

Chapter 1 : Religion Is A Queer Thing:

Religion Is a Queer Thing: A Guide to the Christian Faith for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Persons
Paperback - September 1,

Here are a few things to say to them to remind them of some basic Christian ideas that they may have forgotten in the heat of their venomous mouth foaming outbursts. Before we begin, as not to judge ALL fundamentalists with the same brush, there is a particular distinction we will make from these particular fundamentalists and the average fun loving fundamentalist. He really just loves everyone, no matter who they are—especially the rejected and outcasts of society, That would be us. Well Jesus never said a single word about gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered. It seems the religious self-righteous Pharisee was put at the end of the line. That means that a gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender person who believes in Christ will be saved because the Scripture tells us this is true. We are saved because we believe, regardless of our sexuality. Yes He did create Adam and Eve. But He did create Steve—and Yvette as well—afterwards. And all of these people He created—He loves. Fundamentalists use this "catch phrase" to sum up why gay marriages should be banned, saying it undermines the family. But if they are really concerned with the family, they should instead petition the government to make laws banning divorce and remarrying, both sins of adultery. And those in 2nd or 3rd marriages should be excommunicated from the church since they are living a life of sin, as well as fired from teaching or leadership positions since they would be bad role models. After all, adultery is breaking one of the 10 commandments, a direct commandment from God. Why does it seem different now? God loves the sinner, but hates the sin. Many fundamentalists will say the same thing about themselves. This is one of the most arrogant and self-righteous statements to justify prejudice I have ever heard. The implication is 1 that they are not sinners, and 2, that they are so noble and humble that even they are able to love us despite OUR imperfection. For many GLBT people And if they do, their only goal is to change us. We are a project to them. A challenge to be conquered. There is no real love for us. The same thing for the homeless, prostitutes, crooks, etc. All the people Jesus cares about Well my response is I love the Christian Fundamentalist. I just hate THEIR SIN of arrogance, nastiness, self-righteousness, lack of love, judging and condemning us, calling us names, sending us to hell, spreading lies about us, making our lives unbearable, acting like they are God, telling us that God hates us, blocking us from their churches Jesus loves us more than these nervous folks ever will. Gay Sex is against nature. For us who are gay, having sex with the opposite sex would be unnatural. Homosexuality is learned behavior. Since there has never been a school for gay behavior, how did we learn to be gay? Straight friends and family? Someone taught them to find the opposite sex attractive? Gays Can Be Changed. Asking us to be attracted to the opposite sex is the same as asking a straight guy to give up women for other men. Why does this situation seem impossible when it is placed on the other foot? Many of us have prayed, cried, and repented a million times, yet we still have not been changed. Because there is nothing wrong with us. And those who have changed? If someone says they have changed, I will not take that away from them. Of course people who make this statement are straight people who are able to date, be in relationships, marry, have someone to talk to, share with, cuddle with every night and plan a future. They say we are never to love or be loved, never to lust, never to have sex, never to marry and be content with that. They deny marriage to us Many say we should avoid homosexuality like lying or stealing, but I will say that even those who lie and steal are able to love someone. They also compare homosexual behavior to heterosexual lust, both sins to be avoided, but the difference is For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Saying all gays go after young boys is the same as saying all straight men go after young girls. Though judging from a Prime-Time TV show that regularly catches and exposes older men who go after underage teens Gay men would like to meet other gay men. Perhaps there is a gene in straight men which makes them think everyone finds them attractive. Gang violence, drug trafficking, spousal abuse, rape, corporate scandals, gun shootings, mugging, car jacking AND child abuse—are all done by heterosexual men! I guess that means heterosexuality is inherently evil! Gays live a wild promiscuous life. Yes, there are many gay men who live a wild sex crazed

