

# All in God's Family

CREATING ALLIES  
FOR OUR LGBT FAMILIES

A PUBLICATION OF

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



# All in God's Family: Creating Allies for Our LGBT Families

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*All in God's Family* is part of a packet of resources intended to help make your congregation a welcoming place for LGBT families. In addition to this publication, you will need:

## 1. BOOK

*Families Like Mine* by Abigail Garner

## 2. VIDEO

*In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*  
(documentary by Jen Gilomen, produced by the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program)

## 3. CD-ROM

*That's So Gay: Portraits of Youth with LGBT Parents*  
(A do-it-yourself exhibit of phototext portraits of children of LGBT Parents from the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program)

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## PART 1 PREPARATION

# Welcome and Introduction

**W**elcome to *All in God's Family: Creating Allies for Our LGBT Families*. During the course of this curriculum, you will have opportunities to gather with other members of your congregation to pray, to learn, to share, and to work together to transform your lives, your congregation, and your world into a loving place in which God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families can thrive.

Creating a nurturing environment for LGBT families is the primary goal of this curriculum. LGBT families can have LGBT parents or an LGBT child or children. Many of our congregations have done a very good job in welcoming LGBT persons, engaging them in the life of the church, and advocating for their rights and their well-being. A logical next step is incorporating LGBT families into the community and working together to secure their legal and social recognition. This packet of resources will provide you with tools you will need in this important endeavor. Although we strongly recommend you use the resources we have included, we also recognize that each congregation is unique. Therefore, we hope that you will customize these resources to fit the unique culture and context of your congregation.

Many people of faith, individual churches, and even entire denominations, have become the spiritual home for millions of LGBT persons. Each summer, spiritual communities line up to participate in Pride events and they receive thunderous applause all along the routes of almost every Pride Parade.

However, this has not always been true. In the past, it was almost impossible for a person to find a church in which to be supported, challenged, and loved as an openly LGBT disciple on a sacred journey. In twenty years much has changed, and now the participation and ministry of LGBT people is celebrated in many places of worship across the nation. People who kept the deepest desires of their hearts silent or who stayed away on Sundays altogether are now publicly incorporated into the Body of the Risen Christ. In many churches, LGBT people serve on boards and councils, they teach, and they even preach and lead congregations.

There is much to be grateful for and there is much more to be accomplished. LGBT persons are still not embraced in spiritual sanctuaries across the country. Instead of words of welcome, they hear words of condemnation and insult from the lips of the very people from whom they expect and deserve love, support, and spiritual leadership. They hear themselves equated with pedophiles and criminals. They hear their loving relationships described in terms of bestial acts. They watch while their spiritual leaders lobby aggressively against their human and civil rights.

For a long time now, when we have thought about LGBT persons, we have imagined individual adults. Debates have raged over what rights should and should not be afforded these individuals based on their sexual orientation or their gender identification. Religious communities have discerned whether or not such individuals should serve in leadership positions, teach children, minister, preach, etc. However, we now know that there are LGBT children and youth in our midst, that there are LGBT families in our congregations, and that there are children all around us who are being raised in LGBT families. While the intricacies of an individual's sexual orientation or gender identification are often alien and alienating to many of the people around them, the joys and struggles of nurturing a family, raising children, or being raised are universal experiences that unite each of us with one another.

Throughout this curriculum, when we refer to LGBT families, we mean many things. We mean families that are led by an LGBT parent or parents, LGBT couples without children, and families that parent heterosexual and LGBT children. These families are formed in a variety of ways — biologically, by adoption or by other placement.

## PART 1 PREPARATION (continued)

The reality of the presence of these LGBT families is changing our world and transforming our spiritual communities. In many churches LGBT families feel incorporated into the community of disciples. They participate in all the sacred covenants and rituals that seek to hold and strengthen loving families. Their children are respectfully and holistically involved in the religious educational programming of the congregation. They hear their stories woven into the tapestry of sermons and homilies that illuminate the teachings of the Scriptures. They know that their full participation in the life and ministry and leadership of the community is welcomed and demanded.

However, there has been backlash against the existence, the visibility, and the success of many LGBT families. Marriage and adoption — two of the institutions which most clearly define our familial relationships — have been the focus of aggressive campaigns which seek to change the laws and even the constitution of our states and of our country. These campaigns are often both religious and political in nature and they have been highly divisive. Sexual activity between consenting adults of any gender is no longer a crime in this country but the debate has shifted to whether or not LGBT families have the right to receive the supports of government, have the same responsibilities as other families, or have the right even to exist.

This curriculum is all about strengthening these LGBT families of ours. We are so grateful for the opportunity to involve you, the members of this faith community in what we believe is the on-going work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of justice and on behalf of the holiness of all of God's people.

The first session will focus on perspective of some young people who are being raised in LGBT families. Their witness comes to us through the phototext exhibition, *That's So Gay*, through Abigail Garner's book, *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is*, and through the video you will soon watch, *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth With LGBT Parents*. The second session will be a reflective study of three aspects of Scripture. The third session will concentrate on preparing for, and committing to, working for changes within this congregation and in the wider world — changes that will strengthen our LGBT families. The final component is a follow-up section designed to help your congregation take concrete action steps.

## PART 1 PREPARATION (continued)

### Laying the Groundwork

Any new educational program should include a preparation phase in which you lay the groundwork for your community. Listed below are three resources that we recommend be used in preparation for using *All in God's Family*. Additionally, take some time to read through this curriculum in its entirety before implementation. Please feel free to adapt any of these suggestions to the culture and needs of your particular congregation.

#### GUEST PREACHER

In the weeks leading up to this program, invite an LGBT family member to give the sermon. Write a special liturgy for the occasion. Some liturgical suggestions are in the Resources section of this curriculum.

#### PHOTOTEXT EXHIBIT: *THAT'S SO GAY*

Display the phototext portraits of children of LGBT families in your worship space, hospitality room, or some other highly visible area. Invite your youth group or confirmation class to assist with the selection, printing, and placement of the portraits. You can do your own printing directly from the CD-ROM or bring it to a local copy center.

#### BOOK: *FAMILIES LIKE MINE: CHILDREN OF GAY PARENTS TELL IT LIKE IT IS*

One copy of Abigail Garner's insightful book is supplied with this packet of resources. Information on how to order more copies is available through the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources ([www.WelcomingResources.org/families.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/families.xml)). It would be helpful if everyone planning to participate in the program had the opportunity to read this book. We strongly recommend that everyone read Chapter Five, "Family Defining Moments" before Session One begins.

## PART 1 PREPARATION (continued)

# Session Structure

Use this format for each of the three sessions or customize it to the needs of your congregation.

### CREATING SACRED SPACE

- Create an altar or centering area, covered with a cloth.  
Place an appropriate symbol on the table and light a candle.
- Read from Scripture: I Corinthians, 12:12-27 (one body, many members).
- Prayer:
  - Invite each participant to share a word or phrase without commentary in response to this question: “What is close to your heart as we begin this sacred time in community with the Spirit and in community with one another?”
  - Leader shares a gathering prayer and may lead the group in a hymn or song.
  - You may instead use one of the worship resources listed in Appendix 2.

