

## **2016 Pride Service**

### **Special Reading**

Pope Francis tells us:

This is important: to get to know people, listen, expand the circle of ideas.

The world is crisscrossed by roads that come closer together and move apart, but the important thing is that they lead towards the Good.

#### *Participatory Timeline Intro*

We have put together a timeline of significant events through LGBTQ history. This record is meant to illustrate the history so we remember why this is important. Some of the events are troubling. Some of the conditions and attitudes are ongoing. Some of the descriptions use adult language. We read these words today to actively remember, to commemorate the work of those who went before us, and to inspire us to continue working for justice and equality.

#### *Pink Triangle Explanation*

The Pink Triangle is one of history's reminders of hate and intolerance, and part of appreciating and celebrating where we are today for Pride Weekend, is understanding where we have been. The pink triangle was used by the Nazis in concentration camps to identify homosexual prisoners. This symbol, which was used in an attempt to label and persecute, is now embraced by the gay community as a symbol of pride. We wear these today to remember it's tragic origins, as well as to stand together in solidarity to provide a future of love and acceptance.

## **Back to the Future: Reflections on the LGBTQ History**

### **An Annotated Timeline, compiled by Sara Keinath**

- 1. November 1912:** Following his arrest in Portland, Oregon for shoplifting, 19-year-old Benjamin Trout tells police that he was "corrupted" by adult men in the town. This news incites a moral panic which comes to be known as the Portland vice scandal. Dozens of men and boys are arrested on charges ranging from lewd behaviour to sodomy, and the state legislature responds by passing a law allowing for the forced sterilization of "sexual perverts."
- 2. In the 1920's and 1930's:** "living a lesbian life" is grounds for commitment to an insane asylum. During this time there was a wave of lesbian-themed plays and books, which were labeled "obscene." New York state outlaws gay references on stage and the Motion Picture Production Code prohibits references on film. A red necktie is a signifier and a way for gay men to communicate to each other; it is very daring to wear a matching handkerchief.
- 3. 1940's:** World War II changes everything - gays began to find out there are others like them. Lesbians are able to gain economic independence as women get jobs outside the home. After the war, returning soldiers often settle in port cities, as it is easier to stay distant from families and connect with others. As soldiers come home, gay bars increase in numbers.

4. **1948:** Alfred Kinsey publishes *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, revealing to the public that homosexuality is far more widespread than was commonly believed.
5. **1950's:** McCarthy and the investigations from the House and Senate look for enemies and dissidents of any kind. Homosexuals are seen as easy targets as they are believed to have a mental illness and are therefore security risks. Hundreds are fired or pressured to resign from government jobs, and thousands are discharged from the military, in what is now referred to as the 'Lavender Scare'.
6. **1951:** The Mattachine Society, the first national gay rights organization, is formed by Harry Hay, considered by many to be the founder of the gay rights movement. In an attempt to change public perception of homosexuality, the Mattachine Society aims to "eliminate discrimination, derision, prejudice and bigotry," to assimilate homosexuals into mainstream society, and to cultivate the notion of an "ethical homosexual culture."
7. **1960's:** During the Civil rights movement, many supporters are gay. They can stand up for racial equality when they can't stand up for their own.
8. **1965:** First open protest for gay rights is held in front of the White House. The organizers enforce a strict dress code: suits and ties for the men, dresses and heels for the women. Since they were asking for equal employment rights, they wanted to look employable. The group was fighting for a number of goals – the repeal of anti-gay laws, declassification of

homosexuality as a mental disorder, and equal treatment for federal gay employees.

9. **1969** - Patrons of a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, the Stonewall Inn, fight back during a police raid on June 27, sparking three days of riots. Since its establishment in 1967, the bar had been frequently raided by police officers trying to clean up the neighborhood of "sexual deviants." The Stonewall protests transform the gay rights movement from a small number of activists into a widespread protest for equal rights and acceptance. This is considered by many the beginning of the modern LGBTQ equal rights movement, and is the reason Pride month is celebrated in June.
10. **1973**: The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders.
11. **1974**: Kathy Kozachenko becomes the first openly gay American elected to public office when she wins a seat on the City Council in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
12. **1977**: Activists in Miami, Florida pass a civil rights ordinance making sexual orientation discrimination illegal in Dade County. *Save Our Children*, a campaign by a Christian fundamentalist group and headed by singer Anita Bryant, is launched in response to the ordinance. In the largest special election of any in Dade County history, 70% vote to overturn the ordinance. It is a crushing defeat for gay activists. The gay rights ordinance will not be reinstated in Dade County until December 1, 1998, more than 20 years later.

