



The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.

COVER: Connecting the
Disconnected by Jonathan
Wilson

Inside This Month

.....
Zach Mannheimer:
Heating it Up at the
Firehouse by Bruce Carr

.....
Briefs and Shorts

.....
From the Pastor's Pen :
Inevitably, Faith in
Something by Rev. Jonathan
Page

.....
Plymouth Celebrates 20
Years as Open and
Affirming Congregation
by Rick Miller

.....
McCoy Report by Matt
McCoy

.....
Review: World's End by Gary
Kaufmann

.....
My M.O. by Steve Person

Calendar

▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, October 4, 2013, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by October 2 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

First Friday News & Views

October 2013

Volume 18

Issue 10

Connecting the Disconnected

By Jonathan Wilson

Make no mistake, we do not have a democracy in the United States, and never have. Ours is a “representative” democracy. Our representatives are elected and they, in turn, make and enforce the laws. Among the laws adopted under this system, that perverts its legitimacy, is the gerrymandering of election districts by the majority party. It perverts the system in two ways: (1) it virtually assures the election of the party candidate from the party favored by the gerrymandering, and (2) it makes that party candidate, whether an incumbent or not, vulnerable to the most extreme --the most motivated/animated/dedicated/vocal/passionate/ uncompromising -- element of the party using primaries to select candidates for the general election. With gerrymandered election districts, those extreme-leaning or extreme candidates are electable and get elected in the ensuing general election.

Whoever gets elected, whether to Congress, the state legislature, city council, school board -- whatever -- they must work with whoever else has been elected in order actually to *do* or accomplish anything. And *that* inevitably leads to deal making.

Every elected official has some kind of agenda. The worst among them are those whose initial agenda is merely to get elected, followed by an only slightly modified agenda merely to get re-elected. The best among them have a disclosed agenda with an openness to compromises that will move toward, rather than necessarily accomplish, their agenda objectives.

This is the juncture where things having nothing to do with one another get connected. This is the juncture where things having no logical connection get connected nonetheless. This is where the real work of governing effectively in a representative democracy takes place and, like it or not, it happens mostly out of the public eye. In fact, it almost has to happen out of the public eye in order to avoid one or both sides grandstanding for perceived political gain. Grandstanding in the process of connecting the disconnected is lethal to the process.

I saw this phenomenon repeatedly when I served on the school board. You don't have to be very smart to be an effective school board member. On a board of seven, you have to be able to count to four. One board member would be wanting more middle school athletics and another wanted more elementary school counselors. No logical connection. Yet a third wanted to reduce class sizes, and another wanted to add

Continued on p. 2

Connecting the Disconnected

Continued from p. 1

more art and music to the curriculum. Their only common denominator was money; there was otherwise no logical connection among them. One board member would then go to each of the others and negotiate the parameters of some increase in middle school athletics; reducing class sizes by an average of only one; or what-have-you; make a deal; and there would then get adopted something toward each board member's agenda even though it would usually not be everything he/she wanted. Reality check: that's the way it works in a representative democracy whether you're talking about a lowly school board or the halls of Congress, and whether you like it or not.

With gerrymandering generating more and more extreme members of Congress, those attempting to connect the disconnected are less and less able/willing to make compromises. They are less likely to succeed in making a reasonable deal on just about any topic, and they are less effective in actually governing.

Gerrymandering has been a cancer growing on our representative democracy. The tumor has grown to the point of compromising the survival of the host, our Republic. The extremists in Congress are actually threatening to shut down the United States Government itself and/or having the United States default on its lawfully undertaken obligations to its taxpaying citizens and others. It's the pernicious ultimate in connecting the disconnected. They are playing a suicidal game of "chicken." They are holding the Republic itself hostage to an extremist agenda. They are actually banking on the President caring more about the survival of the Republic than they do. In my judgment they are flirting with treason.

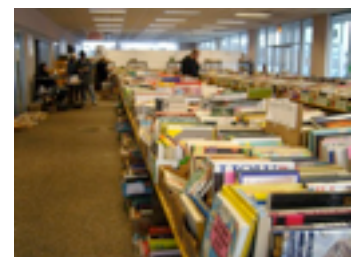
While perhaps not actionable as treason, their position certainly reaches the underlying reason that treason exists as a crime and a violation of their oath of office.

