

The Tower

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin

LXVIII

October 9, 2011

No. 33

Death by His Own Hand

The following story appeared on a pro-LGBT listserv from which I receive occasional e-mails. I have tried to check the reliability of the story. Evidently the events described did happen, though Egnew's wife denies she said he could never see their children, and Egnew's family says they tried to support him after he came out. Stories like this make me incredibly sad for the people involved, and they make me very angry at a church that takes the described action in the name of my Savior, Jesus Christ. Here is the story, edited for length, as I received it. It is from Pittsboro, North Carolina.

Bryan Michael Egnew, 40, spent the last decades of his life building up the courage to come out to his family and Mormon church. Once he did, his life, family and religion were stripped away from him, and he committed suicide within a matter of weeks.

Growing up in the Mormon church as a gay man isn't easy.... It's a deep hole that many never escape from.... Egnew went on a Mormon Mission when he was nineteen, was married in a Mormon Temple to his wife Amy and had five children. He served within his local Mormon congregation for years, and outwardly was everything a Mormon man was expected to be. But inside, Egnew fought a constant struggle over whether to continue pretending, or to be honest about himself.

Last month [August], Egnew ... came out to his family and his church. The results were tragic. According to [Egnew's friend Jahn] Curran, Egnew's wife Amy immediately picked up their children and drove them out of state to Tennessee, refusing to let Egnew see them. His parents and family withdrew, and his church immediately excommunicated him because he refused to denounce his sexual orientation.

Mitch Mayne [is] an openly gay man who currently serves in the bishopric of his local Mormon ward (as long as he remains celibate). His local church leaders are actually supportive of him speaking openly about the fact that he's gay, and encourage his story to be told. Contrast that with ... Bryan's leaders.

You see, despite the thousands of reported suicides among LGBT Mormons, the Mormon high-leadership still refuse to put into place any official guidelines or provide training to local leaders on what to do when a person chooses to be honest about themselves. The result is a long trail of suicides of individuals who were left to face the wrath of local prejudices.

How long will the Mormon church continue to let their members die before they decide that LGBT people are worth being treated as equals? Calls to the Mormon church for comment have not been returned.

This coming Sunday, we will celebrate our church's decision, 19 years ago, to become an Open and Affirming Church. Many of our lesbian and gay members have told me how welcomed and comfortable they feel at our church. I am incredibly glad about this, as we all should be. At the same time, we should be constantly aware of the possible discrimination, danger and maybe worse that LGBT people may face in any part of their lives. It is important to stand against hate and discrimination wherever and whenever it happens.

Curt



JOIN US FOR MORNING SERVICE

Sunday, October 9, 2011
Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary
Open and Affirming Sunday
Scripture Readings:
Genesis 1:24-31; Mark 12:28-34

Genesis 1:1-2:4a is the first Creation story in the Old Testament. It is the one that goes by days: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day," etc. On the sixth day, in addition to ... *the cattle and creeping things and wild animals of every kind*, God also created humankind. And in one of the most powerful affirmations of humanity in the scriptures, it says that ... *God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* That is a powerful affirmation of God's care for all humankind. Discrimination and oppression, unfair treatment and injustice, torture and murder and war and other forms of inhuman treatment of human beings – these are all denials of our human dignity based on being created in God's image. One is reminded of Psalm 8: *Who are human beings that you are mindful of them, God? Yet you have made them little lower than yourself, and crowned them with glory and honor.*

The passage from Mark is the Great Commandment: love God with all your being, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Donations are needed for bus tickets and McDonald's or other food coupons for the office to distribute to the needy. Designated funds or the coupons themselves are welcomed.

Would you like to save some trees, copier toner, and staff time, with the advantage of receiving the Tower promptly and in **full color**, anywhere in the world? Just email Jill Farnsworth at office@firstcongrmadison.org

and **YOU** could be the 200th person on the list for the e-Tower! (Separate copies can go to multiple email addresses in the same household.)



