

FEBRUARY 2013



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# The Independence

The Monthly Newsletter of Dignity/Philadelphia for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Catholics & Friends

## DIGNITY AND ME US – PART 3

Dolores Vera started coming to Dignity Philadelphia in the early 1990s, and Michelle Perrone, her daughter, started around 1996 – both became members in 1997. Prior to coming to Philadelphia in 1991, Dolores and Michelle had been members of Dignity Washington for circa 10 years. Dolores came to Philadelphia – with the expectation of returning to D.C. – to go to graduate school; Michelle came 4 years later since her then-partner was stationed in New Jersey. They bring diversity to Dignity Philadelphia in that they consider themselves ethnic/racial minorities AND they are heterosexual!



Both were introduced to Dignity Washington when they were looking for a volunteer activity focused on women. They learned of the “Feeding Program for Homeless Women” that functioned out of a church in D.C., and various groups took part in preparing food for this group during the week and weekends. Dignity Washington was in charge of the food preparation 2-3 Sundays out of the month. It was working at this activity that they both learned about Dignity, and being lax Catholics, they admired the work this group (mostly male lawyers) was doing in the community. Soon they started going to Mass with them after the “Feeding Program” and eventually joined Dignity Washington. “There was somewhat a connection to this community that I liked. They were Catholics, well-off, liberal minded, yet there they were cleaning tables, preparing food, cleaning pots and pans, and cleaning up the church/dining room after the meals on Sunday. And still taking time to sit and talk to the women, sometimes giving them rides to the shelters, and always rushing to get to Mass on time. And we would all sit together during liturgy, smelling of onions and just exhausted.” And soon both Michelle and Dolores began to socialize with these Dignity members, and to this day remain friends with them. According to Dolores, these men exemplified who the real Catholic Church was – a community based group that was doing good charity work, all in the name of Catholicism. This was the church she had known as a child growing up in Mexico. Dolores is quick to point out that when the Vatican disavowed gays from the church, it shot itself in its Prada-covered foot.

To Michelle, her mother always volunteered and accepted this altruism as normal in her household in Arlington, VA. As a feminist – learning from her mother – she just assumed she had to help women in all aspects of their lives. Michelle can remember working on ERA activities, mostly stuffing envelopes, at a very early age. She was hurt at a “Take Back the Night” rally, but continued going since this is what her mother did – so it must be what was expected of her! She too worked alongside her mother and the Dignity members in the church’s soup kitchen.

After the death of her husband, Dolores moved to Philadelphia in 1991 to go to graduate school. She looked around for a church in her West Philadelphia neighborhood and became a member of St. Francis de Sales; the reward for going was that after the 10 a.m. service, they sold copies of *The Washington Post* outside on the steps! This membership lasted a couple of months. She realized this was not her community! This was the same church that spewed the same verbiage she detested about the Catholic Church prior to joining Dignity Washington. The church had now become a political soapbox; it now focused on telling its members whom to vote for, came down on women’s rights to reproductive freedom, actively lobbied for anti-choice, and excluded gay people and women from fully participating in the liturgy. She looked for a Dignity chapter, found Dignity Philadelphia in the phone book, attended sporadically for two years before joining, and has been a member since 1997.

After Michelle left D.C. and came to live in Philadelphia – 3 blocks from her mother’s apartment, she too became a member of Dignity Philadelphia. She remembered how happy she had been attending Dignity services in D.C. and had very little memory about the politics of the “regular” Catholic Church. She found it hilarious that when she started coming to Dignity with her mother, people would ask her if she and Dolores were “partners.” She likes Dignity services because she usually plays an active part as either a lector or EM. She has only good things to say about the Presiders and treasures the friends she had made in this community. Michelle says, “I especially like that our orientation is not an issue; what they care about is inclusiveness.”

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Today, Dolores and Michelle head up the Communications Committee and are responsible for the monthly Dignity newsletter, *The Independence*. While it is a known fact that both are straight and pro-choice, they are quick to point out that Dignity is a group of Catholics that have chosen NOT to take a stand on women's reproductive rights. They both like that Dignity Philadelphia actively works on getting women on ad-hoc committees and the Steering Committee; and advocate for women to be Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors. "While Dignity members would never call themselves feminists, they do realize that women are an integral part of the church, and work towards this goal," say Dolores.