It's one thing to engage in run-of-the-mill horse trading in order to get things done. It's another to kill both horses because there's something about the other guy you don't like. Congressional Republicans need to grow up and stop acting like the back end of a horse. It reminds me of the Biblical story of Solomon, who was called upon to identify the true mother of a child that had been born to one of two women. When one was fine with the idea of slicing the baby in half and obviously killing it, it didn't take long for Solomon to figure out the true mother.

As now framed, voters simply need the Wisdom of Solomon to figure out the true patriots in Washington D.C., and the true horse's posteriors.

Briefs & Shorts

- Be sure to RSVP for the October 4 meeting no later than October 2. Email to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Brad Anderson, candidate for Iowa Secretary of State.
- Thanks to Chris Corey for his introduction of our September speaker, Zach Mannheimer, Executive Director of the Des Moines Social Club.
- **Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund.** You can designate FFBC as a targeted recipient in your United Way pledge; FFBC is an approved designee. You'll get credit at work for your participation and help FFBC at the same time.
- Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange.



Inevitably, Faith In Something

Several weeks ago Le Boi bar in Des Moines held a "Gospel Night." I must admit that this intrigued me. Gospel night at a gay bar! What? I wanted to attend but, sadly, it was on a Saturday night, and some of us work on Sundays. It did, however, get me thinking, "Hmm, gay bar and religion. A new kind of faith? Why not?"

In the mid 20th century, theologians made a careful distinction between faith and belief. To say you believe something is to say that you assent to a certain statement or set of doctrines. To have faith, on the other hand, is to commit yourself wholly to something. Protestants are saved by faith, not belief. Salvation is more than simply saying, "Jesus is Lord." It also requires commitment. You have faith in whatever is your center of value, what Paul Tillich, perhaps the greatest 20th century theologian, called your "ultimate concern."

Some gays, and straight people as well, have faith in pleasure. Pleasure is their ultimate center of value, that which determines the overall arc of their actions. Brian Kinney, from the show *Queer As Folk*, is a perfect example of such a person. His career, his apartment, his friends, all serve to maximize his personal pleasure, usually sexual pleasure. Mind you, I am not critiquing Brian Kinney or any other person who might make pleasure their center of value. The point is that all of us, including Brian Kinney, have faith in something and that thing need not be God. What do you have faith in?

Most of us, according to theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, are henotheists, that is, we hold up one thing as a primary object of faith, but we also have allegiance to other things as well. We have faith in many "gods." We might make family our primary concern but also really love material things, like clothes. We might love God, but we usually consider other things pretty important too. But how well do we interrogate our centers of value? Can we stand behind our faith and proclaim it boldly?

It was no accident that I began by mentioning pleasure as a center of value. Our society tells us that we should be ashamed of making pleasure, and especially sexual pleasure, the object of our faith. But why? People do it all the time. Unfortunately, our sublimated judgment makes people ashamed of pleasure, which can often lead to a host of harmful consequences. Where does this sense of shame come from? Our inherited, Victorian sense of purity cloaked in a poorly-thought-through Christianity. If you live in a nice house in West Des Moines, trust me, you probably have a center of value other than Jesus. Be careful how you judge.

All of our objects of faith have their own advantages and disadvantages. Sensual pleasure has the great benefit of releasing lots of endorphins. It also can lead to self-destructive behaviors, such as excessive use of various substances or unsafe sexual habits. Making sensual pleasure primary also has the disadvantage that it becomes comparatively more difficult to achieve the older we get. It is a fleeting faith. Similarly, faith in material goods can bring certain forms of satisfaction, but material goods fall apart and our desire for more is rarely fulfilled. Family and friends can bring immense happiness, but when bad things happen to our loved ones or our relationships, we experience great pain and suffering.

Religious people generally claim that their center of value, God, does not degrade over time, and that it is rooted in something truly eternal. Moreover, religious people claim that having faith in God can bring a deeper and more lasting sense of fulfillment. Of course, God can seem absent. We can feel abandoned by what we thought was God. An atheist would laugh and say that is because there is no God. Your faith is in a well-sold illusion.

Faith is a tricky topic, one that we all too often avoid thinking about. Either we misinterpret the nature of faith and claim we do not need it, or we take it for granted without examining it more thoroughly. Neither position helps us out. We would all be

...continued on Page 7

Plymouth Celebrates Twenty Years of Open and Affirming

By Rick Miller

A celebration was held at all services on the weekend of September 14-15 to commemorate Plymouth's success in achieving justice, compassion, and a true love of neighbor – especially its LGBT members. Sr. Minister, David Ruhe, proclaimed the Open and Affirming Day with an amazing sermon. Check out plymouthcongregationalchurch.org for the full text.