life. But there is a huge portion of the straight population who regularly indulge in sex hookups, one-night stands, and sex for pay, all trying to have a good time and maybe find their soul-mates. And yes, there are even Christians who fall into this. Of course, I have heard rumors that 60 something percent of married people cheat on their spouses Is it just me? Well I guess then, that means that all straight porn is a correct depiction of the heterosexual life also. Just as there are wild straight men and women running around looking to hook up, there are also boring, quiet gay monogamous couples who stay at home, watch TV and read, like everyone elseâ€”oh and by the wayâ€”they love the Lord and go to church every Sunday and even sing in the choir. Gays go out and recruit young people. Gay people do not go out to recruit young people. Gay people go out to try to meet other gay people. We do not go to schools with brochures advocating the advantages of gay life. By the way, the average gay person discovers they are gay on their own, without the help of anyone else. Then tell me what the sin was of those who perished in the World Trade Center? What about the victims of the Holocaust? Or the Asian Tsunami? How about people who die of heart attacks? What about cancer victims? Stop thinking like a 5 year old. Being Gay is a Choice. If some straight people really believe that sexuality is a choice, then that means they believe every person is bisexual has the capacity to go either way and if they think we have a choice, then that means there was a time in their own lives when they themselves had to decide if they wanted to be straight or gay. So you do agree then that God made YOU bisexual, yes? And you made a choice to be straight Because that is what you are basically saying when you say that "we chose to be gay". Why would we have the ability to choose to be gay Where was I when all the kids at school were trying to decide whether to be gay or straight? Were there discussions and forums with adults helping to lead us to the better decision? If it was a choice, why are there so many tormented teens who commit suicide? They could just have easily chosen to switch rather than kill themselves. And if it were a choiceâ€”why would anyone choose a lifestyle that causes divisions and harassment with friends, family and society? Fundamentalists like to say we have a choice because it makes us responsible for making ourselves gay. And it seems even the Father does not judge us. In condemning us, they are putting themselves in the position of Godâ€”and we know what Jesus said about these kinds of people. The only real choice we do make, is to accept the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and to rest in His eternal love. Jesus came not to judge us, but to save us.

Chapter 2 : Religion - Wikipedia

Religion Is A Queer Thing A blog of Cambridge Welcoming Ministries, an open and affirming, progressive, United Methodist faith community dedicated to proclaiming the Good News of God's love with all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight persons.

September 2, Your relationship with religion is completely up to you! The relationship between religion and the LGBTQ community is a complicated one, and everyone experiences it differently. It all depends on how you feel, and what you choose. However, within nearly every religious denomination there are now supportive groups that have adopted different interpretations about LGBTQ people. Am I going to hell if I come out as bisexual or a lesbian? My family is so conservative and very religious. It takes a lot of courage to reach out for answers. Just because you might like girls does not mean you are going to hell. In fact, there are many practicing Catholics who are gay, lesbian, etc. These people are proof that you can be religious and a lesbian, or bisexual. There are many religious leaders who spread a message of love and acceptance of ALL people. Have you ever spoken with someone from the Catholic Church who is accepting of different sexual orientations? It could help you start a conversation with a trusted adult in your faith, or even a parent or friend. Finally, remember that The Trevor Project is always here for you. We are here for you! Many parents go through their own process when their child comes out, and unfortunately some react less favorably than others. Above all, the most important thing is to stay safe, even if that means holding off on coming out. The only person who can make that decision is you, and no one else. Religious communities can sometimes be considered less accepting of the LGBTQ community, but faith may also give you hope and a sense of community. Have you explored whether or not your religion has any supportive groups, maybe online or nearby? There are several resources at the end of this section that might be useful as you navigate how your religion and your identity interact. You might want to check out our social networking site, TrevorSpace www.trevorproject.org. It could be helpful to take a look at different types of sexual orientations, like asexual, bisexual, and bi-romantic. Even if you decide none of these labels suit you, you may gain a better understanding of your feelings. Do you know anyone who would be open to having a conversation about gender identity or sexual orientation? If you every need immediate support, know that the Trevor Lifeline is just a phone call away at 1-877-842-2263. You are not alone in facing this challenge and figuring out what to do can be really tough. As you consider whether or not to come out, the most important thing is for you to be safe and comfortable with your decision. There are benefits and risks to coming out, and each person has to weigh the pros and cons for themselves. However, there are also challenges you need to consider. How do you think they might react if you told them you were gay? Would you be safe, or would you be afraid that they might kick you out of the house? As you might already know, various faiths and congregations have different views on the LGBT community. In fact, it is completely normal and natural. There are many, many gay people who are religious and continue to attend religious services. It is the most comprehensive and up-to-date website devoted to providing religious and faith based resources for the LGBTQ community. Finally, it can really help to reach out to someone you trust a close friend, parent, teacher or school counselor and talk through the worries you have. The Trevor Project is also always here for you, through TrevorChat online and the Trevor Lifeline over the phone, available at all day, every day.

