



PRIDE MINISTRIES'

Café Pride Project

Volunteer Resource Guide

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History of Pride Ministries/Café Pride

Why a youth coffeehouse that seldom serves coffee? Why create a gay coffeehouse? Why meet in a church?

For several months, the Halsted Street Café near Halsted and Waveland served youths, primarily lesbian and gay youths. In September 1996, this establishment received its liquor license from the city of Chicago and no longer provided a place for persons under twenty-one years old to gather. Immediately after ejection several of the youths that had frequented the Café had no stable place to “hang out” and began getting into trouble with the police. The charges were usually just loitering as the youths waited on the street corners to meet their friends.

Many persons in the neighborhood saw the problem as one not of youths getting into trouble but of people of faith neglecting to act on their beliefs. These were young brothers and sisters, who deserved access to the institutions that had been created over the years in this neighborhood, but the institutions were locked and dark at the time these neighbors needed a place to be. After several meetings with interested local agencies and individuals, Holy Covenant United Methodist Church at 825 W. Diversey opened its facility to these youths. The coffeehouse was initially staffed by community volunteer, David Thomas; Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary student, Karen Tompkins; and the Rev. Stu Smith of The Night Ministry.

In October 1997, what we had come to call Café Pride moved to Lake View Presbyterian Church at 716 W. Addison. This was a larger facility with fewer scheduling demands, and it was in the same block as the original hang out—the Halsted Street Café. This was a greatly superior location.

The café’s goal was to parallel, as much as possible, the local bars. Since the bars and nightlife are what attracted the youths to the neighborhood in the first place. Free refreshments would allow participation for those youths without

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funds. Programming was to be low key with interactions mostly initiated by youth.

Vision and Mission Statements

The Board of Directors of Pride Ministries has approved the following statements.

Pride Ministries is dedicated to the proposition that the Good News of God's love is broader than any one denominational creed or religious understanding. It is, therefore, not limited to service among any one type of religious community. Pride Ministries is dedicated to the concept that the needs of all persons transcend the merely material and include access to religious tradition, ritual, community life, and opportunities to serve others.

Therefore, Pride Ministries is a religious organization that exists

- To provide assistance to religious communities considering outreach among persons in their neighborhoods' sexual minority communities.
- To consult with religious communities designing or redesigning sexual minority outreach programs or any type of radically inclusive ministry.
- To guide religious communities in the study of inclusive ministry or urban ministry in general by leading guided street walks, by providing resource persons for study groups (Sunday School classes, youth groups, or academic classes), by writing study guides, and by offering more intensive consultation.

Café Pride is a religious outreach of Pride Ministries that exists

- To provide sexual minority youths with a safe space for fellowship with peers and to interact with adults who are integrated into the community.
- To challenge the exclusion which gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youths often experience from religious communities and the attendant spiritual alienation that many sexual minority persons experience.
- To offer the wider community an example of inclusive ministry.



II

Chaplaincy Style of Outreach

What is the “posture” volunteers are asked to take with regard to the spiritual issues related to adolescence and coming out?

Faced with the need for a mixture of clergy trained in several traditions to serve a very diverse clientele in the military, in hospitals and in prisons, these institutions have developed a form of ministry in which the caregiver assumes different roles and uses different pastoral “languages” as she or he ministers to parishioners from traditions which might be different from the caregiver’s. This requires the caregiver to become flexible in approach while maintaining his or her own tradition and unique relationship to the numinous.

Consequently a Roman Catholic priest may be called on to lead a ritual or speak a prayer appropriate to the tradition of a Muslim, an evangelical Protestant, or a Buddhist all within a few minutes while never losing his center in his own unique relation to God. This should never mean that a chaplain has reduced spirituality but that the chaplain has gone beyond a limited set of metaphors and has become comfortable with the God who lives behind the words. When this understanding of relatedness becomes a reality the caregiver may find that her or his own spirituality is not “watered down” but deepened and moved from traditional formulations to living reality.

At Café Pride we aren’t interested in converting young persons to any one tradition but to a way of seeing themselves relating to the numinous, to neighbors, to the past and future, and to themselves that is healthy and life giving. This spirituality can exist in almost any religious tradition or system of belief. We are very much about conversion, but not as it is traditionally understood as proselytizing, but as a way of converting persons from self-hatred and alienation from God to reconciliation with God and self.

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“Papa Don’t Preach”

Our style of outreach can be characterized by practicing friendship rather than preaching/correcting/condemning or even approving or endorsing. If Mr. McLuhan was correct and the “medium is the message,” what are we choosing to say? I suggest that our actions will be our message. Our words will be so much background noise except as they reinforce our actions or as they make us look foolish as they contradict our actions.

