



be not afraid

help is on the way!

straight for equality™
in faith communities

preface

Whether I want to deal with it or not, accepting gay people is a religious issue for me. Like many, I'm in that category of 'Sure, I have a gay friend' but often find myself trying to not think about what it means when my acceptance of my friend is in conflict with what my religion teaches me about him. And for me, not dealing with it means not talking about it with people from my church, even when it would mean speaking up on behalf of my friend. I avoid it because it is just too challenging and it is bound to end in an argument. I'm not proud of that, and I want a way to respond differently.

Andrew, 39

Sound familiar?

We've got some really good news for you: You're not alone.

Welcome to Straight for Equality.

Straight for Equality is a project that started in 2007 as part of PFLAG National,* the original family and ally organization to the gay, lesbian, bi, and transgender (GLBT) community.

The premise of the Straight for Equality project is pretty basic: There are many people out there who fall into the "I have a gay (or lesbian, or bi, or trans) friend and I want to be supportive" category, but don't necessarily know what "be supportive" means—or, for that matter, if their support is even wanted.

Our response is simple: Yes, your support is wanted and very much needed. More importantly, we can help you learn more about what your GLBT friends are facing, work through any of

*PFLAG National is really Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Kind of long, right? That's why it is in this footnote. You can learn more about PFLAG by visiting www.pflag.org.

the challenges you may face to being an ally, and find ways to demonstrate your support, no matter where you are on your ally journey.

And we can help you do it in a unique way.

Straight for Equality isn't about politics or politicians, radical activists, or peacekeeping pacifists. And when it comes to faith communities, it isn't about redefining what you or your community believes. It is about changing the way we treat each other. It is about creating a place where all people who care about equality can honestly and openly discuss and remove the barriers they face to becoming an ally, get specific recommendations for action, and learn how to assist others—whether friends, family members, coworkers, or community members—in becoming agents of change, on their own terms.

Got questions?

We'll do our best to answer them here. You can also find us online at our website, www.straightforequality.org, as well as on Facebook (www.facebook.com/S4Equality) and Twitter (@S4Equality). These are just a few ways to keep connecting with us and with other allies on this journey.

Got concerns?

We imagine so. This is a big topic and one that deserves your time, thought, and, for many, prayer. Becoming an ally should be a contemplative and thorough process, and considering what this means in light of your personal beliefs is part of that journey.

Don't know how to get involved?

Throughout this guide we'll offer some suggestions for places where you'll be able to learn more and maybe even become a little more involved than you are today. Check out page 3 for further details on our Equality Guideposts.

Ready to go?

Then keep reading.

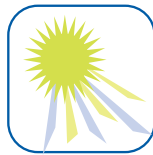
Equality Guideposts

Throughout this book you'll see some symbols that will help bring your attention to a few nifty little guideposts to help navigate your journey. Here's what they mean:



Walking the Path

Here you'll find personal stories detailing peoples' challenges, examples of common difficulties that many allies of faith encounter, and places where caution is recommended. These aren't bad things, but experiences that have been shared by many allies who have taken this journey before you.



Seeing the Light

You're never alone when facing a challenge. These are great suggestions and resources to help you gracefully travel your ally path.



The Leap of Faith

If you're ready to take the next step and put something you've learned into action, these are suggestions for ways to demonstrate your support as an ally of faith.



Giving Testimony

There are a number of ally stories featured in this book. Here you'll find just a few stories from GLBT people talking about the role faith (and, often, straight allies) plays in their lives. Think your words and actions don't matter much? These stories are a reminder that they do.

So what's the big rule that you learn about faith? It's that you don't question it. Faith is faith, and that's it. When I realized that I was starting to question my religion when it came to what it taught me about gay people, I can't say that it was a welcome development. In fact, it made me panic. I never doubted anything before, and there I was, questioning what I was taught?

But here's what I learned—it wasn't about questioning my faith or my relationship with God. For me it was about deciding how I was going to treat the people around me. There are big-picture things that my religion gives me, one of the most important ones being how to treat other people. For me, that's where being a straight ally started, and that's what it means to me.

Sabine, 42

chapter one:

don't panic

It sounds so easy, doesn't it?

For most people of faith, the moment in which they find themselves trying to reconcile a belief with experiences or messages that don't seem to fit is a frightening experience. Our religious beliefs, regardless of the tradition we adhere to, are bigger than the word that represents them: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist...and the many others people embrace. Religious beliefs provide a sense of greater meaning, order, purpose, and—hopefully—joy.

Religious traditions (and often the many denominations that they encompass) offer guidance on the way the world ought to be and the role each one of us plays in achieving that goal. Some of this guidance has transcended specific religious traditions and even made it into our mainstream culture. “Love your neighbor as yourself” is a great example.

In the same way that religions offer us guidance on how to live our lives, they often provide messages and rules about specific things we'll encounter. For example, within the Judeo-Christian realm, the 10 Commandments provide people with everyday guidelines—respect your parents and don't steal are just two most people quickly recognize.

Those are the easy ones.

When it comes to talking about GLBT people, many religions have specific messages and teachings about whether being gay is acceptable and how straight people should treat GLBT people.

In some traditions, the message is incredibly positive. For example, most of the movements in Judaism teach love and acceptance, inclusion of GLBT people, and that there is no conflict between being GLBT (or an ally) and being consistent with Jewish beliefs. In fact, there are many GLBT rabbis and ministers serving throughout the world, in congregations that not only allow them to be out, but also celebrate their authenticity.

Yet in others—and, unfortunately, in some of the largest faith communities—the message isn't as positive. Teachings range from trying to not talk about it, to separating the person and who they are (“love the sinner, hate the sin”), to outright rejection of GLBT people and those who support them. Think fire and brimstone.

For many people, this issue quickly becomes an either/or decision: “Either I accept what my religion teaches me and act accordingly *or* I will not be living in grace.” For others, it just means trying to not think about it...which tends to be pretty difficult given the big space that faith occupies in our lives.

When a person finds him or herself in a place where their religious teachings and beliefs are being questioned, it can literally shake their whole world. That's because no matter what religious tradition we embrace, there is comfort in the order that faith gives us. We know what is right and wrong, and our religion gives us guidelines for how to make the call.

And a lot of us have the same reaction when that order seems to be less clear than it once was: Panic.

