

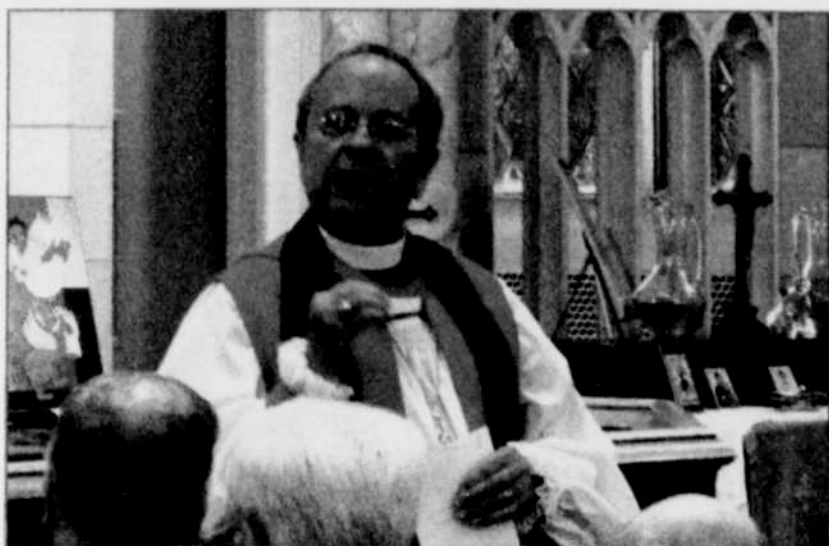
profile

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."

And how do we as LGBT people of faith encourage church leadership and congregations to come around to this new vision? "You know, 34 years ago Harvey Milk got it right," Robinson said, "that coming out is the most political thing you can do. And I would say it's actually the most religious thing you can do. I feel that anytime you tell somebody who you really are—regardless of whether you're gay or not—it's kind of a holy moment."

Robinson's vision for LGBTQ people is to return to the church, synagogue or mosque that they left and to re-proclaim the love of God for all people—to come out and be out to all in the congregation. "Hopefully, it's the thing that changes people's minds and hearts," Robinson said. "First, their hearts, and then their minds—because they can't live with the dissonance between what they've been taught and what they know in their lives when they have a son or daughter or father or uncle or next-door neighbor or coworker who comes out to them. And they know that all that stuff they've been told by the church is bullshit."

Robinson has hope for the future of the church and a vision of inclusiveness for all former outcasts—one that extends not just



Bishop Robinson brings the faith to Rochester, NY.

to the church but to the culture at large.

At large and at home

"If we're really going to effect such positive change like marriage equality in Oregon and change that constitutional amendment," said Peter Cunningham, executive director of Equity Foundation, "I think we need to hear from people of faith. They are going to be part of the coalition that's necessary, I think, to effect this positive change."

Bishop Robinson will be in Portland June 29 to support Equity Foundation. He will speak and answer questions in an intimate Breakfast Forum at the organization's offices downtown and then, in the evening, will speak at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral on NW 19th. The general public is invited to both events, but tickets are limited and going fast.

"We've had a lot of interest in hearing the bishop speak," Cunningham said. "And all the funds we raise are going into our general grant cycle, which allows us to fund organizations that are embracing our vision of diversity."

Equity Foundation is an Oregon-based organization that gives grants, scholarships and donor-advised funds to advance LGBT and diversity issues in our community. "We give a little bit of money to a lot of organizations, statewide," Cunningham pointed out. "So especially in the rural communities, where there's a lot of work still to be done on LGBT and diversity issues, I think we are effecting a very positive change in our community."

What will Robinson discuss? "Basically I will be, first of all, talking about why we find ourselves at this historic moment in the life of our movement," Robinson said, "what has brought us here and why it's important. And then talk about, and try to pinpoint, our mistakes and why religion is our previous obstacle to achieving our goals for the light. And then talking about, so, how do we move forward and are there some ways that we can do that with the least amount of fallout?"

Breakfast Forum: Wed., June 29, 7:30-9 a.m.; NW Health Foundation, 221 NW Second Ave., third floor Bamboo Conference Room; \$50. Equity Fundraiser Dinner: Wed., June 29, 7 p.m. reception, 7:30-9 p.m. dinner; Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Kempton Hall, 147 Northwest 19th Ave.; \$75.