Chapter 3 : 10 facts about religion in America | Pew Research Center

Many will no doubt claim that a book like Religion Is a Queer Thing is unnecessary. Christianity is Christianity, they will argue; there is only one version of it and it applies to all. Christianity has nothing to do with race, sexuality, class, or bodily differences. Christianity addresses us in.

Yet, we must not jump too quickly to this conclusion. Contrary to what we might assume, this text is not about Jesus at all. So why, in the world, on Christ the King Sunday, the last day of the liturgical season, the day when we are supposed to be celebrating the Christ would we be reading about John the Baptist? All great epics need sidekicks after all, you know those characters who act accompany heroes on their journeys, offering them assistance and support. Which sidekicks do you remember? He, like Jesus, was divinely conceived, a child of a woman who had long ceased menstruating. Like Jesus, he too preached an edgy message, calling people out of the comfort of their homes to the margins of society that they might seek salvation. He is often called the forerunner to the Christ, the one who points to Jesus, who prepares the way. John functions as a sidekick playing against the hero, Jesus, in order to spotlight the true Messiah, the real Christ. Clothed in a camel hair cloak and a connoisseur of locusts, he even had his own sidekick costume and quirky characteristics. John is the one who leads to salvation through the forgiveness of sins, not Jesus. Perhaps the problem lies in our overly simplistic understanding of sidekicks as nothing more than lesser heroes. In the film, Sky High, sidekicks take on a new role moving out from the shadow of heroes into their own light. The story follows a group of teenagers at Sky High, the first and only high school for kids with super-human powers, going through crime-fighting puberty. At Sky High, the student body throws flames with their footballs, studies Villainy with their Chemistry and is divided into "Heroes" and "Sidekicks" instead of jocks and geeks. It is this division between heroes and sidekicks that fuels the plot and provides a larger metaphor for our own human experience of being in or being out. Each year new students to Sky High are subjected to an entrance exam administered by Coach Boomer during which they must demonstrate their super-powers. Those with cool powers such as super-strength, super-speed, or super-intelligence are made heroes, while those with lesser skills such as morphing into a guinea pig or glowing are labeled sidekicks. Now known simply as Mr. Boy, he teaches the art of assisting the hero. The classic rivalry between the cool kids and the nerds gets played out in the fantasy world of superheroes and sidekicks. The movie follows Will Stronghold, son of the legendary Commander and Jetstream. As the story progresses, however, it is Will and his fringe friends who end up saving the day. It belongs to them. I mean, hero support. A little cheesy, a little predictable, perhaps, but a helpful re-imagining of what it means to be a hero. Minor characters play major roles, both in fiction and in real life. Who are we to judge the worth or value of others? We never know who is destined for greatness. We do not know the play. We do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V. We do not know who are the major and who the minor characters. The playing it well is what matters infinitely. You see, it is not really the part we are given, but how we play it that matters. The world gives us various scripts to play based on who we are, what we do, or who we love. Our parts are cast based on race, class, gender, age and ability, labeling us as majors and minors, sidekicks and heroes. Yet, the scripts of the world are meaningless in the end. How we are labeled or perceived by the world makes no difference. What matters most is that we are faithful to the script of the Good News of Jesus Christ that proclaims love over hate, hope over despair, life over death. This is the script we are called to follow—the script of love, peace, justice, mercy, hope and compassion—and in this script there are no boundaries on who gets to play which part, for all the parts matter. We have the opportunities each and every day to make way for the Christ among us, just like John. When we choose actions of love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and hope, we subvert the dominant scripts of the world and prepare the way of the Christ and the Commonwealth.

