

The Global Crisis for People Who Are LGBT and Their Families:

A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Response



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Section 1.

A Resolution and an Encouragement

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor churches have explicitly affirmed the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people for almost forty years. This includes a call from the 117th General Assembly (1977) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to stand for just treatment of LGBT people regarding their civil liberties, equal rights, and protection from social and economic discrimination. Statements of the General Assembly through the years have included similar affirmations. Presbyterians disagree on many questions of human sexuality, but the General Assembly's commitment to the human rights of LGBT people is long-standing.

Building on that long-standing commitment, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted a commissioner resolution titled "*The Global Crisis for LGBT People and Their Families: A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Response.*" This document is part of the implementation of that action.

The resolution said, in part:

In eighty-one countries where homosexuality is illegal, God's global family includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people who face persecution for simply being who they are, for whom they love, and with whom they create a family. . . . Given the global crisis for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons and their families in [these eighty-one countries in which homosexuality is criminalized] and the impact of persecution that threatens their lives, health, and safety, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:

1. Encourages each Presbyterian to hold in prayer our LGBT sisters and brothers in the countries where they are vulnerable around the world.
2. Encourages the Presbyterian Mission Agency to create educational resources about the critical global LGBT situation and forward those resources to synods and presbyteries for study and action.
3. Encourage Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations to consider preparations to provide sanctuary, safety, and support for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers.

Section 2.

The Scope of the Global LGBT Crisis

Michael Adeo

Homosexuality is illegal or criminalized in eighty-one countries. In ten of those countries, capital punishment is also a threat for same-sex sexual expression. For a sense of perspective, as of February 2016, the United Nations has 193 member states as well as two Permanent Observer Non-member States: the Holy See and the State of Palestine. In the Global South, most of the criminalization laws are legacies of colonialism, placed into legal codes by British, French, Portuguese, and Dutch colonizers. While some countries, such as Mozambique and South Africa, have recently decriminalized homosexuality (and, in South Africa's case, recognized civil unions), these tend to be exceptions.

Sexual minorities also are persecuted in the Global North. In Russia, for example, persecution of sexual minorities in the form of anti-propaganda laws fosters violence against LGBT people and hinders work with HIV and AIDS, public health, and human rights. Moreover, the lack of safety can become a barrier to going to school, securing sustainable employment, and seeking health care. Criminalization can result in shame and stigma while simultaneously encouraging anti-gay attitudes in the general population.

Criminalization has had profound effects on the lives of LGBT people. Davis Macllyalla's story provides one example.

Story of Davis Macllyalla

My name is Davis Macllyalla. I was born and raised in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. I was baptized and confirmed at St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Bakana, my hometown in Nigeria. I was educated in Port Harcourt and worked full time as a teacher and with the National Population Commission of Nigeria. My childhood was good, and I consider my family and friends the best. My childhood friends include boys and girls, but I gradually came to realize that I felt more attraction toward members of my own sex.

Sexual issues are not easily spoken about in Nigeria. From an early age, I would hear preaching that described homosexuality as a taboo. However, I have never allowed this to affect my faith or beliefs. I knew that I was born homosexual and did not choose my sexuality. My only regret was that I grew up in a culture where I could not dare to discuss my sexuality with my parents or siblings.

I started experiencing public homophobic attacks as early as 2005, when I founded Changing Attitude Nigeria to work for the full inclusion of LGBT people within the Anglican Church of Nigeria and the wider society. The threat to my life became so serious that I had to leave Nigeria and go to Togo, where I hoped to be safe to continue my human rights work.

I was not safe in Togo, as I was physically attacked there, too. The scars of that attack still reside on and within me. The attack did not stop me from attending the Lambeth Conference in 2008 in London, where I wanted the African LGBT voices to be heard. While in the United Kingdom, I got a threatening email telling me never to come back to Africa or I would be attacked again, to my death. I showed this to the police, and I was told that asylum was my only option.

West Africa was no longer a safe place for me. My only option was to seek asylum, which was one of the most painful decisions I have ever had to make in my whole life.

My asylum was successful, and I have been living in the UK since 2008 as a settled citizen, where I continue to fight for the freedom and human rights of LGBT Nigerians from the diaspora. I earn my living by working as a nurse for the elderly. My philosophy in life is equality and fairness. My prayer and hope is to see the day when gay and straight persons would live together peacefully without any form of discrimination.

