



ICON

*Interfaith Coalition on
Nondiscrimination*

News Brief • October 2005

■ Executive Director Hired!

ICON has reached a milestone! We have hired our first full-time Executive Director, Dan Funk, to travel the state and get us organized as never before!

ICON is a two-year-old faith-based organization dedicated to advocating equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people. ICON's operations are guided by its member congregations. We currently have 13 member congregations from the following denominations: United Methodist, Church of Christ (Disciples), United Church of Christ, Metropolitan Community Churches, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and nondenominational.

Until now, ICON's operations have depended entirely on volunteer efforts. Now we enter a new era—and none too soon.

The Power of the Religious Right

A few months ago, the Indianapolis City/County Council was poised to make it illegal for employers to fire good workers simply for being gay or transgendered. The votes were there! Then something happened. A few days before the scheduled vote, two statewide religious right organizations issued an alert to their members and flooded the Council with email. Within a few days, several Council members flip-flopped and voted against. The measure failed by a narrow margin.

Although painful, this episode illustrates the power that people of faith can wield. Churches, synagogues, and mosques are unique among nonprofit organizations

in their close and regular connection to their membership base. When linked together by a common cause, and integrated communications, they can become a formidable network of passionate, reliable activists. Back in the 1980s, the religious right recognized this and began organizing. Several decades later, right-wing churches are one of the most powerful forces influencing federal and state government.

ICON was created as an answer to the religious right. There is no reason why affirming people of faith cannot become just as well organized and just as effective.

In its brief existence, ICON has already identified 250 affirming clergy across the state. These clergy and affirming members of their congregations represent a source of enormous potential influence. But ICON's efforts to organize have been severely limited by the fact that it has no staff. ICON has desperately needed someone who can travel the state day after day to meet with affirming clergy and congregants, gain their confidence, and welcome them into active membership in ICON.

In a religious state like Indiana, GLBT people will not make lasting progress toward justice until affirming people of faith are equipped to go toe-to-toe with religious right organizations.

The Immediate Threat

In March of this year, Indiana's legislature passed a bill that initiates the process for amending Indiana's constitution. Before becoming law, the bill must be passed again by the legislature in 2007, and then be approved by Hoosier voters in November of 2008.

The bill creates a special exception to the Equal Protection Clause of our Constitution. The Equal Protection Clause provides that all Hoosier citizens shall be treated equally under the law. The religious right is afraid that eventually an Indiana court will conclude that equal really

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Dan Funk speaks to Senator Glenn Howard at an ICON Action Day at the Statehouse, January 27, 2004.

means equal and require the government to offer equal legal rights to same-sex couples.

To prevent that from happening, the religious right has persuaded Hoosier legislators to amend the Constitution to specify that the Equal Protection Clause does not extend to same-sex couples. *This is the first time since the era of slavery that the legislature has tried to create an exception to the Equal Protection Clause.*

The Creative Response

In May of this year, ICON was approached by the Jesus MCC Justice Fund, a nonprofit corporation affiliated with one of ICON's member congregations, Jesus Metropolitan Community Church (Indianapolis). The Justice Fund believes that ICON, as a faith-based organization, is in a unique position to influence the debate over GLBT civil rights, but also recognizes that ICON does not yet have a sufficient financial base to support full operations.

To solve this problem, the Justice Fund offered to raise sufficient funds to hire someone who would be detailed to serve as Executive Director of ICON for a period of two years. Within that time, the Justice Fund believes ICON can be built into one of Indiana's most influential action networks and become self-sustaining through its annual membership dues.

Negotiations ensued and once agreement was reached, a joint committee of Board members from ICON and the Justice Fund launched a search for the right person to serve as Executive Director. In May, a notice was sent to all 500 clergy, congregations, and individuals on ICON's mailing list. In response, we received eight applications. The Search Committee was delighted with the high quality of applicants and the broad experience they represented.

After detailed interviews and background checks, the Search Committee unanimously recommended Dan Funk as the leading candidate. The Board of ICON and the Board of the Justice Fund both reviewed and unanimously approved the recommendation, and Dan began work October 1.

Dan's Background

Dan has served as an ICON Board member since ICON's inception and has functioned as its volunteer coordinator, donating innumerable hours to ICON. He has also served as ICON's representative to the Steering Committee of Indiana Equality, the statewide umbrella GLBT civil rights organization, and served as an officer of that entity. In both roles, Dan has gained enormous experience and won the confidence of Indiana's leading GLBT civil rights organizations. ICON's Board has been deeply impressed by Dan's work.