If we’re staffing the Café as friends and not as authorities, how should we act? Here’s a short list.

- **Don’t tell anyone how to get his or her life together.** If you have it all together, all of us will sit at your feet and listen to discover the wisdom you have to offer. Then we’ll kill you. Friends disagree, friends argue, friends tell one another how they’d do something different. However, few persons enjoy “friends” who know all the answers and consider their advice above discussion.
- **Listen and help your friend hear back what they are saying to you.** There is a big difference between listening passively, strict Rogerian reflective listening, and the kind of engaged and passionate listening that good friends exercise.
- **Be willing to disagree and challenge.** There’s a proverb in the Hebrew scriptures that is translated, “As iron sharpens iron so a friend sharpens the countenance of a friend.” A good animated discussion is not the same as telling someone how to get her or his life together. In the best of all possible worlds you will be changed as much as any of the young people whom you challenge. If you leave with none of your ideas challenged, you probably didn’t listen enough.
- **Take their felt needs seriously not just their “real” needs.** You may know that what a certain young person needs is to get more secure housing. However, if that youth wants to talk about his boyfriend, listen. You may eventually bring up what you see as the “real” issue but let the youth lay out the felt or “presenting” issue first.

The important thing is relationship not language, metaphor, or tradition.

Chaplaincy as we practice it is more than telling a person what tradition we belong to and how that tradition views the topic at hand. Chaplaincy means listening and figuring out what religious language the parishioner is speaking and trying to converse in that language. If you’ll let me extend the metaphor, if someone starts to speak to you in Spanish, listen and respond in Spanish or find someone who can or find another way to communicate. Don’t insist that only English can be used to communicate complex truths or that the parishioner shares your love of Shakespeare and Milton before you can discuss what is before you. The important thing is **relationship** not language, metaphor, or tradition. Don’t be so eager to make a convert until you’ve first made a friend.

Determining the Health of Religious Systems and Their Parishioners

However, we do not concede that all religious systems are alike or that all should be treated as acceptable. There are four questions that each of us needs to ask of any philosophical or religious system (and how the individual uses it) to determine whether or not the system is a good one and whether or not the person in that tradition (who we will now identify as the parishioner) is healthy.

- **How does the parishioner relate to _____?** (God, Allah, The Universe, The Numinous, Nature) Does the system encourage the use of negative relationships—sinner, victim, hopeless, stupid, bastard, outcast? Does the system allow or encourage the use of positive relationships—child of God, forgiven, redeemed, elect, favored one, intelligent? Some of these relationships are metaphysically determined and some are the result of some physical, social, mental, or class distinction.
- **How does the parishioner relate to community?** Does the parishioner identify with a religious tradition? Does she or he regularly worship/meet with a community of that tradition? (Roman Catholics who haven't been to mass in five years are receiving none of the support of that community. They need to be assessed in terms of what they remember and maintain from that community, not on the community as it truly is.) Does the parishioner accept the positive and negative reinforcements from that religious community? Does the parishioner accept the positive and negative reinforcement of the larger community? (This includes but is not limited to the secular community as experienced in the media, workplace, school, gang, or other dominant religious traditions in the neighborhood.) The values and mores of a youth are not dictated solely by where he or she was baptized. There is a distinction between church theology and popular theology. They often differ widely. Often popular denominational theology is much less healthy than the official brand.
- **How does the parishioner relate to the past and future?** Does she or he have a way of relating to the past in religious sacraments or memorial observations? Is there a way for past regrets and shames to be reconciled, atoned, or forgiven? Does the parishioner live only for the moment with no regard for the past or future? Is there a way to heal the past and improve prospects for the future?
- **How does the parishioner relate to self?** Are negative messages from the religious tradition challenged or internalized? Are positive messages from the tradition utilized and encouraged? Is the individual in the process of challenging circumstances and assumptions regarding sexual orientation, parentage, race, class, and gender, which exist in this culture? All healthy persons find it essential to be in a constant state of battle with negative images that exist in the world and often in our traditions. None of us, no matter what our religious tradition, age, race, class, or whatever, can be spiri-

None of us can be spiritually healthy except as we constantly reject the negative messages, and accusations directed at us from the “world the flesh, and the Devil.”

Beyond even the obvious stereotypes of race, gender, and orientation, we are belittled for not winning the approval of whoever is on top of the soapbox today.

tually healthy except as we engage in a constant state of wariness rejecting destructive messages, and negative images.

There is a reason that in an earlier time popular theologians and preachers declaimed against “the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.” The temptations we face, the turmoil we endure, and the pain we experience in our hearts and souls is not merely an attack by some personification of evil in a red suit. Each of us feels pain from a world that is always finding some reason to disqualify us. It is hard to imagine a world where persons would not be valued differently because of arbitrary standards of beauty, possessions, or heritage. Beyond even the obvious stereotypes of race, gender, and orientation, we are belittled for not being desirable to whoever is on top of the soapbox today. How much can you bench press? What are your cholesterol numbers? Where do you live? Do you rent or own?