Beginning with a conversation in the 1980s between Senior Minister, Jim Gilliom, and congregation member, Earl Willits, the church embarked on a journey. This journey would lead to the Earl Willits Conference on Spirituality and Sexuality from 1990 – 2012. As a gay man coming out of the closet, Earl traveled through the consequences of his choice to reveal his sexual orientation to the world with Rev Gilliom at his side. Willits later died of AIDS and provided funding for the Earl Willits Conference, bringing national and local leaders to provide education and a nurturing spirit during those formative LGBT years at the church. Plymouth continues to create a sanctuary for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered people through other acts of courage, including: formerly hosting Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG), creating support groups with a range of discussion topics, and providing a place for sexual minorities to meet in a safe space such as the Gay-Straight Alliance Leadership Teams with PrideNet and the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus.

At the front of the sanctuary the words "Love Never Faileth" are carved into the wall describing the wonderful and extravagant welcome Plymouth is known for in the Des Moines community and across

the nation. As a United Church of Christ denomination, Plymouth has been an outstanding leader in offering a wide range of opportunities to interact with the LGBT community. LGBT members are deacons, clergy, and staff. You could share worship with LGBT members and join church boards such as Education, Membership, Social Action, Stewardship, or Benevolences. You could see LGBT members as leaders on the church council. LGBT people are fully engaged in the life of the church and all its activities.

Plymouth has passed resolutions to support marriage equality and has participated with the largest contingent of people walking in the Pride Parade. Although members have embraced the Gay community, they are also actively involved in outreach with mission trips, homeless assistance teams, food banks and dinners, clothing drives, prisoner release transitions, sustainable agricultural issues, immigration education, as well as fine arts and youth programming.

Stoddard Lane, a former senior minister, created the motto that Plymouth members love: "We agree to differ, We resolve to love, We unite to serve." The church is not filled with dogma. The progressive theology practiced by members is reflected in the poster that says, "Our religion is over two-thousand years old. Our thinking is not." Plymouth has a Bible-based new understanding that reflects one of its early congregationist leaders, John Robinson, who provided this message to the Pilgrims leaving for the New World. "The Lord has yet more truth and light to break forth from his Holy Word." This vision, along with a compassionate love of neighbor, has served the congregationalists well for hundreds of years. They continue their journey with reverence to God and a new understanding of our purpose in the world through justice, compassion, and love.

Some Christians have given the Christian brand so many negatives that many spiritual people are

relegated to being followers of Jesus

without being Christian. Jesus himself wouldn't recognize some of the most vocal Christians and would be rolling over in his grave, if he were still in it.

Doesn't "expecting the unexpected" make the unexpected expected?

Why are a "wise man" and a "wise guy" opposites?

Why do "overlook" and "oversee" mean opposite things?



Heating it up at the Firehouse by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on September 6, the First Friday of September, was Zachary Mannheim, Executive Director of the Des Moines Social Club (DMSC), which he founded six years ago. Zach gave us a quick and fascinating account of how he came here from the East Coast, how and why he imagined the DMSC, and his ambitious plans for settling the club in its new venue, the historic firehouse at Ninth & Mulberry downtown.

“After a road-trip from NYC to 22 cities around the country,” Zach says, “I settled in Des Moines in the fall of 2007 to found the Des Moines Social Club, an arts and educational non-profit. Focused on the retention and recruitment of young people, DMSC uses the arts as a catalyst to create unprecedented community engagement. Since opening its doors in 2009, DMSC has hosted over 500 arts-related events and seen over 150,000 patrons. Founding the non-profit from scratch, I raised over \$7,000,000 in my time in Des Moines towards the project. Recently, I was awarded the 2011 Des Moines Citizen of the Year Award, 40 under 40 in Des Moines’ *Business Record*, 40 under 40 for the national *New Leaders Council*, The Iowa Governor’s Volunteer Award, and the DSM Young Professional of the Year Award in 2009. In addition to my non-profit work, I own and operate Proof Restaurant, a Mediterranean lunch and dinner spot in downtown's Gateway District.