Chapter 4 : LGBTQ + Religion – The Trevor Project

About Religion is a Queer Thing. Since the mids, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Christians have found confidence in their ability to define their own experience and think theologically about it.

Religio Religion from O. One possible interpretation traced to Cicero , connects lego read, i. The definition of religio by Cicero is cultum deorum, "the proper performance of rites in veneration of the gods. Augustine , following the interpretation given by Lactantius in Divinae institutiones, IV, The term was sparsely used in classical Greece but became more frequently used in the writings of Josephus in the first century AD. It was used in mundane contexts and could mean multiple things from respectful fear to excessive or harmfully distracting practices of others; to cultic practices. It was often contrasted with the Greek word deisidaimonia which meant too much fear. Throughout classical South Asia , the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial as well as practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between imperial law and universal or Buddha law, but these later became independent sources of power. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the terms Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and world religions first entered the English language. What is called ancient religion today, they would have only called law. There are however two general definition systems: The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the religious from the remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. That is, the basic structure of theism is essentially a distinction between a transcendent deity and all else, between the creator and his creation, between God and man. We just know that it is done, annually, weekly, daily, for some people almost hourly; and we have an enormous ethnographic literature to demonstrate it. He also emphasized the cultural reality of religion, which he defined as [â€] the entirety of the linguistic expressions, emotions and, actions and signs that refer to a supernatural being or supernatural beings. When more or less distinct patterns of behavior are built around this depth dimension in a culture, this structure constitutes religion in its historically recognizable form. Religion is the organization of life around the depth dimensions of experienceâ€”varied in form, completeness, and clarity in accordance with the envioning culture. He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies. In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* , the psychologist William James defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine". Sacred things are not, however, limited to gods or spirits. Religious beliefs Traditionally, faith , in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs. The interplay between faith and reason, and their use as perceived support for religious beliefs, have been a subject of interest to philosophers and theologians. Mythology The word myth has several meanings. A traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon; A person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence; or A metaphor for the spiritual potentiality in the human being. Religions of pre-industrial peoples, or cultures in development, are similarly called myths in the anthropology of religion. The term myth can be used pejoratively by both religious and non-religious people. There, myth is defined as a story that is important for the group whether or not it is objectively or provably true. But from a mythological outlook, whether or not the event actually occurred is unimportant. Instead, the symbolism of the death of an old life and the start of a new life is what is most significant. Religious believers may or may not accept such symbolic interpretations. Worldview Religions have sacred histories , narratives , and mythologies which may be preserved in sacred scriptures , and symbols and holy places , that aim to explain the meaning of life , the origin of life , or the Universe.

Chapter 5 : religion is a queer thing | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

Christian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered support groups, churches, individuals and those wishing to make queer people welcome in their churches, will find Religion is a Queer Thing an invaluable resource for the journey towards queer liberation.

