

AREA I SIGN ERECTORS/MAKERS

Apprenticeship Program
(Non Union)

Accepts Applications

Wednesdays only year round.
1:30 PM – 4 PM

**15800 SW Boones Ferry Rd. Suite B3,
Lake Oswego.**

Requirements—min 18 yrs old, High School Diploma/GED & transcript w/one year of High School pre-algebra or higher with a passing grade of “C” or better, or equivalent community college placement test.

Minorities and women encouraged to apply.

www.areaonejatc.com

AREA I PAINTERS

Apprenticeship Program
(Non Union)

Accepts Applications

Wednesdays Only
1:30 PM – 4 PM

**15800 SW Boones Ferry Rd. Suite B3,
Lake Oswego.**

Requirements—min. 17 years old, GED or High School diploma.

Minorities and women encouraged to apply.

www.areaonejatc.com

AREA I PLUMBERS

Apprenticeship Program
(Non Union)

Will be accepting applications

June 6-July 20
Monday-Thursday (closed Fridays)
10 AM – 4 PM

**15800 SW Boones Ferry Rd. Suite B3,
Lake Oswego.**

Requirements—min 18 yrs old, High School Diploma/GED and transcript w/1 yr. High School algebra or higher w/passing grade or equivalent community college placement test.

Minorities and women encouraged to apply.

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Bridging an Ancient Divide

On the eve of his retirement, and a Portland visit,
Bishop Gene Robinson talks faith and sexuality

BY GLENN SCOFIELD WILLIAMS

Almost every Pride celebration, they're there, a small but very loud gaggle of Christians, carrying placards that read “God Hates Fags” and “Thank God for AIDS.” And each one of these sentiments is followed by a reference to scripture: Romans 1:27, Leviticus 20:13, etc. It's hard to understand why they would travel thousands of miles to show us just how hard the church has turned its back on us.

What makes it even more difficult is that some of us cheering the parade on the sidelines, or marching row by row down SW Broadway, are also people of deep religious conviction—torn by the teachings of a church that has brought us this age-old condemnation while struggling to believe in a God of compassion and understanding.

And every time, standing there on the parade route, we have to ask, *How is it possible to reconcile our faith with our sexuality?* Can the 2,000-year-old divide between Christianity and queerness ever be bridged?

“I think religion is enormously important, even for non-religious people,” Bishop V. Gene Robinson, 64, told *Just Out* recently, “because of having been steeped in Judeo-Christian culture. Those passages, and the attitudes about homosexuality that come from them, are in the very air we breathe.”

In 2003, Robinson, a priest of the Episcopal Church, was voted the new diocesan Bishop of New Hampshire, prompting a torrent of controversy and conversation among those in the Christian community. This uproar, because he is a proudly, openly, unabashedly gay man and the first to be so voted bishop. A small section of the church split away in disgust with the appointment and with the movement of the church toward recognizing LGBT people as equal members of the fold. Robinson, a priest more interested in preaching the gospel than in becoming a political icon, found himself thrust into the midst of a firestorm where, like it or not, he bravely and articulately became the spokesperson for LGBT issues in the Christian community.

Eight years, a No. 7 ranking on *Out Magazine's* 2009 Power 50 List and an invocation at President Obama's inaugural ceremonies later, Robinson prepares to retire the bishopric—having become a fiercely vocal symbol of reconciliation, confronting the church he loves and asking it to admit the errors of its ways and to move into a new era of compassion.

“Generally speaking, love trumps the histori-

cal teaching,” Robinson reminds the church.

The fact is a vast number of LGBT individuals consider themselves persons of faith, and a vast number of faiths are beginning to come around. Robinson, in his book *In the Eye of the Storm*, points to a study that seems to indicate that nearly 40-60 percent of Catholic priests worldwide may be gay. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) proclaims on its “Religion, Faith & Values” website that “more than three-quarters of American Jews and Buddhists believe society should accept gay people, as well as more than half of mainline Protestants and Catholics and almost one-third of Muslims.” There is a sea change occurring in faith communities around the globe and prejudices concerning religion and spirituality are starting to crumble.