(Those who don't panic often say, “I just won't think about it now.” This is, interestingly, a close cousin of panic.)

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Really.

Why?

Because the discussion about looking at GLBT people and the way different faith traditions treat them is often presented in an all-or-nothing kind of way. Either you accept GLBT people completely, *or* you reject them outright. Either you consider them to be wrong, *or* you grab your rainbow flag and celebrate them in your congregation. Either you think that GLBT people can be religious leaders in your community, *or* they should be banned. Either you believe that marriage equality is the right thing to do, *or* you think it will change what some believe is a sacred institution.

Don't get us wrong: These are all important questions, and ones that deserve meaningful consideration and discussion far more important than just dismissing the issue with an either/or response. But those big conversations aren't where we're going to start.

For most of us, just thinking about GLBT people in our faith communities outside of these either/or options—and even saying the words, “gay, lesbian, bi, and trans”—is a tremendous step. It signifies the proverbial leap of faith that leads to thinking about the issue in a different way, thinking about our relationship with our faith in a changed way, and maybe even seeing the people around us in a new light.

We can't lie: This process can be tough. Figuring out how to resolve some of the disconnect between what we believe and our experiences isn't easy. But it can be done. In fact, lots of allies in faith communities have done it (and are doing it right now). So we're going to try to find a quiet spot in our hearts and minds where the *issues* are set aside and *people* are the focus. Hopefully, with that, the sense of panic can be minimized...and our real journey can begin.

The way I understood gay people was from what I learned from my religion. I mean, going to services predates ever actually realizing that I know someone who is gay. And the context was often political—things like marriage, for example. But I've come to realize that it doesn't have to be about the political stuff, or the things that get people so riled up. It just has to be about how I'm going to treat other people, regardless of what makes us different. It's so simple, and yet it took such a long time to get there.

Simone, 28

And so your point is...?

So if the point isn't to advocate for a certain change in the way our religions respond to GLBT people, where are we going with this?

The point is pretty simple: It is actually about you.

The straight ally journey that we're on is to try to think about GLBT people and how you, as a person of faith, can understand the role that you play in their lives. It is especially important to consider how faith shapes this role and our relationships.

For some of us, the journey may mean thinking about this topic beyond what we hear in our churches or faith communities, and considering how it impacts our day-to-day interactions. For others, it may mean a little literal soul searching. And there are those for whom it may mean building on an existing place of acceptance to take the dialogue further (or get it started) within your own community of faith.

Lao Tzu wrote in the *Tao Te Ching*, "Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."

Let's take that step, shall we?

I'm 40 now, and I officially became a Christian when I was 30 by attending a Pentecostal Assemblies of God church. When I first met my wife, I discovered that her brother was gay. At the same time, my church taught me that scripture was clear about homosexuality: according to my religion's teaching, being gay is a sexual addiction that needed healing through Jesus. Since this time I have revisited the scriptures and have read widely and can now honestly say I am gay-affirming.

What was the major turning point that changed my views? The many relationships I had formed with other Christians who just happened to be gay.

Matt, 45

chapter two:

Starting the (Occasionally Awkward) Journey, with Grace

There are a lot of reasons why you might be reading this book right now. Maybe someone gave it to you. Maybe you came across it when you were searching for something online. Perhaps you were drawn to the really lovely cover design. (Ok, maybe not, but we can dream.)

But there's a really good chance that one of the big reasons that you're reading this right now is because you are in a similar place to Matt. You consider yourself to be a person of faith, and you know (care for, and maybe even love) people who identify as GLBT, and find yourself trying to figure out how to make those two pieces of your life compatible.

Did we mention that you're not alone?

As more GLBT people are living their lives out of the closet, the chance that you know someone one (or more) of them increases. Right now in the United States, polling suggests that 8 in 10 people say that they personally know someone who is GLBT. And, in our experience, the other two in 10 just don't realize that they know someone...yet.

And this is happening at a time in which 92% of people in this country say that they believe in God (or a higher power) with 58% of them identifying as religious, saying that they pray at least once a week.

When you put these two statistics together, we learn two important things: First, a lot of people personally know GLBT people. Second, lots of people identify as people of faith. Put together, it means that there are a lot of people out there who are personally connected to the tension that often settles between the two topics.

So change is happening, and faith communities are certainly taking the issue on in a wide variety of ways, from resistance, to silence, to acceptance. And each of these responses create a different kind of journey for a straight ally in terms of what gets them started, what they'll encounter, and what they need to keep moving forward.

It sounds a little complicated doesn't it?

Maybe looking at the way some of these experiences happen is a good way to figure out where you are and what it means. In other words, where does *your* journey start?

I grew up in the Bible Belt. My mother's favorite quote when the issue of gay people came up was 'love the sinner, hate the sin.' While I was raised to be tolerant and respectful, when it came to gay people, this distinction prevailed.

As I matured, I grew to have a problem with the idea of separating the person and a big part of who they were. It started in my teens, especially when I made my first out gay friend. Talking with him and seeing how this teaching of separation affected his own spiritual health made me think about things differently. It tormented him within his church, and was reinforced by the people in his community telling him that he was wrong and that he needed to change. It didn't seem right to me. In college I made more GLBT friends and found that they were some of the best people I knew, and among many, I saw a similar struggle that they had with being accepted in their faith communities.

At the end of the day I can't say that I had one moment in which the straight ally light bulb just turned on. Instead I met many different people through my walk with the Lord and came to believe that there isn't anything wrong with being GLBT—it is about being a good person. We are all God's children and He made us this way for His glory.

Ben, 29

The Surprise Ally Journey (a.k.a. “I didn’t even know I had an ally journey in me!”)

For many people, the topic of gay people isn’t an issue to them...until it is.

It isn’t until you meet someone and start hearing about the struggles that many GLBT experience in their faith communities that the subject even becomes relevant to you.

Sometimes you’ll hear a story that causes you to quickly shift your ideas about how to find a place of peace within your religious beliefs. But more often than not, it is a gradual process where you learn more, create new relationships, and start thinking about how it fits into your belief system.

For others, like Ben, this meant looking at his own values and realizing that what he was taught might not be the best understanding of how he should live. Looking at his gay friends as “good people” who are living in a “bad way” didn’t fit for him. In the end, he came to believe that everyone is equal in God’s eyes, no one better than the other.

