

General Gayety

by Leslie Robinson . Contributing Writer

Jim and I

The case of Jim Adkisson, the fellow who murdered churchgoers in Tennessee, brought up such a hodge-podge of thoughts and emotions for me that I couldn't figure out how to write this column. I sat here for an hour puzzling how to begin. I think I heard my keyboard snore.

I got a grip and realized I should start at the start. Tallyho.

On a recent Sunday, Adkisson, 58, walked into the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville and opened fire with a shotgun. He killed two people and wounded six others.

Children had just begun performing their version of "Annie" when the shooter appeared. I have to think both kids and adults will be facing post-traumatic stress the size of Daddy Warbucks' wallet.

In a search warrant affidavit after the mayhem, an investigator stated Adkisson told him that he "targeted the church because of its liberal teachings and his belief that all liberals should be killed because they were ruining the country."

That's an attitude I don't think even Joe McCarthy could get behind.

Adkisson left a four-page letter in his car. In the letter, according to the Knoxville police chief, Adkisson declared his hatred of liberals and gays.

Yup, it's us again. Homosexuals. The group



people love to hate. Really, I think just by existing we perform a kind of warped public service.

I'm gay, liberal and a Unitarian, so Jim Adkisson wouldn't like me one little bit.

I'm not too fond of him either. I have a hankering for the day when straight white men with big guns will stop taking out their problems — real or imagined — on the rest of us.

Adkisson had a real problem, namely he couldn't get work. How he blamed liberals for that is more perplexing than a statement by Yogi Berra.

It's clear that Adkisson didn't think committing mass murder would boost his job prospects. He expected to die that day, commit suicide by cop. With 76 rounds in tow, he wanted to take a lot of Unitarians with him.

The Unitarian Universalist faith is notably gay-friendly, which is only one of the many reasons I joined up. The church in Knoxville has a "gays welcome" sign and provides space for PFLAG meetings and gatherings of gay teens.

In other words, it's a hotbed of lurid liberal acceptance.

On its website, the Knoxville church describes its "rich history of taking stands for social justice." Since the '50s the congregation has worked for desegregation, fair wages, women's rights, environmental protection and a bunch of other issues sure to have made Adkisson's trigger finger itchy.

His first victim was usher Greg McKendry, 60, whom a congregant described as a big guy, "a refrigerator with a head." McKendry was

one heroic kitchen appliance, as witnesses said he put himself between the shotgun and the congregation.

It happens that on the day of the shooting, I was volunteering as a greeter at my Unitarian church in Seattle. That means I was the first person people saw when they walked into the building, a fact that gave my girlfriend the jitters after we heard later that day what had happened in Tennessee.

For the record, I'm not a fridge with a head. More like a dishwasher with feet.

A friend of mine who has been a member of my church for about a year frequently says that many more people would join the

Unitarian Universalist religion if only they knew about it. One of the perverse parts of this terrible event is that Adkisson has helped spread the word about this liberal faith that emphasizes social justice.

I hope that pisses him off. ▀

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This just in > The gorgeous **Isis**, seen here, is one of the 14 models competing to win over Tyra, Mr. Jay, Ms. J and all the other judges in the upcoming cycle of "America's Next Top Model." What's so fab about her, other than the fact that she has legs for days and will surely give the other girls a run for their money? She's the first-ever transgender contestant in "Top Model" history.



Us Weekly provided the exclusive scoop, so read it, or check out featured highlights below:

Hailing from Prince George's County, Md., Isis identifies herself as "a woman born physically male."

Will she be a role model?

"I like to help people, but I'm here to follow my dreams," she tells *Us*.

The inclusion of Isis is being hailed by Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation President Neil Giuliano as "an unprecedented opportunity for a community that is underrepresented on television.

"We applaud Tyra Banks and The CW for making this historic visibility of transgender people possible," Giuliano said.

Here, here! "America's Next Top Model" kicks off Sept. 3 on The CW. ▀

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