

# WINDY CITY TIMES' LGBTQ WEDDING & SPECIAL EVENTS GUIDE

NINTH EDITION  
February 2019



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# WINDY CITY TIMES' LGBTQ WEDDING & SPECIAL EVENTS GUIDE

**NINTH EDITION • February 2019**

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# HIRING A WEDDING CONSULTANT/COORDINATOR/PLANNER: HOW IT ALL WORKS

BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS, MWP, FRANK EVENT DESIGN

Many couples know that hiring a wedding consultant is the right thing for them from the very start. Other couples think this is an unnecessary expense and that they can do it all on their own. My philosophy is that if you trust your taxes to a professional, your health to a professional, why would you not want to trust this once-in-a-lifetime event to a professional? Each planner does things his or her way, but here is how I have been providing services for my clients for 25 years:

—**Full-service planning:** I will plan and design the details of the wedding from start to finish. Additionally, I and my team are there at the

wedding to direct the day's events and coordinate everything that needs to happen and keep things on time.

—**Partial planning:** This level of service is pretty much the same as full-service, but this is if a couple should have their venue selected and then get to the point of "Okay, now what are we do?"

—**"Day of" coordination:** This is the common term for wedding-day directions services. I am not a fan of calling it "day of," because it is so much more than just what it sounds like. I review all your contracts, meet with a couple before the wedding and put together the timeline. Then I pretty much take over all the final confirmations and last-minute details. I am there with a staff to direct the day's events and take the stress away from the couple, their friends and family, making sure everything they have planned and selected happens correctly and on time and as well as assist with any unexpected occurrences.

—**Hourly consultations:** I offer this service for couples who really want to do this on their own or cannot afford full or partial planning services. I am hired on an hourly basis to review your plans, give you advice on etiquette, guidance on what will work, and more importantly what won't work, as well as vendor recommendations. This is a great way to tap into my knowledge and expertise at a very minimal investment.

Once I know I am available for their date, I set up an initial interview and discuss their expectations. We talk about the event in detail. You will need to have an estimated guest count and wedding budget. From here, I know if their expectations are realistic. If they are not, one of two things must be done: either increase your budget or decrease your guest list so that you have more money to spend on the details that are a priority. This is where my expertise comes into play in assisting them on deciding on what's most important, and how to make the best of their wedding budget.

This also gives us a chance to meet and interact. It also lets us both know if this is going to be a productive and enjoyable relationship.

It's at this initial interview that I can come up with a cost for my services. Every wedding consultant charges a different way. Some charge by the hour, some charge a percentage of your budget. I charge a flat fee based on the amount of detail to your wedding. Since our weddings are different, the fee structure varies.

Once we have set up a contract, I set up an initial meeting. Here I determine the couple's style by asking a series of interpersonal questions to each member of the couple. We also then talk about each facet of the wedding and the vendors that will be involved. With my 25 years of experience, I can easily fit vendors whose price and style work best with the couple's budget and expectations. I check those vendors availability then forward the information to the couple for their review. From here, we set up meetings with vendors they like the most. Keep in mind every vendor that they choose, the couple contracts with each vendor directly. I, unlike other planners, do not subcontract any vendors.

This planning process can take several weeks or even months, depending upon how much time we have before the big day. Many clients do not live in the Chicagoland area, so we arrange FaceTime meetings and conference calls on a regular basis. I then guide the couple through each intricate detail, use my creative flair to add unique and personal touches and to manage the whole event. When the big day arrives, my team and I are there to manage all the details of the day and keep things flowing according to the agenda.

There are dozens and dozens of wedding consultants out there. I highly recommend you research consultants fully before hiring and going into a contract. Make sure that you ask for references and check online reviews. See what professional credentials and affiliations they have. However, what's most important is hiring a consultant you trust and feel comfortable with. Beware of anything that seems too good to be true regarding price. I always recommend the old saying, "You get what you pay for."

Just as every planner does things differently, each planner charges in a different way. The most common is an hourly rate, percentage of budget or flat fee. I charge a flat fee, so the client knows exactly the amount of the investment they are making, as well as the freedom call, email and meet with me as much as they need to.