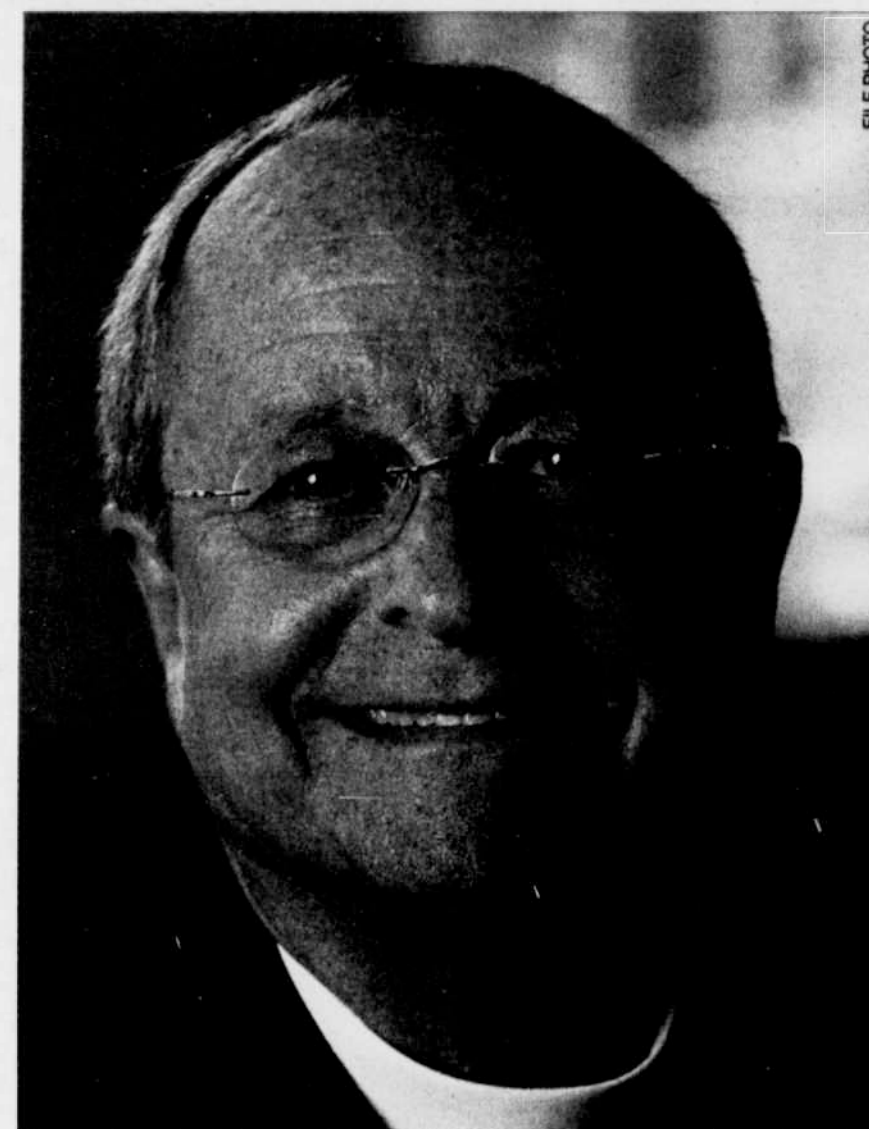
As recently reported on *blogout.justout.com*, Oregon's own Episcopal bishop, the Right Reverend Michael J. Hanley, stated, “I strongly believe in the inclusion of all persons in the life of the church. Our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ deserve all the rights and privileges, including the right to marry and raise a family.”

In the years 2000

So after two millennia of being called “abominations,” how do we reconcile historical scriptural teachings with our sexuality? “You can talk to a biblical literalist all day and get nowhere,” Robinson said, “when the real question is, ‘How are we going to understand this book?’”

Robinson—along with millions of other Christians—points away from a literalist approach to the Bible. The Scriptures, he insists, must be approached within the bounds of the context in which it was written and the people to whom the authors wrote. When speaking to a literalist about the Bible, Robinson said, “Until you come to some sort of agreement as to how you are going to regard that book, you're going to be speaking from two different platforms.”

Does this make the Bible irrelevant then?



FILE PHOTO

“I think it's important to have religious leaders say, ‘You know what? The church got it wrong about slavery, using the system to justify slavery. We've gotten it wrong about women. And now it's time to admit we got it wrong about this, too.’ Just having somebody in a leadership position say that is enormously freeing and helpful to people.”

-BISHOP GENE ROBINSON

Do we simply ignore the text? By no means, said Robinson: “My understanding of that book is that it's a marvelous record of people who've had an experience of the living God and have sat down and tried to describe that. And the reason it's so important is that it gives us the best clues about how to encounter the living God in our own lives.”

The church leadership, in the meantime, has an important step to take—and it may be the hardest one of all. “I think,” Robinson said, “it's important to have religious leaders say, ‘You know what? The church got it wrong about slavery, using the system to justify slavery. We've gotten it wrong about women. And