And then there is the regular attack of the flesh. Not just the sins often known as carnal, but the recognition that our bodies are weak, weary, and wasting. If we depend on the “arm of flesh,” we shall always discover failure and destruction. The recognition that death is the end event of all life is not only a pain for the old or sick. All of us at sometime or other will face the pain of mortality—the disappointment of an unavoidable appointment with decay; disease; and, finally; death.

Healthy religious traditions not only prepare us for the attacks of a pitchfork-wielding demon but from the prejudices of an inhospitable world and from the disappointments of mortality.



III

A Discussion of That Stuff in the Bible That You've Been Avoiding

What do you believe about the Bible before you start to read? Is it a magical book? Is it a book of rules? Is it an interesting historical document? What is inspiration?

You aren't the only one. Many sexual minority persons avoid the Bible even as they enjoy a good relationship with the divine. They avoid it not merely because of what's in it but because of what they fear is in it. So tuck in your shirt and straighten up we're going in to the Bible and find out if it's as hate filled as many of its adherents.

Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

All literature requires interpretation. Whether it's an email letter or a medieval manuscript, there are methods of approach that render the words meaningful and there are methods that render them unintelligible. The Bible since it is a very old and very important collection of pieces of literature needs methods of approach that both honor its heritage and the intentions of its human authors and that do not create of it some kind of idol or magic property. There are four principles that are essential to biblical interpretation.

- **Remember to look at what the text really says and not just what others say it says.** Maybe it's too obvious but many of the things that people "know" about the Bible are not in the text at all just in the popular mythology around the text. Take the time to read and if possible read in the original languages the passages in question. Most troublesome passages are cleared up by reading them carefully.
- **Remember the historical context in which the passage was written.** The books of the Bible as we know them emerged from the literature of people of faith over a thousand years, perhaps as much as 1500 years. They

were writing and responding to specific historical events and worldviews. How were the words in question used during this period? What were the philosophical and social debates that inspired the writing of the passage in question? However God chose to “inspire” these books, God did not ignore the understandings and even misunderstandings regarding science, history, and psychology that existed at that time. These writings had a human author and an expected human audience both of whom existed in a specific context. Read the passage in historical context.

- **Remember the style of writing each passage demonstrates.** In our own world we expect different levels of metaphorical usage and different styles of punctuation and grammar depending on whether we’re reading a letter, a poem, a news article, or an editorial. As adults we don’t just learn to read—we learn to read specific styles of documents. Literalism means very different things in each of these settings. If you are asked if you take the Bible literally, understand that that question is meaningless if separated from a specific passage. The poems of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 differ as much because they demonstrate different styles of literature as because of any differences in the writers’ worldviews. Any prohibition relating to sexual minority persons needs to be put into its context before it can be analyzed, accepted, or rejected. We don’t expect the same style for a writer of technical reports in a business office in the Loop and for a writer in a comic book publishing house on the Northside. Even when both authors are striving to communicate something they value as truth. We need to respect the differences that exist among the biblical authors as well. The Bible may have problems, but often the real problems are from the interpreter’s missing stylistic clues. Read the passage in light of its literary style.
- **Remember that the Bible is a living book.** The stickiest issue regarding the Bible is that it is only one part of the faith of the “people of the book” (Jews, Christians, and Muslims). It is not the last will and testament of a God who then up and died. It is a recording of what some of the people of God believed. The Bible is not relationship with God it is a means of understanding that relationship. As is commonly said, “When the Word became flesh it didn’t become a book; it became our brother.” There is an open door for subjectivity here but when that door is closed, what we have is bibliolatry—the worship of the Bible, not the worship of God. The inspiration, canonization, and sanctification of the Bible are all-important questions to discuss and struggle with. They are not answered by any appeal to literalism or metaphorical interpretation. When the words of the Bible fight against the Word in your heart, trust the Word over the words any day. Is this dangerous? Yes it is. It is also essential. Never forget to read the Bible listening **for** the Word of God.

When the Word became flesh, it didn’t become a book; it became our brother.

With these four principles in mind, let us look at the “problem passages” for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. This is a very brief overview. If this

is your issue, don't be afraid to look at some of the book length discussions of these passages.

The Story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)

Abraham's nephew, Lot, is a resident alien in the city of Sodom. He receives a visit from two angels. As the angels are resting in Lot's home, the men and boys of Sodom demand that Lot send the angels out so that they may know them. Lot tries to bargain with the men and even offers his daughters as substitutes. Lot and part of his family escape and Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other "cities of the plain" are destroyed.