Hiring a wedding consultant/coordinator/planner is not for everyone, but the benefits of having one involved in some capacity of your wedding planning is an "insurance policy" for you. It is such an immense benefit to the couples to give them peace of mind and less stress during this very emotional time in their lives. This way, you can be a guest at your own wedding.

Photo from wedding of couple David Parker and Dale Roberson, who worked with Frank Event Design. More photos of their wedding on page 9.

*Rick Aguilar Studios*





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**Evan Snyder and Brian Michael O'Neill** became **Evan and Brian Michael Callan** at a ceremony at Pretty Lake, Michigan, on November 10, 2018.

*Photo by Crystal Snyder*

**Kyle Wood** (right) wed **Larry Massen** at Lincoln Park's A New Leaf on September 10, 2017.

*Chris Bergin Photography*



**Keely** (in glasses) & **Melissa Schalk** made it official November 17, 2018, at The Market in Valparaiso, Indiana.

*Mark & Carly Photography*







**David Parker and Dale Roberson** were married on August 11, 2018. The ceremony took place on the terrace overlooking the Chicago River cityscape of the Wyndham Grand Chicago Riverfront Hotel. The weather was perfect and the couple's dog, Zoe acted, as ringbearer. The wedding reception immediately followed, featuring a lounge reception in the hotel's Penthouse Ballroom, featuring two sets of different passed small bites and a risotto and carving station. A decadent dessert buffet featuring French macarons and other French pastries followed later. Guests danced the night away against the stunning city views.

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*Photos by Rick Aguilar Studios*





# OF THE CLOTH: Bishop Phyllis V. Pennese on leadership, 15-year anniversary

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Bishop Phyllis V. Pennese, 61, recently celebrated her 15th anniversary as a minister at the church she founded in 2003, Pillar of Love Fellowship United Church of Christ (UCC).

"This has been a difficult but marvelous journey," said Pennese. "I have learned how to be a better pastor and pastoring has taught me how to be a better parent to my son, Brandon, and a better partner to my wife, Vickie. The anniversary service included friends, pastors, deacons and lay leaders from California, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio,

Pennsylvania, Illinois and Iowa.

"We celebrated with song, dance, praise, testimonies, great preaching and spoken word by local artist, activist and Pillar of Love founding member e. nina jay. It was a glorious time and I am so incredibly grateful and appreciative of all those who came from near and far to help us celebrate."

Pennese described her church as "radically inclusive and welcoming to everyone who wants to attend. It was founded to do outreach to those on the margins of society and the Black LGBTQ community specifically."

Pillar of Love's motto is "We live the love in our name and are courageous enough to be all God created."

This is a far cry from the church teachings Pennese heard during her youth as a member of the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ (COGIC). She called her childhood self a "Bible thumper."

Pennese grew up during the civil-rights era as a biracial child with an African-American mother and Italian immigrant father. She was part of the first wave of integrations during her elementary school years.

Everything changed when Pennese entered a local Catholic college and discovered a wider interpretation of faith through her exploration of other faith traditions. Pennese learned that the other people she met believed in God as much as she did. College was also where she discovered the lesbian scene, embraced her sexual orientation and went to her first gay bar, Augie & CK's.

Pennese said both her biracial and lesbian identities have formed much of how she views her faith and the wider world. This viewpoint and the fact that Pennese could not reconcile the anti-LGBT rhetoric she was taught as a child led her to leave the COGIC church and drop out of college. She spent the next 20 years "developing my feminist, womanist, lesbian self" through her involvement with Rape Victims Advocates (RVA). At first, Pennese was an RVA board member and volunteer doing rape crisis intervention and later, she served as one the organization's first paid staff members.

"I trained hundreds of women, and some men, in rape-crisis advocacy and was responsible for setting up rape-crisis advocacy programs in hospitals all over Chicago," said Pennese. "I also served as the Chicago Sexual Assault Ser-

vices Network executive director and eventually worked with other organizations to do rape and incest survivor counseling."

While working at RVA, Pennese was asked by Rev. Delois Brown-Daniels to train some Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) students about rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. This led to Pennese attending a church service where Daniels was a guest preacher.

