



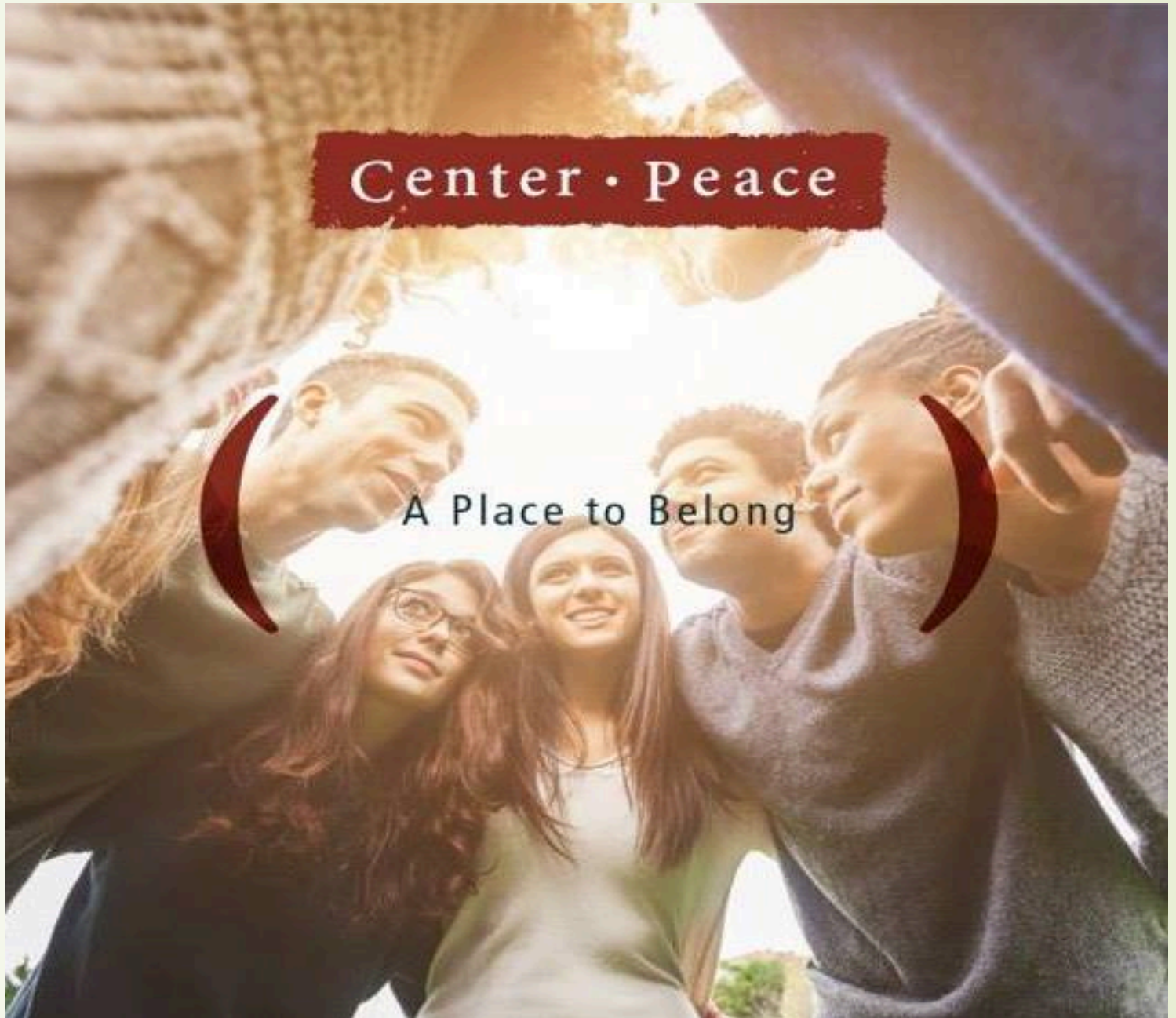
Pastoral Care

Creating **Safe Space** for those experiencing same-sex attraction

**Center Peace
PEACEMAKERS
CONFERENCE**

**October
27-29, 2016**

**Highland Oaks
Church of
Christ, Dallas**





My Goals for Today:

- **Raise awareness and understanding about the LGBT Community**
- **Raise awareness about the spiritual discussions ongoing within this Community**
- **Equip church leaders with practical ways to effectively and pastorally care into this community**



My Background

My Family



December 1963



My childhood family



My family



SCOTUS: Obergefell v Hodges

North Davis' Elders Response:



Our Story



LGBT Community – Things I've learned

- **Not all attend Gay PRIDE Parades**
- **Many live 'ordinary' and regular lives**
- **As diverse in thought and practice and living life as any one else**