### CREATING A HEALTHY AND SAFE SPACE FOR SHARING AND LEARNING

Establish Ground Rules:

- Listen carefully to others.
- Be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say.
- Speak your mind freely, but strive to maintain an open mind.
- Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.
- Don't monopolize the discussion.
- Address remarks to the group and not to an individual.
- Engage in friendly dialogue.
- What other guidelines are necessary so that we can be in respectful community with one another?

### SESSION CONTENTS

- Refer to Sessions 1, 2, and 3, below.

### CLOSING

- Reflection, Questions, Summary of Session
- Close with prayer.

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 1: Hearing the Stories

<b>GOALS</b>	To have participants hear stories of children of LGBT parents and then engage in conversation and reflection.
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<i>Families Like Mine</i> excerpt (below) <i>In My Shoes</i> video and discussion questions (below)
<b>TIME</b>	1.5 Hours  <i>Please refer to the Session Structure page.</i>

#### ACTIVITY

##### READING

Have someone from your group read this excerpt from *Families Like Mine* aloud:

“Sorry to put you on hold for so long,” the airline ticket agent told me. I was scheduling a flight for Dad, Russ, and me to attend my uncle’s funeral. The agent did not know if same-sex partners were included in the company’s definition of family. If they were, Russ would qualify for the reduced bereavement fare. If not, his ticket would cost over a thousand dollars more.

“I had to find a supervisor who knew the policy on this,” the agent explained. “We do consider your father’s, um, partner to be a family member.” Dad and Russ have been together for more than a quarter century, yet it is a stranger at an airline company who gets to decide if that relationship constitutes family.

I had dreaded making the call for fear of feeling the sting of homophobia that put yet another barrier in the way of my family getting treated like one. Even when an airline does have an inclusive bereavement policy, individual agents are not always familiar with it, so it takes some calling around. Justifying our relationship should be the last thing I have to do when a family member has just died. Hearing on my first attempt that yes, Russ is family, made me feel lucky...

It was one of countless “family defining moments” — times when kinship is publicly named and acknowledged — that people without LGBT family members don’t even have to think about. Family-defining moments may have insulting or affirming outcomes for a family with LGBT parents. These moments occur in public contexts, when laws or company policies are at issue. They also occur in more personal contexts, when, for example, neighbors or extended family acknowledge, or fail to acknowledge, same-sex relationships. The institutionalized

homophobia of the legal system reinforces the culturally conditioned homophobia of social institutions, and vice versa.

Despite parents’ efforts to raise children in strong and safe homes, the validity of LGBT families is questioned every day by broader society. When families are slighted, children frequently take it more personally than do their parents.

##### IN MY SHOES

Show the documentary *In My Shoes* (31 minutes) and set aside some time for your group to reflect and share afterwards. It may help your participants to remind them of the names and situations of the five youth featured in the video:

- Sarah, adopted daughter of two gay dads.
- Alex, son of lesbian moms and a gay dad.
- Jessica, lives with her transgender and lesbian guardians.
- Xavier, has two lesbian moms and a baby sister.
- Marina, has two lesbian moms who are a bi-national couple.

##### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (adapted from *In My Shoes* discussion guide)

1. How were the youth in the film or their families the same or different from you or your family?
2. What surprised you about the film?
3. Why did the youth who created the film want you to “walk in their shoes?”
4. In what ways do you think youth with LGBT parents/guardians experience isolation, discrimination or harassment in this congregation or in society?
5. How did the youth talk about the importance of marriage in the lives of their families?
6. How does the “gay marriage” debate affect children of LGBT families?

##### UNDERSTANDING HETEROSEXISM

Ask participants to define heterosexism (see Appendix 1) and discuss ways in which the congregation promotes heterosexism and how it works to stop it. This conversation may lead to a deeper conversation about the difference between homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to say that while a church might claim to not be homophobic, it may be very heterosexist. Part of becoming fully inclusive of LGBT families is being intentional against heterosexism.

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION (continued)

# Session 2: Scriptural Engagement

<b>GOALS</b>	To demonstrate the New Testament trajectory towards inclusion of more and more classes of people into the Church, explicitly embracing classes of people previously excluded: Jews from outside Palestine; non-Jews and people associated with the Roman occupation; and people considered to be sexual misfits. This journey is all about transforming and healing the world by embracing all manner of different people and including them in the circle of the people of God.
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Scripture passages (below)
<b>TIME</b>	1.5 Hours  <i>Please refer to the Session Structure page. Invite participants in your group to read the Scripture readings from this session.</i>

## INTRODUCTION

In this second session of *All in God's Family*, we are going to take a look at three passages of Scripture. You will notice that we do not cover the seven texts that are regularly used to justify homo-hostile feelings and actions against LGBT people and their families. To find out more about those passages, refer to "Bible & Homosexuality" in the Resources section.

## ACTIVITY

### 1. BIBLE STORY: PENTECOST

A. Have someone read the following text aloud:

**Acts 2:1-17** [*The Inclusive Bible*, adapted]

- <sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room.  
<sup>2</sup> Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. <sup>4</sup> They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.  
<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, <sup>6</sup> and at this sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being

spoken. <sup>7</sup> They were amazed and astonished: "Surely all of these people speaking are Galileans! <sup>8</sup> How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? <sup>9</sup> We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome — <sup>11</sup> all Jews, or converts to Judaism — Cretans and Arabs, too; we hear them preaching, each in our own language, about the marvels of God!"

<sup>12</sup> All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> But others said mockingly, "They've drunk too much new wine."

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: "Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! <sup>15</sup> These people are not drunk as you think — it's only nine o'clock in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, it's what Joel the prophet spoke of:

<sup>17</sup> 'In the days to come —  
it is our God who speaks —  
I will pour out my Spirit  
on all humankind.  
Your daughters and sons will prophesy,  
your young people will see visions,  
and your elders will dream dreams.'"

B. As the leader, read over the following and be prepared to present it. Our hope is that you would not simply read it, but put it into your own language based on your knowledge of the group.

The miraculous phenomena associated with the Pentecost story are famous — tongues of fire; frightened disciples are given the courage to witness to their faith; pilgrims from different nationalities hear Galileans speaking in their own language. However, the outcome of the Spirit's miraculous intervention seldom attracts the same attention.

After the original disciples are accused of being drunk, Peter delivers a comprehensive speech and then we learn that, "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were baptized that day." (Acts 2:41) The effect of the Spirit's presence was an expansion of the Church beyond the boundaries of the original circle of disciples. These new members became disciples — devoting themselves to prayer, to learning, to living in community, to sharing their belongings.



## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 2 (continued)

#### C. Small Group Discussion

Break into small groups of three to four people and discuss the following questions:

- What does this Pentecost reading mean to you?
- Were you familiar with this interpretation of the text — the expansion of the community of believers beyond the original disciples?
- Does this have any effect on how you see the evolution of the Christian church?
- What impact does it have on your understand of LGBT families in the church?

Move back into the full group and invite anyone to share reflections.

## 2 BIBLE STORY: CORNELIUS AND HIS COMMUNITY

A. Have someone read aloud the following, followed by the reading from Acts 10.

There are many other stories of expansion throughout the Acts of the Apostles. One of them is about the conversion (AKA the incorporation into the Church) of the Cornelius community — a Roman community.

There was a Roman family living in Palestine, in the city of Caesarea. The father was a centurion in the army of the Roman Empire and his name was Cornelius. We have no information about the other members of this family apart from the fact that they were spiritual people and they were very generous to the poor.

At three o'clock one afternoon, while Cornelius was praying, he saw an angel. The angel told him to send a soldier and two of his servants to the city of Jaffa, on the Mediterranean coast, with instructions to invite Peter to stay with him in Caesarea. The angel also told Cornelius that God was as pleased with his family's generosity as with the offerings made in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The next day, Peter was praying on the roof of a house in Jaffa — the home of Simon the tanner and his family. He was having difficulty praying because he was hungry and he could smell lunch being prepared downstairs. He fell into a trance. He had a vision and he saw something like a large sheet coming down out of the sky. The sheet was laden with all kinds of animals — mammals, reptiles, and birds. A voice told him to eat them all. "No way!" cried Peter, "I don't eat anything that is impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him again, "Do not call anything that God

has made 'impure' or 'unclean.'" Peter saw this vision two more times.

Peter sat up on the roof, scratching his head and wondering about the meaning of this dream. Then the three men from Caesarea arrived at the gate and Peter ran down to meet them. Peter let them in and they all had lunch together.

#### Acts 10:23b-36, 44-48 [The Inclusive Bible]

<sup>23</sup> Peter left the next day, accompanied by some of the coworkers from Joppa. <sup>24</sup> They reached Caesarea the day after. Cornelius was waiting for them, along with his household and many close friends.

<sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him, dropped to his knees and bowed low. <sup>26</sup> As he helped Cornelius to his feet, Peter said, "Get up! I'm a human being, just like you!"

<sup>27</sup> While talking with Cornelius, Peter went in and found many people gathered there. <sup>28</sup> He said to them, "You know it's unlawful for a Jew to associate with Gentiles or visit them. But God made it clear to me not to call anyone unclean or impure. <sup>29</sup> That's why I made no objection when I was summoned. Why have you sent for me?"

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered, "Four days ago, I was here praying at this hour — three in the afternoon. Suddenly a figure in shining robes stood before me <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayers have been heard and your charity has been accepted as a sacrifice before God.

<sup>32</sup> Send to Joppa and invite Simon, known as Peter, who is staying in the house of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' <sup>33</sup> I sent for you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. Now we are all gathered here before you to hear the message God has given you for us."

<sup>34</sup> So Peter said to them, "I begin to see how true it is that God shows no partiality — <sup>35</sup> rather, that any person of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God. <sup>36</sup> This is the message God has sent to the people of Israel, the Good News of peace proclaimed through Jesus Christ, who is Savior of all."

<sup>44</sup> Peter had not finished speaking these words when the Holy Spirit descended upon all who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup> The Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, <sup>46</sup> whom they could hear speaking in tongues and glorifying God.

Then Peter asked, <sup>47</sup> "What can stop these people who have received the Holy Spirit, even as we have, from being baptized with water?" <sup>48</sup> So he gave orders that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. After this was done, they asked him to stay on with them for a few days.

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 2 (continued)

**B. As the leader, read over the following and be prepared to present it.**  
Again, our hope is that you would not simply read it, but put it into your own language based on your knowledge of the group.

In chapter two, we were presented with the astounding story of what happened on the first Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were, through the power of the Holy Spirit, able to speak to and unite “God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” Jews from various racial and ethnic backgrounds were reminded that they were one people — God’s people — centered around one God. The metaphor of the twelve disciples echoed the twelve tribes of Israel, scattered around the world. On Pentecost, the tribes were re-united.

Now, in chapter ten, God’s circle of inclusion is widened. This time, the disciples of Jesus are not only uniting Jews, one to the other, as the people of God, but Peter is convinced that God has mandated him to preach to, and gather into the circle, non-Jews as well. God’s hope is that we should treat all God’s people, everything that God has made, as pure and clean: “God has shown me that I should not call any human being impure or unclean.” (Acts 10:28)

These stories are not about Judaism yielding to Christianity, although we have all heard sermons along those lines before. These stories are about God’s people living side by side in love and mutual respect — “Jews from every nation under heaven” and non-Jews alike.

Perhaps it is appropriate to apply these stories and their implications to the situation of LGBT families. There was a diversity of Jews gathered in Jerusalem on that Pentecost. Each language group heard the good news preached to them in their own language — the Gospel reached them just as they were. Peter and the sisters and brothers from Jaffa brought the good news to Cornelius and his network of family and friends. Peter discovered that Gentiles found favor in God’s sight and he and his companions witnessed the Holy Spirit being poured upon non-Jews. God does not show favoritism. Peter and his companions did not show favoritism. Neither should we.

Can we respond to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and live in Christian community with the various individuals and the diverse families that God has gathered together in this congregation? Can we encourage others to practice their faith by living in Christian community with a wide array of people and of familial relationships? Can we bring this vision to our wider circles, in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, states, and our nation — a vision of diversity, a vision of inclusion, God’s vision?

### C. Small Group Discussion

- What is your reaction to the Cornelius story and the effect of Peter’s inclusion of non-Jews among the believers?
- Is this a story familiar to you?
- Does this have any effect on how you see the evolution of the Christian church?
- On how you see the inclusion of LGBT families?

Move back into the full group and invite anyone to share reflections.

## 3 BIBLE STORY: PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH

### A. Have someone read aloud the following:

So we have a vision of a circle of inclusion before us but how can we know that God intends that LGBT people and their families be included in this circle? Let’s turn our attention to another piece, this time from chapter eight of the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter and John and Philip were on their way back to Jerusalem from Samaria when an angel spoke to Philip:

#### **Acts 8:26-39** [*The Inclusive Bible*]

<sup>26</sup> An angel of God spoke to Philip and said, “Be ready to set out at noon along the road that goes to Gaza, the desert road.”

<sup>27</sup> So Philip began his journey.

It happened that an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official in charge of the entire treasury of Candace, the ruler of Ethiopia, had come to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage <sup>28</sup> and was returning home. He was sitting in his carriage and reading the prophet Isaiah.

<sup>29</sup> The Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and meet that carriage.”

<sup>30</sup> When Philip ran up, he heard the eunuch reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

<sup>31</sup> “How can I,” the eunuch replied, “unless someone explains it to me?” With that, he invited Philip to get in the carriage with him. <sup>32</sup>

This was the passage of scripture being read:

“You are like a sheep being led to slaughter, you are like a lamb that is mute in front of its shearers:

like them, you never open your mouth.