I did not have any close relationships with gay people nor had I ever studied the issue in the Bible. I did not even know one gay Christian, that I knew of. It was from this paradigm that I formulated my opinions about the lives of gay people and made assumptions about their status with God. All that changed when I met Netto on a hiking trail. It is now ten years later and I offer ten things that I wish straight people, especially Christians, knew about gay people. This conversation often is relegated to love and hate, right and wrong, but there is a wide expanse between the two sides. And that middle group is, for the most part, silent. You are the ones to whom I am offering these insights, from experience, knowledge, study, relationship and with a genuine interest in engaging the too often silent middle. With Bible in hand and in spirit, an open mind and heart and a willingness to listen to people, I entered the conversation that often brings out the worst in people. I hope to inspire you to move and to speak up with the Jesus-voice inside you. Ten years and thousands of miles ago, I met Netto on a hiking trail. It was a time for conversation, the answering of all my stupid questions, and an opportunity to get to know my Native American, agnostic, lesbian friend. Miles translated to trust for both of us and the growing relationship challenged my cultural Evangelical stances on homosexuality. My insights include a timeline to show the long, thoughtful and prayerful process. These are ten things I have learned in ten years about the gay, lesbian and bisexual community; especially the Christian segment of that community. Being gay is not a choice. In the US, we are almost evenly divided on the question of choice: For the most part, how we answer this will dictate related views about inclusion in the church and civil rights for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Behaviors, they reason, are controllable and changeable and therefore, they conclude, sexual attraction is controllable, if not changeable. When sexual orientation is seen as a choice and a behavior, people are less likely to extend civil rights and inclusion in the church for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. This one issue is the key and it took a long time and many relationships for me to understand. What you believe either unlocks the passage to equality or it keeps the door shut and segregates. It is the premise upon which most of the insights I offer builds. There is no gene yet discovered for human sexuality, whether that be heterosexual or homosexual. Opinions formed in and out of relationships along with anecdotal evidence become the basis for each of our truths. I write and say that word a lot "it matters. I was raised in a moderately prejudiced home in the New York City area; my stepfather was horribly biased against the black community. While he was recovering from cancer surgery, he roomed with a lovely elderly black man. After six decades of bigotry, he saw this man as just another human. When puberty kicked in, they noticed the comments and feelings of their friends did not jive with their experiences. What followed was an average of another three and a half years of struggling, in confusion, for a self-acceptance of being gay. Gay people, just like heterosexual people, are attracted, at the core, to a gender at a young age. All of this is innocent and has no sexual overtones. I started to meet people in long-term, same-sex relationships that had never been romantically interested in the opposite sex, ever. Others had been married and were parents. Being married and bearing children do not mean one is straight. Some people get married before they understand that they are not heterosexual. They marry because it is expected, or they want a family. They are told they will change by getting married. Situational sex in prisons does occur. This is NOT a change in orientation; it is a sex choice for convenience. Actually get to know people. Using uninformed opinions to decide on civil matters for a class of people is careless. There are gay Christians. It took me six years amongst unchurched gay and lesbian friends until I discovered groups of gay Christians. They were there; I was just not among them. I was confident that I would not agree with the mission statement or statement of faith, but it was Jesus focused and I did agree. Feeling a definite tug, three weeks later I flew to Seattle for four days to the GCN annual conference. The experience of standing at the back of the room on the first night filled with four hundred gay Christians stunned me. The depth and richness of God and Jesus worship was unmistakable, the resonance of