IMAGINE - worship with a little different twist. On October 16, be sure to join us in our regular worship service to experience a service with innovative elements suggested by a number of members. You may really like some of the changes, and may not like others. And some may not seem like changes at all. Don't worry; this is just an experiment to help us IMAGINE how our worship experience might be renewed and enhanced. There will be ample opportunity for feedback after the service - what worked, what didn't, and what other changes you would like to suggest.

Capital Campaign Kickoff Our REACH and RENEW Capital Campaign had a great kickoff on Sunday. We had worship with Communion in the Sanctuary; and then most of the way through worship, we walked downstairs through the side (garden entrance) stairway singing "We Are Marching in the Light of God" and came out in the dining room, where we finished our worship service. Annette Ellstrom gave a wonderful talk on why she is giving to the campaign and why she agreed to chair it. We ended worship with a hymn and a prayer. Then we had lunch - wonderful choices at a pasta bar: stuffed manicotti, alfredo, or marinara sauce on noodles. What a great morning! If you are a resident member of the church or a frequent visitor, a volunteer from the church will soon be calling you to set an appointment to talk about the campaign. We hope you have an enjoyable and informational visit.

REACH and RENEW Church Tours Yes, that's right, "tours" plural. We have 2 more very interesting tours of the church arranged in October.

On **Sunday, October 9**, at 11:15, Don DeBruin will lead us in looking at, and learning about, our organ and piano. When did we get them, what are they like, and what repairs need to be done to get / keep them in top shape?

On **Sunday, October 16**, beginning at 9am, a member of the Space Utilization Committee will lead us on a tour of all the work that might be done in our building if our capital campaign is completely successful. For example, see how easy it would be to add a room for a Sunday School class simply by putting in a hallway.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Women's Book Study Women! Mark your calendars now to attend a morning of coffee (or juice), treats, and great conversation after reading *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* by Sara Miles. Sara's work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Progressive*, *La Jornada*, and *Salon*, among others.

Raised as an atheist, Sara Miles lived an enthusiastically secular life as a restaurant cook and a writer. Then early one winter morning, for no earthly reason, she wandered into a church. "I was certainly not interested in becoming a Christian," she writes, "or, as I thought of it rather less politely, a religious nut." But she ate a piece of bread, took a sip of wine, and found herself radically transformed. The mysterious sacrament of communion has sustained Miles ever since, in a faith she'd scorned, in work she'd never imagined. In this astonishing story, she tells how the seeds of her conversion were sown, and what her life has been like since she took that bread. The class will meet on Sat. mornings October 8, 22, Nov. 12 and 26 from 8-9:30am in the Student Lounge and will be facilitated by Eldonna Hazen. Books are available in the office for \$11. Please let Eldonna know if you plan to attend.



First Cong Animal Blessing is Saturday, October 8 at 10am. All pets are invited, and the humans who love them! If this would prove too stressful for your pet, bring a photo! Group and individual blessings plus fellowship with fellow animal lovers.

The Gathering Class – Prison Ministry Restorative Justice A brochure telling about several adult education options went out in last week's Tower, and is also on the website. Be sure to read about our Gathering Class beginning October 5 on the Restorative Justice program our Prison Ministry runs. The class continues October 12, 19, and 26. Dinner is at 5:30. Class begins at 6:20, in the Fellowship Room.



The Cherub Choir will NOT be singing in worship this coming Sunday, October 9.

WAYS TO SERVE



Thanksgiving Tradition For almost 20 years, First Congregational has been home to a free Thanksgiving meal. Will you consider helping out and keeping up the tradition? If you are interested in being on a planning committee for the event, please meet in the student lounge following worship on October 9th. We are in need of several team leaders who could help this year or in the future. If you are interested in serving and cannot attend the meeting, please contact Jessica Flowers, 347-7716 or at jessicaflores.phd@gmail.com

Madison Area CROP Walk!