Things I've learned

- ▶ **They have the same needs and hopes as any other person**



Things I've learned

- **50%** of the LGBT community identify as Christian



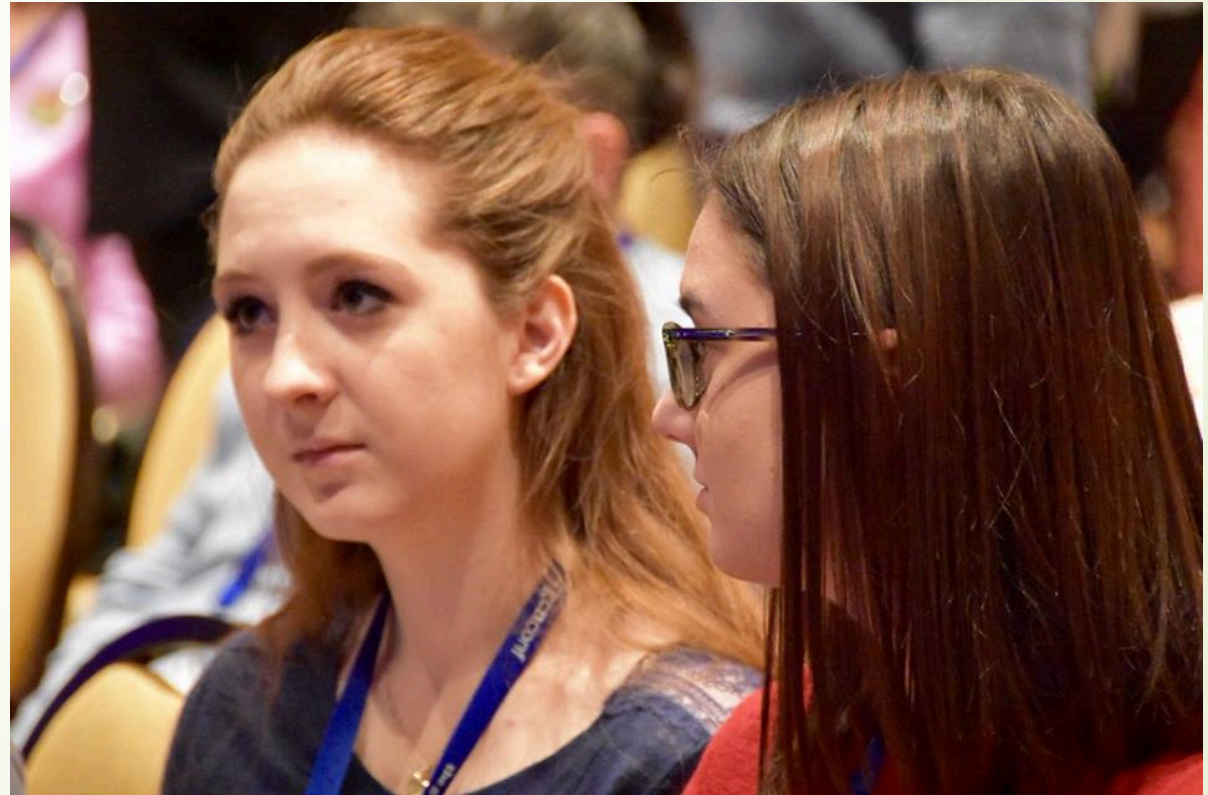
Gay Christians : An Understanding

- ▶ You need to be aware of the discussions going on in the gay Christian community about life as a gay Christian and how that can be God-Honoring
- ▶ **Side A** – A committed, monogamous, loving relationship such as a marriage can be God honoring.
- ▶ **Side B**- Chosen celibacy is the only God honoring option.



Things I've learned

- Most of those have been asked to leave their churches OR have been so hurt by their churches that they had to leave.





Worse yet...

- **28%** of the homeless teens in America are gay and forced to leave their Christian homes (over 1 in 4). (US Dept. of HHS)
- Other studies show that of those:
 - **35%** will be introduced to the sex trafficking trade within the first 48 hours of being homeless, AND
 - **70%** will contemplate or attempt to commit suicide.



A lot of damage has already been done.



So How do We proceed?



1: Do No Harm

- ▶ The **WORDS** that we say publicly and privately need to be edifying, uplifting, and beneficial.
 - ▶ Put yourself in the shoes of a closeted gay person sitting in your church or reading your signs and bulletins. Would you be better off, feel loved, improve one's understanding, see Jesus, and decide this **IS** a safe place?
- ▶ Reparative ex-gay therapy such as that offered by the now defunct Exodus International does not work and actually does harm. SO much so that some states have outlawed its practice.
- ▶ Approach with **humility**. Be willing to understand.