Some commentators question whether the word translated "know" requires a sexual contact, or even if the original text requires that we assume the angels were male at all. It seems clear, however, that the men and boys of Sodom intended some sort of violence. Consequently, it appears that this is not a story about same-sex relations but about rape. This reading is also compatible with the use of this passage in several other biblical and early theological sources as an example of the violation of the period's high regard for hospitality and the protection of visitors. Rape is unacceptable behavior in any context. If the angels were female, would that have made the actions of the men of Sodom any more acceptable? Is the crime of rape only committed against persons of the same sex?

Consequently, it appears that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is not a story about same-sex relations but about rape.

Ritual Prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17; I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; II Kings 23:7)

"None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute." Deuteronomy 23:17

"There were also male temple prostitutes in the land. They committed all the abominations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel." I Kings 14:24

Although the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates these passages "temple prostitute," most other English translations use the word "sodomite." It is significant that no translator has assumed that the female temple prostitutes are associated with lesbianism. It is possible that these passages are proof of the western world's preoccupation with insertive sex. Most modern translators concede that there is no proof that the duties of the male temple prostitute ever included same-sex rituals. However, even if the rituals did include same-sex penetration, as was sometimes a part of middle-eastern fertility cults, one should not be surprised that one could not be both a ritual leader in a Canaanite religion and a member in good standing of the Hebrew theocracy. In contemporary parlance "Duh!"

We should not be surprised that one could not be both a ritual leader in a Canaanite religion and a member in good standing of the Hebrew theocracy.

Ritual Uncleaness (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13)

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Leviticus 18:22

"If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them." Leviticus 20:13

This section of the book of Leviticus is concerned with ritual purity, dietary laws, and laws regarding close-kin marriage. In the Levitical proscriptions there is separate Hebrew word—also translated “abomination”—that is used to describe the actions that are forbidden for other than ritual reasons. The word here-translated “abomination” is usually associated with idolatry and ritual uncleanness.

Disputed Translations (I Corinthians 6:9; I Timothy 1:10)

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” I Corinthians 6:9-10

“This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching.” I Timothy 1:9-10

The word translated here “male prostitute” is a very common word that is usually translated “soft.” It occurs nowhere else to indicate same-sex relations. From Calvin’s time to the early part of this century, it was understood to refer to masturbators. To associate this word now exclusively with same-sex relations says more about the prejudices of the translators than about their scholarship.

The word translated by the NRSV as “sodomites” is a colorful word that could be literally translated “male penetrator.” This verse is the first recorded use of this word and it is used quite infrequently in First Century Greek literature. This could be a reference to some sort of prostitution, but there is no indication of whether this is same-sex or opposite-sex prostitution. If the author did intend to condemn same-sex relations, then why didn’t he use any of the common words for persons in those relationships?

Actions against Nature (Romans 1:26-27)

“ For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.” Romans 1:26-27

Finally, woman’s sexuality is mentioned!

The first thing we need to remember in this passage is that it will be another 1100 years before the concept of natural law is invented. Paul is saying this is a rejection of the individual’s nature not a rejection of a principle of natural law. Although Paul clearly is not favorably disposed toward non-traditional sexuality, what he is speaking of here is heterosexual persons rejecting the sex that was natural for them and being drawn to sexual activity that violated their own desires. This is directly related to the argument that Paul is making in this passage that it was a rejection of original revelation for the nations of the world to leave worship of the

From the Sixteenth Century to the early Twentieth Century, this word was understood to refer to people who masturbate.

What Paul is speaking of here is heterosexual persons rejecting the sex that was natural for them.

one true God and serve idols. It is noteworthy that one of the earliest commentaries on this passage, that of St. John Chrysostom (died AD 407 in Constantinople) did not consider this passage to be directed against same-sex relationships but against idolatry and the inversions of personal desires he related to idolatry.

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IV

Prostitution

Is it a lifestyle choice or a symptom of a deeper spiritual need or is it purely economic?

Prostitution is a very real part of the community in which we are located. Although we should never imply that all young persons are involved in or tempted by prostitution, many of those we see at Café Pride have considered the life or have toyed with the outlaw aspects of sexuality. As may be obvious, there exists no significant same-sex female prostitution.