It is important to note that he doesn’t believe in God less—he actually now has stronger beliefs about how to treat people—beliefs that are grounded in his faith.

For some people, this change is incredibly difficult. Maybe the biggest step for some will be just to have friendships with GLBT people and not keep them at a distance. For some, being an ally may be expressed through maintaining relationships with GLBT people that they already know, and not rejecting or devaluing them because they aren’t straight. In other words, for some allies of faith, their behaviors may change, but their beliefs may remain the same.

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Giving Testimony: Jason's Story

"What was it like to feel rejected for being gay in my faith community? Stripped naked, beaten and thrown into the dark, is my first thought. I wasn't really separated from God, it was just my former church telling me I was. My separation from faith wasn't about God at that time—but it was about the place I called my faith family for more than 30 years! How can you go from being someone's brother, son, grandson...spiritually speaking, and then one thing changes it all in a matter of days? My struggle with God wasn't really with Him. It was with what my previous religion told me my relationship would be after I left that church. It was the deeply ingrained teachings from people and doctrine that I battled in order to establish my true relationship with God."



Walking the Path: Knowing You're Not Alone

"I'm Muslim, and my religion shapes everything that I am—it isn't just about prayer. It is about how I see the world around me, and how I should behave. The teachings I received about gay people were very strong, and not what anyone would call accepting. So when I became friends with a lesbian at school, I didn't know what to think or do. I'd been taught that her life is not right, but I saw her as a good person. The strangest thing was feeling like I was the only Muslim who ever found herself in this situation. Obviously, I wasn't, and eventually I found that many people I knew from my mosque had similar experiences. Knowing that I wasn't the only one wondering how to find resolution gave me great peace."

Nida, 27

The trademark question of the Surprise Ally is "Am I the only one feeling this way?" While we'd love to provide you with statistics to prove that you are certainly not the only one in your faith community thinking this, we can't. But we can remind you about that 8 in 10 statistic. Even if people aren't talking, there are others having this experience too. Maybe you will be the one who will help someone else not feel alone.



The Leap of Faith: Have an (Online) Discussion

Finding yourself in the position of the “Surprise Ally” is often a tough one, and you may not be ready to start a conversation about what you’re thinking with people you know just yet. However, opening yourself up to some of the dialogue happening with people who have been there can happen in a less intimidating way through social media. So try this Leap of Faith: Commit to having a few discussions online. It may help you in your journey...or you might find yourself helping someone else in theirs. A list of suggested places to tap into these kinds of discussions can be found on page 41.



Seeing the Light: Begin Your Search

“My journey toward being an advocate for full inclusion of GLBT people in the faith community has been more of a continuous path of learning than a road with a definite turning point. As a seminary student, before the concept of transgender was even part of my realm of knowledge, I was aware that I had several classmates and at least one instructor who were gay men. My intentional search for understanding began because I knew them. Probably the most significant marker along my journey was reading *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Christian’s Struggle to Serve the Church*. What otherwise might have been an ‘issue’ now had a name and a face, a heart and a faith—just as I did. By the time I encountered the question of accepting transpeople, there really was no decision to be made—it was just an extension of what I had already learned. Other study before and since that time, and other GLBT persons and allies I know and have known, have helped me to clarify my understanding that ‘All are one in Christ Jesus.’”

Rev. Karen, 50

We may have mentioned several times that you’re not alone in this experience. The even better news is that many allies who have taken this journey have shared their story to help people

where you are right about now. There are literally hundreds of resources out there, but here are a few that might be worth checking out:

- **For Evangelicals:** Canyon Walker Connections | www.canyonwalkerconnections.com
- **For Jews:** Keshet | www.keshetonline.org
- **For Muslims:** Arabs for Tolerance | www.arabs4tolerance.org

Seriously, there are countless great narratives out there. For more information on how to find them, see page 41.

The Feeling Ownership Ally Journey (a.k.a. “I didn’t know that this was my issue, too.”)

When my brother was dying, his friends told me that he was especially afraid of me because I am a Christian. I was able to tell him that I loved him no matter what, and he died knowing that God’s love is unconditional. But the rhetoric of some people of faith cost me a relationship with my brother until his final months. I have decided that one person can make a difference, and I feel a responsibility to help people understand what it means to be accepting of GLBT people and be religious at the same time.

Betty, 52

Most people can easily name causes that they care about, and then tell you why a cause makes them feel it is “their” issue. An environmentalist might say that they feel a responsibility as someone living on the planet to ensure that future generations inherit a healthy environment. Someone who works to end hunger can point to the fact that they have the means and feel a responsibility to help end the pain and suffering that people endure when they go hungry. But when it comes to being supportive of gay people, things often look different.

There are a lot of reasons that people shy away from the topic, with religion just being one of them. It may be too political, cause too much controversy, not be in someone's comfort zone...the list can go on. But for many people, one of the big reasons that they don't feel that supporting GLBT people is "their" issue is because they don't see how they're connected to it.

For many straight allies, and certainly straight allies of faith, the fact that religion plays a significant role in the lives of GLBT people becomes the reason to pay attention.

In Betty's case, she didn't ever see how her identity as a person of faith created a wedge between her and her brother. He had experienced exclusion by other people of faith, and this led to a distance between him and his sister. His assumptions about his sister were grounded in his past experiences. While his negative perceptions about people of faith incorrectly colored his interaction with Betty, it became her role to help change it.

So for some allies—maybe you—it will be a moment in which you realize the good and bad roles that religion plays in the lives of a GLBT friend or family member that will establish why this is your issue and start you on your ally journey.



Walking the Path: Defining “Ally” for Yourself

“When I had this realization that maybe this whole gay thing applied to me too, even though I’m straight, I went online to search for ‘GLBT rights’ and found tons of stuff, but a lot of it wasn’t what I wanted. Just because I’m thinking about this doesn’t mean I want to work on a political campaign. Maybe someday, but right now, I just need to know how I’m supposed to fit in where I am today.”