<sup>33</sup> You have been humiliated

and have no one to defend you.

Who will ever talk about your descendants, since your life on earth has been cut short?”

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 2 (continued)

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch said to Philip, “Tell me, if you will, about whom the prophet is talking — himself or someone else?”

<sup>35</sup> So Philip proceeded to explain the Good News about Jesus to him.

<sup>36</sup> Further along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is some water right there. Is there anything to keep me from being baptized?”

<sup>38</sup> He ordered the carriage to stop; then Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came out of the water, the Spirit of God snatched Philip away; the eunuch didn’t see him anymore and went on his way rejoicing.

**B. As the leader, read over the following and be prepared to present it. Again, our hope is that you would not simply read it, but put it into your own language based on your knowledge of the group.**

This is a very powerful reading and it is very popular among Christian communities who practice “conversions.” It’s also very popular among African Christians and Christians of African descent because it features an Ethiopian — a black African. Read side-by-side with the Pentecost story and the conversion of Cornelius and his community, this episode affirms the inclusive trajectory of the Acts of the Apostles.

Remember that Acts of the Apostles is the second volume of a work we know as Luke-Acts. In the Gospel of Luke, the narrative is organized around the journey of Jesus from Bethlehem, to Nazareth in the Galilee, and finally to Jerusalem. This journey took Jesus from a Galilean backwater to the very heart of Judaism. Acts, the second volume, traces the journey of the disciples of Jesus out from Jerusalem, out from the domain of Judaism to the rest of the world — all the way to Rome, the center of the known universe at the time.

These stories of encounters with “Jews from every nation under heaven,” non-Jews, and now the Ethiopian eunuch elaborate the nature and the purpose of this outward journey. This journey is all about transforming and healing the world by embracing all manner of different people and including them in the circle of the people of God. Some of these inclusions were quite controversial — leading to the Council of Jerusalem in chapter 15. You can see that the author was aware of the controversy in the cases of both Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch. He made sure to tell us that the Holy Spirit “confirmed” these inclusions with visible signs.

However, we cannot overlook the fact that this story is about an Ethiopian who is a eunuch. Westerners have all sorts of images of harems, etc., that flood our consciousness when we are presented with the idea of a eunuch. Most of these images are untrustworthy, based as they are on the

inaccurate and fantastic reports of European men. We tend to think of a eunuch as a biological male whose testicles have been removed. The term eunuch has broader meaning in the Christian Scriptures.

Matthew, chapter 19 quotes Jesus referring to eunuchs:

#### **Matthew 19:12**

<sup>12</sup> Some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by humans; and others have renounced marriage because of the reign of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

Jesus broadens our view of eunuchs to include not only those who “were made by humans” but also individuals born with ambiguous or unusual genitalia and those who are celibate beyond marriageable age. Jesus most likely considered himself a eunuch by his own definition as he himself was probably not married. The biblical term “eunuch” embraces hermaphrodite, transgender, and unmarried women and men as well as those who are “born that way” or “made that way by humans.”

Interestingly, this piece about eunuchs occurs in a discussion that Matthew’s Jesus is having with his disciples on the topic of marriage, divorce, and children. In keeping with Rabbinical tradition, it serves as a commentary on the oft quoted line from Genesis “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) This context suggests that we not simply think about the treatment of eunuchs (or their modern day equivalents) as individuals but that we should reflect on how the Gospel considers the various ways in which our relationships are configured.

Jesus seemed quite intent on developing alternatives to the family structures around him. He called women and men to leave their families — to leave the traditional patriarchal structure within which everyone lived (Matthew 19:29). His own family was far from traditional even though they may have “passed” as quite normal. In fact, Jesus went so far as to redefine what a family actually meant when he commented:

#### **Matthew 12:46-50 [The Inclusive Bible]**

<sup>46</sup> While Jesus was still speaking to the crowd, his family stood outside, wanting to speak to him.

<sup>47</sup> Someone said to Jesus, “Your mother and kin are standing outside, and they are anxious to speak with you.” <sup>48</sup> Jesus replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my kin?” <sup>49</sup> Pointing to the disciples, Jesus said, “Here is my family. <sup>50</sup> Whoever does the will of Abba God in heaven is my sister and brother and mother.”

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 2 (continued)

Turning our attention back to the story about the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts, chapter eight, it's hard to imagine that Philip was not thinking about what Jesus had said about eunuchs and about the increasing inclusion of non-Jews in the circle of the people of God. He must have been thrilled when the opportunity presented itself to him to actually practice this inclusion himself.

Is a eunuch the same as a transgender person? Not necessarily, but the eunuch in the Bible represents a different understanding of what comprises gender in the real world. Today, we tend to think of gender only in terms of men and women without understanding the many differences that comprise humankind: transgender, intersex and other gender non-conforming identities are just a few of these manifestations. The story of the Ethiopian eunuch teaches us that all should be welcome as believers.

At the heart of all of this is the tradition of welcoming the stranger. However, these early Christians did not just welcome strangers in a superficial and transitory way, they incorporated people who were very different from them into the life of their community — that's what baptism meant for them. They must have felt the same as we do when we are confronted with strangers — with people who do not look like us, who do not act like us, who have different values from ours. However, they knew that opening up to the stranger is really an opening up to God, allowing God's vision, God's will, and God's presence in through the defensive walls of our hearts and souls.

#### C. Small Group Discussion

- Did this Biblical discussion about eunuchs challenge you in any way?
- Were you familiar — and comfortable — with the concept of eunuchs and their role in the society of Jesus' time?
- Why or why not? How or how not?
- Did it offer any fresh insights into the diversity that Jesus was looking for in the Christian Church?
- What about Jesus' expansion of the definition of family? How does that "land" on you?

Move back into the full group and invite anyone to share reflections.

#### D. As leader, end this session by reading the following:

Opening to God in the stranger is very much at the heart of this curriculum. Welcoming LGBT individuals has been a strength of many of our Christian communities. Incorporating LGBT individuals, electing them to positions of leadership, ordaining them, has been an evolution in many of our Christian communities. Many have been blessed with the presence of LGBT families in their midst. Next time we will take a look at how we, as individuals and as parishes and congregations, can fully incorporate LGBT families into our lives and the lives of our primary communities. We will also explore what we can do to make our state and this nation welcoming, inclusive, and nurturing places for our LGBT families.