"Rev. Dee asked me to stand and introduced me to those gathered and said that people 'should get to know me and my ministry,'" said Pennese. "I remember thinking, 'who the hell is she talking about.' The anti-violence work I did was powerful and healing and in many ways spiritual but I had never thought of it as ministry until Rev. Dee said that."

Attending a revival at Trinity UCC, Pennese heard a sermon by Rev. Dr. James Forbes, who was LGBTQ-affirming. She also heard affirming messages at New Faith Baptist Church by Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas and joined the church after a few visits.

"I spoke to God about my sexual orientation and heard God affirm that God desired a relationship with me just as I was and that what was stopping me was me and other people but not God," said Pennese.

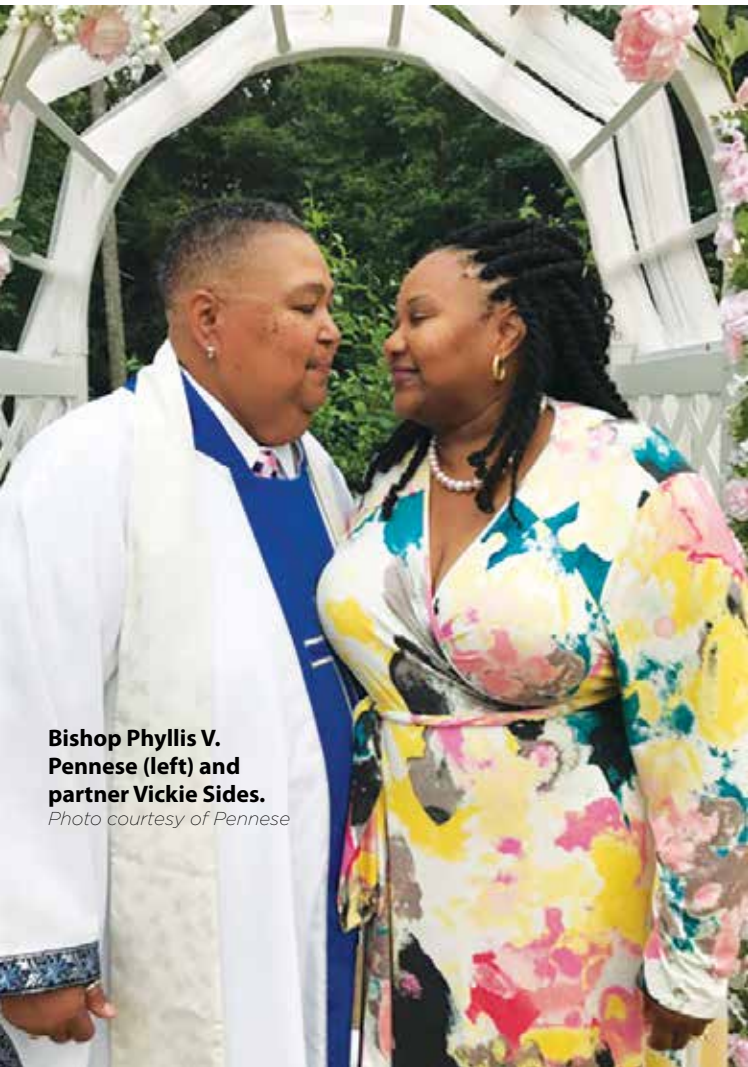
At New Faith Baptist Church, Pennese got involved as a leader and started ministry training. One of the rotations was in pastoral care which Pennese enjoyed so she started going to CPE classes herself.

"I applied for a Chaplain Intern Program at Northwestern Hospital and was accepted," said Pennese. "I flourished there and was told by the director that I should pursue a chaplain residency."

Pennese, with Dee's guidance, took on the challenge and was accepted into Advocate Christ Hospital's CPE Residency Program. She said she was surprised to be accepted since those residency programs were mostly offered to seminary students or graduates, of which she was not.

"When I completed that residency, I took a position at Advocate Hospice," said Pennese.

While at Advocate, Pennese applied and was accepted into the Master of Divinity program at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS). She said CTS was the best fit for her due to the school's focus on teaching students how to think, that who one



**Bishop Phyllis V. Pennese (left) and partner Vickie Sides.**

*Photo courtesy of Pennese*

continued on page 18





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# A JEWEL OF THE COMMUNITY:

## Donald Strzepek on jewelry business, early LGBTQ activism

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Lifelong Chicagoan Donald Strzepek has been in the jewelry business for more than 30 years and is currently the owner of Tucker Inc., in the heart of Jewelers Row in the Loop.