Mayra, 24

The question that captures the “Feeling Ownership Ally” is, “Now that I’m here, what is my role supposed to be?” The good news is that there’s no checklist of items that you need to do when you adopt the word “ally” for yourself. Being an ally means many things to people, in the same way being a person of faith means different things to different people.*



Seeing the Light: Movie Time

Sometimes the best place to start taking on a tough topic is by settling down, grabbing some popcorn, and watching a movie. (Yes. Learning more can even be done from the comfort of your sofa.) For “Feeling Ownership Allies”, hearing stories of others who have taken this journey can be a motivational and comforting experience. Like good resources, there are countless films out there. Looking for a place to start? Check out *For the Bible Tells Me So* (www.forthetellsmeso.org), *Hineini* (www.hineinithefilm.org), and *A Jihad for Love* (www.firstrunfeatures.com/jihadforlove_synopsis.html) as a few diverse starting points to hear first-person narratives of powerful faith journeys.



The Leap of Faith: Hear a GLBT Story

There’s no getting around it—starting a dialogue around GLBT issues for any new ally can be tough. But if you’re in your journey and find yourself at this point, here’s one leap of faith you can take: Ask a GLBT friend or family member about the role faith plays in their life. Starting this dialogue will do two things. First, it will give you a chance to hear the story of someone with whom you’ve got a personal connection, and you will know them better. Second, it actively demonstrates that you are on your own journey and starting to express support where you are now.

*Please know that carrying a rainbow pride flag is certainly not a requirement for being an ally. They are really quite cheery, though...



Giving Testimony: Rob's Story

"I am gay and grew up in a very conservative Christian home, going to Christian schools and lots of church. Being gay certainly created tension in my family, but not the split that I've seen many people experience. For me, though, the way it plays out is this: When I'm somewhere—at work, on a flight, at an event—and I meet someone who has some kind of religious symbol on, my immediate gut reaction is, "They aren't going to like me because I'm gay." I'm not proud of that, and I'm usually proved to be wrong about my assumptions. But like a lot of gay people, I've seen horrible things happen to us by people who call themselves religious. I tend to keep people at a distance. I'm trying to work to not respond this way, but the place this fear comes from is very real."

A word of caution that builds on Rob's story: Some GLBT people are sensitive about this topic because it has caused them pain in the past, so getting them to trust you as an ally may take some time.

Don't be discouraged.

The Moved Ally Journey ("Here's what shocked me into changing...")

I'd never really thought about how some churches exclude many people from worship until I attended a church service with some young friends who were supporting their pastor, who was coming out during his sermon one week.

I was totally shocked to find out he was locked out of the church afterward and no longer able to....well, to do anything affiliated with that church since. That's when I knew that I was an ally, and I had work to do.

Wanda, 48

There are a lot of allies out there who don't know that they're allies yet. Some find that they have felt supportive of GLBT people, but it isn't until something specific happens that they realize they need to do more than just *feel* supportive. For them, it becomes important to *talk* about the topic and share personal stories.

Many of these newly "Moved Allies" will find that they actually need to work backwards a little in order to talk about their support, and really think about what it was that led them to the place where they are today. Was it the way that their families taught them about their religion? Was it their personal explorations? Was it because of a specific incident? By identifying what brought them to where they are, they can often become strong advocates for change and through sharing their stories support other allies who are also on the journey.



Walking the Path: Finding Advanced Ally Work

"Since college I found my eyes opening up to the truth and legitimacy that could be found in gay relationships. While I was open and accepting, it did not sink into the core of my being until my second year out of Rabbinical School. That summer, I was fortunate enough to hold one of

the Chuppah poles (a traditional Jewish wedding canopy) for a classmate who was marrying her partner of four years. When I saw the two of them looking at each other with the same eyes that my wife and I had for each other on the day of our wedding, I turned and said, ‘How can this be anything *but* Kiddushin!’ (a legitimate Jewish wedding).”

Rabbi Michael, 56

The trademark outburst of the Moved Ally often sounds like, “Wow—I didn’t even realize that! What can I do now?” For a lot of allies at this place, there are more progressive efforts going on within their specific faith communities that help them keep their momentum. Undertakings like creating Open & Affirming* faith communities are often the work of Moved Allies looking to take action.



Seeing the Light: Finding Your Community

For allies who find that resolution between their faith and their beliefs about GLBT people is not a challenge, getting resources to talk to other people about the subject becomes key. Since many religions approach the topic differently, connecting with resources for your specific faith tradition is a great place to become an effective conversationalist. Find out how to access this kind of information on page 41.



The Leap of Faith: Have One Conversation

Lots of people want to change the world, but often real change begins right at home, with the people we know best. Commit to actively starting one conversation with someone close to you about this issue—sharing this guide may be a great way to do that. It is when we encourage other people to be part of the discussion that progress starts.

* *Not sure what this term means? This term—and lots of others mentioned in this guide—are included in the Glossary that starts on p. 38. In the resources section, you can also get more info on welcoming congregations.*



Giving Testimony: Jane's Story

“Growing up Catholic, going to Catholic schools, having almost all Catholic friends—life was conservative, but it was never hostile to gay people. There was a big focus on social justice and the roles we played in making things better for those in need. So when I came out as gay in college and found myself in a situation where I was informed by a priest that I could ‘correct my attractions’ or leave the school, it completely changed me. Maybe it is my ego, but I didn’t think that this priest was right about my relationship with God—I always knew that my relationship with God is as it should be. But the idea that after a lifetime of being a member of the Catholic community I could be told to leave? That’s alienation, and it is something no one should have to feel. Interestingly, it was straight allies who brought me back into a faith community. They saw their invitation as simply the right thing to do. What they didn’t realize that their basic kindness was a life-changing act.”

No matter where you find yourself on your journey—as the Surprise Ally, the Feeling Ownership Ally, the Moved Ally, or maybe something in-between—there are people who are alongside you on the journey. For some, the journey may take them to places where they rethink some of their beliefs. For others, the journey may mean that their beliefs don’t change at all, but the way they choose to treat GLBT people is different. And for some, finding a different faith community may be where their journey takes them.

Here’s the bottom line: Allies of faith are critical. They often are the lifeline that helps GLBT people keep the faith — literally.

Knowing that there are people from their religious traditions—no matter how conservative or how liberal—that support them is often the biggest factor in GLBT people believing that who they are is not incompatible with what they believe.

It’s a big responsibility, but someone’s got to do it, and allies everywhere are meeting the challenge.

I'm from a small Texas Bible Belt town and grew up attending several local churches. It never occurred to me to doubt anything I was told the Bible says. I didn't have any friends who were openly gay until college, although in retrospect, I realize many were gay, but fearful of coming out.