—Davis Maclyalla, email message to Michael Adey, August 15, 2015

Section 3.

Why the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Cares about the Global LGBT Crisis

Mark Koenig and Michael Adee

“The great commandment, to love God with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself, seemed more subtle than ever. I began to see the three elements as a kind of trinity, always in motion, and the three loves as interdependent. It would be impossible to love God without loving others; impossible to love others unless one were grounded in a healthy self-respect; and, maybe, impossible to truly love at all in a totally secular way, without participating in the holy.”

—Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk*

With the decision for federal marriage equality by the Supreme Court, the United States is among twenty countries that offer same-sex marriage equality and thirty-four that recognize civil unions for same-sex couples.

Seventeen countries provide joint adoption of children by same-sex parents.

Sixty-nine countries prohibit some or all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

These legal protections provide a framework for human dignity and equality for LGBT people and their families. They also encourage social respect for sexual minorities, their relationships, and their families.

Given these realities, Presbyterians and others within the United States and the Global North might think that LGBT people and their families are not vulnerable to persecution or violence because of recent gains in equality. They might wonder if the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs to care about the issue of LGBT people and their families enduring persecution and violence.

The reality is that, in too many places, our global sisters and brothers live with daily threats of violence, bullying, criminal prosecution, and death. Legal frameworks for dignity, respect, and equal protection under law do not exist in eighty-one countries.

Criminalization and persecution discourage global ecumenical partners from engaging in evangelism, pastoral care, and ministry to LGBT people and their families, and limit opportunities for PC(USA) accompaniment of such ministries, if requested. The threat of persecution and violence is a barrier to LGBT people and their families attending or being active in a local church, Bible study, prayer group, or campus ministry.

Our faith—rooted in Scripture, our confessions, our polity, and General Assembly policies—calls us to respond: to pray for and with our sisters and brothers, to learn more about the situations they face, and to consider ways to provide sanctuary and support. The Church is sent, our *Book of Order* reminds us, “to be Christ’s faithful evangelist” by “participating in God’s mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from sin, suffering, and oppression; and to establish Christ’s just, loving, and peaceable rule in the world” (*Book of Order*, F-1.0302). In discerning how God calls us to respond to this mandate, the PC(USA) has formulated positions on a number of topics that are relevant to the treatment of LGBT people around the world.

Love. The *Book of Order* notes: “The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down” (*Book of Order*, F-1.0301).

We are called to love God, neighbor, and ourselves by the life, example, and teaching of Jesus. Matthew 22:37–40; Mark 12:30–31; and Luke 10:25–27 are called the great commandment texts based on the question asked of Jesus concerning the most important law or commandment for a faithful disciple to observe. Jesus’ response to the question—“Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29)—teaches us the universal and specific nature of neighbor. Paul identifies love as the greatest of God’s gifts (1 Corinthians 12 and 13). Justice is love made public, as author Cornel West often reminds us.

Justice. God creates humankind in God’s image (Genesis 1:26–28). Micah stands firmly within the prophetic tradition that calls us to honor God’s image in one another. God requires us “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for:

- a. dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- b. exercising power for the common good,
- c. supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- d. working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- e. welcoming the stranger in the land,
- f. seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- g. bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- h. redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world. (*Book of Order*, W-7.4002)

The themes of love and justice echo in the *Book of Confessions*. In *A Brief Statement of Faith*, the Church affirms:

In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

Human rights. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor denominations long have supported the human rights of all people. General assemblies have explicitly supported the rights of our LGBT brothers and sisters on numerous occasions. The 189th General Assembly (1977) expressed the need for the Church to stand for just treatment of LGBT citizens regarding their civil liberties, equal rights, and protection under the law from social and economic discrimination.

The following year, the 190th General Assembly (1978) called for equal access to the basic requirements of human social existence for LGBT persons. The assembly went on to declare that there is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying such access to any person.

The 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved the policy, *Transforming Families*, that concludes with a vision in which the “church rejects attitudes or practices that value some more highly than others based on gender, age, class, ability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or any outward condition.”

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) committed the Church to support the goals to address discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientations and gender identities contained in a May 4, 2015, report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (See un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/29/23.)