"I grew up on the Northwest Side of Chicago, near the brickyard, with my two brothers and a sister," said Strzepek. "My neighborhood had lots of kids and we played outside until the street lights came on. I had a great childhood. I went to Lane Tech, which was an overwhelming experience because of the size of the school."

He graduated from DePaul University with a double major in English/communication and secondary education and, after a brief stint teaching high school English in the Chicago Public School system, began his journey in the jewelry business.

"I was too young, short and way too thin to be a high school teacher, so I decided to find other career options where I could utilize my artistic and communication skills," said Strzepek. "I found Tucker Inc. and the owner, Sherman Tucker, sent me to my first gemology course. I was hooked. He also taught me to be humble and see every customer as my first customer. I found my passion and a career path that allowed me to explore all facets of my persona."

While Strzepek was working at Tucker Inc., he resumed teaching, this time as an English as a Second Language teacher at Truman College.

"Recently, I had my students write down one word to explain why they came to the United States, and out of over 50 students only one person wrote down money," said Strzepek. "The rest of the students wrote down freedom, opportunity, love, family, war and security among other words. In my almost 30 years of teaching these classes, I have seen refugees from Bosnia and El Salvador, and professionals from many repressive countries, who have come here and taken cleaning jobs so they could support their families. All they want is security and freedom, and the right to live the American dream."

In 2006, when Tucker was ready to retire, Strzepek decided to purchase Tucker Inc., so he created a business plan, took out a huge loan and bought the company.

"This is my home, my company, my life, my passion, my joy, my adventure and, yes, even my source of angst," said Strzepek. "I have created almost every kind of jewelry design imaginable, from the sublime to the avant-garde. This includes a belt with 28 one-carat diamonds, a volcano ring with a ruby, a necklace with eyeballs and sapphires for tears, tiaras and thousands of other items. I love working with a client to create something that is unique and made especially for them."

As for wedding rings, Strzepek explained that he is a purist who does not like metal rings. He said if a couple is "making this leap of faith in each other, you need to do it with style, grace

and elegance."

Strzepek has had many famous clients including Chef Art Smith and his husband Jesus Salgueiro, author Sara Peretsky, actor Chris O'Donnell and baseball player Curtis Pride. He nevertheless added that everyone who walks into his store is a high profile client.

Over the past three decades plus, Strzepek has also been involved with a variety of local LGBTQ- and HIV/AIDS-focused groups and events.

When Strzepek was in college, he and fellow classmates Edward Maldonado, David Gayley and Bliss Frings founded the first LGBTQ student group, The Society of the Individual, for a Catholic university in the world. Four years ago, the group (now called Act OUT) invited Strzepek to take part in their Pride Parade contingent as their guest marshal.

One of the ways Strzepek gave back as a young adult during the AIDS epidemic of the '80s was by participating in Howard Brown Health's early safer-sex awareness research studies. They met every six months to discuss the issue and get tested for HIV. Strzepek has gotten tested every six months since.

He started attending Chicago's Pride Parade in high school and has never missed a year since then.

In 1985, Strzepek recalled, he and his college friends were walking alongside the parade's line-up area. A man asked if anyone wanted to ride on his AIDS-awareness float since the people who were supposed to participate had recently died of AIDS. They decided to jump on the float since no one else was willing to do it.

"As we went through the parade route, the thing that came to my mind was this moment was like a Fellini movie," said Strzepek. "It was surreal. When our float went down the street there was total silence. People were coming up and saying they admired our courage and how much more research and medical funding needed to happen. It was an awe inspiring moment."

"I can remember how different the parade was in the early days. There were rallies after the parade in the park with poets, speakers, musicians and politicians. I have witnessed so many changes and advancements, yet I still see so many challenges that need to be met. We still need HIV/AIDS education, human rights awareness and, yes, I see an ever growing need to ad-

**Donald Strzepek.**

*Photos courtesy of Strzepek*







**Don Strzepek (in Hawaiian shirt) after Pride in 1985.**

*Photo courtesy of Strzepek*

dress the opioid crisis that is escalating within the gay community.”

