



## Do I need a progressive theology to affirm gay people?

There are those with conservative viewpoints who also love and affirm their lesbian and gay relatives and friends.

## What about same sex marriage?

Attitudes in the church and society on the question of same-sex marriage are changing rapidly. One Christian approach is considered in a separate brochure from Uniting Network NSW/ACT.

## What about 'family values'?

Some use 'family values' as shorthand for anti-gay sentiments. How about 'valuing families'? Is it not more Christ-like to value people and families rather than valuing 'values'? What family does not have some favorite uncle, aunt, friend or workmate who is lesbian or gay? Pressure to reject a daughter or son has devastating effects on the family.

## But what if it's my child?

No matter how open minded you are, it can be a shock if it's your own child. Parents can face the same bewildering and agonising journey of 'what does it all mean', 'coming out' as a parent of a gay child, and potential ostracism.

Where is the church when it is needed?

## What are the social effects?

Of youth in secondary schools who are attracted to others of the same sex, 46% have been verbally abused, and 13% physically abused. (Hillier, et al, *Writing Themselves In: A National Report on the*

*Sexuality, Health and Well-Being of Same-Sex Attracted Young People.* La Trobe University, 1998.)

Ministries to the homeless report that a large number of young men living on the streets are gay, having been thrown out of home with nowhere else to go. Other studies show a high rate of suicide among young gay males particularly in country areas. In fact, every lesbian or gay person, of any age, has a story to tell.

It's not fun to live in fear of losing the love of family and church community and even to be told that God hates you.

The time has come to challenge the hostilities & fears associated with a more traditional theological view. By the grace of God, we are all people of the Vine (John 15). A true question remains: 'What would Jesus do?'



[www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au](http://www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au)

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Series Editors: Elizabeth Teece and Warren Talbot.  
(c) Uniting Network NSW/ACT. Revised Nov. 2015.  
Funded by UnitingCare NSW/ACT.*

# The Church and homosexuality



**Uniting Network**

**NSW/ACT**

*welcoming and celebrating  
lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,  
intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people  
in the Uniting Church in Australia*





## What does Uniting Network want?

The Uniting Network's vision is that the Uniting Church be a safe place where lesbian, gay, bisexual transgendered, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people, their families and friends are affirmed, their gifts used at all levels, their loving relationships valued and their faith nurtured.

## Is homosexuality a sin?

Some Christians say yes. Five verses from the Hebrew and Second Testaments have been used as 'evidence' that homosexuality is a sin. However, some verses also support slavery and inequality for women.

Biblical writers understood homosexual behaviour as a manifestation of sin<sup>1</sup>. Homosexuality came to be understood as an inherent orientation only during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Jesus was silent on the subject. He took issue mostly with Pharisees, those who imposed the law regardless of its effect on people. Jesus befriended the outcast.

## Is homosexuality a sickness?

In 1973 the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists deleted homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Despite this, some practitioners still practice aversion therapy. Studies show that social rejection and discrimination

<sup>1</sup> Refer to Bill Loader, Uniting Church Minister and Professor of New Testament at Murdoch University in Western Australia <http://www.staff.murdoch.edu.au/%7Eloader/homosexuality.html>

increase the risk of self-hatred, depression, drug and alcohol misuse, risky social and sexual behaviour and suicide.

## How common is it?

In a 1997 survey, between 9 and 11% of secondary students indicated they were not exclusively attracted to the opposite sex. (Lindsay, et al, *Secondary students, HIV/AIDS and sexual health*, La Trobe University, 1997.) In every age, members of the community from all walks of life have been lesbian or gay, including those who have deeply held Christian beliefs.

## If we accept gay and lesbian people, does that mean 'anything goes'?

The church plays an important role in upholding moral values, contributing to social cohesion for the common good. With this role comes the serious responsibility to 'get it right' and the humility to know when the church hasn't always done so. In the past, scripture has been used to justify apartheid, slavery and the oppression of women. It's hard now to imagine just how accepted slavery was not so long ago. No, not anything goes. Activities that violate others, such as the exploitation of minors or sexual abuse of any kind should never be tolerated.

## Can't gays just be celibate?

If gays or lesbians were celibate, what common good would that serve? If not chosen, imposed celibacy can be very psychologically damaging to individuals.

## God made us male & female

In a creation with its multi-textured complexity, is it really surprising that our human emotional and physical landscape is more diverse than just being born either male or female and heterosexual?

## What about 'ex-gay' ministries?

Two founders of Exodus International, a church-based coalition of ministries that purports to change homosexual sexual orientation to 'ex-gay', tell their stories.

For four years 'ex-gay' Michael Bussee and Garry Cooper along with other staffers travelled across the USA, speaking to church groups and recruiting local parishes into the 'ex-gay' ministries. Over the years they noticed that "none of the hundreds of (mostly) men they counseled actually changed their sexual orientation. The majority... at most managed to be celibate". The sexual orientation of Bussee and Cooper themselves, despite years in the program, had not changed. They eventually left the church and came out as a gay couple. (O'Neill, C., *Founders of Ex-Gay Ministries Come Out*, Integrity News and Notes, 1990).