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

# Session 3: Transforming the Status Quo

<b>GOALS</b>	To facilitate individual and group reflection with the expectation that participants will commit to concrete actions in the personal, congregational, and political arenas to create a loving place in which our LGBT families can thrive.
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Paper and pens for participants, reflection questions (below), poster paper and marker
<b>TIME</b>	1.5 Hours <i>Please refer to the Session Structure page.</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Depending on the number of participants in your program, you may decide to divide into smaller groups for the following exercises. We suggest allowing participants to reflect individually on these questions and encouraging them to write down their responses before returning to the large group or smaller groups to share their reflections. Make sure that everyone knows that they need only share as they are comfortable and that their sharing with the larger group will be held in confidence if they ask this of the group.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Invite participants to spend a few minutes individually reflecting and then writing on the following: Turn the clock back a few years and imagine that you are a transgender teenager — maybe you are out to others, maybe it is your innermost secret — and that you are participating in this congregation's confirmation preparation program. What changes are necessary so that the confirmation preparation program can assist you as you become the beautiful, healthy, beloved person whom God created?
2. In this next exercise, we will build on what we worked on in the first two sessions of this program. We have listened and learned. We have prayed and we have supported one another in prayer. Now we wish to transform our lives, our congregation, our world, to create a loving place in which our LGBT families can thrive. You will be asked to reflect silently on several questions, to write down your responses, and to share (as you are comfortable) with a small group or with everyone present. Then we will challenge one another to commit to working for change — change in our own lives, change in the life of this congregation, and change in our world.

## MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

1. Where am I in my own journey with my sexuality and gender identity?
2. Do I have the support I need for my journey — friends, spiritual community?
3. What have I taught, directly or indirectly, to my own children about LGBT families?
4. How do I accept the sexual orientation and gender identities of other people?
5. Do I integrate respect for LGBT families into my speech?
6. Do I count LGBT people and their loved ones among my family's acquaintances and friends?
7. What are some ways I can practice and demonstrate my solidarity with LGBT families?

## OUR JOURNEY AS A CONGREGATION

1. Has our congregation adopted any official stance with regard to LGBT people and their families?
2. How do LGBT families know they are welcome in our community and in our place of worship?
3. Have we had opportunities recently for education, reflection, prayer and Bible study around issues of sexuality and gender?
4. How would we assess the attitudes of our congregational leadership towards LGBT people and their families?
5. Are LGBT people and family members in positions of leadership and ministry within our congregation?
6. Do our sermons, homilies, and rituals celebrate the lives of LGBT people and their families? Do our educational materials, photos, etc. show LGBT people?
7. Are the children of LGBT families respected and included in our educational programs? Are the realities of their lives reflected in curricular materials?
8. Does our congregation support LGBT-friendly organizations? Do we give financial, moral, and in-kind support? Are our congregational facilities available to LGBT-supportive projects and groups?
9. Are our membership processes, forms, etc., welcoming and reflective of the realities of LGBT families?
10. What can we do to enhance the incorporation of LGBT families in this congregation?

## PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION

### Session 3 (continued)

#### OUR JOURNEY IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

1. Is there an area of concern for LGBT families at the local/state/national level that we could work on as a congregation?
2. How will we go about choosing to work on this area of concern?
3. How will we create support and accountability from our congregation in this matter?

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

Ask participants to brainstorm different ideas of what to do next. Write the ideas on poster paper.

After reflecting on the questions above, what might be next for your congregation as it continues on the journey of being inclusive to all LGBT people and families?

## PART 3 FOLLOW-UP

### Striving for Inclusivity Within, Among, and Beyond

Many people in congregations want to be supportive of LGBT families but aren't sure how. This section builds on your work in the Transforming the Status Quo session—your journey of transforming your personal selves, your congregation, and your world. This resource includes concrete steps that individuals and congregations can take to become true allies of LGBT families within our selves, among the community of your congregation, and beyond the walls of your church. These suggestions probably include many of the ways to work for change that your group already identified, and perhaps includes some that didn't come up.

#### DEEPENING ONE'S OWN UNDERSTANDING OF LGBT FAMILIES AND THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEM.

Most of us did not talk about LGBT people or issues while we were growing up. Some of us never used the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual” or “transgender” until adulthood, and some still haven't. For many of us, these terms had very negative connotations. The first step in becoming an ally to LGBT people is to unpack what we've learned and to examine our own feelings and beliefs. Self-reflection is the foundation to opening hearts and minds.

- Examine your own preconceptions about what makes a family. Think about what you've learned— and haven't learned—about LGBT people.
- Ask questions, don't make assumptions. For example, you could ask the parents or child what language they use to describe their relationships, e.g., two dads might be “daddy” and “papa.”
- Educate yourself. Read books about LGBT families. Abigail Garner's *Families Like Mine* is a great start. For more options, visit COLAGE, Family Equality Council, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources websites for LGBT family-friendly book lists. Explore the websites of LGBT family organizations and sign up to receive their e-newsletters.
- Learn to recognize and challenge heterosexual privilege and homophobia. Where are LGBT families not included? In photos, stories, sermons, educational materials.
- Remember that you don't need to know everything about LGBT people or issues to be an ally. Jump in and get started while continuing your personal journey.

#### STRENGTHENING YOUR CONGREGATION'S COMMITMENT TO LGBT INCLUSIVITY

The next step in the journey towards inclusivity is to explicitly express your congregation's commitment to LGBT people and help members of LGBT families feel fully welcome in every aspect of the church community.

- If you are already an officially recognized Welcoming congregation, include your Welcoming Statement on your congregation's website and in your bulletins. If you are not, see *Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit* ([www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org)) for more information on how to do a Welcoming Process in your congregation.

**Example:** “We, the members of First United Lutheran Church, as a community of disciples affirm with the apostle Paul, that in Christ, ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female’ (Galatians 3:28). We embrace everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, economic status, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, or race.”

— First United Lutheran Church, Dallas, TX

- Visually display your support. Display a rainbow flag on your church's sign or place rainbow stickers on name tags that all members wear. (See the “Glossary of Terms” section for an explanation of the significance of the rainbow flag.)

*“When I saw the rainbow flag on the church sign, I knew my family would be accepted.” — Julia, age 10, Virginia*

- Include outreach literature from local LGBT organizations in your literature area.
- Invite full participation of LGBT family members—in worship, in religious education, on committees, etc.
- Use language that is inclusive of diverse family structures in all communications. Language has the power to include or exclude. Use inclusive language in verbal communications as well as on forms, letters, and documents. For example, use “partners” rather than “spouses” and “parents or guardians” rather than “mothers and fathers.”

*It was disheartening when a letter addressed ‘Dear Moms and Dads’ came home with my son from church. I felt like our family was invisible.” — Laura, St. Paul, MN*

- Include events and issues relevant to LGBT families in worship. An example might include a worship service on celebrating all kinds of families.

## PART 3 FOLLOW-UP (continued)

Provide adult education on LGBT topics. Offer an “LGBT 101” workshop, invite a guest speaker, read and discuss a book, host a film screening and discussion. See [www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org) for resources.