Strzepek also started the Halloween Parade with Maldonado in 1997. They got the idea after seeing New York City’s parade in 1996.

“The New York City parade was a spectacular event with flame throwers, Joi Cardwell singing dance tunes, marching bands, Broadway stars performing and, yes, costumes, costumes and more costumes.”

They eventually obtained a permit for a Chicago parade and, the following year, it took place from the CTA Red Line stop at Belmont to Sidetrack.

“Here is the kicker, we were to remain on the sidewalk,” said Strzepek. “If anyone stepped onto the street, we would have been arrested. I think that first year consisted of about 30 people. A family with two children in a red wagon, a couple of people walking their pets and

the wonderful brave cast of characters I call friends and family. The first year there was a police officer in uniform along the curb about every 20 feet keeping us on the sidewalk. Now the parade is a wonderful, beautiful, much larger event.”

Additionally, Strzepek participated in the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality and the very first Dance for Life as a volunteer.

When Strzepek is not working he loves to watch foreign films, ride his bike, go to the gym, go dancing, hang out at the Kit Kat Lounge on Wednesday nights, eat out in restaurants and watch other people cook because, he said, “I am the world’s worst cook.”

His message to the world is “Be proud of who you are. Love is love in all its glory. Never stop advocating for what is right and just.”

See <https://www.facebook.com/Tucker-Company/> for more information.

## Gay Indiana mayor marries

Pete Buttigieg—the mayor of South Bend, Indiana—recently married Chasten Glezman, The Huffington Post noted.

They had been dating for three years. Approximately 200 guests attended the ceremony, which was held at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. James in South Bend. Right after the wedding, the couple appeared at the South Bend Gay Pride Week block party.

Buttigieg, 36, first publicly discussed his sexuality in a 2015 South Bend Tribune.

*Note: This story was first reported in June of 2018. Since then, Buttigieg has stepped down as mayor of South Bend and announced a presidential exploratory committee in January 2019.*



**South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg (left) and Chasten Glezman.**

*Photo by Mike Kuby*



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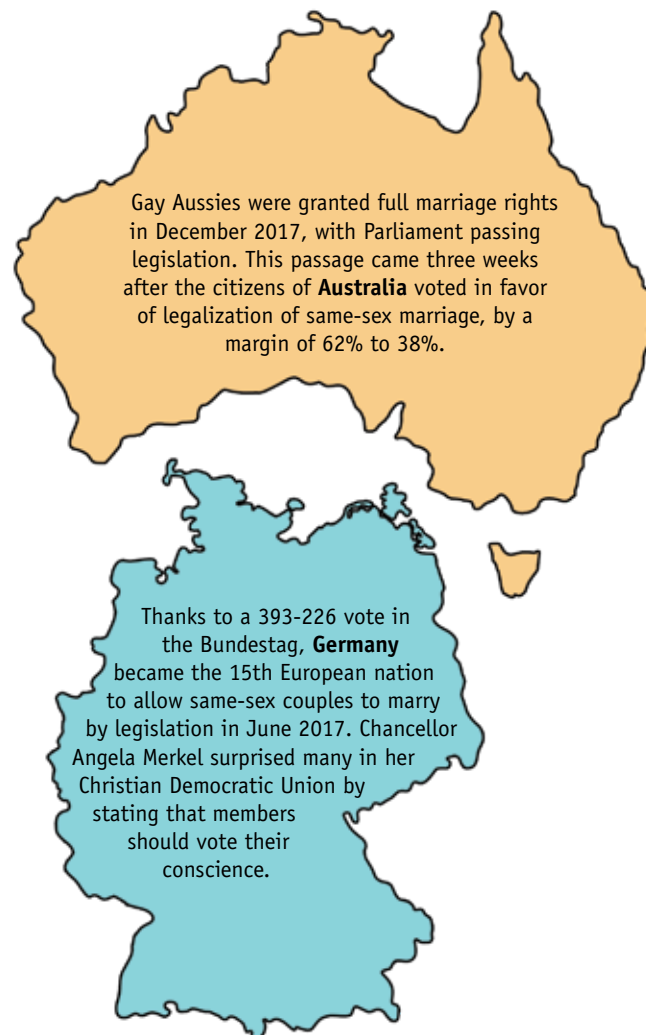
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# A WORLD OF MARRIAGE RIGHTS

The world is changing for the better! Since Marriage Equality officially became the law  
of the land in 2015, other nations have followed suit, granting marriage rights to their  
LGBTQ citizens. Here are a few of those nations.