More loaves of bread are still needed for the Sunday, October 16 Madison Area CROP Walk! Bread can be brought in during the week or on Sunday morning. First Congregational Church also has a team ONLINE for you to join in or offer your support! Check out www.cropwalkonline.org/madisonwi and look for *FirstCongWalkers*.



FIRST CONG YOUTH

Youth Group Meeting Change! Just a reminder to all First Cong Youth (7th Gr – High School) that meeting times will now be following worship on Sunday mornings. Noon – 1:30pm. BOUNCE (Gr 7 & 8): first Sunday of the month/SAGE (Sr High): third Sunday. (no meeting in October due to CROP Walk)

BBQ starts Sunday!

BBQ, the 7th & 8th grade Bible Study will start Sunday, October 9. Youth should head down to the Youth Room following Time With Children.



Youth FOOTBALL PARKING

Just a reminder that First Cong Youth are responsible for football parking on Saturday, October 15. Shift runs from 9 – 11am. Please let Jeff Rabe know if you plan to work. Call the church office or email him at jrabe@firstcogmadison.org

Church Calendar October -9-16, 2011

Sunday, October 9

10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S
 10:15am Sunday School
 10:15am BBQ ~ YR
 11:00am Piano & Organ tour ~ S
 11:00am Outreach Thanksgiving meeting. ~ SL

Monday, October 10

5:30pm Table Tennis Club ~ DR
 8:00pm SA ~ Room 301

Tuesday, October 11

12noon Bible Conversations ~ SL
 5:15pm NA Women's ~ Room 301
 7:00pm Boy Scouts ~ DR
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 301
 7:00pm Piano Tech Guild ~ FR

Wednesday, October 12

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
 10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
 5:30pm Gathering Dinner ~ DR
 6:20pm Gathering Class ~ FR
 6:30pm Coventry Ringers ~ Room 301
 7:30pm Chancel Choir ~ Chapel

Thursday, October 13

5:30pm Eating Disorders Support Group ~ Room 301
 7:00pm Madison Area Jugglers ~ DR
 8:00pm AA ~ Room 301

Friday, October 14

5:30pm Table Tennis Club ~ DR

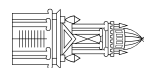
Saturday, October 15

11:00am UW Football Parking ~ Youth

Sunday, October 16

9:00am Church Renewal Tour ~ S
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ S
 10:15am Sunday School
 11:15am Cherub Choir ~ Room 301
 1:00pm CROP Walk

BBQ ~ Mid High Bible Study
 Big K ~ Big Kitchen
 BOUNCE ~ Mid High Youth Group
 C ~ Chapel
 DR ~ Dining Room
 FIGS ~ Families Including God and Stuff
 FR ~ Fellowship Room
 GAS ~ Sr. High Bible Study
 LRC ~ Learning Resource Center
 MS ~ Minister's Study
 S ~ Sanctuary
 SAGE ~ Sr. High Youth Group
 SL ~ Student Lounge
 SR ~ Salad Room
 YR ~ Youth Room



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue
 Madison, Wisconsin 53726
 608-233-9751 (phone)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Worship attendance on
 Sunday, October 2, 2011 was 164.

Staff:

Curt Anderson, Senior Minister
 Eldonna Hazen, Associate Minister
 Jerry Hancock, Director of Prison Ministry Project
 Donald J. DeBruin, Director of Music Ministries
 Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education for
 Children & Youth
 Rob Eagle, Bookkeeper
 Jill Farnsworth, Church Secretary
 David Krantz, Building Manager

Office Hours: 8am-12:30pm, 1:00pm-4:00pm,
 Monday -Thursday; 8am-noon Friday.

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 Facebook.com/firstcongo

IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES: Curt Anderson's phone is 836-1321, Eldonna Hazen's phone number is 241-8117 and Jerry Hancock's phone is 658-6630.

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