the Holy Spirit flipped my theology on end; real relationships confounded my created theology. I am a list-maker, driven, likes-to-have-answers person, but seeing the Trinity in gay people made me question what I believed and why I believed it. It is scary to be in doubt and not know when black and white, right and wrong segment your world. I stood in a place few straight Christians have stood, as the only straight person amongst hundreds of gay Christians. I knew I was the one in error, not them. Reconciling my faith and beliefs with what I saw in gay believers became a God-quest in which I have risked precious things over the past ten years. I know thousands of gay Christians. My evaluation list is non-gender, non-orientation, non-any-condition specific: Does your list require a change in sexual orientation or celibacy? Humbly consider that you may be wrong. There is a link to affirming churches and online sermons at the end of this post; attend one. Gay couples do enter into long-term, committed, loving, and monogamous relationships. I had been warned by my heterosexual religious culture that gay people had erotic love, and not deep, committed, monogamous love. However, the relationships I witnessed as I engaged socially in the gay community with Netto were not distortions; I saw authentic relationships. My know-it-all, possessor-of-all-truth, gift-of-evangelism self had to struggle with a simple question: How do I tell a gay person about the possibility of a relationship with a God they cannot see, if that relationship first requires them to stop loving the person they can see? With Family Counselor, Ling As trite a thought as this seems, it tripped me up. Asking people to deny authentic, earthly love as a condition of God-love is never a condition we heterosexuals ask of ourselves. Yet, we ask it of same-sex attracted people. That is a bold statement to make, but I have done the work. I dig into the reports and check the sources. Furthermore, the test was completed before the Netherlands even allowed same-sex marriage. Be assured though that not-so-good-people with less than honorable intentions publish these facts, knowingly. Rather than discounting the genuineness of same-sex relationships, we should be impressed that they have survived without the benefits of legal contract and the support of family, society and religious communities. How many of us straight married people would have walked out on our spouses had it not been for a legal agreement, children and the positive tension placed on us by families and faith communities? Lacking all of that benefit, gay couples stay together. Get to know some gay couples and families; they are as partner- and family-focused as the rest of us. I know thousands of gay Christians but still needed to align my understanding of the Bible with what I saw in their lives. It was another simple question I asked: Why, God, did You create people that you would reject? Theologically, I knew that was not possible; no one makes a choice to be gay, and all God creates is good. Once again, the thinking I used to understand the five verses had to be flawed. I had believed what I had been too lazy to investigate for myself. I am quite strong in discussing these sections of Scripture, yet I encourage readers to go through the process I went through. I am confident enough in God to let go of the process and let Him talk to His people when they earnestly ask and listen. Until I met gay Christians and did the work myself, I was exactly like the silently judging majority of the church. I read the verses used to investigate same-sex attractions as stand-alone verses out of context and with the English translations of words. It is risky to lay down a belief and study it. The far greater risk is casting aside people in our laziness. Make sure you go after the truth; your precious children are jewels and deserve your personal investigation of these verses. Ten years of experience show that people rarely study the verses without prejudice until interaction with a gay, lesbian or bisexual person challenges their theology. When I could not reconcile the lives I could see with the words I thought I understood, then I did the work. In most churches, we give them two options: However, you gay kids, it is never appropriate for you. God has called you to a life of celibacy, forever. The sexual drive is strong. They effectively trapped this kid. With Pastor Josh The most common reactions will be either: For most faith communities, we do not offer a place of safety for gay Christians. The affirming churches offer strong gay Christian role models and the balance of the churches offer up condemnation.

Chapter 6 : 14 Responses to 14 Christian Fundamentalist Myths

Theological Trends Christianity is a queer thing The development of queer theology Elizabeth Stuart T HE STONEWALL RIOTS OF JUNE -- caused when the patrons of a.

