Family/Faith Issues for LGBT People

PRESENTED BY
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Who We Are

- Lesley Salas is a writer with a lifelong commitment to peace and social justice issues, especially with the Latino and LGBTQI (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender /Transsexual Queer or Questioning Intersex) communities.

- Bridget Flad, MDiv, is Associate Pastor at Plymouth United Church of Christ, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary as an Open and Affirming congregation.
United Church of Christ

Our faith is 2000 years old. Our thinking is not.

God is still speaking,

United Church of Christ, cont.

- Difference between understandings of homosexuality:
  - Catholicism views it through a theological lens.
  - Many Protestant denominations, including the UCC, view it as a human-rights issue.

- UCC comes from a Congregationalist tradition, so each individual church discerns its own viewpoint on issues.
- UCC was the first Protestant denomination to ordain African Americans (1700s), women (1800s) and gays (1900s) as fully vested ministers.
Bruce Bawer, writing in the Advocate, 1998

Straight Americans need... an education of the heart and soul. They must understand... how it can feel

• to spend years denying your own deepest truths

• to sit silently through classes, meals, and church services
while people you love toss off remarks that brutalize your soul.

Catholicism and Sexual Identity

In 1997 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops called on parents of homosexual children to

“draw on their reservoirs of faith, hope and love”

to accept, love and walk together with their lesbian daughter and sister, or gay son and brother.........
...as long as they remain *celibate* chaste.

**Esther and Ahasuerus: A ‘coming out’ story?**

Comparing Esther’s secret to LGBT realities

- Esther was a member of an established people who offered her their support

- LGBT people often think they’re the only one who’s ever felt the way they do. Coming out = isolation.

Secrets – Esther vs. LGBT

- When Esther told Ahasuerus that she was a Jew, he accepted the fact without question.

- LGBT people who come out are questioned about their identity.
  - “Are you sure? Maybe it’s just a phase.”
  - “You just haven’t met the right man/woman.”
  - “You can be ‘cured’ of your homosexuality.”

- When Esther told her husband she was a Jew, she was not rejected or abused by him as a result. He was not disappointed in her.

- LGBT people often lose the support of their families when they come out to them. Even accepting families must grieve the loss of their vision for their child (i.e., marriage, grandchildren).
Secrets – Esther vs. LGBT

• When Esther ‘came out’ as a Jew, no one wondered if Ahasuerus was secretly a Jew, also.

• When LGBT people come out, it sometimes casts suspicion on those closest to them as having either ‘caused it’ or through ‘guilt by association.’

Esther vs. LGBT

• Esther is able to save her people in part due to the love and compassion awakened in her husband, Ahasuerus. Haman is hanged on the gallows he had prepared for the leader of the Jews.

• LGBT people who come out to themselves begin a cycle of stigma and risk caused by their incongruence with the dominant society. What may begin as a reaction to one negative encounter becomes a draining hyper-vigilance, even when danger is not actually present.
Minority Stress

- Defined as the stressors experienced by persons in a minority group **above and beyond** everyday pressures.
- Identity reduced to a binary: straight = good; gay = bad.
- Hard for LGBT persons to establish a positive self-concept
- May lead to more negativity, including:
  - Rejection by family
  - Depression/Suicide
  - Drug and alcohol abuse
  - Alienation from church and other institutions

Minority Stress in Action

“Fixed social and cultural constraints pose continual limits on [a lesbian’s] options, thus continually reducing her opportunities to evolve a self-identity independent of the culturally imposed master status….for lesbian women, both the traditional subordinate behavior expected of women and the disassociation from her sociosexual identity make most heterosexual milieus uninviting.”

**Source:** Virginia R. Brooks. Minority Stress and Lesbian Women, Chapter 10.
‘Clobber Texts:’ Leviticus 18:22, 20:13

These passages are part of the Jewish Holiness Code which also:
• permits polygamy
• prohibits sexual intercourse when a woman has her period
• bans tattoos
• prohibits eating rare meat
• bans wearing clothes made from a blend of textiles
• prohibits eating pigs and some forms of seafood


Other ‘Clobber Texts’

• Genesis 19 – men wanted to rape angels

• Judges 19 – rape and death of a concubine

• 1 Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Timothy 1:
  ○ Against people using each other for self-serving sex
Parents, Friends & Families of Lesbians & Gays

PFLAG began in 1972 when Jeanne Manford marched with her gay son in New York's Pride Day parade.

After many gay and lesbian people ran up to Jeanne and begged her to talk to their parents, she decided to begin a support group.

PFLAG, cont.

The first formal meeting took place in March 1973 at a local church with approximately 20 people in attendance.

Today PFLAG has more than 200,000 members and 500 chapters worldwide.
**DignityUSA Vision Statement**

DignityUSA envisions and works for a time when...
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Catholics
are affirmed and experience dignity
through the integration of
their spirituality with their sexuality,
and as beloved persons of God
participate fully in all aspects of life
within the Church and Society.

**Other Resources**


- [http://www.hrc.org/issues/religion/4955.htm](http://www.hrc.org/issues/religion/4955.htm)
The Human Rights Campaign's list of stances adopted by various faith traditions.

- [http://www.hrc.org//documents/For_the_Bible_Tells_Me_So_Curriculum.pdf](http://www.hrc.org//documents/For_the_Bible_Tells_Me_So_Curriculum.pdf)
  Also from the Human Rights Campaign, pages 58-65 address the Bible and homosexuality.

- **Film** – For the Bible Tells Me So, directed by Daniel Karslake, 2007

- [http://whosoever.org/believe.shtml](http://whosoever.org/believe.shtml)
The 10 core beliefs of the whosoever online magazine for LGBT Christians incorporates both the religious identities and sexual orientations of its contributors and readers.
International Resources

- Utopia
  - Founded for LGBTQI individuals in Asian-Pacific countries in 1995
  - Provides information on gathering places, publications and other pertinent news for LGBTQI individuals from a variety of countries

- International Gay, Lesbian Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA) [http://ilga.org/](http://ilga.org/)
  - Provides information by continent, which is further broken down by country
  - Includes legal status of homosexuality and other indicators on a country-by-country basis

Still more resources

- Transgender/trans-sexual
  - FILM: Call Me Malcolm, directed by Joseph Parla Greco
    - Documentary about a trans-sexual seminary student and his struggles with love, faith and gender identity.

  - BOOK: Omnipolitic, by Virginia Ramey Mollencott
    - Bridges traditional religious doctrine and secular postmodern theory regarding gender. Through an examination of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, church history, and other religious traditions, Mollenkott honors intersexual, trans-sexual, or otherwise-gendered individuals.
Words to Ponder

When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one.

*Epitaph of Leonard P. Matlovich, 1988*

Questions? Feel free to contact me.

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