These are the nations worldwide where same-sex marriages can be performed legally, ac-  
cording to data compiled on Wikipedia.

Argentina  
Australia  
Austria  
Belgium  
Brazil  
Canada  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Denmark

Finland  
France  
Germany  
Iceland  
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# EQUALITY ILLINOIS' 2019 GALA

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald ([www.MysticImagesPhotography.com](http://www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)).  
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## BOOK REVIEW

# The Best Party of Our Lives: Stories of Gay Weddings

by Sarah Galvin

\$18.95; Sasquatch Books; 226 pages

## REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Your summer is filling up quickly.

It starts with graduations and confirmations. You've already got a pile of "Save the Date" cards for a bunch of weddings, and the summer wraps up with family reunions and more weddings. It might even end with yours, and in the new book *The Best Party of Our Lives*, by Sarah Galvin, you'll see how "I do" becomes "whoohoo hoohoo!"

Even though she "always figured" she'd end up spending her life with a woman, Galvin "certainly had no interest in weddings...." They just weren't relevant to her, except for an irksome knowledge that much of the wedding industry was biased against LGBTQ couples.

Later, as a writer for a newspaper in Seattle, she began getting requests to "crash" weddings and she was "blown away by the things" she saw. Weddings—especially for LGBTQ couples—weren't what she thought they'd be. Their parties were "the best ones imaginable..."

The stories of some she found are in this book.

When a couple looks back on their boy-meets-boy (or girl-meets-girl) story, there's often an element of surprise. There was an introduction, either traditionally or through modern methods like Craigslist, online, or dance rave. Falling in love might've begun with bumps and rough spots, followed by the realization of common interests and the happy idea that you can't get her out of your mind.

No two proposals are alike, although today's couples almost always have some sort of prior discussion on it. The actual "Will you..." might be romantic and accompanied by one or two rings, or it may be an out-loud wondering if moving in together meant more than merely sharing a home. And just like the proposals are varied, so are the budgets, which usually leads to a DIY ceremony that more reflects the pair.

Some of the couples in this book had domestic partnerships long before they married. One couple debated marriage altogether, figuring that there was no reason to wed as an "affirmation of the love they'd known was true" for years. Some invited nearly everyone they knew, while one couple sent "Don't Save the Date" tchotchkes. There were cakes and cake-toppers, toasts and gifts, and one "[23]-year relationship [that] deserved a party..."

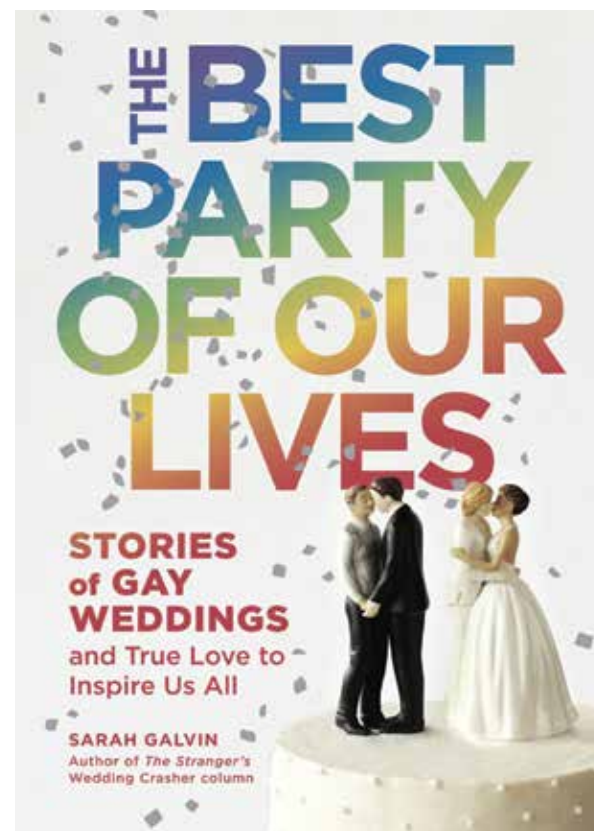
So you got engaged over the holidays, or maybe you've got love on the

brain. How do other LGBTQ couples make their special days... special? "The Best Party of Our Lives" is packed with ideas on that.