Capital punishment. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor denominations have consistently opposed the death penalty. In 1959, the 171st General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America stated that the use of the death penalty tends to brutalize the society that condones it. The 190th General Assembly (1978) stated that capital punishment is an expression of vengeance which contradicts the justice of God. General assemblies have regularly reaffirmed this position. Most recently, the 218th (2008) General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called for an end to the death penalty. (See <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/>.)

Section 4.

How One PC(USA) Congregation Is Responding

Chris Morehouse

Several PC(USA) congregations have been working diligently to discern faithful responses to persecution of LGBT people. In 2014, some members of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church (SPC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, acted to support a group who are truly among the “least of these”—LGBT refugees in Africa. Despite the frustrations they have encountered, their efforts have created a foundation on which the congregation can build.

In late 2013, through Facebook, two young men from Uganda contacted an SPC member. They were *kuchu*—gay—in a country that had recently approved the death penalty, with the support of some American evangelicals, for the crime of being who they were. (Although the Ugandan Supreme Court since has struck down that law on a technicality, social attitudes continue to make the country dangerous for its LGBT citizens.) The young men had been abandoned by their families and asked for help. The member, who had followed the situation in Uganda, understood this to be a real danger and helped them travel to Nairobi, Kenya, so they could apply to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for official refugee status and the possibility of resettlement in a safer country. With the member’s help, they applied for refugee status.

Over the next two years, as SPC members prayed for the young men, they would learn just how much LGBT refugees can fall through the cracks. Refugee camps can be hostile places, too, with LGBT refugees prey to attack by other refugees. “Safe houses” for LGBT people awaiting decisions on their status reportedly have been attacked and burned. Refugee-serving organizations, although they can and do serve LGBT refugees, are ethically prohibited from receiving financial support for individuals, because they must not show favoritism. Churches in these countries, even if welcoming, can offer little more than moral support. The two young Ugandans sought help from Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, of the Anglican-affiliated Church of Uganda, who had been isolated by the church for bravely speaking out against the homophobic law. The young men feared being followed there by the police. Two gay-friendly churches in Uganda, affiliated with a U.S. denomination, were unable to help. International gay human-rights organizations focus on many issues, not just refugees. And the only African country that recognizes LGBT human rights is South Africa—out of reach for these young men. U.S.-based Quakers quietly support an “underground railroad” for LGBT refugees, but its reach is limited. In the case of these two young

men, a network of activists, including clergy and laypeople of various denominations, as well as LGBT refugees who have been resettled in the U.S., provided advice.

In 2015, after almost two years of seeking to leave Uganda, the two young men had few options. Through a U.S.-based clergywoman, the SPC member identified an entrepreneurial initiative in Uganda that would both employ and house them. This initiative, involving a fledgling brick-making enterprise and a hair salon, was developed to support LGBT youth who had been abandoned by their families. The two young men, who earlier had feared that they would become targets in a safe house, declined the offer. In a society steeped in hate and fear, trust and hope are in short supply.

During this time, SPC responded with compassion and concern, sponsoring a listening session to learn about the issue, which was new to many members. A special collection was approved. Regular prayers were offered. And some members attended a screening of the documentary *God Loves Uganda* to raise awareness and support. SPC, with other churches in the community, has begun to explore ways to make the community welcoming for refugees coming to the area and to welcome refugees from any country and of any faith. Although the limitations proved insurmountable in this case, the knowledge gained and network developed may help members extend compassion to others.

Section 5.

How One of Our Partner Churches Is Responding

Dennis Smith

Human sexuality and mission are controversial and polarizing issues throughout the world today. Thus, they are controversial and polarizing issues for many of our partner churches. The Evangelical Waldensian Church of Río de la Plata (IEVRP; for more information on the ministry of the IEVRP, see www.iglesiavaldense.com), with congregations in Uruguay and Argentina, provides an unusual example of a partner church in the Global South that allows local congregations to bless same-sex marriages.

The Waldensians are a Reformed group that originated in Lyon, France, in the twelfth century. Violently repressed because of their teaching and pastoral practice, the “Poor of Lyon” were forced to flee to the remote and rugged valleys of the Italian Alps. Today, they are the oldest of the members of the Reformed family in Italy. Wherever they have migrated—including South and North America—Waldensians always have defended religious freedom and respect for diversity.

