Rev's Reflection

Changing Pride

The first march I ever went to was in Hartford, CT. The event wasn't about pride, and it sure wasn't celebratory. It was 1985 and at that point about 25,000 people had died of AIDS. We were young, angry and afraid, and we were demanding to be treated like people. There were only a handful of spectators, most of them trying to go about their business, visibly disgusted by our presence.

Four years later, in Manhattan at the 20th Anniversary of the Stonewall riots, we jeered "shame on you" to throngs of police protecting St. Patrick's Cathedral from us. Many of us lay down in the street in protest, then got roughed up for it.

In 1992, just before the Republican National convention, hundreds of thousands descended upon Washington, DC shouting "40,000 dead from AIDS. Where. Was. George?"

Those protests were exciting! They were FUN. We were with *our* people.

It's been more than 30 years, and those "Gay and Lesbian Marches" (as they were called then) have morphed into Pride celebrations, familyfriendly events with corporate sponsorship. Instead of drag queens, leather daddies and disco twinks parading, there are banks, politicians and even churches. Last Saturday, Joe and I went to Pride a block from our house, where were surrounded by children and families with booths representing the public school system, youth programs, family-oriented businesses and houses of worship. There was face painting, ice cream and a petting zoo.

I kind of miss the old days, the sense of risking something to be *together*, grieving, protesting and celebrating *outrageously*.

More than that though, I am thrilled to see us rainbow people being feted by our families and allies, the businesses that take our money, the schools

that serve our children, the leaders charged with protecting us and the churches there to bless us.



On Saturday, UUCSC will have a chance to be one of those congregations at South County Pride in Wakefield. We'll have a booth from which I will be handing out chocolate kisses with a simple blessing: "may you be loved exactly as you are."

But first, I'm going to drive our ridiculous but fabulous 1985 VW convertible in the car parade, a reminder of how far we have come over the years. A few others from our congregation will be joining me, sharing the wistfulness and the wonder of it all. Celebrating *outrageously*.

In Peace,
Rev Denis