To reserve your seats for both events, call 503-231-5759 ext. 523 or email lanced@equityfoundation.org.

Visit justout.com for a complete transcript of the interview with Bishop Robinson.



Pride in Faith

A message from the Community of Welcoming Congregations' Reverend Tara Wilkins

When *Just Out* caught up with the Reverend Tara Wilkins, executive director of the Community of Welcoming Congregations, she had just returned from the Clergy Call for Justice and Equality, a biennial Human Rights Campaign effort in Washington, D.C. to mobilize clergy nationwide to address issues of LGBT equality with members of Congress.

"It was really awesome to have all 50 states represented and to be there together and working in the movement, and then to lobby..." shared Wilkins.

"It's always a very powerful thing to see all the diversity that exists within religious communities."

—REV. TARA WILKINS

"It's exciting that people look at Oregon as a model for successful religious organizing—that people think there's something special about Oregon, and we take some pride in that," she added. "That's not bad for being one

of the least churched states in the country."

The CWC is a ministry of more than 110 congregations and affiliated organizations throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington that are intentionally and publicly inclusive of LGBT people. For Wilkins,

"It's always a very powerful thing to see all the diversity that exists within religious communities."

who will deliver the sermon Sunday, June 19 at the First Congregational United Church of Christ downtown (1126 SW Park Ave., 9:30 a.m.), Portland Pride weekend provides a unique opportunity to reach attendees at Tom McCall Waterfront Park—and at CWC's booth.

"What we always get is at least three or four people that are in a great deal of pain and come and look at the [member congregations] brochure rack," Wilkins said, noting a "steady stream of people" on both days. "Folks will initiate a conversation and in the process of that conversation they tell their

story of where their family kicked them out or they've been excommunicated.

"What we're able to do in a few minutes is attempt to be that reassuring presence that we were created to be," explained Wilkins, and that "even though their home church may not understand that, there are places where [they] can be safe." The goal during Pride is not to increase member congregations, she added, though the CWC can help match an interested person with a church.

More than anything, Wilkins said, Pride is about a message beyond a Sunday sermon.

"[We assure them] they're loved—and that there's hope."

For more information on the Community of Welcoming Congregations, which will also be present at Bend Pride June 11, visit welcoming-congregations.org.

—AMANDA SCHURR



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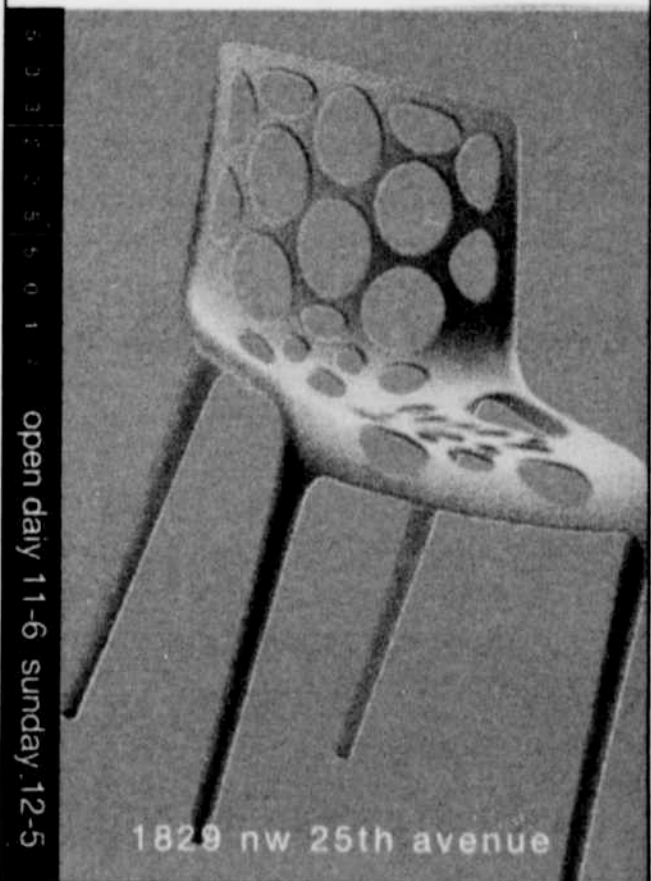
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