Vocabulary Basics

- **Drag Queen** used of a male entertainer or prostitute who dresses as a woman
- **Hustler** male person in prostitution, male equivalent to “hooker”
- **Pre-op** person who has planned surgery (the operation) and is living against chromosomal gender. Often someone who is in the midst of hormone treatments and perhaps who has had breast augmentation surgery.
- **Shemale** usually a form of derision for anyone dressing against chromosomal gender. More common in African-American contexts.
- **Trade** sometimes the buyer in a prostitution transaction in other contexts a hustler who does not identify as gay but merely in the life for the money. Rough Trade is a hustler who appeals to the rescuer in the buyer by appearing and often truly being dirty and potentially violent—a boy who needs a parent figure
- **Tranny** slang for transsexual popularized by the film “Priscilla: Queen of the Desert”
- **Transgender** umbrella term for persons who dress or identify “against” chromosomal gender

- **Transsexual** person who has had or is having sex realignment surgery. For a variety of reasons, persons who are in the initial stages of sex realignment often “try out” prostitution.
- **Transvestite** person who dresses against chromosomal gender. See drag queen above.

Hierarchy of Needs v. Web of Needs

Although psychosocial research has generated a hierarchy of needs common to all persons, field experience reveals that different personal histories may slightly reorder these hierarchies or create unique “webs” of needs.

Persons in prostitution often exhibit webs of needs that are being “met” by “the life”. Note that many of these needs are often associated with being young, having limited access to the gay community, and being underemployed. Not all prostitution is obvious *quid pro quo*. Often the buyer will not pay a set fee but buy a meal or offer a place to sleep for the night or in some way offer his power as an adult to serve a young prostitute.

There is very little connection between the man who advertises through an escort service and the youths who hang out at the neighborhood convenience store. Moreover, there are light years between the hustler who works solely for money and the one who craves adult male attention although they will often work the same block. It is not unusual to find that at the end of the evening some youths will get in their own cars and drive back to Mom and Dad’s house in the suburbs. They didn’t need money they needed adult attention. They are the youths that Café Pride can and should help by providing them a legal, safe, appropriate place to associate with other sexual minority persons.

Among the common needs met by prostitution:

- Money
- Association—”It’s the only place I can be myself. It’s not like at school.”
- Desirability—”He really likes me! See what he bought me.”
- Power to control a sexual transaction

Some needs that are unique to persons in transgender prostitution

- Affirmation of assumed gender identity
- “Glamour”
- Confirmed place in the minority community
- Power to deceive a client (although the deception is usually willing)

Working with Persons in Prostitution

- **Pronoun use** Follow the lead of the person you are supporting. Let go of the desire for political or grammatical correctness. There are bigger issues here than what gender the person possesses

There are light years between the hustler who works solely for money and the one who merely craves adult male attention although they will often work the same block.

- **Orientation identity** Do not assume anything. Many persons who hustle will be quite insulted if you assume they are gay; others are quite comfortable with that identification.
- **Gender identity** A few of the persons you meet will be using prostitution to “try out” the possibility of a transgender life; the majority will have few issues regarding their gender.
- **Relationship building** You cannot do outreach to many persons, least of all to persons in prostitution, without coming to know them **as** persons. You must develop longer-term relationships before you gain the trust and the knowledge of these parishioners.

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V

Transgender Spirituality

On October 22, 1996, the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta (Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) voted to sustain the ordination of Rev. Erin K. Swenson, a transgender person. The vote was divided, and came after 16 months of intense study and debate. During this process Reverend Swenson was asked to respond to a number of questions, one of which is reproduced here with Reverend Swenson's answer.

The Question

How do you answer the charge that you are living a life of public deceit contrary to Holy Scripture and our Constitution? — That your behaviors are deceitful and a denial of your creation? — That your behavior will bring shame on the Church and offend many of “the least of these?”

Erin Swenson's Answer

I have “saved” this question for last because I think it deserves special attention. I am aware from other conversations that this is perhaps the substance of the Accusation that was filed against me by one of my Presbyterian brothers. I believe that it must be answered not only for him and the others joining him in the accusation, but for the church as a whole and for myself in particular. Hence, I have made it the “wall” off of which I wish to make my theological statement.

I have struggled with the virulent anger that drips from these words and wondered the source from which such anger flows. As I have struggled with the other questions in this document I have also found myself wondering why I feel like I am defending myself more from existential rage than from real theological argument. As I have wrestled with this, I came to recognize the anger, for it is not only the anger of my accusers, or of the Committee, or of the Church, but it is my anger as well. It's as if this reality standing before you, a reality that clothes my own soul threatens the very foundation of what we believe. I have spent the best years of my life wringing enough energy from myself to carry on as husband, father, and minister against a personal reality that seemed wholly unacceptable to not only others,

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but to myself and God as well. It seemed that I had either truly been excluded from the kingdom of heaven, or God was playing some kind of cosmic trick on me.