“The Des Moines Social Club is an open and inclusive venue that creates unprecedented community engagement through the arts. We work to support the development of the creative class in central Iowa. On any given night at DMSC, you may see thought-provoking theater, pop-up art galleries, entertaining trivia competitions, cooking classes or drama courses for kids — all happening simultaneously!” There is a grassroots arts movement in Des Moines, as DMSC’s Website (desmoinessocialclub.org) notes, and people are starting to take notice. Des Moines is on the cusp of a revolution, and the art scene is a big part of that movement, shaking up the city and exposing this creative culture to a wider, more diverse and inclusive audience. DMSC at the firehouse is intended to be a “Place for Everybody.”



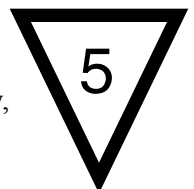
Cool Firehouse Facts and Ideas

- Firefighters spent downtime playing on the handball court on the second level of the firehouse. We will preserve this space, which features original floors and an 18-foot ceiling.
- The firehouse features a two-floor hose tower that was used to hang hoses to dry. This will become a Firefighter Memorial.
- We’re working on plans to have a 24/7 come-one-come-all recording studio, and a community garden in the courtyard.
- Plans are in motion for an art walk from the Firehouse to the DART station, with rotating sidewalk art, sculptures, illuminated installations, you-name-it.
- Half a dozen arts-based non-profits are looking to

co-habitat at the firehouse, including Civic Music.

- We expect to put several retail locations in the first floor, including a new restaurant concept [the name “Malo” was just announced] from Orchestrate Management, the owners of hot spots like Zombie Burger, Centro, and Django, and set up a culinary program.

Here is just a sampling of the events that DMSC has already provided in our community: Circus Arts, String ‘Em Up! Old-Time Music Hangout, Systema Russian Martial Arts, Simple Songs Simple Feelings, Girls Rock! Des Moines, Parents’ Night Out, Play in a Day, Afternoon Art, and Dance Baby Dance.





9-13-13

PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE

The Iowa Department on Aging tells us that older Iowans are increasingly falling prey to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Nationally, 1 in 13 seniors report abuse, and it is estimated that 80 percent of elder abuse cases go unreported.

This fall, a special legislative committee will collect ideas to improve Iowa's efforts to prevent this abuse. The Elder Abuse Prevention and Intervention Study Committee will examine data, look at what is working in other states, hear from experts and offer recommendations to be considered during the 2014 session of the Legislature.

Elder abuse appears in many different forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, undue influence, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation and denial of critical care. We all have a role to play when it comes to ensuring older Iowans are safe and able to enjoy the best possible quality of life.

How can you help?

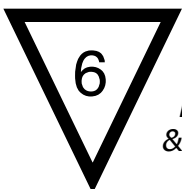
- Keep in regular contact with older friends and family.
- Listen to seniors and their caregivers.
- Take action when you suspect elder abuse. In Iowa, you should call 800-362-2178 if you suspect a senior you know is at risk of being abused.

The Iowa Department on Aging is hosting a two-part Webinar series on Elder Rights & Protection. These free online seminars take place from 10-11:30 a.m. on October 22 and November 19. The sessions will provide an overview of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation; how and why it occurs; warning signs and risk factors; barriers to addressing elder abuse; and available resources. Register and learn more at www.iowaaging.gov/elder-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.



Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.

The World's End

Review by Gary Kaufman

Writer/director Edgar Wright has hit another home run with his delightful comedy, **The World's End**. Edgar Wright was the genius who brought us **Shaun of the Dead**, which had the audience cheering for the film's heroes bashing in the brains of the zombies that were overtaking their town in 2004. Now, in 2013, Edgar reunites with writer/actor Simon Pegg, who was Shaun in **Shaun of the Dead** and Scotty in the recent **Star Trek Into Darkness**, and Nick Frost (Ed in **Shaun of the Dead**) and creates another bizarre adventure to share with the world. In this film, Gary King (Simon Pegg) talks his old college buddies into reliving what was the best night of his life, a 12-pub drinking marathon called the "Golden Mile," which ends at a pub called The World's End. It had always nagged at Gary that they had not completed the "Golden Mile" that night, and he was determined that this time they would all make it to the end. So the movie starts out as a buddy movie reconciling their old glorious past and eventual fallings out. At about the third pub the movie takes a sudden surprise move and begins to take on the trappings of a **Twilight Zone** episode or **The Village of the Damned**. Soon it is up to Gary and his gang to save the world and humankind.