The IEVRP, a global partner of the PC(USA) based in Colonia Valdense, Uruguay, traces its roots to the massive emigration out of Italy that began in the mid-nineteenth century. Today, the IEVRP has congregations throughout Uruguay and Argentina.

Like many ecumenical Protestant churches in the region, the life and mission of the Waldensians were deeply marked by the military dictatorships in Uruguay (1973–85) and Argentina (1976–83). During those periods, the promotion and defense of human rights came to be a core expression of their presence in society for some Waldensians. The IEVRP congregation in Flores, a neighborhood in Buenos Aires, illustrates this commitment. Its pastor, Oscar Nuñez, who died in 2013, was a respected professor at Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos, the local ecumenical seminary, and a well-known human rights activist.

Beginning in 2006, the leaders of the Flores congregation, together with Nuñez, began to actively support the civil rights struggle of Argentina’s LGBT community. Marriage equality became a high-profile political issue in Argentina when the government promoted legislation that would legalize same-sex marriage. Members of the Flores Waldensian community came to understand that part of their pastoral task—and a concrete expression of solidarity with LGBT members in their own congregation—was expressed by their participation in the struggle for marriage equality.

As is the case in many countries, ministers in Uruguay and Argentina are not agents of the state and thus have no authority to perform legally binding weddings. In 2008 and 2009, members of the Flores community were appointed to lead the synod's Commission on Liturgy of the IEVRP. From this platform, members reflected deeply—together with their whole congregation—on the theological and pastoral implications for their denomination of blessing same-sex unions.

In a document sent to all IEVRP pastors in 2009, the Commission on Liturgy stated:

[We] understand that we are a Church that is born of the boundless love and grace of Christ (Romans 5:1–11). This challenges us to walk in accordance with the vocation to which we have been called (Ephesians 4:1) and that is made clear in Christ's call to love the neighbor. Therefore, we feel called to be an open door to all. To welcome and reflect with, not on, [the LGBT community] is what permits us to be faithful to the Gospel call: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God (Romans 15:7)." (IEVRP, *Actos de la XLVII Asamblea Sinodal Rioplatense* 2010, p. 8.)

In 2009, the synod of the IEVRP commissioned a resolution on same-sex unions to be presented to the 2010 synod. This resolution, approved unanimously, included the following:

We should be encouraged as communities to become sensitive to and to respond with concrete actions of study, attention, and intervention to the issue that demands of us a response of solidarity rooted in the Gospel. Consequently, if a local congregation receives a concrete request and, upon reflection, has come to a mature and respectful consensus, we understand that they should feel at liberty to take the pertinent decisions. (IEVRP, *Actos de la XLVII Asamblea Sinodal Rioplatense* 2010, p. 9.)

In July 2010, Argentina became the first nation in Latin America to approve same-sex marriage. Edgardo Malán, a member of the Flores community, describes the decision to participate in the public campaign in support of this legislation as being the result

of a “fraternal, committed dialogue, certain that the approval of the marriage equality law constituted a milestone in the struggle for civil rights, especially for minorities.” (Edgardo Malán, email message to Dennis Smith, January 22, 2016.)

Malán shares that, in 2014, Adriana and Laura approached the Flores session, asking that their faith community bless their legal marriage. The ceremony took place in January 2015. For reasons of space, the blessing service was held in the nearby, much larger Methodist church. Because the community was without an ordained minister at the time, lay members of the community did the whole celebration—the decorations, the music, and the sermon. They also pronounced the blessing. After reading 1 Corinthians 13, Adriana and Laura approached the table to receive the blessing. Then, as is their custom every time they gather, the community shared the Lord’s Supper—this time with Laura and Adriana sharing the elements. At the time of intercession, all in attendance were invited to share their hopes for the couple. Malán describes this event as being a mobilizing experience for this faith community.

Malán notes that the struggle to defend this new legal conquest will continue. Under Argentina’s new conservative government, some sectors of society are calling for the marriage equality law to be repealed.

Section 6.

How We Can Respond to the Global LGBT Crisis

The 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) resolved to encourage each Presbyterian to hold in prayer our LGBT sisters and brothers in vulnerable places; to encourage the Presbyterian Mission Agency to create educational resources about the critical global LGBT situation; and to encourage Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations to consider providing sanctuary, safety, and support for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers.