The moment I define as my biggest fail as a Christian to this day was the conversation I had with that lesbian friend who asked me if she was a sin...and I didn't tell her no.

It took many years for me to have that conversation differently, but it was the dissatisfaction I had with the conflict between my heart and my religion that lead me to search for a different answer on my own. I found the answer when I started talking to people who have been on a journey like mine. Finding other people of faith who speak up was the best gift my religion has ever given me.

Rebecca, 64

chapter three:

Going from Walking to Talking

You probably knew that this was coming, but it is time to get to the part where we mention that *walking* the ally path is just the first step. And it is just that: A step.

The next part is where you start talking about it.

For a lot of people, talking about faith and religion is one of those things they were taught one does not do in polite company. For others, talking religion is as effortless and automatic as breathing since it is so much a part of who they are. No matter what category you fall into, talking about your faith in the context of support for your GLBT friends and family can be an intimidating proposition.

Intimidating, but also monumentally important.

The truth is that change doesn't happen unless people hear different perspectives, and your story is an important one that needs to be heard. Now that you've (hopefully) found a little more clarity about where you are on this journey, finding ways to talk about it becomes a big priority.

Again, don't panic.

The good news is that there are some awesome suggestions for ways to talk about your status as an ally of faith and your support for GLBT people. Keep reading to get started...

Start with what (or who) you know

The first time I remember becoming supportive of inclusion for GLBT individuals in my faith community (the Catholic Church) was when I was about 12 years old. I remember sitting in Mass and hearing the priest read a statement from the Bishops of Massachusetts that stated their expectation that all Catholics vote and behave in accordance with the belief that homosexuality is a sin.

Having been raised around multiple aunts and uncles that identify as gay or lesbian, I was taught that there was nothing different or wrong about them, so I could not grasp what the priest was saying. I remember sitting in the pew, crying, and asking my parents on the way home why they said that. That is my first memory of understanding that not everyone is accepting, but that as a person of faith, I would always speak up for the people I love.

Allison, 31

Most people know this on an instinctive level, but when something is personal, it becomes much more compelling than a random, generic story. For example, hearing, “I support gay people because they don’t have the same rights as I do,” and hearing “I support gay people because I have friends and family who are gay. I see how they are often hurt and rejected, and I think they should be treated the same way I’m treated,” carry different amounts of power. Both are good statements, but the moment that you make it about your personal connection to the issue, perspectives go from thinking about abstract stuff (as in, “The Gays”) to being about real people (my friend, my sister, the person in the choir with me).

A lot of people still assume that they don’t know anyone who is gay, or they don’t have any GLBT people in their congregation, but chances are that isn’t correct. (Remember the 8 in 10 stat?)

While mentioning a statistic might raise awareness of the proximity to an issue, putting yourself on the map as an ally who can speak about it from a personal perspective is much more effective in transforming hearts and minds.

Remember: You don't need to even have a specific purpose in mind when you have these conversations—it is just about getting your story out there. Chances are you'll be surprised by how many people meaningfully hear what you're saying and start talking, too.



Walking the Path: A Word of Caution

"After a friend at church came out to me and I got to a place where I felt like I could acknowledge that I do, in fact, have a gay friend, I wanted to be supportive and talk about what it means to me, but I had a moment where I wasn't sure if *she* wanted me to do that—I mean, you always hear about people coming out and scary things happening. So I asked her, and she told me that she'd prefer that for the moment I not use her name or be specific because she's still in her coming out process. Whew. Good thing I asked. That could have been more than a little awkward!"

Roberto, 22

A word of caution on sharing personal stories: Not all GLBT people are out to everyone in their lives. A great practice as a straight ally is to ask your friends and family if they are out and if it is okay for you to talk about it. Many GLBT people are out to different degrees (maybe to their friends, but not to their parents, or out to people at work, but not to their church). Inadvertently outing someone can be harmful and even dangerous.

Be sure to be clear by confirming people's needs and boundaries through a basic conversation. If someone doesn't want you to mention their name, respect the choice, but discuss these issues in broader terms that protect their identity. Instead of "My friend James, who is gay, told me that he often feels isolated from his religion," you could say, "I have good friends who are gay and have shared the feelings of isolation from their faith."

Begin by talking about what you have in common.

I am Methodist and our mantra is open hearts, open minds, open doors. In Sunday school, I listened when we were taught that Jesus loves all the children of the world. My parents also taught me that all people are to be treated the same, with no exceptions. While the Methodist Church has not been perfect in regards to GLBT issues, we are making a great effort. Because of that I am able to stand by my faith and my support of the GLBT community.

Sarah, 41

One of the challenges of creating any kind of book or resource on faith is that there are so many faith traditions—and even in those, so many ways of expressing faith—that offering specific words that will resonate with all groups is almost impossible.

And this is where you come in.

As a member of your faith in the community, you know what kinds of words and sentiments will resonate with the people with whom you speak. In other words, you're already a subject matter expert.

Sarah's comment is a perfect example. As a Methodist, she shared her story using terms (open hearts, open minds, open doors) that will speak directly to people who are in her community. When she connects her belief and her feelings about GLBT people with language familiar to other Methodists, it sends a powerful message that people right in your congregation do feel this way. It's authentic. Use what you have in common in your faith community as a way to demonstrate your connection and find common ground with others.



Walking the Path: Sidestepping the Dreaded Debate

"I love my GLBT friends and family. I want them to be included and treated fairly. But I don't do conflict, and I just can't debate. Throw a Bible verse at me and I shut down. People get so heated about this... I usually choose to not talk about it because I don't want to go there."

Jake, 29

While talking with people in your own faith community might feel safe since it is something you know, there is an ever-present challenge (and, even for the most outspoken allies, fear) that dialogue will turn into debate about scriptural interpretation or complicated theology. For most of us, this is a pretty intimidating prospect, stressful enough that the choice to avoid talking about it at all can be very tempting.

Since this is about religion, we'll go ahead and say it:

Resist the temptation.

There are thousands of books and essays that have been written on the theological aspects of this topic. In fact, this is so much a part of mainstream culture that we see lots of ways that this theological debate has become part of many people's go-to dialogue ("love the sinner, hate the sin," anyone?). But for most allies—and certainly those at the start of their journey—this is too much and they find themselves giving into temptation and not speaking at all.