This is a lot to ask of these out-of-shape 40-year olds, but take it on they do in an often hilarious slaughter. Enjoy.



Why do you press harder on the buttons of a remote control when you know the batteries are dead?

Why do we drive on a parkway and park on a driveway?

Why is "phonics" not spelled with an 'f' the way it sounds?

continued from p. 8... My M.O. by Steve Person

Ackroyd emphasized that even the best-laid plans can often go awry. When William Rufus's son and heir drowned during a crossing of the Channel, the youngest son of William the Conqueror, Henry, claimed the throne with due haste. Says the author, "Statesmen may plot and plan. Learned men may calculate and conclude. Diplomats may debate and prevaricate. But chance rules the immediate affairs of humankind." See what I mean about this man being eminently readable? Good stuff!

Inevitably, Faith In Something

...continued from page 3

well-served by honestly asking ourselves, "What are our centers of value? What is our ultimate concern? Is our faith well placed? Why or why not?" I hope that through careful consideration of faith, we can be comfortable with the role that something like sexual pleasure or God has in our life. I also hope that we can move beyond the unhelpful dichotomy, so common in the LGBT world, between people of no faith and people of faith. We all store up our treasures somewhere. It is good to think about the pros and cons of where that is.



When the moon is directly overhead, you will weigh slightly less.

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

The shortest war in history was between Zanzibar and England in 1896. Zanzibar surrendered after 38 minutes.

The original name for butterfly was flutterby.



FFBC

First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa

October 2013

First Friday
Breakfast Club

In Service

Board of Directors

CHRIS CORREY
RYAN CRANE
BRAD HOLLAND
BYRON HUFF
SCOTT KLINEFELTER
RICK MILLER
GARY MOORE
MIKE SMITH
ALLEN VANDER LINDEN
RYAN WEIDNER
PHIL WILLIAMS
JONATHAN WILSON

Officers

KENT DONALDSON, TREASURER
BYRON HUFF, VICE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN WILSON, SECRETARY & PRESIDENT

Newsletter

STEVE PERSON, EDITOR
BRUCE LEHNERTZ, PRODUCTION EDITOR
ARTHUR BRUER, WEBMASTER

WEBSITE: WWW.FFBCIOWA.ORG

PUBLISHER, FFBC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
©2013 FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB, INC

MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

by Steve Person

A Solid Foundation

Being an Anglophile means that every once in awhile, a really interesting and well-written book comes along. I happened to find one a few weeks ago at The Book Store in the Equitable Building in downtown Des Moines. Entitled **Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors**, the book was written by the prolific and eminently readable author, Peter Ackroyd. Ackroyd has authored thirty books, among them **Dickens**, **Shakespeare**, **London: The Biography**, **Dressing Up: Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession**, and **The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde**, to name just a few. Ackroyd writes history in a manner that brings its subjects, circumstances, and settings in such a way that the reader actually feels like he or she is reading a well-written magazine article rather than a 450-page volume.

The author's thorough research enabled him to piece together the daily life of British civilizations that existed as long ago as 900,000 years. The chapter that chronicled the building of Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain should be required reading for any student of English and/or world history. Begun approximately in 2800 B.C.E., Stonehenge originally was a circle of timbers. The gigantic stones came a few hundred years later.

With the advent of Julius Caesar's first invasion of Britain in 55 B.C.E, life among the natives took a drastic change, insofar as the Romans managed to colonize much—but not all—of what is today England. Ackroyd cites two fine examples of Roman architecture unearthed in West Sussex along the south coast of the country. The impressive mosaic floors of Fishbourne Place near Chichester and of the Bignor Roman Villa in the South Downs attest to Rome's intention of not just being an occupying force but also a colonizing one. Ranging as far north as nearby Scotland, Hadrian's Wall exemplified both the superior architectural skills of the Romans and their intention of not trying to extend their empire any farther. By the beginning of the fifth century A.D., Rome stripped England of its military forces, thus hastening the decline of the island and opening it to the invasions of the Vikings from Norway and Denmark. The author further notes how all these outside influences added to the rich language that English is today.

With the Norman invasion of 1066, a new and different England emerged. From William the Conquerer to his sons William Rufus and Henry I, (*Cont'd on Page 7*)