This educational resource is designed for individual and group reflection and response. This guide began with a summary of the global crisis regarding criminalization and violence experienced by LGBT people and their families. A Nigerian gay Christian, Davis Maclyalla, shared his life and faith journey as he seeks asylum in the United Kingdom. Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and a congregation of the Evangelical Waldensian Church of Río de la Plata (IEVRP) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, shared their experiences of care and ministry with and for LGBT people in their contexts.

The appendices that follow offer information and links to educational resources. For people and congregations considering offering support for LGBT asylees or refugees, we recommend the guide “Stronger Together” from the LGBT Freedom and Asylum Network (lgbt-fan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Stronger_Together_FINAL.pdf).

A Prayer for God’s LGBT Children and Their Families

God of creation, may we remember that all of us are created in your image.

God of love, may the same heartbeat among us
draw us together across fear and false divisions.

God of life, when God’s LGBT children experience prejudice,
violence, and persecution, may we seek the grounding presence
of your love and compassion.

God of grace, open our hearts in the hope of creating a world that affirms that
we are all children of God and one human family.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *A Brief Statement of Faith* challenges us to hear the voices of peoples long silenced. To listen and to hear with fidelity and integrity, we must explore and understand the language used in common conversation within the LGBT community. Dialogue often is thwarted because of a fear of saying the wrong thing. This glossary is offered to assist in respectful and necessary conversations related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

Ally: Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than his or her own.

Asexual: Someone who generally does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuality should not be confused with celibacy, which is the distinct choice not to have sex.

Biphobia: The fear of, irrational antipathy toward, or discomfort with people who are bisexual.

Bisexual (bi): A term referring to persons who can be emotionally, sexually, and romantically attracted to people of both genders. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual experience to be bisexual.

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the sex he or she was assigned at birth.

Civil union: A state-based designation that recognizes gay and lesbian couples' relationships, offering some or all the rights, protections, and responsibilities of marriage as granted by the state. Civil unions or domestic partnerships were more common in the era before marriage equality.

Closeted: Descriptive of a person who is not public about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, or one who is not "out."

Coming out: The process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Cross-dressers: People who wear clothing, makeup, and/or accessories that are not traditionally associated with their biological sex. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression that is not necessarily indicative of a person's gender identity or sexual orientation. Many cross-dressers are comfortable with their gender identities.

Domestic partnership: Civil and legal recognition of a committed relationship between two people that sometimes extends limited protections of the law to that couple. Like civil unions, domestic partnerships were more common prior to marriage equality.

Drag queen: A term used to refer to a man who dresses as a woman (often a celebrity woman), typically as part of a performance.

Gay: A term originally referring to men who were emotionally, romantically, sexually, and relationally attracted to other men. Now the word *gay* often is used for anyone who is attracted to a person of the same sex or gender.

Gender: A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to persons. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different among cultures. Differs from *sex*, which is biologically determined.

Gender dysphoria: A psychological diagnosis (according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th Edition) recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Gender dysphoria includes a significant degree of distress and trauma caused by a marked difference between an individual's expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign them. Formerly known as "gender identity disorder."

Gender expression: The external characteristics and behaviors socially defined as either masculine or feminine. Gender expression is the attempt to align one's outward way of being with one's gender identity, including elements such as clothing, voice, or body characteristics.

Gender fluid: Describing a person whose gender identification and presentation moves, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations.

Gender identity: Distinct from “sexual orientation,” gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt psychological identification and personal experience of his or her gender.

Gender queer: Descriptive of nonstandard gender identity or expression. Also known as “gender nonconforming” (see *Queer*).

Hate crime: A crime (usually an act of violence) in which the victim is targeted because of perceived membership in a certain social group, race, color, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.

Heterosexism: The term that applies to a system of bias and discrimination in favor of heterosexuality. It can include the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that opposite-sex attractions and relationships are normative and therefore superior. Heterosexism as discrimination ranks gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people as second-class citizens regarding various legal and civil rights, economic opportunities, and social equality in most the world’s jurisdictions and societies.

Heterosexual privilege: Benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that often are denied to LGBT people.

Homophobia: Describes a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward LGBT people—specifically antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, and irrational fear. Homophobia is expressed in hostile, discriminatory, and/or violent behavior against non-heterosexual orientation, real or perceived.

Internalized homophobia: Self-identification with societal stereotypes by LGBT people, causing them to dislike and resent their sexual orientations or gender identities.