Attending Dignity services is a joy and a pleasure for these women; to hear the interpretation of the readings, both in humorous and serious styles, and from different Presiders, re-enforces their belief that the members are here to worship God, and when called up, do good works of charity. These acts of charity include the food collection for the AIDS Ministry at St. Luke's, the 50/50 collection every month for a non-profit, the Calcutta-related activities and Broad Street Ministry participation. These acts of kindness are why Dolores and Michelle continue to be members; they also participate in political activities undertaken by Dignity Philadelphia – these activities fuel their political needs.

"In getting away from the politics of the Catholic Church, we joined one of the most political groups within the church" says Dolores. "I really do think that if more straight people knew about Dignity, how giving and generous they are, how the readings are the focus of the service, they would come to our services and eventually join. This is the church I grew up in: worshipping together at the altar and when called upon, provide for others less fortunate, as Jesus would want us to do. These Dignity Philadelphia members are the least political, and most charitable, group of people I have ever met, and I love them for this."

*This is the third in a series dealing with some of the history of Dignity Philadelphia that this year celebrates 40 years of service to the Catholic GLBT community. Michael Flynn conducted the interview.*

## DIGNITY PHILADELPHIA IN 1994

A significant Dignity/Philadelphia Community Survey encompassing the spiritual, liturgical, social, educational and political aspects of the Chapter was produced. One hundred six (106) responses were received from the over 200 distributed weekly at Liturgy over the course of several months. The responses were tabulated and printed in the Dignity newsletter. As one result of the survey, the chapter sponsored a workshop illustrating the benefits of the consensus model in reaching decisions.

The Chapter Time Capsule was re-sealed and will be opened at Dignity/ Philadelphia's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2003.

In early Fall, the chapter created an AIDS Task Force in an attempt to centralize the AIDS ministries being performed by all of the Standing Committees. Task Force facilitators would coordinate the chapter's outreach to persons living with HIV/AIDS. The Task Force sponsored a successful Thanksgiving turkey drive and Christmas gift-giving endeavor at Betak, an AIDS hospice. Eventually, the Task

Force became a subcommittee of the Spiritual Life Committee.

The Chapter hosted an East Coast Conference from Friday, October 7 through Monday, October 10. Over 65 attended at the Philadelphia Doubletree Hotel representing 17 chapters and three regions. Dignity/USA President Marianne Duddy was the homilist at our Sunday liturgy.

Sunday, October 30 the Liturgy Committee sponsored its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Fundraising Brunch at Woody's Bar. Approximately 90 people attended and it was the usual success as it had been in the past. The chapter continued its social life at the annual picnic and New Year's Eve Party.

The chapter was in desperate need of new office space. Dignity House was a structural mess and the owners were unwilling to fix several safety and health violations. After an exhaustive search by an Ad Hoc Committee, several recommendations were submitted. In November, Dignity/Philadelphia closed a chapter in its history by vacating Dignity House and moving into recently renovated office space in the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany where we had been celebrating weekly Liturgy.

At the end of the year an Ad Hoc Committee was established to consider changes to chapter By-laws and Constitution.

It was decided to discontinue monthly Women's Sunday Liturgy and to integrate women's concerns into all liturgies. At the annual Outfest Block Party, Dignity circulated petitions for the ordination of women to be sent to the Vatican.

## HISTORY OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER IN PHILADELPHIA

*Michael Flynn*

On Sunday, January 20th, a number of Dignity members attended the third in a series of presentations by the 40th Anniversary Committee. Jimmy Calnan introduced the Executive Director of the William Way Community Center (WWCC), Chris Bartlett, who in turn introduced the speaker, Bob Skiba. Bob has been the Archivist at WWCC for seven years and gave us all an informative and educational presentation of the history of the community center in Philadelphia from its start at dances of the Gay Liberation Front to the large Engineer's Building on Spruce St. He gave us a description of each of the venues of the community center: the first was located at 60 N. 3rd Street, later it was at Kater Street, off 3rd and South Sts., basements in the Lincoln Apartment house and the Camac Baths, a hiatus where events were held in people's homes (anyone remember "Penguin Place?") on up to the present address at the old Engineer's Club. Many people may not know that "William Way" was a real person - a gay activist in the



*Jimmy Calnan, Bob Skiba and Chris Bartlett, ED of WWCC*

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LGBT community for years - and a member of our own chapter. Some of the posters and handbills he passed around to an audience of circa 15 people included a 1985 community survey that included Dignity/Philadelphia.