13. **1981:** The *New York Times* prints the first story of a rare pneumonia and skin cancer found in 41 gay men in New York and California. The CDC initially refers to the disease as GRID, Gay Related Immune Deficiency Disorder. When the symptoms are found outside the gay community, Bruce Voeller, biologist and founder of the National Gay Task Force, successfully lobbies to change the name of the disease to AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
14. **1987:** AIDS advocacy group ACT UP (The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is formed in response to the devastating affects the disease has had on the gay and lesbian community in New York. The group holds demonstrations against pharmaceutical companies profiteering from AIDS-related drugs as well as the lack of AIDS policies protecting patients from outrageous prescription prices. Hundreds of thousands of activists take part in the National March on Washington to demand that President Ronald Reagan address the AIDS crisis. Although AIDS had been reported first in 1981, it is not until the end of his presidency that Reagan speaks publicly about the epidemic. The CDC mails a brochure, *Understanding AIDS*, to every household in the U.S. Approximately 107 million brochures are mailed.

15. **1993:** The Department of Defense issues a directive prohibiting the U.S. Military from barring applicants from service based on their sexual orientation. "Applicants... shall not be asked or required to reveal whether they are homosexual," states the new policy, which still forbids applicants from engaging in homosexual acts or making a statement that he or she is homosexual. This policy is known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."
16. **October 1998:** Matthew Shepard dies from severe injuries he sustains in a violent gay-related hate crime. His death sets off a nationwide debate about hate crimes and homophobia that ultimately leads to the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2009. The measure expands the 1969 U.S. Federal Hate Crime Law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.
17. **2011:** The U.S. Senate votes 65-31 to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the U.S. Military.
18. **June 26, 2013** the Supreme Court rules that the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. In a 5 to 4 vote, the court ruled that DOMA violates the rights of gays and lesbians. The court also ruled that the law interferes with the states' rights to define marriage. It is the first case ever on the issue of gay marriage for the Supreme Court.

19. **June 26, 2015**, The U.S. Supreme Court ruled, 5–4, in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that same-sex couples have the fundamental right to marry and that states cannot say that marriage is reserved for heterosexual couples. "Under the Constitution, same-sex couples seek in marriage the same legal treatment as opposite-sex couples, and it would disparage their choices and diminish their personhood to deny them this right," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion.
20. **June 12, 2016**: On June 12, 2016, a mass shooting terrorist attack and hate crime occurred inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Fifty people died, including the gunman, who was killed by Orlando police after a three-hour standoff. An additional 53 people were injured. It was the deadliest mass shooting by a single gunman and the deadliest incident of violence against LGBT people in U.S. history, and the deadliest terrorist attack in the U.S. since the September 11 attacks in 2001.

*We will now observe a moment of silence for the victims of last weekend's shooting.*

21. There is still work to do. The Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit finds that same-sex couples experience discrimination in 27 percent of housing rental, sales, and financing tests.
22. The Human Rights Campaign Foundation finds that 53% of LGBT employees still feel the need to be closeted at work. There are no state laws prohibiting workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in 29 states (including Michigan) and gender identity in 33 states.
23. Numerous studies have shown that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth have a higher rate of suicide attempts than do heterosexual youth. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center synthesized these studies and estimated that between 30 and 40% of LGBT youth, depending on age and sex groups, have attempted suicide. Lesbian and gay youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide as their straight peers. Transgender youth are 10 times more likely than their peers to attempt suicide.

There once was a time when lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people were isolated and alone. Here at First Congregational Church of Cadillac United Church of Christ, we believe no one should be alone anymore. We stand together. We pray together. We work together for a better future.

We will close this portion of our service with words from our current president, Barack Obama:

We, the People, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense.

When all Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free.

*Amen.*