So if you're tempted to choose silence when the heat is up, here are a few guidelines to keep in mind should you find yourself in one of these dialogues-turned-debates:

- **Don't let it become an argument.** In other words, if the tone of the discussion is getting heated, stay calm. Arguments and debates can only happen when both people are participating. Model the conversation you want to have by not going to DEFCON 1, but keeping it about dialogue.
- **It is ok *not* to argue interpretation.** Just because someone puts their interpretation out there doesn't mean that you need to counter it. Acknowledging that there are a wide variety of interpretations of scripture—even within the same denomination—is

a great way to remind people that there's still room for discussion. And be sure to follow this acknowledgment with redirecting the conversation to be about how our interpretations drive the way we treat each other each day.

- **Make it about what you value.** If you're reading this guide, it is probably for a specific reason. Is it to support a friend? A family member? Caring, compassion, feeling included, and being part of a faith community are values that are hard to deny and easy to relate to. Keep coming back to what this means for you as a person of faith.

At PFLAG and Straight for Equality, we are inclusive of all allies. So while we offer the guidelines above to those who want to avoid conflict, if you are the type who loves to debate and feels comfortable with that type of discourse about scriptural interpretation, check out page 41 with some leads as to where to go for more information.



Seeing the Light: Finding Support Online

The really good news is that you never need to go at this alone. There are incredible resources that already exist for nearly every tradition and denomination out there that will help you talk about your feelings about GLBT people and issues in the context of your religion. We've done our best to pull together some of the best resources as your starting point. Visit www.straightforequality.org/faith to see our list.

My 'turning point' was when Matthew Shepard was murdered for being gay. Around that time, I was at a Bible Study and there was some discussion about the news. The final comment was by the pastor's wife who ended the conversation with, '...but he was gay.' As if he had brought it on himself!

I couldn't believe it—and I couldn't help thinking about how much hearing that would hurt a GLBT person or someone like me who cares about one.

Kris, 45

Talk about how this affects you... and the people you care about.

I belong to a women's group in my church. We study Scripture, have issue discussion days, volunteer, things like that. One of the women in the group has a gay son, but hasn't told anyone else about it because she fears what people will think, say, or do.

Recently, the topic of gay people came up in one of our meetings and some people said some very unkind things. I spoke up, but it wasn't enough—the look of pain on her face was horrible. Religion is about love and caring, and yet I see things like this? I just wish that more people had said something positive. No one should be made to feel alienated from their faith or from God.

Rosa, 49

Regardless of what religion you call your own, there is one element that is consistent: A sense of community and belonging among the people in your faith group. From churches to synagogues, mosques to temples, people with similar beliefs come together to worship and support each other to form a supportive and inclusive faith community.

So when there is something that is harming that community or one of its members, the other members tend to pay attention.

Stories of those who have left their religious community (by choice or otherwise) are well-known. But there is a lot of hurt that happens up to that tragic point that people don't see or know about. As an ally of faith, you have an opportunity to put this issue in front of people and help them see it not as something that happens to *other* people, but something that happens to *your* people. The idea of alienation from God (or however you understand your higher power) is unimaginable for most people, yet they don't realize how often it happens to GLBT individuals, their friends, and their families right in their own congregations.

When we share stories like those that Kris and Rosa told, there's a chance that learning about the pain and alienation that many GLBT people, their families, and friends experience will become real and a point of transformation for others. It is hard to not listen and possibly see an issue differently when the story is about someone you care for.

Tell a happy story.

I consider myself to be a person of faith. In fact, my vocation is that of a church musician. I also consider myself to be a straight ally simply because I have been honored to receive the love and friendship of a number of people whose sexual orientation is different from my own. I needed no 'turning point' to tell me to be loyal to my friends. That is what friends do. I know from experience that prejudice is eliminated one person at a time by caring for and loving one person at a time. Be the caring persons that you are. As the Bible says, 'Perfect love casteth out all fear.'

Venita, 44

A lot of the writing that exists about GLBT people and religion is about the challenges and pain that they face. For many people, hearing these stories is the motivation that moves them to reconsider how they understand the topic.

But for many people, hearing a happy, positive story is what transforms them—and there are countless positive stories out there. Venita talks positively about what led her to become a straight ally. Her story doesn't involve any kind of tragic incident, but it involves how she sees her role as a person of faith and as a friend. Other allies can talk about how their status as allies to their GLBT friends and family led to positive changes in relationships and even spiritual growth. Don't think for a second that it necessarily takes pain to bring about a new perspective.

word.

Giving Testimony: Marlena's Story

"My story starts out sad and ends up being one of the greatest joys I have. As a gay woman who was raised in a religiously conservative home, I always knew that God loved me, but I felt that my faith community didn't accept me. Gay people are too often the center of a lot of fire-and-brimstone sermons. So for more than 20 years, I went to church, but never felt permission to receive communion—and it felt awful. Week after week I would just wait and watch other people, but felt I wasn't invited to the table.

I eventually started attending another church. It did not identify as a welcoming congregation, but the leadership and people could not have been more kind. The pastor even asked why I didn't receive communion, and encouraged me to be part of it. And after more than two decades of watching, I did receive communion. At the Communion rail that Sunday, the pastor stopped and told me how happy he was to see me there. I need to be clear on this: That pastor—that straight ally—changed my life."

No matter what your personal story is, it has the power to create miracles for GLBT people—and the people who care about them—and challenge stereotypes about people of faith.

Choose to not remain silent.

I am Muslim. I was brought up in a religious home, and I am still religious. Growing up, we didn't talk about gay people at all. In fact, I didn't even know what the word 'gay' really meant, beyond 'happy.' So when I was a teenager, and a friend of mine came out to me as gay—and after I understood what he was telling me—I was thrilled for him. I didn't realize how much controversy this subject could stir until after I started learning more about it. And while there are those who would say that supporting my friend and people like him isn't in line with what my religion teaches, I see it a different way. This is about caring for people who are my friends, and that is why I am a supportive ally as a Muslim woman.

Dija, 32



The Leap of Faith: Talk to Someone New

"A ship reverses course slowly in a wide circle, not quickly around a point. In the late 1980s members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) prepared to vote on admitting gay rabbis to our organization. As I read the study materials provided by colleagues, I had to confront my ignorance and unlearn the misinformation offered in Psych 101 in the 1950s.

