



Pride Month and the People of God

June is Pride Month. Many schools, businesses, and government officials are celebrating LGBTQ perspectives on gender and sexuality. Our church is not. Two years ago, we led summer discussions related to same-sex sexuality. As we focus on the church's next steps, we aren't giving the same time to it right now. Nevertheless, it's worth reiterating, since the church's position is not the majority one in Buffalo.

Email is primarily for the exchange of information, so please excuse my inability to give proper attention to personal situations and offer the fullest extent of my compassion for struggles that people have with implementing teachings of the Christian faith. I give my life precisely to working with people through such struggles. Nothing would please me more than a reply email: "This is tough. Would you mind grabbing coffee?"

1. The teaching of the ACNA is clear: "The Anglican Church in North America affirms our Lord's teaching that Holy Matrimony, commonly called a Sacrament (Article 25 and ACNA Catechism 124-125), is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman." (Canon 7.1). ACNA repeats the biblical teaching that is clear in Romans 1:21-27 and other passages, but is also deeply woven into the fabric of how Moses, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles talk about sexuality, marriage, and gender.

2. A good summary of that teaching is in these 3 talks given at our diocese's Synod a few years ago by Matthew Mason. <https://adhope.org/article/human-identity-and-sexuality>

3. Another implication of the divine purpose in the duality of the sexes is that our bodies are given specifically to be men and women - it is the bodily mode of being a person, given for God's purposes. This can be socially expressed in many ways by different cultures - but they ultimately flow out of the bodily distinction and especially its use in marriage and procreation.

The sexes have far more in common than distinction - we can all be accepted by Christ in the same way, through faith (Galatians 3:28). **But gender is not fluid with respect to God's purposes for our bodies.** People experience many complicated things in a complicated gendered culture. In our experiences, people may not always feel that sexual duality. My heart is deeply drawn with compassion for all of us who experience trauma or different longings in gender and sexuality, and especially for the 1 in 10,000 persons who experience persistent gender dysphoria. Our minds are indeed warped by sin in the world, even when it's not our fault. But Jesus says that our longings should not always be followed by actions (Matthew 5:28).

I am 100% committed to walk through the hellish storms of life with anyone seeking God and his ways (as the Bible reveals them). There is no feeling or struggle that can push me away as

your pastor and friend if you will give yourself, however imperfectly in results, into seeking to conform yourself to God's purposes for you.

4. Some people do not affirm these teachings. I love you also. But God's word is clear here, and deeply related to Christian ethics in a way that Christians have long recognized: to pull the plank out of this, and affirm same-sex sexual activity or blur the bodily gendered distinctions or seek to undo them - these are departures from a Christian worldview. Those departures require a change in perspective on the Bible and how God made us that, logically and in practice, will lead to many other changes in worldview. Please be clear: Romans 1 does not only reject same-sex sexual practices. It equally censures those who "give approval to those who practice them" (Romans 1:32).

Not all who give themselves over to the Lord will experience a healing of their desires. But we as a church walk together toward God's purposes: sometimes with a limp, always imperfectly, all of us broken. God has a particular path for me, to be sanctified as I walk through my persistent pains and temptations. They may not be yours, but we are walking together. And we will reach full healing one day at the resurrection to eternal life.

Some resources. I have most of these if you want to borrow them.

- *Is God Anti-Gay?* by Sam Allberry. Very good, accessible, short book, by a man (an Anglican priest!) who is himself same-sex attracted

- *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, by Rosaria Butterfield. a conversion story of a woman who was an English professor and leader in gay activism

- *Sexuality and Identity: A Pastoral Statement from the ACNA College of Bishops*, January 2021. <https://anglicanchurch.net/sexuality-and-identity-a-pastoral-statement-from-the-college-of-bishops>

- *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, by Mark Yarhouse. A Christian clinical psychologist gives a balanced view on current research, with some suggested compassionate approaches for churches

- *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, by Carl Trueman. A big, high-level "How did we get here?" book about the philosophy, sociology, and theology of identity that led to a world in which the statement, "I am a man trapped in a woman's body," is persuasive.

- *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn't*, by Stephen McAlpine. A much shorter, more popular-level version of Trueman's book that is also more practical for what churches should do now.