*Michael Flynn and Bob Skiba*

Jimmy thanked Bob for coming and said he was the “real treasure” of the WWCC. Bob, who is also a tour guide, asked us to Google his site at “Gayborhood Guru” for more gay and lesbian history.

## **HISTORY OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER IN PHILADELPHIA (ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE)**

*Kevin Davies*

Bob Skiba, the archivist at the William Way Community Center, took us on an oral and visual tour of the many lives of the Community Center in Philadelphia on Sunday, January 20 at 4:30pm at St. Luke’s.

From its beginning on N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, then at Kater Street, then to a community center without walls and to its current location on Spruce Street, Bob led us through the timeline of the people involved, the newsletters (the archives has a copy of the inaugural issue), all the locations (the good, the bad and the ugly), the names (remember Penguin Place?) and the future of the Community Center in Philadelphia.

Today’s community center has an extensive collection on D/P. Bob mentioned many people over the years have used the archives to do research papers on GLBT religious organizations.

Everyone is invited to visit the archives on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at the Community Center but please call first to make sure it is open.

Thank you to Bob for his time with us on Sunday and reviving memories to an integral part of our GLBT history in Philadelphia.

## **40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES**

Please join us for “**Presidents Gone Wild,**” our next panel discussion on Sunday, February 17, 2013 at 4:30pm at St. Luke’s. The current and past presidents have been invited to participate in this panel and they include:

Joann Collins our current president and prior presidents Ann Butchart, Mary Louise Cervone, Joe D’Amato, Kevin Davies, Jim DeSimone, Michael Flynn, John Guiliani, David Kalinowski, Andy McCaffrey, Dick O’Malley, Michael Rocks, Norm Simmons, Marie Summers and Joe Tozzi.

Get the inside scoop on what it’s like to be a D/P President and what was going on during their time as President. Listen to their trials and tribulations combined with their joy of serving the D/P community.

Prior monthly activities: October (“Sex in the City” a walk done memory lane of the bars, etc. in the ‘70s and ‘80s), November (sponsored a Gay Bingo game), December (history of the glbt religious groups in Philadelphia) and January (history of the gay/lesbian community centers in Philadelphia by Bob Skiba, the archivist at the William Way Community Center).

## **40TH ANNIVERSARY UPDATE**

Dignity/Philadelphia’s 40th Anniversary Dinner/Dance will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2013 from 7-11pm at the Mummer’s Museum.

More details (price, outline of the night, etc.) will be provided at a later date.

The 40th Anniversary Mass will be on Sunday, April 28, 2013 at 7pm at our regular meeting space.

## **MOTIONS FROM JANUARY 2013 STEERING COMMITTEE**

At the first meeting of the Steering Committee for January 2013, the following motions were presented and voted on:

**Motion #1** Made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Joe Toal. Be it moved that the Ad Hoc Committee for Future Memorial Services Policy be reinstated with Michael Rocks as Chair. Passed unanimously

**Motion #2** Made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Linda Barrett. Be it moved that the Ad Hoc Committee for Presidential Awards be reinstated. Passed unanimously.

**Motion #3** Made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Joe Toal. Be it moved that the Ad Hoc Committee for Memorial Panels be instated. Passed unanimously. Joanne volunteered to chair.

**Motion #5** Made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Kevin Davies. Be it moved that an Ad Hoc Committee for membership be initiated with Linda Barrett as chair. Passed unanimously. The first meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 8 at 6pm. Other members: Jimmy Calnan, Joanne Collins and Dick O’Malley.

## **50/50 FOR FEBRUARY**

**Motion #4** Made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Joe Toal. Be it moved that the February 2013 50/50 be designated for the Mazzoni Center Food Bank Initiative. Passed unanimously.