Work to make your children’s religious education program inclusive for children with LGBT parents. Educate the religious education teachers and volunteers to be mindful of various family structures and to use inclusive language and materials. Review the curriculum to ensure inclusivity. Avoid materials that only portray families as having a mother and father. Avoid language that assumes all students have a mother and a father, such as, “Bring this home to your mom and dad.” Be aware of diverse family structures when assigning family related projects (family tree or mother’s day/father’s day). Consider implementing aMaze’s Families All Matter Book Project ([www.amazeworks.org](http://www.amazeworks.org)), a curriculum that teaches children about diversity through stories about families.

Include LGBT family-inclusive books in the congregation’s library/bookshelf. (Visit COLAGE, Family Equality Council, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Institute for Welcoming Resources websites for book lists).

Perform commitment ceremonies or same-sex marriage ceremonies OR consider not performing any civil marriage ceremonies until marriage equality for all is granted in your state.

*“Effective April 9, 2006 Lyndale Church and its pastor/s will no longer perform civil/religious marriages as an agent of the State of Minnesota. We will continue to perform religious marriages only, for all couples, same or opposite gender.”*

*- Lyndale United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN*

- Don’t remain silent on LGBT topics. Remember that silence communicates loudly. Avoiding LGBT issues sends the message that LGBT people and families are not acceptable, which helps perpetuate homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism.

## TAKING ACTION BEYOND THE DOORS OF YOUR CHURCH

Put your congregation’s faith into action by working for social justice in your community with and on behalf of LGBT people and families.

- Collect a special offering to donate to a local organization working for LGBT equality or provide volunteers to support their work.
- Reach out to local LGBT organizations and offer your facilities as a place for their meetings.
- Demonstrate your congregation’s support of the LGBT community by taking part in local LGBT events. It is incredibly powerful to LGBT people and families to see faith communities participating in LGBT pride parades, festivals, rallies, conferences, and lobby days.

*“My eyes filled with tears and my kids cheered when our church’s contingent marched by in the pride parade.”*

*— Carol, San Diego, CA*

- Publicly show support for local and state initiatives that advance equality for LGBT families, such as non-discrimination laws that include sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, or relationship recognition and marriage equality bills. Pass a resolution declaring your endorsement, have a representative from your congregation testify at public hearings, sign petitions, write editorials, attend rallies, and encourage your members to get involved.
- Publicly oppose any anti-LGBT initiative in your state or local community, such as propositions prohibiting LGBT parents from adopting, amendments to ban same-sex marriage, or anti-LGBT policy in local schools. Pass a resolution declaring your opposition, have a representative from your congregation testify at public hearings, sign petitions, write editorials, attend rallies, and encourage your members to get involved.

*“I was so proud when our minister spoke of being in covenant with LGBT families and feeling called to action during a statewide battle for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.”*

*— John, Milwaukee, WI*



## APPENDIX 1

# Terms Associated with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community

### Ally

Any heterosexual person who opposes heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and who actively supports LGBT individuals and causes.

### Bisexual

A person who is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of either gender. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward both sexes equally.

### Coming Out

The process by which one accepts one's own sexual orientation or gender identity. May also refer to the process by which one shares one's sexual orientation or gender identity with others. This can be a continual, lifelong process.

### Domestic Partners

Adults who are not legally married, who share resources and responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time. Legal definitions may vary among state or city ordinances, corporate policies and by individuals and families. In some areas, domestic partnerships extend limited protections to the couple, but this varies widely from place to place.

### Family

"Two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time. The family is that climate that one comes home to; and it is that network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, or adoption or marriage."

Source: American Home Economics Association

### Gay

A man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other men. This term can also be used to apply to lesbians and bisexuals, and on some occasions, is used as an umbrella term for all LGBT people.

### Gender Binary

The belief that there are only two genders, male and female, and that they are fixed at birth according to physical characteristics.

### Gender Identity

An individual's own sense of being male or female. One's gender identity is not always congruent with one's biological gender. Research indicates that gender identity develops some time between birth and 3 years of age. A person's gender identity is separate from his/her sexual orientation.

### Heteronormativity

The practices, systems and institutionalization of heterosexuality as the norm. See heterosexism.

### Heterosexual

A person whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to persons of the opposite sex. Also called *straight*.

### Heterosexual Privilege

The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives that are systematically denied to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons simply because of their sexual orientation. This privilege is often unrecognized.

### Heterosexism

The societal assumption that all people are heterosexual. Systems and ways of thinking that reinforce a belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating the lives and relationships of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. Heteronormativity means the practices, systems and institutionalization of heterosexuality as the norm.

### Homophobia

Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, or people perceived to be any of the above. Consists of three separate components: sexism, xenophobia and erotophobia. Currently, the word is often used in relation to issues of discrimination in regards to sexual orientation and gender identity. Other related terms that may be appropriate in specific cases: *biphobia* and *transphobia*.

### Homosexual

A term to avoid. A term coined in 1869 by an early psychiatrist, who used it to describe a person who has 'an other than normal sexual urge which renders them physically and psychically incapable.' Since the word was originally used to describe a pathology, most gays and lesbians do not like this term used to define them.

### Intersex

Generally applied to people born with ambiguous genitalia (an outdated term would be *hermaphrodite*). This, however, is an incomplete definition; the subject is much broader than that. Many, including intersex persons, believe that intersex is a medical rather than gender identity issue and should not be included under the transgender umbrella. In the past, most intersex individuals have had surgery soon after birth in an attempt to give them an "identifiable" gender. Such "normalization" surgeries are imposed on these children with little understanding of the future impacts.

## APPENDIX 1 TERMS (continued)

### LGBT (also GLBT)

The acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender," used to describe an entire community or an individual. Sometimes the acronym is expanded to a variation of LGBTQQIA to include queer, questioning, intersex, and ally people.

### Lesbian

A woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other women.

### Lifestyle

A term to avoid. An inaccurate term used to describe the lives of LGBT people with a negative implication. Just as there is no one heterosexual lifestyle, there is no one LGBT lifestyle. The lives of LGBT people are as varied and diverse as the lives of heterosexuals.

### National Coming Out Day

An internationally observed civil awareness day for coming out and discussion about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. It is observed on October 11<sup>th</sup> every year to commemorate the 1987 March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights (the 1987 March was not inclusive of the bisexual and transgender communities). Many studies show that people who personally know LGBT individuals are more likely to accept and support equal civil rights for LGBT people. National Coming Out Day encourages all people to be honest about their own sexual orientation and gender identity in order to have the positive dialogue needed to erase bigotry, misunderstandings, and stereotypes.

### Out of the Closet/Being Out

Means that one states openly that one is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, in contrast to 'staying in the closet' by hiding or denying one's sexual orientation or gender identity either from oneself or from others.

### Pink Triangle

The pink triangle was used by the Nazis to identify male prisoners in concentration camps who were sent there because of their homosexuality. Just as Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David, homosexuals were forced to wear pink triangles. In the 1970s, the inverted pink triangle was reclaimed and has become an international symbol of gay pride and the gay rights movement.