Information and advice for gay, lesbian, bisexual and unsure under twenty-fives. I cannot believe that any god "being a good, loving, infinitely wise entity - would create gay people with the expectation that they should be unhappy, lonely and repressed, and spend their lives in denial of who they are so that they might be tolerated by others and welcomed into heaven by him. Here I broadly focus on Christianity. Though you might speak to God via prayer, nobody can actually have a two-way conversation or active debate with him. And so we have friends, family, teachers and priests telling us what they think God wants, expects or demands of us. Some picket funerals, some have open days and free cake. The way they see it Conservative Christian groups tend to share the following beliefs: The Bible makes it clear that homosexuality is a sin. Being gay is fundamentally wrong, unnatural, and even a psychological problem. Being a gay is a choice or, more specifically, being a practising homosexual is a choice. The Bible says that homosexual acts are wrong but not necessarily being homosexual. God intended everyone to be heterosexual and that by choosing to be gay you are offending him. God hates homosexual acts. Homosexual behaviour develops due to poor upbringing or bad parenting. God would not create gay people. Sexually active gay people should not be welcomed by the church or ever be allowed to become priests. Some denominations are more tolerant toward gay people who are celibate do not have sex and who are not currently in a same-sex romantic relationship. Giving gay people the same rights as straight people would encourage more young people to choose homosexuality. This would undermine heterosexual union. Homosexual relationships undermine and have a destabilising effect on society. Is homosexuality sinful or evil? Homosexuality occurs naturally and is considered by many to be a normal type of sexual orientation. Gay people are more or less visible in society depending on its attitude toward homosexuality. A gay person in a very homophobic country with anti-gay laws and fervent religious persecution will likely hide who they are out of fear. War, poverty, environmental decay, animal cruelty, child abuse, bigotry and hatred, racism and homophobia? I doubt you put love and sex at the top of your list. These things are wonderful and natural. Loving someone and sharing your life with that person can bring intense happiness and pleasure, and a great sense of fulfilment and wellbeing. Most people desire romantic love and physical intimacy. When a man and a woman express love for one another within a committed relationship it is usually celebrated by the church, while a same-sex couple living in a similar way may be condemned. Homosexuality occurs in animals too. Another story from a German zoo revealed that attempts by zoo keepers to turn gay penguins straight by introducing females failed. These birds are following their natural instincts. They form close bonds, have sex, and seek to become successful parents. Homosexual behaviour has been observed in other species too. If homosexuality occurs throughout nature then surely it is a normal part of the natural world. In other words, homosexuality is morally neutral in species other than human. Does the Bible say that being gay is wrong? There is ongoing debate about whether the Bible really does condemn homosexuality or just specific instances of same-sex behaviour. Many say that the Bible is open to interpretation and that different meanings can be gleaned from it. Also, a person studying the Bible today may or may not be willing to question what they read in light of contemporary thinking and scientific progress. The Religious Tolerance website has much more on this topic. Is homosexuality a choice? Can it be changed? Sexual orientation is not a choice. Indeed, I remember being bullied in school for being gay before I knew I was! People knew I was different. A gay person can certainly choose not to participate in sex with partners of the same gender, just like a heterosexual person can choose not to have sex, but he or she does not have the power of choice over their sexuality. Again, nor do heterosexual people. To be gay may be tolerated by the church if a person does not act on their homosexuality, but for most of us that would mean being lonely, unfulfilled and sexually frustrated: Not because they think that being gay is wrong but because they think being straight is the only way to be accepted by their peers and by God. They would so desperately like to have a choice over their sexuality. Would it make sense in a world that can be so hostile toward gay and

bisexual people for anyone to choose to be anything but heterosexual? Some believe that gay people are mentally ill, which explains why they choose to be gay. But homosexuality is no longer classed as a mental illness. This is based on the idea that since homosexuality is chosen, caused by poor upbringing, or brought about by a distorted sense of how to relate to the genders, it can be treated like any other psychological problem. These treatments are unproven and experimental. Many who undergo reparative therapy report failure in their ability to change their sexuality and either feel worse about their situation or move on to accept themselves as they are. Recently, the largest ex-gay organisation in the world, Exodus International, closed. Its president, Alan Chambers, apologised to the gay community for hurt caused. He admitted at a Gay Christian Network conference in that I seriously doubt the 0. Most mental health professionals believe that homosexuality is a naturally occurring type of sexual orientation and cannot be altered through therapy or by other means. Science suggests that homosexuality is genetic. In other words, you are born gay, just like you are born with a certain eye colour. Whatever weird and wonderful force that creates a straight, gay or bisexual person, happens in the womb. I think that the only way to be truly happy is to embrace who you are. The alternative to self-acceptance is not a cure, but a path of denial and repression, or worse. Continues on next page.

Chapter 7 : Queer thing, religion.