**Mazzoni Center** has been providing free nutritious food through its pantry-style Food Bank program since 1989, based on the belief that a healthy and balanced diet is vital to the overall health and well-being of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Clients may access the food bank, which is located in Center City, two times per month,

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and receive the equivalent of four meals for each member of their household upon each visit. In FY 2009 Vivian's Pantry distributed more than 8,400 bags of groceries, equivalent to over 32,000 meals, were distributed to 1,093 unduplicated households.

In addition to Mazzone's regular client base, they were able to help 75 households receive emergency food bank services, an increase of 29% over the previous fiscal year. These emergency clients face immediate food needs due to the high number of closings and/or restrictions by community-based and church-based soup kitchens and food banks throughout the city.

## AND THE BIRTHDAYS KEEP HAPPENING

We love celebrating birthdays of our members and friends with the great cakes from Acme made special each month. Join us on February 10 as we again sing along to "Happy Birthday to You."

## NOTES FROM THE LITURGY COMMITTEE

by Dick O'Malley

### 1. 2013 Lenten & Easter Schedule

It's Mardi Gras time in New Orleans which means that "sack cloth and ashes" are not far away. Here is Dignity's Lenten and Holy Week time table for your convenience and planning purposes:

**Ash Wednesday:** February 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m.: Mass and the distribution of Ashes. During the 40 days of Lent Dignity encourages its members to practice self-denial and/or take positive action, such as helping to feed the hungry at Board Street Ministry on Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> from 3 to 6 p.m.

**Holy Week:** March 24<sup>th</sup>: **Palm Sunday**, 7:00 p.m. Mass and the distribution of palms

March 28<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Thursday Mass**, 7:30 p.m. commemorating the first Eucharistic Liturgy

March 29<sup>th</sup>: **Good Friday**, 7:00 p.m. Ecumenical Prayers Around the Cross with St. Luke's community.

March 30<sup>th</sup>: **Easter Vigil**, Saturday at 10:00 p.m. Mass in the church downstairs

### 2. Eucharistic Ministers Workshop

David Kalinowski will facilitate a workshop for Eucharistic Ministers on Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30 p.m. This workshop is for anyone who wants to become a Eucharistic Minister and for current Eucharistic Ministers who want to re-familiarize themselves with their responsibilities.

### 3. Guest Homilist for March

The Liturgy Committee has invited Sharon Browning to speak on March 3, 2013, during National Women's History Month. Sharon currently provides JUST Listening\* consultation and training to a wide range of organizations. She is the former Executive Director of Philadelphia VIP (Volunteers for the Indigent Program), the hub of pro bono legal services in Philadelphia, and also taught for fifteen years in the Sociology Department at Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia. She is a trained mediator, as well as a retreat facilitator, spiritual guide and teacher, focusing on the needs of marginalized individuals and groups.

\* **JUST Listening** provides a range of training, workshops, and services designed to encourage and facilitate Listening for personal, organizational, and social change and transformation. Individual and group coaching and facilitation is available for those seeking to improve work environments and effectiveness through enhanced communication. (<http://justlistening.wordpress.com>)

## BOOKS AND BOBBLE HEADS

By Michael Flynn

The Dignity/Philadelphia 40th Anniversary will be holding a book sale after mass in the tile room on Sunday, Feb 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, Feb 24<sup>th</sup>. Old and new books, souvenirs and some great Phillies bobble heads will be on sale at the tables. Bring a few extra dollars (or your checkbook) to mass on these two Sundays and leave with a new treasure or two and the feeling that you've helped us celebrate our anniversary!

## MONTHLY MUNCHIE

### Black History Month • Coretta Scott King Appeals for Justice for All:

Coretta Scott King told a Chicago audience that her slain husband's memory demanded a strong stand for equal rights for lesbian and gay men. "I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice," King said, "But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'"

I appeal to everyone who believes in King's dream to make room at the table of brother and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people." She also noted that lesbians and gay men "stood up for civil rights in Montgomery and Selma, Alabama, in Albany, Georgia, and St. Augustine, Florida, and many other campaigns of the civil rights movement," and saluted those gay people who fought "for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own."

