

Church on the Hill

*At Church on the Hill, we have a tradition of welcoming everyone
to our church family, just as they are*

Open and Affirming Seminar 3

Re-imagining Family: LGBT Youth and Family Relationships

Led by Jennifer Schmuhl

***Please use the down arrow on your keyboard
to click through the presentation***

Re-imagining Family: LGBT Youth and Family Relationships

OBJECTIVES

- To provide education and information based on scholarly articles and research
- To increase awareness of LGBT families, using readings, video, and personal stories
- To listen carefully, respectfully respond, and discuss questions regarding the material presented
- To consider LGBT family perspectives across three generations, and focus on LGBT youth and young people

Re-imagining Family: LGBT Youth and Family Relationships

- **In this seminar we will consider three kinds of LGBT families:**
 - Heterosexual families, nuclear and extended, with LGBT members
 - LGBT parents of heterosexual children
 - LGBT parents of LGBT children

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET

- “Closeted” has been defined as, “a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity”
- Coming out is a **process**, that begins with self-acceptance and continues throughout an LGBT person’s life; decisions to share information is part of the LGBT journey;
- An LGBT person may not come out to everyone in their life. For example, they may be “out” to people at church, but not to their neighbors; coming out is an intimate and personal experience,
- It is critical to be sensitive and to respect the privacy of each individual to decide if, when, and where they want to come out.

Coming out and Family acceptance

- Adolescents report being attracted to a person of the same gender at about age 10. On average, adolescents identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, between 13 and 14 years old. Their families learned about their LGB identity about a year later. More than 1 in 4 are thrown out by their families.
- While about 7% of the youth population identifies as LGBT, they represent 40% of the homeless youth population
- Family **acceptance predicts greater** self-esteem, social support, and general health status; it also **protects** against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors
- Statistics show LGBT youth and young people from **highly rejecting families** are: 8 times more likely to attempt suicide; 6 times more likely to report high levels of depression; more than 3 times more likely to use illegal drugs.

Homeless LGBT youth: Shunned by religious families

This video takes us inside one teen's struggle in the coming out process.

Please click on this link:

- <https://youtu.be/uFM-6gqVD1I>

LGBT YOUTH: BULLYING

- In school **AND** at home, LGBT youth are bullied in a variety of ways:
 - **Physical abuse:** hitting, slapping, pushing, and punching, for example
 - **Social abuse:** isolation, exclusion from family or school events, rejection
 - **Psychological abuse:** name calling, isolation, harassment, and rejection, for example
 - LGBT students often have lower grades and lower educational aspirations. Truancy is also common since students are often fear for their safety at school

LOVE MAKES A FAMILY

Quotes from three LGBT families represented in the book,
Love Makes a Family:

Native American single mother and her son.

Lesbian couple with two children.

Lesbian mom, her two children, and her
grandfather.

- *Family pictures followed by personal quotes on next panels...*

The Burning Cloud/ Sison Family



Consuelo and Falcon

Falcon, Eighth Grade

When my mom told me she was gay, I didn't really mind. I thought it was her decision, not mine. I can't change it, so I was happy for her. She was still my mother!

I started Fancy Dancing when I was seven at pow-wows and social gatherings at school. I still love to Fancy Dance, but I've outgrown my regalia.

Everybody on the reservation knows my mom is gay. Other kids here used to call me names. Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words do hurt! Luckily, nobody teases me anymore. Now I have close friends who accept my family and they stay overnight at our house just about every weekend.

Prejudice exists because people are scared of what they don't know. People don't really sit down and talk with gay people and consider them as individuals.

If somebody asked me what it's like to have a lesbian mom, I'd say, "It's fun. I get to talk to her about girls!"

THE BENJAMIN/ ZELLERS FAMILY



Left to right: Bonnie, Marc (18), Sheila, and Elan (15 months)

Sheila, lesbian mom

I was in college when I finally felt the freedom to sort through the layers of my personal experiences, religious teachings, and fears, and arrive at a place where I could claim my lesbian identity. I can only say that once you've gone through intense self-examination, there can be opportunity for great personal celebration. You can develop the inner strength to stand up to the inevitable criticism you will face. Now my life is quite calm, and all of that pain seems like it took place during another lifetime.

My parents' process of coming to terms with my lesbianism may actually have been harder than my own because they are invested in a homophobic system of beliefs. My father, who is a Lutheran minister, told me in no uncertain terms that I was a sinner, for whom there would be no redemption, and that he was embarrassed by me. My mother tried to figure out what had "gone so wrong" in my life, that caused this "perversion," and she encouraged me to get "straightened out" in therapy. I think my parents have made progress during the last fifteen years, but they would still rather I meet the "right man" and have a "normal life."

THE DRAYTON FAMILY



Left to right: Marquita, Wallace(grandfather), Laquita(5), and Rafael(4)

Wallace (Grandfather)

I've got thirty-three grands, and thirteen great-grands. Rafael and Laquita are great-grands.