At our Convention in June of 1990 I was ready to welcome and support gay and lesbian colleagues. I began working to grow allies in my congregation and community. I always remind myself of the passage from Exodus: 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.'"

Rabbi Daniel, 51

There's a lot of truth to the warning against hiding your light under a bushel. Now is the time to let your ally light shine and to take the leap and commit to having one conversation with someone about why you feel that you're an ally of faith. Like Rabbi Daniel's story, it may take some time to revisit and examine some things you've been taught. Maybe you'll start the exchange, or maybe you'll chime in on a discussion already in progress. Maybe it will take a while for you to get to talking...but say something and light the way for someone else on the same path.



Giving Testimony: Rev. Julie's Story

"Learning to recognize the rich diversity of God's creation in the lives of GLBT people wasn't a journey I expected to take. Coming out as transgender started an amazing journey of faith. At first I struggled. I prayed and searched the Scripture. My prayers brought me to a spiritual awareness of God's love that I never imagined; a peace unspeakable. I began to see Scripture in a new way. But the most powerful part of the journey was meeting other GLBT people of faith. Both the pain caused by religion to these GLBT people of faith and the depth of their faith stories moved me differently but in one powerful direction. Their stories strengthened my own faith journey and made me an ally and activist for the full inclusion of GLBT people in communities of faith."

While I can't say exactly when I began to be supportive of equal rights for GLBT people as a person of faith, I distinctly remember a moment in the late 80s when I was a sophomore in college that significantly influenced my journey.

Two of my classmates received a death threat which had been made of letters cut out of newspapers and magazines. It looked cartoonish, except that the letter mentioned a 'free sample' and included a bullet. The two recipients, who were co-presidents of the GLBT student group, asked that everyone on campus wear a pink triangle button for a week in solidarity.

Not only was I glad to—it felt somewhat like the stories I had heard of how the King of Denmark refused to allow the Nazis to force Jews to wear the yellow star badge, saying he would wear it himself—but I noticed that it became the new 'cool' overnight. Even members of the football team—not previously known for their liberal views—joined in. I was so astonished to hear one such guy say that he still needed to get his pink triangle when he saw mine that I immediately pulled mine off my shirt and gave it to him. I knew I would make a point of getting another one, but I wasn't sure he would.

I think until then I believed intellectually in equal rights and equal treatment for the gay community; I think after then I really owned it emotionally.

Rabbi Justin, 63

chapter four:

Where does the path go from here?

The way this guide started out was by describing the process of becoming an ally of faith as a journey. We know that like any trip, people approach the voyage differently. Some will come prepared, having spent a lot of time getting ready for the effort. Others will find that something unexpected compelled them to start their travels. Some people find that they've been on the journey for a long time and they're ready for some new excursions.

Of those on the ally path, some will discover that the road is much less challenging than expected, while others will need to spend more time focusing on some of the barriers that they encounter on their way.

But no matter how an ally gets to where they want to go, all of these paths eventually hit a point where everyone needs to pick the direction that is right for them.

Starting to sound a little cryptic?

What we're saying is that this book and the thoughts it inspires are just the beginning. Some allies will find that just the process of soul searching about their feelings on this issue is going to be enough for them. Perhaps they won't become vocal advocates, but they will move forward quietly, with thoughtfulness and respect.

I love my gay friends. I even belong to the GLBT group where I work. But I still struggle with things like marriage. I'm not sure I'll ever quite be on board with it. . . my religion has some very strong teachings. But I'm thinking about it and praying. Oh—and I am a straight ally.

Mary, 34

For many GLBT people and existing allies, hearing that someone isn't quite where you want them to be is tough. Mary's support for her friends—but not yet for marriage equality—is an example of one of those cases. It is important to remember, though, that “being supportive” is most often a process of slow change, not overnight transformation. So for those around Mary, committing to sticking with her while she goes through that process is a great way to demonstrate active support for doing the sensitive work that will change the world we live in.

There are allies who are going to want to take the path that leads to connections to other people like them in their faith community. Maybe these connections will lead to larger discussions which start transforming hearts and minds. Maybe the changes that occur will be more individual. Either way, where we leave off here is just the start of the process.

I grew up in a culture which acted as though gay people didn't exist. In my teens and beyond any references were all pejorative: queer, fags, homos. Without ever really thinking about it, I slipped into the cultural bias of rejection.

What changed all this was coming in contact with GLBT people and their families and understanding two things: First, what terrific people these folks were, and second, what awful pain is inflicted on them by the attitudes of our culture. I made an about face, and have been a vocal advocate for change for over ten years.

Rev. Jack, 70

For those who already identify as an ally, perhaps this guide will provide some good ways to be compassionate towards those who don't yet identify that way, and give you perspective to walk the path with them with more authenticity and grace.

Being patient with those who aren't where you want them to be often takes a lot of patience, but knowing that you have the potential to facilitate important change is a great motivator (and occasional disciplinarian) when emotions are high and the temptation to push too hard rises.

This is where our path diverges and you have the chance to pick which way you're headed. The final section of this guide offers plenty of suggestions as to where to explore next, and by visiting us online, you'll find even more resources for the trip.

People have asked me if there was a moment or event that caused me, as clergy, to feel I should advocate for equality for GLBT people.

No, there wasn't. For me, it was always the right thing to do.

Rev. Lorelei, 29

What we hope that everyone learned along the way—no matter where you started, who you are, or what you believe—is that this is a topic that is not going away. Ignoring these issues is not an option for people of faith anymore. Remember that 8 in 10 people know someone who is GLBT? There's someone in your faith community right now who fits into that number. Maybe it's you and you need an ally.

This isn't about right and wrong or the either/or. It is about creating communities of faith in which every life is celebrated, valued, and included. Straight allies can ensure that happens.

**We wish you peace and happiness
on your journey.**

resources for the faithful

Chances are that if you've made it to this point in the book, you're looking for more ideas about how to learn more: More new things, more ways to connect with people who have similar beliefs, and some next steps.

Your prayers have been answered.

In this final section, you'll find a great glossary that provides explanations of much of the terminology that will be helpful to get the conversation started, a list of preliminary resources, and details on how you can contact us if you have questions.