This couldn't be true. So I spent enormous resources in trying to make it not so. I not only entered psychotherapy, but also became a therapist myself. I have been in therapy so long I can honestly not really remember what life is like without a therapist to talk to regularly. I involved others in my personal struggle. I married believing that this had finally "answered" some need in me and I was freed from my gender burden. Not so. I pursued what appeared to be a normal male life pattern in the desperate hope that, because of this no one would be able to see the terrible truth about me. I wanted to be female against all reason and against all that seemed right and good to me. And I lacked faith in my community, perhaps in my God, to be able to nurture and see me through whatever dark valley I seemed to be traveling.

So I carried on, burying myself in work, responsibility and depression in order to hide from the terrible truth within. I applied myself especially hard to the task of living and working as a male, and succeeded. In my arrogance, I even convinced myself that I could hold the terrible truth within me for a lifetime, dying with my secret still intact. But the depression and denial began to take their toll, on my health and the health of my marriage. I lost my marriage, not because of my gender problem, but because of my willingness to deny the truth and therefore destroy my self-respect and the respect of my partner.

And so I am before you, bewildered that I am being charged with deceit now when my experience is that I have, at great cost, ended my deceitful life and devoted myself to living in the light of the truth.

And so the central question for all of us to wonder over is, why does my proposal that the Presbytery accept my transgenderism cause so much visceral objection? Simply put, I believe this is so because the church's struggle with me parallels the church's struggle with itself. In a sense, the church has also been struggling with a gender change.

I must thank the committee member who posed the question regarding the sacredness of sex organs in the Old Testament, for this one question, above all others, has helped me to understand our struggle. You see, the Old Testament view of male sex organs WAS that they were sacred in ways transcending all other aspects of human biology. The ancient Hebrews felt, understandably, that the source of life was contained exclusively within this part of the male anatomy. The homunculus theory of human reproduction viewed the male seminal fluid (inaccurately thought to come from the testicles) as containing a small, microscopic in fact, human being, a homunculus. This homunculus was deposited, during the sex act, into the woman's womb for safekeeping while it grew, nourished by the mother, to the size necessary for birth. Naturally, the source of all life would come to be revered.

And this ancient "scientific" view fit nicely into the strongly patriarchal culture that belonged to the Hebrews. Men, therefore, became the center of Hebrew social and religious life. Women were viewed as not only second class, but actually of a different order altogether. This was common in ancient patriarchal cultures where women were often viewed as chattel, lives worthy of ownership and use by

And so I am before you, charged with deceit now when I have ended my deceitful life and devoted myself to living in the light of the truth.

men. But movement away from the pagan patriarchal world had already begun. Both the Priestly and Yahwistic creation stories that come to us through our Hebrew forebears and recorded in Genesis say something radical for their time. Both stories, in different ways, place men and women next to each other, either by treating them together (“He created them male and female”) or by making a clear biological connection between the bodies of men and the bodies of women (Adam’s rib).

God’s people continued to struggle with this, and the cultural and religious attitudes prevalent in Jesus’ time were once more confronted by God. Women, before seen only as valued property that could be cast out at the will of the owner, now were seen as human beings needful of respect. Jesus, in his discourses with the Pharisees about divorce, continued to drive this point home. And even more profound is Jesus’ friendship and valuing of women in his ministry. And in spite of Paul’s early teachings on family life, the early church clearly began to count women among her leadership.

Today, two millennia hence, we still struggle with patriarchy. In spite of ourselves, probably all of us continue to hold the status of men above the status of women. I experience this as mostly an unconscious thing, one that has been illuminated by my transitioning from having the social role of male to female. For about the first two months after I began living full time in the female role, I was having a problem bumping into people. At first, I thought it was simply a kind of emotional dizziness that had come from allowing myself full expression of myself for the first time in a long life. But as I went along, I began to notice that my collisions were almost exclusively with men. It took much self-analysis before I realized that men and women navigate differently in public space. Men tend to walk directly toward their destination, and women tend toward the more circuitous route. I realized suddenly one day after another such collision, again with a man, that what happens is that men take precedence over women in public space. Even the men who would hold open doors for me or allow me to enter the elevator first would also walk right into me. I realized that men have the right of way! And having navigated most of my life as a man, I simply was navigating like a man in public while men were expecting me to navigate like a woman. Hence, we collided!

My entire life has been filled with a struggle, often with God, about the difference between what I looked like—how I was treated by others, and what I felt like on the inside.

Now I am not so arrogant as to believe that God has somehow made me to be transgendered to “teach the church a lesson,” but I do believe that God uses us somehow to work God’s purpose out. I would sing the lines to that hymn, popular in the seminary chapel, and completely miss that they could somehow apply not just to my theological education, but also to the transgendered nature I knew myself to contain.

I have struggled my entire life with my own patriarchal feelings and attitudes. I felt it somehow shameful that I felt like a woman and wanted desperately to be one. I knew for certain that I would become a miserable outcast were I to reveal by

Both the Priestly and Yahwistic creation stories place men and women next to each other, either by treating them together or by making a clear biological connection between the bodies of men and the bodies of women.