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS (weekly mass at 330 S 13th Street between Pine and Spruce Streets)

## February is Black History Month

Friday, Feb. 1	Prayer Around the Cross, St. Luke's at 7 p.m. upstairs	Sunday, Feb. 17	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m.; 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent Presidents Gone Wild, 4:30 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 3	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m. Feast of St. Blaise (see article in January newsletter) Steering Committee at 4:30 p.m.	Monday, Feb. 18	Presidents Day
Sunday, Feb. 10	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m. (Healing Mass) Birthday Celebration Sunday liturgy Committee at 4:30 p.m.	Sunday, Feb. 24	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m. Book Sale (after Liturgy service)
Wed., Feb. 13	Ash Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. distribution of ashes	Wed., Feb. 27	Broad Street Ministry, 3 to 6 p.m.
Thurs., Feb. 14	Valentine's Day, distribution of love/hearts/ candy/whatever		

## March is National Women's History Month

Friday, March 1	Prayer Around the Cross, St. Luke's at 7 p.m. upstairs	<b>For specific Holy Week services, see newsletter article.</b>	
Sunday, March 3	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m. Guest Homilist, Sharon Browning (see article) Steering Committee at 4:30 p.m.	Sunday, March 24	Passion/Palm Sunday Liturgy at 7 p.m.
Sunday, March 10	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m. Dialogue Gospel Liturgy Committee at 4:30 p.m.	Thurs., March 28	Holy Thursday
Sunday, March 17	Eucharistic Liturgy, 7 p.m.	Wed., March 27	Broad Street Ministry, 3 to 6 p.m.
		Friday, March 29	Holy Friday
		Sat., March 30	Easter Vigil
		Sunday, March 31	No Liturgy service at Dignity

## PRAYER INTENTIONS



Please sign our Prayer Intentions book if you have anyone you would like the community to remember in our prayers.

**The deadline date for submissions for the March Newsletter is Feb. 17, 2013.**

*Articles published in the Dignity/Philadelphia newsletter, The Independence, are not necessarily the opinions of the Steering Committee of Dignity/Philadelphia, or of the Communications Co-chairs. Publication of names, organizations, and/or photographs in The Independence is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such persons, employees, and/or members of organizations.*

<b>Steering Committee</b>	<b>Joanne Collins</b> – President
	<b>Linda Barrett</b> – Vice President
	<b>Kevin Davies</b> – Secretary
	<b>Vacant</b> – Treasurer
	<b>Jim Clay/Dick O'Malley</b> – Liturgy Committee Co-coordinators
	<b>Jimmy Calnan/Melissa Hrinko</b> – Community Life Committee Co-coordinators
	<b>Michelle Perrone/Dolores Vera</b> – Communications Co-coordinators
	<b>Dave K. and Joe T.</b> – Education Committee Co-coordinators
	<b>Chaplains:</b> Barbara Gindhart and Father Ron Hoskins



The Catholic Christian Tradition in the L/G/B/T Community  
**Celebrate Who You Are And Embrace The Person God Calls You To Be!**  
*Yes, I want to be a member of the Dignity family!*

I am joining as a **new member**  I am **renewing my membership**  **Address Change**

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Numbers: cell** \_\_\_\_\_ **home** \_\_\_\_\_ **work** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_ to receive Dignity/Philadelphia's Newsletter (*The Independence*) and the latest news via email blasts. Your support through your dues to Dignity/USA will entitle you to voting privileges in national elections; subscriptions to the monthly Dateline and Quarterly Voice; discounted registration for biennial conventions and other Dignity/USA events; and access to Dignity News email list and chat groups.

Scholarships are available for Dignity/Philadelphia and Dignity/USA memberships. Contact the Dignity/Philadelphia Vice President for more information ([vp.dignityphila@gmail.com](mailto:vp.dignityphila@gmail.com)).

*The total amount of your dues and donations to both Dignity/Philadelphia and Dignity/USA may be included in one check. We will forward your Dignity/USA dues/donations and your contact information to the Dignity/USA national office.*

**Please enclose your check, payable to Dignity/Philadelphia, and mail to: Dignity/Philadelphia, P.O. Box 53348, Philadelphia, PA 19105.**

**Individual annual dues:**  
**Dignity/Phila \$20;**  
**Dignity/USA \$30**  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total**

**Couple's annual dues:**  
**Dignity/Phila \$35;**  
**Dignity/USA \$60**  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total**