My daughter is Marquita's mom. She called me right after Marquita came out to her. I said, "Well, if Marquita's happy then God bless her." My wife couldn't accept or understand it. She just went to pieces. I said, "Marion, you can't go around choosing people's lives. You haven't got the church in your heart if you can't accept things. This is where the churches fail their mission. It just has to be in your heart. If you can't accept anything in your heart, then you're not a truly religious person."

When Marquita and her girlfriend have an argument, the girlfriend comes right to me. She'll be angry at Marquita, and I will ask her, "What did Marquita do this time?" The girlfriend calls me "Granddad" too. She keeps in touch with me. Sometimes she comes over and calms herself down. She's a great girl. I like her. We talk to each other and I try to help her iron out the problems.

Eventually someone's going to come up to Rafael and Laquita as they grow up and throw it in their faces that their mom is lesbian, but I think they'll be strong enough to handle it. Marquita will have taught them to handle a situation like that. She'll get them squared away. They'll be ready.

Loving Families

These quotes are testimony to the fact that the most gay and lesbian parents are competent, caring individuals, who create loving families for themselves and their kids!

PERSONAL STORIES

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR
EXPERIENCES WITH US!

- Andrea, about how easily her 10yo son understood a lesbian cousin's relationship.
- Alicia, past president of PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), about being lesbian and raising her daughter, who came out as bisexual, then transgender.
- Aidan, Alicia's transgendered son.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Carol Goodenow, Ph.D., corresponding author
Ryan J. Watson, Ph.D.,
Jones Adjei, Ph.D.,
Yuko Homma, PhD, RN,
d and Elizabeth Saewyc, PhD., RN, FSAHM, FCAHSe.
Sexual Orientation Trends and Disparities in School Bullying and Violence-Related Experiences, 1999–2013. US National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health

Joseph P. Robinson and Dorothy L. Espelage. Inequities in Educational and Psychological Outcomes Between LGBTQ and Straight Students in Middle and High School. Educational Researcher, Vol. 40, No. 7, pp. 315–330 .

www.pflag.org

www.familyproject.sfsu.edu

Church on the Hill, ONA Sub-Committee

- Jeff Newcomb 561-239-1909 Sarah Hugus 561-445-3783
- Jennifer Schmuhl 561-862-7371 Bob Rodgers 813-841-0835

With participation and contribution by Wendy Hinshaw & Sue Sullivan

Church on the Hill

Open and Affirming Seminar II – Reimagining Family: LGBT Youth & Family Relationships

Presented on February 25, 2018 and repeated on February 26

Questions asked during the seminar, with answers provided

Questions Submitted to co-speakers (Lesbian Mother and Trans-male child, Aidan)

1. Q: (to Alicia) Is Aidan the biological child of the speaker?
 - A. yes

2. Q: (to Alicia) I have friends who are parents of an LGBT child. Where can I send them for resources?
 - A. There is a lot of support and resources available at COMPASS, and LGBT Community Center located in Lake Worth, Florida (<http://www.compassglcc.com/> 561-533-9699)
 - B. PFLAG (Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is also a good resource for support and information. They have chapters in Ft. Lauderdale and in Palm Beach. <https://www.pflag.org/find-a-chapter>
 - C. It is important to figure out what you really want for your child. It is not an easy thing to go through, and many parents fear for their child's safety, because a lot of people don't understand LGBT persons
 - D. Many families fear how their churches will react
 - E. Main thing to remember is to be there and be supportive for the child.

3. Q: (to Aidan) Was high school difficult for you socially ?
 - A. Yes. I grew up in West Virginia. LGBT is NOT accepted there. I started liking girls, and when other students found out, they called me Lesbian as an insult. It was not until college that I came out as a Transgender Man.

4. Q: (to Aidan) The State of Florida does not protect LGBT individuals from being fired from their jobs. Are there any counties or cities in SE Florida which protect them from firing?
 - A. Lake Worth does as a City, and Palm Beach county does as a county. Some other areas offer protection for sexual orientation in their non-discrimination laws and ordinances, but gender identity is not always included in these protections.
*****See Q&A Appendix 1 for a list of local Counties' and Cities' Non-Discrimination policies.*****

5. Q: (to Aidan) What resources or shelters are available in our community for LGBT youth who are thrown out of their homes by their families?
 - A. I'm not aware of any local shelters, but COMPASS is a great resource, and they are located in Lake Worth.

6. Q: (to Aidan) What ideas do you have for our church to be more welcoming?
 - A. The rainbow flag is great!

7. Q: (to Aidan) A lot was explained in your presentation about how churches accept or don't accept LGBT individuals. How do LGBT individuals accept heterosexuals? Do LGBT individuals want to be together with heterosexuals or separate?
 - A. I don't know anyone who wants to be separate. Most people want to be included in loving relationships and families, regardless of whether we are attracted to same sex or opposite sex persons.
 - B. If you don't have LGBT persons in your family, you may believe the Hollywood stereotypes about LGBT persons. It is important to realize that we are regular people who work in regular, every day jobs, and who want regular loving families.

