

THE YEAR IN faith

DECEMBER 9, 2011 21



Despite very vocal town hall-style meetings discussing the issue, both Mars Hill and Q Center agreed to hold regular meetings between members of the evangelical Christian and LGBTQ communities.

Before the shadow was cast by the Mars Hill debacle, the positive work of Portland's chapter of **Integrity USA** emerged as a critical progressive story regionally. Helmed by Andy McQuery, the local chapter expanded on the LGBTQ Episcopalian community's goals of leading the grassroots effort for the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the Episcopal Church and access to its rites.

The chapter's highlights included walking in this year's Portland Pride parade, with Michael J. Hanley, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, at its side. **Bishop Gene Robinson**, the Episcopal Church's first openly gay bishop, paid a visit to Portland in June, speaking at the Trinity Episcopal Church, as well as during a forum for Equity Foundation. **Christopher Senyonjo**, a retired Anglican bishop from Uganda on a cross-country tour of the States, also spoke at Trinity Episcopal Church in September.

In May, the **Reverend Susan Leo**, long-time minister of Bridgeport United Church of Christ, announced that after more than a decade of running the church, she had de-

Integrity USA's Andy McQuery with the Rev. Mary Piper at the first Southern Oregon Pride Parade

cided to retire.

Leo and spouse Diane Syrcle—the minister of music at Bridgeport UCC, as well as executive director of the Oregon Ballet Theatre—founded the church 13 years ago. Syrcle also announced she would be leaving her post at Bridgeport. Bridgeport UCC is an LGBTQ welcoming congregation, with an estimated 50 percent of the adults in the church identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

"God called me to start this church, build it and bring it along for 13 years," Leo said in a statement. "Now I feel God calling me out and into the next phase of my life, and I must heed that call."

On that note, **Rabbi Debra Kolodny** arrived from Washington, D.C. in September to head Portland's P'nai Or synagogue.

With transition comes new opportunities for area faithful. Surely, inclusive efforts on the part of the community ought to be ramped up. In 2012, *Just Out* will continue to provide coverage surrounding the olive branch extended to Mars Hill, as well as the hardworking believers the city over. ☐

justout columnists:
a queer view of Portland

Remember to Breathe



by Nick
Mattos



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