**I have never
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remain so.**

terrible truth. And the portrayal by the media of others with my “affliction” did not help. These were not people with whom I could identify. I felt no relationship whatever with bizarre prostitutes and nude dancers.

But, you see, God has throughout history been calling people away from this ancient myth, that men and women are somehow of different substance and therefore profoundly different from each other. God has continued to lead us away from the prejudice and ignorance we all are victim to, toward the light of truth. The church, an institution characterized by its strongly patriarchy (in spite of its being the Bride of Christ), has entered a time when the church truly faces its own transgenderism. And my request that the church simply recognize my transgendered reality comes at a time when we as the church are disoriented by our own (as the church) transgenderism. I don’t believe, incidentally, that the church is moving toward a matriarchy. As I have stated elsewhere, I have never really been a man and I know that I can never really be a woman. I am transgendered and will always remain so. My hope is that the church, too, will be able to recognize its transgendered nature and discover more fully God’s love for us humans not because we are male or female (or anything in between) but because we are all God’s children.

So I deeply disagree with the charge that I am being deceitful and a source of shame for the people of God. On the contrary, I believe that the truth I live in is a truth the people of God are struggling to understand. The church, as it is currently, may not be able to recognize or appreciate this. Nevertheless, we are all desirous of finding God’s will, and it will be done.

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VI

Supportive Churches

These are congregations in Illinois that have publicly identified themselves as supportive to sexual minority persons. They self-identify within their denomination as “Reconciling Congregations,” Open and Affirming Churches,” “More Light Churches,” etc. On the other hand, in the case of the UFMCC churches their entire denomination is made up of sexual minority persons and their friends and families.

American Baptist

Grace Baptist Church
1307 W. Granville Ave.
Chicago, IL 60660
773/262-8700

University Church
5655 S. University
Chicago, IL 60637
773/363-8142

Lake Street Church
607 Lake St.
Evanston, IL 60201
847/864-2181

**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church
909 S. Wright St.
Champaign, IL 61820

Disciples Of Christ

Illinois Disciples Foundation
610 E. Springfield St.
PO Box 2600, Station A
Champaign, IL 61820-2600
217/352-8721

Augustana Lutheran Church
5500 S. Woodlawn Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637

Christ The King Lutheran Church
637 S. Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL 60605

Irving Park Christian Church
4300 N. Kedvale Ave.
Chicago, IL 60641
773/685-5407

Christ The Mediator Lutheran
Church
3100 S. Calumet
Chicago, IL 60615

Ebenezer Lutheran Church
1650 W. Foster Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640

Gladstone Park Lutheran Church
6200 W. Foster
Chicago, IL 60630

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran
Church
1218 W. Addison St.
Chicago, IL 60613

Immanuel Lutheran Church
1500 W. Elmdale
Chicago, IL 60660

Lake View Lutheran Church
835 W. Addison
Chicago, IL 60613

Park View Lutheran Church
3919 N. Monticello
Chicago, IL 60618

Resurrection Lutheran Church
3301 N. Seminary St.
Chicago, IL 60657

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran
Church
2649 N. Francisco
Chicago, IL 60647

St. Mark Lutheran Church
6047 N. Rockwell St.
Chicago, IL 60645

Trinity Lutheran Church
1430 W. 100th Place
Chicago, IL 60643

Maywood House Church
2 Atrium Way, #409
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
611 West Randolph
Oak Park, IL 60302

St. Paul Lutheran Church
515 S. Wheaton Ave.
Wheaton, IL 60187

**Universal Fellowship of
Metropolitan Community
Churches**

Good Shepherd Parish Metropolitan
Community Church
615 W. Wellington
Chicago, IL 60657-5305
773/472-8708

Resurrection Metropolitan Commu-
nity Church
c/o CTS Chapel
5757 S. University Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637-1507

Holy Covenant Metropolitan Com-
munity Church
c/o The Unitarian Church
11 W. Maple
Hinsdale, IL

Metropolitan Community Church of
the Incarnation
460 Lake St.
Oak Park, IL

Faith Eternal Metropolitan Commu-
nity Church
304 W. Allen Street
Springfield, IL 62704-2908
217/525-9597

Joy of Life Metropolitan Community
Church
c/o St. John's UCC
1520 N. McAree Road
Waukegan, IL

Presbyterian Church (USA)

McKinley Memorial Presbyterian
Church
809 S 5th St.
Champaign, IL 61820
217/344-0297

Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church
600 W. Fullerton Pkwy.
Chicago, IL 60614-2690
773/248-8288

St. James Presbyterian Church
6554 N. Rockwell (at Albion)
Chicago, IL 60645
773-465-6254