It's also packed with another thing: stories that are very Seattle-centric. Author Galvin said she "started with" Seattle couples but she never really got any farther than that, although LGBTQ couples get married all over the place. I would've absolutely liked to see wider coverage from this book; the minimized area doesn't make it bad—it makes it a lot of the same.

Even so, if you've got stars in your eyes, a ring on your finger, and romance on your mind, you'll barely notice. For you, newlywed-to-be, *The Best Party of Our Lives* will fill you with happiness.

Want more? Look for *The Wedding Heard 'Round the World*, by Michael McConnell and Jack Baker; or *The Essential Guide to Gay and Lesbian Weddings*, by Tess Ayers and Paul Brown.



## OF THE CLOTH

from page 10

studies with is as important as what one studies and to ask who makes the rules and how can one change them.

Another pivotal moment for Pennese while she was at CTS was when she traveled to California with her wife to hear Rev. Yvette Flunder (now Bishop) preach.

"Hearing this powerful woman of God felt like looking in the mirror and seeing all of me for the first time, ever," said Pennese. "By this time I had had women ministers as role models and

Black lesbians as role models but I did not know of anyone who embodied all of that and who demonstrated the love of God so profoundly. It was Bishop Flunder who took me under her wing and mentored, nurtured and encouraged me to birth Pillar of Love."

During this time, Pennese had switched her membership to Trinity UCC under Pastor Jeremiah Wright.

"Pastor Wright, of course, gave me his time, expertise and graciously shared his wisdom," said Pennese.

Pennese is also the Midwest Region Bishop for The Fellowship Of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) where she helps other pastors grow and develop as leaders.

Pennese and partner Vickie Sides celebrated their 20th anniversary this past May. They met when both were doing rape crisis work in Chicago.

"I would not be who I am nor would my work in ministry be as successful without her and our son, Brandon in my life," said Pennese.

Sides currently works as a University of Chicago administrator and as an adjunct professor at National Louis University.

"My entire life has been a great journey and I am excited to see and know what God has in store for me for the next 15 years" said Pennese.

See <http://www.pillaroflove.org/> for more information.



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see also **VENUES**

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### Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq. Law Offices of Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss & Associates, P.C.

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## HAPPY ANNIVERSARIES!

Even before gay marriage became official, some couples did it anyway. One couple celebrates a marriage older than gay marriage itself.

**Top photo:**  
The couple celebrates with friends.  
**Right: Jason (left) and Robin Delgatto.**  
**Far right: The Delgatto family.**  
*Anthony Rivera of LunaFox Photography*



The path toward marriage equality was unpredictable at times, frustrating at others. As policy shifted from stop-gap civil unions to state-by-state marriage rights to, inevitably, nationwide rights, many couples didn't wait for the official government go-ahead and just called their marriages, marriages.

One such couple is Robin and Jason Delgatto of Chicago. The couple has been together almost 16 years and has been married (by their own definition, at least) for almost 11. After all this time together, the family has expanded with the addition of two children. All of this means there are many anniversaries to celebrate.

Robin Delgatto recently shared the following statement with Windy City Times on the evolution of his family and how weddings are weddings:

*"We got married before it was legal, but promised to use all the words: marriage, wedding and husband. We didn't want to wait for the world to catch up with us and certainly didn't want to use words that had less meaning. We're all just people and we all own these words equally. We picked up the piece of paper (marriage certificate) a year-plus later in Iowa, so I could get my name changed."*

*The wedding itself was held in the theater where we fell in love, when he came to see me in You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown. I played Linus, which is now our dog's name."*

*Now we have been together almost 16 years and married almost 11; we got married on our fifth anniversary. We have two perfect daughters and we're getting ready to buy our first house together in Evanston."*







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