8. Q: (to Alicia) When did you realize you were a lesbian?
 - A. I was young when I knew I was attracted to girls, and then I wasn't sure and felt the pressure that I was supposed to be straight, so I for a while I tried dating a boy and a girl. When I decided I really was Lesbian, I discovered I was pregnant. The boy rejected me and the baby, so I raised my child on my own.

9. COMMENT: A congregant who is Lesbian disclosed how difficult it was and is to come out at work as Lesbian.

10. Q: (to Andrea) Can you tell us more about what you discussed with your 10 y/o son regarding the wedding of his Lesbian aunt and transgender uncle? (question posed to married heterosexual congregant who shared a story about getting her family ready to attend the marriage of her Lesbian niece)
 - A. My son could look at pictures of me when I was a young girl, when I dressed and acted as a Tomboy, and he understood that there are differences among people. My son was completely accepting without any issues or concerns. I think we probably over think this kind of thing when it comes to our children. It is just important to be loving.

11. COMMENT: I have been a professional educator for 43 years. I teach adolescent, who are at a vulnerable stage of life. We need to be ready if a student is deciding to come out as LGBT or to start transitioning their gender. I get a chill when I think about what to do in response to middle school children coming out. It is an issue today. It doesn't mean we have to accept it. But, we do have to accept the issues and challenges these young people face. We have an obligation to face it if we work with young people.

12. COMMENT: This is a symbiotic process. It is not just about our church being more welcoming, but also about LGBT persons feeling welcomed as well.

13. COMMENT: UCC recommends a process of discussion for ONA. It is NOT just a unilateral decision by church leadership. Open sharing, discussion, and thinking through are all important parts of this ONA process.

14. COMMENT: People are scared of what they don't know! This is why we need more education on the subject of LGBT. Thank you Church on the Hill!

Q&A Appendix 1

The City of Boynton Beach:

is an Equal Opportunity Employer and prohibits discrimination because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, political affiliation, disability (except where such factor is a bona fide occupational qualification or is required by State and/or Federal law), sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status and/or other protected class status in all aspects of its personnel policies, programs, practices, recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention or any other actions and operations.

The City of Coconut Creek:

Sec. 21-19.4. Prohibitions.2205

19.4.1. No person shall be appointed or promoted to, or demoted, dismissed or suspended from any position, or in any way favored or discriminated against with respect to employment because of his/her political or religious opinions or affiliations, or his/her race, creed, color, national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

Broward County Code of Ordinances:

(e) *Advertising*. It is a discriminatory practice for an employer, labor organization, or employment agency, to publish an advertisement relating to employment, internship, or volunteer position, indicating a preference, limitation, specification, or discrimination, based on a discriminatory classification; but a notice or advertisement may indicate a preference, limitation, specification, or discrimination based on such a classification when religion, sex, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, marital status, political affiliation, or absence of disability is a bona fide occupational qualification for employment.

The City of Fort Lauderdale:

Section 3. There shall be no unlawful discrimination by the City or the Union in employment, employment opportunities or job actions on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, legally recognized disability, sexual orientation, familial status, or marital status unless one or more of the above constitute a bona fide occupational qualification within the meaning of the law. No job applicant or present employee will be unlawfully discriminated against or given preference because of any of the above characteristics, or any other characteristic protected by law unless otherwise required by law.

The City of Deerfield Beach:

e. Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination: There shall be no discrimination exercised based on race, national origin, color, religion, age, creed, sex, political affiliation or handicap with respect to the recruiting and examination of applicants, the hiring of eligibles or in any personnel transactions affecting employees in the Civil Service System; including training, promotion and disciplinary actions. The Human Resources Department shall see that information about job opportunities is readily available to all people and a continuing program shall be conducted to make the equal employment policies known to all potential employees.

The City of Coral Springs:

The City of Coral Springs is an Equal Opportunity Employer and prohibits discrimination because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, political affiliation, disability or marital status in all aspects of its operations.

Harassment: Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct or mental intimidation that shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law,

The City of West Palm Beach:

The City of West Palm Beach, an equal opportunity employer, is committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all applicants and employees regardless of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status or sexual orientation.

The City of Pompano Beach:

The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate based on race, color, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected characteristic.

The City of Boca Raton:

All applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to age, ancestry, color, marital status, sexual orientation, nation origin, disability, political affiliation, race, religion, creed, sex or other non-merit factors.

The City of Lake Worth:

The City of Lake Worth offers equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.

Palm Beach County:

prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy discrimination and sexual harassment), national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, familial status or gender identity or expression.

The City of Delray Beach:

The City of Delray Beach is an Equal Opportunity Employer and committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all applicants and employees regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.