### Pride Celebrations

Often held in late June every year to celebrate the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The Stonewall Riots were a series of riots and demonstrations in New York City that began on June 27, 1969, to protest the frequent police raids on gay bars. The Stonewall Riots were the defining event that marked the beginning of the LGBT rights movement.

Pride celebrations often include a parade and/or festival. The purposes of these events include: 1) To educate about the diversity, issues and goals of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens and neighbors. 2) To provide a forum for celebration of the history and accomplishments of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. 3) To provide an opportunity for networking and outreach by the many businesses, services, religious communities and community organizations that welcome and serve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, their families and friends.

### Queer

Traditionally a pejorative term that has been reclaimed by some LGBT people to describe themselves or the LGBT community. Some people prefer *queer* because they feel it is an all-encompassing term that includes everyone, including those who may not neatly fit into the L, G, B, or T categories. Some LGBT individuals dislike this word and view it as pejorative.

### Rainbow Flag

A symbol of LGBT pride and community. The colors represent the diversity within the LGBT community. Many allies use the rainbow flag as an outward symbol of support.

### Sexual Preference

A term to avoid as it implies that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a choice and therefore "curable." The preferred term is *sexual orientation*.

### Sexual Orientation

The orientation within human beings, which leads them to be romantically, emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex, same sex, or both. One's sexual orientation may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual. This term is preferred over *sexual preference* which implies that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a choice and therefore "curable."

### Transgender

A broad umbrella term for persons who have a self-image or gender identity not traditionally associated with their biological gender. Some transgender persons change their anatomy to be more congruent with their self-perception, while others do not. There is no absolute correlation between sexual orientation and transgender issues. A transgender person may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

## APPENDIX 2

# Resources, Resources, Resources...

If specific questions arise, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources maintains a wealth of information on its website to help you. You will find extensive bibliographic listings on a number of LGBT-related issues:

### Anti-LGBT & "Ex-Gay"

[www.WelcomingResources.org/antilgbt.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/antilgbt.xml)

### Biblical Interpretation

[www.WelcomingResources.org/bible.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/bible.xml)

### Bisexuality

[www.WelcomingResources.org/bisexuality.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/bisexuality.xml)

### Coming Out

[www.WelcomingResources.org/comingout.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/comingout.xml)

### Denominational Policies

[www.WelcomingResources.org/policies.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/policies.xml)

### Education

[www.WelcomingResources.org/education.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/education.xml)

### Families & Children

[www.WelcomingResources.org/families.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/families.xml)

### How to Become a Welcoming Church

[www.WelcomingResources.org/welcoming.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/welcoming.xml)

### Interlocking Oppressions

[www.WelcomingResources.org/interlocking.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/interlocking.xml)

### Marriage Equality

[www.WelcomingResources.org/marriage.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/marriage.xml)

### Medicine & Psychology

[www.WelcomingResources.org/medpsych.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/medpsych.xml)

### Multi-Faith

[www.WelcomingResources.org/interfaith.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/interfaith.xml)

### Ordination

[www.WelcomingResources.org/ordination.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/ordination.xml)

### Pastoral Care

[www.WelcomingResources.org/pastoral.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/pastoral.xml)

### Sexuality and Spirituality

[www.WelcomingResources.org/spirituality.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/spirituality.xml)

### Spanish Language Resources

[www.WelcomingResources.org/espanol.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/espanol.xml)

### Theology

[www.WelcomingResources.org/theology.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/theology.xml)

### Transgender

[www.WelcomingResources.org/transgender.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/transgender.xml)

### Worship & Arts

[www.WelcomingResources.org/worship.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/worship.xml)

### Youth & Young Adults

[www.WelcomingResources.org/youth.xml](http://www.WelcomingResources.org/youth.xml)

In particular, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources has produced a number of resources that you might find helpful (and more are in the pipeline all the time!):

### *Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit*

A step-by-step guide to help your congregation become a community that openly welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Available as a free download from [www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org).

### *A Place in God's Heart, A Place at Christ's Table*

Worship resources — prayers, responsive readings, liturgies, and music — for the Welcoming Church Movement. Available as a free download from [www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org).

### *transACTION: A Transgender Curriculum for Churches and Religious Institutions*

A three-session curriculum designed to help congregations become aware and welcoming of transgender members from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources

You can find details about and learn how to obtain each of these at [www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org)

## APPENDIX 2 RESOURCES (continued)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Aarons, Leroy, **Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son**, [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995; 288 pp., ISBN 0062511238].

Bobby Griffith was an all-American boy... and he was gay. Faced with an irresolvable conflict - for both his family and his religion taught him that being gay was "wrong" - Bobby chose to take his own life. *Prayers for Bobby*, nominated for a 1996 Lambda Literary Award, is the story of the emotional journey that led Bobby to this tragic conclusion. But it is also the story of Bobby's mother, a fearful churchgoer who first prayed that her son would be "healed," then anguished over his suicide, and ultimately transformed herself into a national crusader for gay and lesbian youth. As told through Bobby's poignant journal entries and his mother's reminiscences, *Prayers for Bobby* is at once a moving personal story, a true profile in courage, and a call to arms to parents everywhere.

Bernstein, Robert, **Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together**, [New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003; 208 pp., ISBN 1-56025-452-1].

*Straight Parents, Gay Children* is Robert Bernstein's moving account of how he came to terms with his daughter's homosexuality and how the experience has enriched his life. Bernstein - winner of the 1996 Award for Best Scholarship on the Subject of Intolerance, awarded by the Gustaves Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in North America - discusses the myths surrounding homosexuality, accepting the news, parents who speak out, public figures who have gay children, and more. *Straight Parents, Gay Children* is a survival guide for all parents who wish to help their gay children cope with the inevitable cruelty from which they cannot hide. This revised and updated edition includes an introduction by Robert MacNeil of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions and a foreword by Betty DeGeneres.

Boenke, Mary, editor, **Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgender Loved Ones**, 2nd edition, [New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2003; 192 pp., ISBN 0615123074].

This new edition features forty authors who share their personal journeys from the initial shock or resistance when first learning their loved ones (or they, themselves) were struggling with gender problems, through the various feelings, to final acceptance. The first of its kind, *Trans Forming Families* has become a best seller among transgender persons and their allies. Arlene Ishtar Lev, noted

trans-therapist, has written a lucid Foreword and Jessica Xavier's Introduction documents the constant public interest in trans-family relationships. Boenke is the mother of an adult MTF son, chair of P-FLAG's Transgender Network, a trans activist, and a retired psychotherapist.

Burrill, Melany, **All God's Children: Teaching Children About Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity**, [Fort Wayne, IN: LifeQuest, 2009; 20 pp., ISBN 1-893270-48-0].

*All God's Children* is an essential guide to open and caring conversations with young children about gender and sexual orientation. You'll find that this small, user-friendly book addresses your concerns, your questions, and your search for just the right words; it also suggests ideas for sermons and classroom activities. As you read, you'll learn to model openness, respect, and the affirming belief that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender difference, is a beloved child of God. Anyone who has a loving relationship with young children—parents, family, friends, pastors, Sunday School teachers—will benefit from reading and discussing *All God's Children*.

