**

Many people claim the label *queer* as a badge of honor that has a radical, political edge. UU seminarian Elizabeth Nguyen has preached: “Queer, for many folks, is about resistance—resisting dominant culture’s ideas of ‘normal,’ rejoicing in transgression, celebrating the margins, reveling in difference, blessing ourselves.”

5. **Queer (n.): an epithet or slur for someone perceived to be gay or lesbian**

Queer is still sometimes used as a derogatory term. Many people who have had the word queer used against them are understandably very uncomfortable with the word.

Unitarian Universalist Association, [Queer 101: Identity, Inclusion, and Resources](#)



bestowed the kiss of peace on each other before being martyred; Pray for us

All ye Holy Men and Women; Pray for us

Those take from us by AIDS; Pray for us



St. John the Evangelist, who lived Christ fiercely; Pray for us

All Ye Holy Women and Men; Pray for us

Dr. Rachel Waltz, 2013, commissioned by DignityUSA

Calendar

Including feasts of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Saints and those thought to be.

Sat. 5/28/2016

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) (vigil)
5:30 pm Liturgy at The Havens@St. Stephen's

Mon. 5/30/2016

St. Joan of Arc [Old Roman Calendar]

Thu. 6/2/2016

Rev. Phebe Ann Coffin



Beatitudes of Dignity

Blessed are you, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, straight sister and or brother—you are a unique and glorious reflection of God's astounding creativity and love!

Blessed are you when you dare to bring the truth of who you are into loving relationship with others—you heal and strengthen the Body of Christ!

Blessed are you who speak out against religious hypocrisy—you help to birth justice and peace!

Blessed are you when you work for full equality and inclusion—you honor the sacredness of all people!

Blessed are you when you create new kinds of families, families formed by love rather than by law—you live the truth that all God's people are one family!

Blessed are you who seek to worship in spirit and in truth, whose prayer arises from humble hearts—the Spirit of Holiness will inspire and guide you!

Blessed are you who offer comfort to the dying, healing to the sick, food to the hungry, housing to the homeless, presence to the lonely, hope to the hopeless—you are the

Hanaford, First Lesbian
Minister [Queer Saints and
Martyrs]

*Gospel, the Good News our aching
world so desperately needs to know!
Blessed are you, reviled and
persecuted, yet persistent in faith,
hope and love! Rjoice and be proud,
for in you God's love is revealed!*

[DignityUSA](#)

Sat. 6/4/2016

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary
Time (vigil)
5:30 pm Liturgy at The
Havens@St. Stephen's

Mon. 6/6/2016

Uganda Martyrs [Queer
Saints and Martyrs]

Thu. 6/9/2016

St. Pelagia/Pelagios, Cross-
dressing Saint [LGBT Catholic
Handbook]



Sat. 6/11/2016

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary
Time (vigil)
5:30 pm Liturgy at The
Havens@St. Stephen's

Sat. 6/18/2016

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary
Time (vigil)
5:30 pm Liturgy at The
Havens@St. Stephen's

June, 2016

[Pride Month: Saints of
Stonewall launched liberation
movement](#)

[Pride Month: LGBT flag
reveals the queer Christ in
Rainbow Christ Prayer](#)

June 19–26, 2016

Houston LGBT Pride

Celebration

Wed. 6/22/2016

St. Paulinus of Nola, Bishop
and Homoerotic Poet [Old
Roman Calendar/New Roman
Calendar/Queer Saints and
Martyrs/LGBT Catholic
Handbook, with Ausonius]

Sat. 6/25/2016

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary
Time (vigil)
No Liturgy
12:00-7:00 pm Houston Pride
Festival
8:30 pm Gay Pride Parade -
Be sure to join us!

References

- [Calendar of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Saints](#)
- [JesusinLove: LGBTQ Saints](#)
- [Queer Saints and Martyrs. Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans in Church history](#)



Be sure to join us every Saturday at 5:30 pm at The Havens @ St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1827 West Alabama, Houston, Texas 77098. Afterwards, you'll want to join us for dinner at a local restaurant.

Larry E. Lutz, President ✕ George Wetzel, Vice-President ✕ Frank Aguilar, Secretary ✕ William Brent Clarkson, Treasurer ✕ Roy Brooks-Delphin, At-Large

Dignity/Houston, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and a nonprofit corporation in the State of Texas. It is a chapter of DignityUSA. Donations are tax-deductible.

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