Dan has also distinguished himself in his professional career. One of the Search Committee's chief objectives was to find a person with a proven track

record of effective leadership and organizational management—especially in the context of start-up organizations. In his last two professional positions, Dan has served as Director Operations for a telecommunications company (where he led the successful effort to establish a new subsidiary company to repair wireless handsets in China) and as Director of Operations for a mental health service provider to residents of long-term care (during which time company operations more than doubled).

Dan also brings a broad familiarity with Indiana's religious culture, a deep personal spiritual walk, and the highest character. We are delighted that such a gifted person is willing to step away from a lucrative corporate career to take a sub-market salary on an un-guaranteed two-year contract. Dan is willing to do this because he is passionate about justice and feels called by God to build ICON.

Where Now?

Now ICON kicks into high gear!

ICON's Board has worked with Dan to prepare a detailed strategy for making the highest and best use of his time. In the months ahead, he will have three primary tasks:

1. To meet face-to-face with as many affirming clergy as possible to discuss how they and affirming members of their congregation might connect to ICON.
2. To meet with key legislators and civil rights strategists to discern the most effective possible approach to state legislators and the voting public.
3. To guide ICON volunteers as they plan and execute at least two major, statewide projects intended to put a human face on GLBT justice issues and win the hearts and minds of thousands of ordinary Hoosier voters.

As ICON gears up, Indiana will never again be the same. Imagine the day when, with the push of a button, ICON



Following this year's legislative session, ICON hosted an appreciation dinner for those legislators who opposed the Constitutional Amendment. Thirteen legislators along with 150 guests attended the event. Following the dinner, the legislators shared their strategic advice for our continuing efforts to defeat the amendment. Pictured above are Sen. Howard (D33), Sen. Rogers (D3), Sen. Bowser (D8), Sen. Broden (D10), Rep. Lawson (D1), Rep. Moses (D81), and Rep. Orentlicher (D86).

can activate a network of thousands of people of faith and dozens of churches, synagogues, and mosques across the state, flooding political leaders with messages at critical moments.

Imagine the day when hundreds of ICON volunteers are working together on creative, faith-based projects to change how undecided voters see GLBT issues.

Imagine the day when state legislators no longer automatically associate faith with opposition to civil rights for GLBT people—when they understand that thousands of people of faith welcome diversity and believe in basic fairness.

How You Can Help

Many careful thinkers have suggested that the struggle over GLBT civil rights is the most important justice issue to face our generation. As people of faith, we must not be AWOL. Our faith calls us to bold, meaningful action.

The response form below identifies four specific ways

you can help. Please take a moment to prayerfully consider these options. ■

Other News

■ ICON welcomes the **Unitarian Universalist Congregations of Fort Wayne** as our newest congregation member. ICON is a membership organization that welcomes both individuals and congregations as members. Voting control of ICON is vested exclusively in its member congregations, which now consists of thirteen congregations.

■ The **ICON Annual Membership Meeting** is being held on **Tuesday, December 6** at Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, 2950 E. 55th Place, Indianapolis. The meeting will begin at 7 PM. For more information contact ICON by calling (317) 722-0236 or send an e-mail to ICON-mail@comcast.net.

My Part in the Justice Struggle

Mail Completed Forms To: ICON
2950 E. 55th Place
Indianapolis, IN 46220-3534

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I am affirming clergy who would like to meet with the new Executive Director.

One of the primary objectives for the Executive Director is to meet with affirming clergy throughout the state to discuss what ICON is doing, where we are going and strategize together about how you and your congregation can be a part of positive change in Indiana. If you check this item, you will be contacted to schedule a meeting at your office or a location of your choice.

I will volunteer some of my time to help ICON.

ICON needs as many volunteers as possible to grow our network and carry out our major statewide projects aimed at winning voter's hearts and minds. If you check this item, we will contact you to discuss options for volunteer involvement.

I would like to make a donation to ICON.

The Justice Fund is providing \$70,000 per year in financial support to ICON over the next two years. That is enough to pay salary, benefits, office expenses, and travel costs of the Executive Director, but leaves many other expenses to cover. For example, ICON needs to fund at least two major statewide actions designed to put a human face on GLBT issues and change the

hearts and minds of voters. To cover these and other operating expenses, we need to raise at least \$25,000 this year over and above the Justice Fund moneys.

Donations of \$1,000, or \$500, or any amount will make a huge difference.

Please make checks payable to ICON.

Contributions or gifts to ICON are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes. These funds will be used for purposes of influencing public opinion and legislation.

I can help ICON grow its network of people of faith.

ICON needs to grow its network. If you know clergy or lay leaders who might be interested in ICON, please list their names and contact information below. We will send them information about ICON.

Name _____

Contact Info. _____

Name _____

Contact Info. _____

Name _____

Contact Info. _____



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*2950 East 55th Place
Indianapolis, Indiana 46220*

A New Era in Civil Rights Begins!



ICON