Cook, Ann Thompson, **And God Loves Each One: A Resource for Dialogue About Sexual Orientation**, [Washington, DC: Dumbarton United Methodist Church/Reconciling Ministries Network, 2003; 20 pp.].

*And God Loves Each One* is more than just a book; it's a catalyst for a new dialogue about sexual orientation in churches and communities. It offers a path for people who wonder about sexual orientation, who wonder about the religious view that it's wrong to be gay. It's about lighting a spark of learning in your church and community. It's about growing and bringing gay and straight people together—united by their profound faith that God indeed loves each one. Read it and start a dialogue. Share it, give it away, and tell your own story. Make *And God Loves Each One* the basis for making a difference in your church and community! Available in Spanish.

Cook, Ann Thompson, **Made In God's Image: A Resource for Dialogue About the Church and Gender Differences**, [Washington, DC: Dumbarton United Methodist Church/Reconciling Ministries Network, 2003; 24 pp.].

Ann Thompson Cook communicates a gently assertive expectation that we as Christians need to get up to speed on something too rarely discussed but very important for the life of the church and its ministries. Combining valuable information, personal sharing,

## APPENDIX 2 RESOURCES (continued)

and resources, this booklet is a perfect starting place for any congregation, family, or individual seeking to better understand transgender issues and to provide a supportive environment for all of God's children.

Curoe, Carol, and Robert Curoe, editors, **Are There Closets in Heaven?: A Catholic Father and Lesbian Daughter Share Their Story**, [Minneapolis, MN: Syren Book Company, 2007; 196 pp., ISBN 978-0-929636-79-5].

It's always difficult for a child to tell her parents she is gay, regardless of how liberal or conservative her family might be. When the daughter is part of a devout Catholic family living in a small rural community, the parent-child relationship is exposed to even greater risk. *Are There Closets in Heaven?* is a revealing first-person dialogue between a lesbian daughter, who had always dutifully tried to please her parents, and her Catholic father, an eighty-one-year-old farmer from Iowa. Through their letters and reflections, we see how courage and love made it possible for Bob and Carol Curoe to navigate the twists and turns of such a dramatic shift in their lives. This highly personal and often emotional exchange offers a gift of hope and inspiration to families who struggle with learning their child is not what they expected — regardless of what that surprise might be. *Are There Closets in Heaven?* lets us experience the real lives behind debates taking place in today's media on same-sex marriage, constitutional amendments, gays and lesbians raising children, and religion.

Kaeser, Gigi, photos, and Peggy Gillespie, editor, **Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents and Their Families**, [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999; 208 pp., ISBN 1558491619].

This handsome volume combines interviews and photographs to document the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents and their children. It allows all of the family members to speak candidly about their lives, their relationships, and the ways in which they have dealt with the pressures of homophobia. Included in the book are people from a diverse array of racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, representing a wide range of family structures. Together, they provide clear evidence that family roles and responsibilities need not be based on gender, and that children thrive in an atmosphere in which understanding, respect, and love transcend the prejudices of the day.

Osterman, Mary Jo, editor, **Claiming the Promise: An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study Resource on Homosexuality**, [Chicago: UMC Reconciling Congregation Program, 1998; 100 pp.].

A 7-session Bible study curriculum on homosexuality; discusses biblical authority, interpretation, "gracious hospitality", "Gift-ed sexuality," spirituality, right relationships, ethics and discipleship.

Rizzo, Cynthia, Jo Schneiderman, Lisa Schweig, Jan Shafer and Judith Stein, **All The Ways Home: Parenting and Children in the Lesbian and Gay Communities — A Collection of Short Fiction**, [Norwich: New Victoria Publishers, 1995; 212 pp., ISBN 0934678650].

A collection of stories written for and by lesbian and gay parents exploring what it means to be a parent in the queer community.

Weston, Kath, **Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship**, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991; 261 pp., ISBN 0231072899].

Analysis of the history, sociology, and politics of gays, lesbians, and their families.

### FILMS

**For the Bible Tells Me So** by Daniel Karlake, [First Run Features, DVD, 97 minutes].

Can the love between two people ever be an abomination? Is the chasm separating gays and lesbians and Christianity too wide to cross? Is the Bible an excuse to hate? Winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Seattle International Film Festival, Dan Karlake's provocative, entertaining documentary brilliantly reconciles homosexuality and Biblical scripture, and in the process reveals that Church-sanctioned anti-gay bias is based almost solely upon a significant (and often malicious) misinterpretation of the Bible. As the film notes, most Christians live their lives today without feeling obliged to kill anyone who works on the Sabbath or eats shrimp (as a literal reading of scripture dictates).

Through the experiences of five very normal, very Christian, very American families — including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson — we discover how insightful people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Reverend Jimmy Creech, *For the Bible Tells Me So* offers healing, clarity and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity.

## APPENDIX 2 RESOURCES (continued)

**Transgender Voices and the Church**, [Lutherans Concerned/North America, DVD, 22 minutes].

An educational introduction to the Transgender Community. The video contains basic transgender information and definitions provided by Meral Crane, a licensed clinical counselor. She is followed by a panel of four transgender participants who share stories of self-discovery and of the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges in their lives. The film is intended for use by small groups or Sunday School classes as a way of increasing understanding and respect for the transgender persons in our churches and communities. This film is included in the *It's About Being Church* DVD available through [www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org).

### WORSHIP RESOURCES

Cherry, Kittredge, and Sherwood Zalmon, editors, **Equal Rites: Lesbian and Gay Worship, Ceremonies, and Celebrations**, [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995; 188 pp., ISBN 0664255353].

*Equal Rites* is a much-needed collection of worship services, ceremonies, and celebrations that is attuned to the unique needs of sexual minorities. The selections, written primarily by lesbians and gay men, include rites of spiritual beginnings, healing, blessings, holy communion, and pride and empowerment. Also included are funeral memorial services, seasonal and holiday rites for couples. More than a collection, *Equal Rites* can also serve as a reference book for creating unique and meaningful worship services that address significant aspects of lesbian and gay spirituality.

Duncan, Geoffrey, **Courage to Love: Liturgies for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community**, [Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002; 384 pp., ISBN 082981468X].

A collection of worship and liturgical resources inclusive of and sensitive to the needs of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender persons for use by clergy and lay leaders. Includes liturgies for the Eucharist and celebrations such as marriage vows.

Turney, Kelly, **Shaping Sanctuary: Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church**, [Chicago: Welcoming Church Movement, 2000; 424 pp., ISBN 0970156804].

A collection of justice-oriented worship resources including essays, sermons, liturgies and hymns gathered from ten denominations. A diversity of voices and a study guide make this an effective tool for those exploring a theology that affirms the diversity of human sexuality and the worship implications of God's incarnation in the world.



[www.WelcomingResources.org](http://www.WelcomingResources.org)