New Covenant Community
210 W Mulberry
Normal, IL 61761

First United Church Of Oak Park
848 Lake St.
Oak Park, IL 60301
708/386-5215

United Church Of Christ

Church Of the Good Shepherd
Carbondale, IL

Community United Church Of Christ
Champaign, IL

Nazareth United Church of Christ
2500 N. Talman Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
773/486-7440

Peoples Church
941 W. Lawrence Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640
773/784-6633

St. Paul's United Church Of Christ
2335 N. Orchard St.
Chicago, IL 60614
773/348-3829

University Church
5655 S. University
Chicago, IL 60637
773/363-8142

Wellington Avenue United Church of
Christ
615 W. Wellington Ave.
Chicago, IL 60657
773/935-0642

Congregational Church (UCC)
Jacksonville, IL

First Congregational Church
25 East Benton
Naperville, IL 60540
630/355-1024

New Covenant Community
Normal, IL

First United Church
848 Lake St.
Oak Park, IL 60301
708/386-5215

Pilgrim Church
Oak Park, IL

Immanuel United Church Of Christ
Streamwood, IL

First Congregational United Church Of
Christ
Waukegan, IL

First Congregational United Church Of
Christ
Wilmette, IL

United Methodist Church

Berry Memorial United Methodist
Church
4754 N. Leavitt St.
Chicago, IL 60625

Broadway United Methodist Church
3344 N. Broadway
Chicago, IL 60657

Epworth United Methodist Church
5253 N. Kenmore Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640

First United Methodist Church-Chicago
Temple
77 W. Washington
Chicago, IL 60602

Grace United Methodist Church
3325 W. Wrightwood
Chicago, IL 60647

Holy Covenant United Methodist
Church
925 W. Diversey
Chicago, IL 60614
773/528-6462

Irving Park United Methodist Church
3801 N. Keeler Ave.
Chicago, IL 60641

Mayfair United Methodist Church
4600 N. Kilpatrick Ave.
Chicago, IL 60630

Norwood Park United Methodist
Church
7115 Hood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60631

United Methodist Church of Albany
Park
3100 W. Wilson Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625

United Church Of Rogers Park
1545 Morse Ave.
Chicago, IL 60626

Hemenway United Methodist Church
933 Chicago Ave.
Evanston, IL 60202

Wheadon United Methodist Church
2214 Ridge Ave.
Evanston, IL 60201

Hazel Crest Community Church
17050 California Ave.
Hazel Crest, IL 60429

Euclid Avenue United Methodist
Church
405 S. Euclid Ave.
Oak Park, IL 60302

Winfield United Methodist Church
Po Box 359
Winfield, IL 60190

Unitarian Universalists

First Unitarian Church
5650 S. Woodlawn Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637

Second Unitarian Church
656 W. Barry
Chicago, IL 60657
773/549-0260

Unitarian Universalist Community
Church
70 Sycamore Drive
Park Forest, IL 60466-2600

The Unitarian Universalist Church
4848 Turner Street
Rockford, IL 61107-5099



VIII

Supportive Synagogues

This is a Reform Jewish congregation in Illinois that has chosen to join the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

Congregation Or Chadash
c/o The Second Unitarian Church
656 W. Barry St.
Chicago, IL 60657
773/248-9456
Rabbi S. Griffel



IX

Miscellaneous Thoughts

This chapter will be reserved for materials that deserve to be shared with persons working in the often confusing world of “youth” or “sexual minority ministry.”

Jesus Is Seen at a Gay Bar

I caught
sight of Him that night
looking sexy in His sackcloth
and ridiculous in a Groucho Marx disguise,
there in the corner behind the David statue,
listening intently to the angel-faced
tramp who knows how to dish with the best of ‘em.
Too bad Madonna
was belting out “Papa Don’t Preach:
so damned
loud we couldn’t overhear them.
The tramp actually looked like he was
putting the moves on the Almighty One,
but Jesus just played it cool
While he chatted over His glass of Perrier
Later seen, magically,
To be filled with an amusing,
Off-year Medoc.
“What the hell
does He want from us?”
Some queen
snarled that night over his pinot noir.
“Christ, we’re not exactly the choirboys
of the Holy Seraphim having their Christmas party.

And by the way, Jesus, we got St. Paul's letter,
again, just the other day: addressed
to the insolent slanderers who exchange
the Truth of God for a lie,
deserve death, and must forfeit the Kingdom.
There was no return address."

But it was a night to remember.
Jesus joined us in a few choruses
of "Over the Rainbow" around the jukebox
and disappeared before Last Call.
He left His keys on the bar.

Thomas O'Neil. (1989) *Sex With God*. Indulgence Press: New York, NY