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Shepherding Community Will you pray with me? Jesus, three times you said to Simon Peter, the rock on whom you built your Church: Jesus restores people to community and empowers Her disciples to do the same. That story is actually strikingly similar to the Acts story we read today. In Mark we read, in part: Jesus went in and said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping. Taking her hand, Jesus said to her, "Talitha, kum! At this they were overcome with amazement. Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat. The healing occurs one-on-one, in private. But after the person is restored to life, the rest of the community re-encounters her. Being restored to life means also being restored to community. In persecuting those perceived to be heretics, Saul was serving God the best way Saul knew how. Christ incapacitates Saul and then sends the disciple Ananias to heal Saul. This person has authority to KILL us and you want me to not only bring myself before this person but also to bring this person back to full capacity? Saul is the instrument I have chosen to bring my Name to Gentiles, to rulers, and to the people of Israel". Joppa is one of the oldest port cities in the world -- now known as Jaffa, in Tel Aviv. Port cities are liminal places, right? Tabitha is singled out both in the Book of Acts and in the lectionary as someone whose discipleship is particularly remarkable. So in some ways we could see her as an "insider" in the early Christian movement. My friend Sophia wondered whether she was mixed-race, or mixed-identity in some other way. What liminal spaces does she occupy, living here on the edge of the land, known by two different names? Sophia suggested, "There are lots of ways for her to have trouble communicating her whole self to the people around her. Coming out is also a resurrection idea. We emerge from the oppressive darkness that has kept us from full life and we are transfigured, able to be transparent to the ground of our being, to shine with the light of divine love. In our Welcome here at Cambridge Welcoming Ministries, we often say: A pastor recently commented to me that being present with people is the essence of pastoral care. Reflecting on that later, I thought about how being present with people in a truly genuine and loving way enables them to be their authentic selves, to live into the fullness of who God created them to be. And so in these resurrection stories, the healer is genuinely attentively present with the other person, and is empowered to restore them to individual life and to community life, and I think implicitly to a life that is richer and fuller than the one they had before. They came to believe in Jesus Christ. They saw the power that Peter had, the power to restore to abundant life, and they gave their hearts to the Source of that power and love. You seek declarations in words, but my deeds testify to who I am. Not the "statements of belief" of the apostles. Not the "codified doctrine" of the apostles. But the Acts of the apostles. In the book , Mark Allan Powell proposes that "The mission of the church is to love Jesus Christ; everything else is just strategy" A commentary I once heard on the 23rd Psalm that really stuck with me was on the ambiguity of "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. This table here, this Communion table, is open to ALL. That table over there, those tables we will bring out for dinner after our worship service is over, those tables are open to ALL. The quotation is, "The heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe. Describing an exercise called "Breathing Through," she writes, "If you experience an ache in the chest, a pressure within the rib case, that is all right. The heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe. Your heart is that large. God so loved the world that God Incarnated to be with us more fully, and the Incarnate God suffered as humans suffered, even unto death, and conquered death so that we might all partake of the abundant life that God has always desired for us. This is the joyous mystery we celebrate every Easter, every Sunday, and every day. One of the things that this church, with its discomfort with blood atonement theology, has taught me is to swap out "love" for "blood" in, for example, hymns. You might be surprised at how little this changes the meaning. For God, in the incarnate person of Jesus the Christ and always, pours out abundant love for us. And Divine Love is sufficient to make anything new -- to make clean and fresh that which has been stained by suffering and pain. And there is a way in which divine love is poured out like blood shed, because God suffers

with us. When we are wounded, God is wounded, too. This reminder both comforts us when we feel alone and also reminds us not to hurt others, for they are beloved children of God just as we are. Carolyn reminded me that this is Earth Sunday. We are called to prepare tables of abundant welcome. We are called to protect all inhabitants of the planet from heat that scorches and kills. And we are called to do all this in love. And so I send you forth, assured in the love that God has for you, and challenged to share that love with all. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. They washed her body and laid her in an upstairs room. All the widows stood beside Peter, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Then calling in all the saints -- including the widows -- Peter showed her to be alive. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! It was winter, 23and Jesus was walking in the Temple area, in the portico of Solomon. If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. I know them, and they follow me. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

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