#2 LOVE these folks like Jesus does

- ▶ I can love people even when I don't agree with them or I don't approve of what they do. **That's when they need love the most.**
- ▶ I can love on them and show them by my actions that this **place is safe** to have life together.
- ▶ I can show them that I love them by **walking alongside and talking** about the goings-on in their life.
- ▶ I can love them by **listening** with an attentive and compassionate ear.
- ▶ I can love them and **validate** their experiences as real and authentic.
- ▶ I can love them and **include them** in fellowship, worship, and experience Christian life together.



Care for the Teen Experiencing Same Sex Attraction



Care for a teen

- Orientation is not a choice.
 - Imagine realizing one day that you are not like your friends. You have an attraction to the same gender.
- Out or not, they are scared and unsure as to what to do or where to go. Many simply are silent.
- To whom do we want our teen to talk to about this? Don't let the secular internet or non-Christian friends be the voice they hear.
- Realize how brave and courageous it is for a 15-16-17 year to tell someone their deepest, darkest secret unsure of how that person will respond.
- Where will they be safe? Communicate ahead of time how church is a safe place. Follow it up with action.
- Be **BOLD** in your loving gentleness.

Care for a teen

- Bring **hope** and walk along side. Romans 8:38-39, 13:8-10. I John 4:7-ff
 - Help the teen stay close to God.
 - Strengthen their faith. I can do all things... Phil 4:13
 - Reinforce their identity as a son/daughter of God and brother/sister of Jesus.
- Youth ministers – Hold this teen to the same standards and rules as every other youth. Don't add extra burdens or hurdles because of their orientation. Don't let them off the hook either. Engage the teen in the solutions to hard questions. Be alert to how the teen is treated.
- Listen with an open heart and mind. Keep communication lines open!
- Obviously work with the teen on telling his/her parents if they don't know (the sooner the better)
- It's ok to say, "I don't know. Why don't we find out together."
- Make a plan on the next steps.
- Its ok to be uncomfortable about this. Its ok to feel like you are not up to the task. Its not ok to not shepherd as a result.



Care for a teen

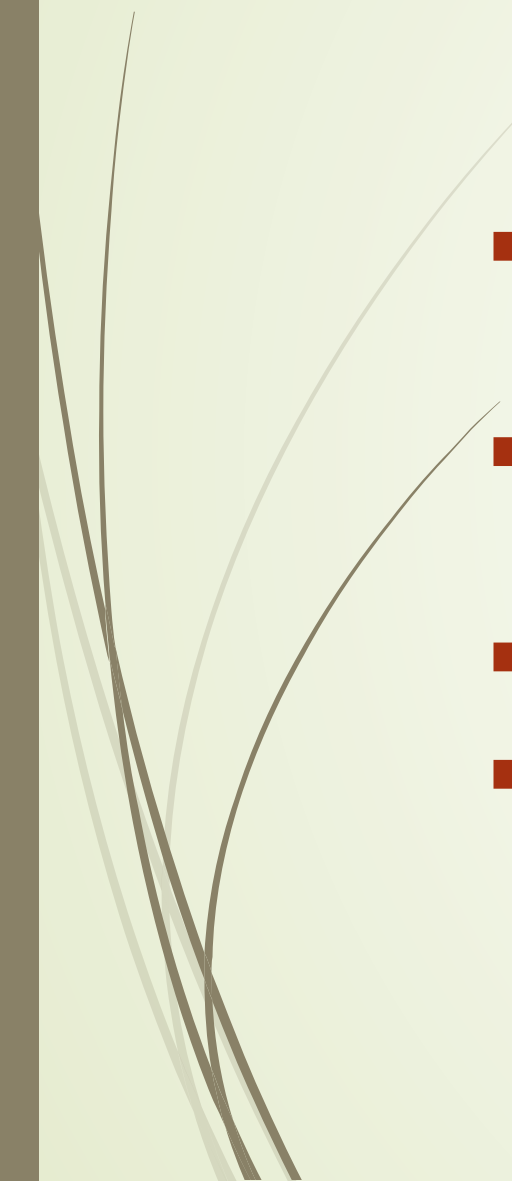
- Finally, peer pressure is a powerful force as a teenager. Having an attraction to the same sex creates a whole other level of pressure.
- **Help the teen see and realize that they are an INDIVIDUAL, uniquely and wonderfully made in the image of GOD.**
- As a result:
 - They do not have to act a certain way
 - They do not have to talk a certain way
 - They do not have to think a certain way, just because they are attracted to the same sex or that community thinks they should.