Internalized oppression: The process by which oppressed people come to believe, accept, or live out society’s inaccurate stereotypes and misinformation about their groups.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/ or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, and relationally attracted to other women.

LGBT: The common acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.” Sometimes one will see LGBTQ, wherein “Q” refers to *queer* and/or *questioning*; or LGBTI, wherein “I” refers to *intersex*.

Marriage equality: A legal framework that allows two people to marry, regardless of their sexes or genders, and that extends the same duties, privileges, and protections to all married couples. In June 2015, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling granting same-sex couples a constitutional right to marry.

Marriage offers legal benefits and responsibilities that protect families. Marriage also provides societal status and emotional benefits to the family unit.

With the Supreme Court’s decision, the U.S. now joins twenty other countries that allow gay and lesbian couples to wed in all their jurisdictions. The first nation to legalize gay marriage was the Netherlands, which did so in 2000. Since then, several other European countries—including Spain, France, all of Scandinavia, and, most recently, Ireland—have enacted laws sanctioning same-sex marriage. Outside of Europe, same-sex marriage is now legal in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and Uruguay, as well as in parts of Mexico. (*See Marriage Equality FAQs at the end of Appendix 2.*)

Out: A person who self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in public life. (This term is preferred over “openly gay.”)

Outing: The act of publicly declaring or revealing another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity as LGBT without that person’s permission.

Queer: A broad term that is inclusive of people who are not straight, often used interchangeably with “LGBT.” Previously a derogatory term, *queer* has been reclaimed by many members of the LGBT community as a moniker of pride. Though some people still feel that it is a word that carries negative weight, most young LGBT people are comfortable with the term, and many universities now offer degree programs in queer studies.

Questioning: Describes a person who may be processing or questioning his or her own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sex: A biological distinction between female, male, or intersex organisms based on genetic, anatomical, and hormonal differences. Differs from *gender*, which is socially and culturally constructed.

Sexual orientation: An inherent and enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, and relational attraction to other persons. This attraction may be the same-sex orientation, opposite-sex orientation, or bisexual orientation. A person's sexual orientation is distinct from that person's gender identity and expression. People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their sexual orientations. (Avoid using "sexual preference," which suggests a degree of voluntary choice.)

Sodomy laws: Legislation historically used selectively to persecute gay men. *Sodomy* is an *incorrectly* interpreted biblical word.

Transgender (or trans): An umbrella term for someone whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with the sex assigned at birth. Not all people who consider themselves transgender will undergo a surgical or hormonal gender transition.

Transition: The social, legal, and/or medical process transgender people may go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth. This may or may not include hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery and other medical procedures. Transitioning means many different things to different people, and a person does not have to experience all or any of these common transitioning elements to identify as trans.

Transphobia: The irrational fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people whose gender identities or gender expressions do not conform to cultural gender norms.

Transsexual: The medical term describing those whose gender and sex differ, and who often seek medical treatment to bring their bodies and genders identity into alignment.

Appendix 2: Resources

Biblical/Faith Resources

Institute for Welcoming Resources:

<http://www.welcomingresources.org/>

Pacific School of Religion/Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion:

<https://clgs.org>

GLAD Alliance biblical resources (Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]):

<http://gladalliance.org/site/resources-category/bible/>

Our Whole Lives sexuality education curriculum (United Church of Christ):

http://www.ucc.org/justice_sexuality-education_our-whole-lives or

<http://www.uua.org/re/owl/>

Family/Youth Resources

PFLAG (formerly Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays):

<https://www.pflag.org>

Family Acceptance Project:

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

The Trevor Project:

www.thetrevorproject.org

It Gets Better Project:

www.itgetsbetter.org

Marriage Equality FAQs

www.hrc.org/blog/entry/5-facts-about-the-changing-marriage-equality-landscape

marriageequalityfacts.org

Human Rights Advocacy

Human Rights Campaign (HRC):

www.hrc.org

GLAAD (formerly Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation):

www.glaad.org

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):

www.glsen.org

National LGBTQ Task Force:

www.thetaskforce.org

LGBT Freedom and Asylum Network:

www.lgbt-fan.org

Out and Equal Workplace Advocates:

www.outandequal.org

Genders & Sexualities Alliance (GSA) Network:

www.gsanetwork.org

StopBullying.gov:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html>