But please consider this just a short introduction to the wide variety of resources and networks available to you. We invite you to visit us at www.straightforequality.org/faith to access even more detailed resources, hear new stories, and find out how to keep moving forward on your straight ally journey.

finding meaning:

glossary

Most people feel more comfortable as a straight ally when they have a better understanding of the terminology around GLBT issues. Below is a brief list of some of the words that you'll encounter, along with a few terms that specifically refer to faith issues.

Ally: A friend, supporter, assistant, partner, collaborator. Being an ally to the gay, lesbian, bi, and trans community means working towards equality in its many forms and through a wide variety of different methods, both personal and public.

Bisexual (or bi): An individual who is emotionally, romantically, physically, and/or spiritually attracted to men and women. Bisexuals do not need to have had equal sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

Closeted: Describes a person who is not open about his or her sexual orientation, or an ally who is not open about his or her support for equality.

Coming out: A process of self-acceptance that continues throughout one's life. People establish a lesbian, gay, bi or transgender identity first to themselves and then may reveal it to others. There are many different degrees of being out. Some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, some may be out only to themselves. One can be out at different points on this spectrum, and it's important to remember and respect that not everyone is in the same place when it comes to being out.

Gay: The adjective used to describe people whose enduring emotional, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian is often a preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals" – see *homosexual*.

Gender expression: A person's way of showing their gender identity to others through means such as dress and/or manner.

Gender identity: One's internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (boy or girl). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match.

Gender nonconforming: A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society.

GLBT: An acronym for gay, lesbian, bi and transgender, which refers to these individuals collectively. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi, and transgender). Occasionally, the acronym is stated as GLBTA or LBGTBA to include allies. The acronym sometimes also includes Q for queer or questioning.

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people. Whenever possible, replace this word with *gay* or *lesbian* to refer to people who are attracted to individuals of the same sex.

Lifestyle: A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of GLBT people. The term is disliked by the GLBT community because it implies that being gay, lesbian, bi, or transgender is a choice.

Open and Affirming: An official designation of congregations and other settings within the United Church of Christ (UCC), affirming the full inclusion of GLBT people in that setting's life and ministry. While this term originates with the UCC, other communities and congregations have adopted it and use this phrase to designate the group as GLBT-inclusive.

Out: Describes people who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bi, transgender, or straight allies in their public and/or professional lives.

Queer: Traditionally a negative term, queer sometimes is used by some people in the gay community to describe themselves and/or their community. Some value the term for its defiance, and some like it because it can be inclusive of the entire community. Nevertheless, some within the gay community dislike the term. This word should be avoided unless referring to someone who self-identifies as queer.

Sexual orientation: Permanent emotional, romantic, spiritual, or sexual feelings toward other people. Straight individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the opposite sex. Gay or lesbian individuals experience these feelings primarily for people of the same sex. Bi individuals experience these feelings for people of both sexes.

Transgender: An umbrella term describing the state of a person's gender identity which does not necessarily match his/her assigned gender at birth. Other words commonly used are female to male (FTM), male to female (MTF), crossdresser, and genderqueer. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

Transsexual: An older term which originated in the medical and psychological communities. Many transgender people prefer the term *transgender* rather than *transsexual*. Some transsexual people still prefer to use the term to describe themselves; however, unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, and many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Welcoming Congregation: Originally referred to a church in the Unitarian Universalist Association or Canadian Unitarian Council that had undergone an intensive educational program to help the congregation become more inclusive of GLBT people. Today this is a term that is used broadly by many faith communities outside of the Unitarian Church, including in many non-Christian places of worship.

next steps on the journey:

additional resources online

There are countless resources out there to provide you with next steps for your ally of faith journey. Below are just a few of the sites that we recommend. If you are looking for denomination-specific content (for example, resources for Catholic allies) please visit www.straightforequality.org/faith to access a more comprehensive list of sites to check out.

Christianity

- Welcoming Churches | www.welcomingchurches.org
- Canyon Walker Connections | www.canyonwalkerconnections.com
- Believe Out Loud | www.believeoutloud.com
- The Gay Christian Network | www.gaychristian.net
- New Ways Ministry | www.newwaysministry.org

Islam

- Arabs for Tolerance | www.arabs4tolerance.org
- Muslims for Progressive Values | www.mpvusa.org
- The Safra Project | www.safraproject.org
- LGBT Muslims and Their Allies | www.facebook.com/LGBTMuslimsAndAllies

Judaism:

- Nehirim | www.nehirim.org
- Heneini | www.lgbtjewishheroes.org
- Jewish Mosaic | www.jewishmosaic.org
- Svara | www.svara.org
- Keshet Ga'avah | www.glbtejews.org

Interfaith/Nondenominational:

- The Religious Institute – Faithful Voices on Sexuality and Religion
www.religioustheology.org
- The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry
www.clgs.org
- The Institute for Welcoming Resources | www.welcomingresources.org
- Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network Interfaith LGBT Toolkit
http://www.uujustice.org/LGBTQ_Toolkit_Final_1-12.pdf

Other Traditions:

- Buddhism – Gay Buddhists Sangha | www.gaybuddhistsangha.org
- Hinduism – Galva 108 | www.galva108.org
- Baha'i – Baha'i Story Project | www.gaybahai.net
- Sikh – Sarbat | www.sarbat.net
- Confucianism – The Useless Tree | www.uselesstree.typepad.com

one last thing...

This publication could not have been written without the help of countless individuals from both the PFLAG family and its supporters who shared their personal stories about being a person of faith and a straight ally. Each of the stories in this publication are taken from narratives submitted to the Straight for Equality team via Facebook and Twitter. The stories have been edited for length and content, and names have been changed, but each one is real and represents one of the millions of critically-important voices in this discussion.

You can be one of those voices too. In fact, please consider this your invitation to be an important part of the dialogue.

Please connect with us online and let us know what you think, what you need, and how your journey as a straight ally in a faith community is progressing. Reaching us is easy:



Connect on Facebook: www.facebook.com/S4Equality



Follow us on Twitter: [@S4Equality](https://twitter.com/S4Equality)



Visit our website: www.straightforequality.org/faith



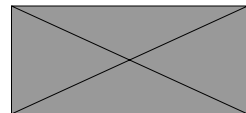
E-mail us: info@straightforequality.org

***be not afraid — help is on the way:
straight for equality in faith communities***

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**Were you looking for a deep thought on this page? So were we, but the copyright stuff needed its own space.*





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