Care for the parents of a child
experiencing same sex attraction



Care for parents

- ▶ Parents often react much like their child having a same sex attraction is like a death. In some ways it is.
 - ▶ The preferred, expected future of their child has died. It is not going to be as we first thought and dreamed.
 - ▶ That takes time to process.
 - ▶ We and others experience the five stages of grief
- 



Care for parents – grief stages

➤ DENIAL

- “It’s just a phase.”
- “I don’t want to hear about it.”
- “You just have not met the right (opposite sex) person yet.”

- “This is not real.”
- “This happens to other families, not mine.”
- “There must be some mistake.”



Care for parents – grief stages

➤ **ANGER**

- “I’m disappointed in you.”
- “How could you shame our family like this?”
- “We were good parents! What did we do wrong?”

- When reality does set in then blame surfaces
 - Spouses can blame each other
 - Blame their child
 - Blame his or her friends
 - Blame culture
 - Blame an early childhood sexual experience.



Care for parents – grief stages

➤ **BARGAINING**

- “Just don’t tell anyone else.”
- “We’ll find you help.”
- “I don’t want you to bring anyone home to meet us.”
- Bargaining is really attempts to quell anger and protect from further pain. There’s an anticipation of things getting harder.
 - “What if others ask about my son?”
 - “What if my daughter will always insist she’s a man?”
 - “What if my daughter shows affection with her partner in front of me?”
- All about setting up boundaries or a plan of action to preserve the parent’s emotional health



Care for parents – grief stages

➤ **BARGAINING**

- Serves an important function as a bridge step
- Unsustainable in the long run
- Get stuck here and risk alienating the child
 - Bargains can be viewed as ultimatums
 - “Do this or I’ll do that.”



Care for parents – grief stages

➤ **DESPAIR or DEPRESSION**

- “I don’t know what to do.”
- “We’ve lost our child.”
- “I just don’t know who my daughter [or son] is anymore!”

- Reality sets in.
- You really have no control over this. It’s bigger than you.
- Saying goodbye to the old reality is difficult
- **NO ONE** wants to go through this.




Care for parents – grief stages

➤ ACCEPTANCE

- “I don’t understand but I want to understand.”
- “We value your honesty, even if it sometimes makes us uncomfortable.”
- “If any of my friends or family have a problem with you, they have a problem with me too!”

- Acceptance is not the same as affirmation or agreement.
- It does mean the parent is willing to enter into a new reality.
- There is a peace that arrives.
- This is going to look different for each family.
- Makes room for new dreams and new possibilities for joy.



Care for parents – Pastoral response

➤ **BE BOLD GIVERS OF HOPE AND GRACE**

➤ Help parents progress, walk along side.

➤ Share uplifting scriptures

➤ Romans 8:38-39 – NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

➤ Romans 13:8-10. - Love is the fulfillment of the law. Love does no harm.

➤ I John 4:7-ff – God's love is perfected in us. Perfect love casts out fear...

➤ 1 Peter 4:8 – Above all, love each other always for love covers a multitude of sins.

Care for parents – Pastoral response

➤ BE A GIVER OF HOPE AND GRACE

- Help the parent define the **goal**: Ours was we want our son to stay close to GOD.
- Help parents to be able to love their child again. I needed that.
- Strengthen their faith. I can do all things... Phil 4:13
- Help the parents to reinforce their child's identity as a son/daughter of God and brother/sister of Jesus.
- It's OK to live in the tension.
- There will be good days and bad ones.
- When in doubt, love more.
- Remind parents, their child's life story is yet to be written.
- Parent: TRUST GOD, like you may have never done so far.



SHEPHERD ENCOURAGEMENT

➔ **THIS IS NOT TOO BIG FOR GOD**

- ➔ God has moved ahead of you in mighty ways.
- ➔ It's OK to not have answers or be able to fix it.
- ➔ Remember the goal: That person who experiences same sex attraction or is a parent of one needs to stay close to GOD.
 - ➔ How can I (we) facilitate that.
- ➔ When in doubt, love more.
- ➔ Remember this is Kingdom work, not politics and issues.
- ➔ Cultivate these relationships. The Parable of the Lost Sheep!
- ➔ **BUT FOR A TIME AS THIS...**




CONCLUSION

- The LGBT community is
 - Isolated
 - Rejected
 - Marginalized
 - Often demonized
 - Hurt
 - Ridiculed
 - Viewed as second class
 - To be avoided
 - Unclean
- 



CONCLUSION

- Just like ancient Samaria.
 - YET...
 - In the parable, the Samaritan was the Hero.
 - IS THIS OUR SAMARIA?
- 



gvollmering@wva-cpa.com

817-996-8888 cell