

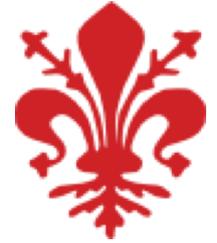
Congregational Social Work: Facilitating the
LGBTQ+ Conversation

Helen Wilson Harris, Ed.D., LCSW

Jocelyn Flores, MSW Candidate

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Objectives



Participants will

- ❖ Explore research on the lived congregational experience of persons who identify as LGBTQ+ and as Christian
- ❖ Examine current congregational and denomination issues with respect to LGBTQ+ membership, leadership, and policy
- ❖ Discuss future research for social work roles in best practices for assisting congregations with these difficult conversations and processes

The Problem and Opportunity

How will the church respond to the opportunity and the challenge of LGBTQ+ persons and their families including the questions of inclusion, leadership, and marriage?



Historical Significance

This is not the first cultural issue to challenge the church and to provide opportunity for Christ-like response

Other examples include:

- ❖ Old Testament Examples
- ❖ New Testament Examples
- ❖ The Reformation
- ❖ Recent History
 - Slavery, racism, alcohol, women's roles, divorce, and the list goes on



Current Challenges and Opportunities

- ❖ Mental illness in the church
- ❖ Drinking and substance use/abuse
- ❖ Birth control
- ❖ Abortion
- ❖ Women in leadership
- ❖ Sexuality-LGBTQ+



Background of Our Focus

- ❖ 2014 NACSW invitation to present on best practices with LGBTQ+ clients who identify as Christian
- ❖ CSWE leadership concern--invitation to dialog
- ❖ Qualitative study--21 Interviews (20 subjects) with persons who identify as Christian and LGBTQ+
- ❖ Congregation and denominational struggles resulting in marginalization and withdrawing affiliation



Results of the First Study

❖ Methodology

❖ Sample

❖ Results

- Marginalization of Christians from Church
 - Leaving Church
 - Changing Church
- Marginalization and Fracturing of Families





Themes



- ❖ Church/Congregational Experiences
- ❖ Family of Faith
- ❖ Minister/Pastor
- ❖ Ministry
- ❖ Personal Faith/Beliefs
- ❖ Personal Values
- ❖ Coming Out
- ❖ Loss and Grief
- ❖ Fear

Church/Congregational Experiences & Family of Faith

❖ CCE quote 1

❖ CCE quote 2

❖ FOF quote 1

❖ FOF quote 2

Minister/Pastor; Ministry

❖ M/P quote 1

❖ M/P quote 2

❖ M quote 1

❖ M quote 2

Personal Faith/Beliefs; Personal Values

❖ PF/B quote 1

❖ PF/B quote 2

❖ PV quote 1

❖ PV quote 2

Coming Out; Loss/Grief; Fear

❖ CO quote 1

❖ CO quote 2

❖ L/G quote 1

❖ L/G quote 2

❖ Fear quote 1

❖ Fear quote 2

In the meantime...The Law

❖ Freedom of Religion

❖ Marriage

❖ Bakeries and Others



In the meantime...Churches

❖ Baptist

❖ Methodists

❖ Presbyterians

❖ Others

- Catholic church challenges
- Episcopalian
- Lutheran



Baptist

❖ Different Categories

- African American
- American Baptist
- Southern Baptist
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Etc.

❖ Structure, decisions



Methodist

- ❖ Organizational structure
- ❖ History of this issue
- ❖ Current status
- ❖ “Reconciling”
- ❖ Next steps



Presbyterian

- ❖ Organizational structure
- ❖ History of this issue
- ❖ Current status
- ❖ Next steps





Current Research



❖ Congregational Discernment

❖ Funding

❖ Three-Year Plan

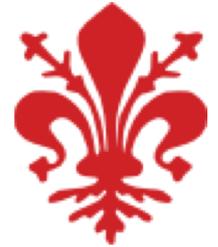
- Year one- *Qualitative*
 - Interviews
 - Case Studies
- Year two- *Quantitative*
- Year three- *Model Development and Testing*

Literature Review



- ❖ Church History
- ❖ LGBTQ+ and Christians
- ❖ Difficult Conversation Models

Year One



❖ Qualitative Study

- Interviews and Case

❖ 3 Denominations

- Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian

❖ 3 positions+

- No discussion
- Discussion with affirmation decision
- Discussion without affirmation decision
- Other decisions?

❖ Identify questions/topics for Quantitative Study

Sample Interview Questions

- ❖ How would you describe your congregation?
- ❖ What challenges have you seen your church work through? What has the church learned from these experiences?
- ❖ What is the congregation's position with respect to having a conversation about LGBTQ+ persons in the congregation?

Sample Interview Questions

- ❖ What vocabulary is used in your congregation?
Congregation/church/fellowship? Church members?
Pastor/minister/priest/?; LBGTQ+?
- ❖ What is the leadership format in your church?
Elders? Deacons? Coordinating Council? What type of
church governance is in place?

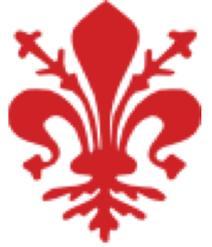
Sample Interview Questions

- ❖ What was your congregation's process for discernment in the conversation related to a more open membership?
- ❖ What recommendations do you have for other congregations who may be interested in engaging in a similar process of discernment?
- ❖ What was the conclusion of your church's process?

Sample Interview Questions

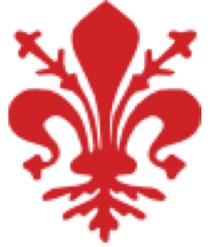
- ❖ What are the lessons learned from the process and from the conclusion?
- ❖ What do you wish you had known as you started the process of discernment?
- ❖ What resources do you believe are important in assisting congregations once they have made their decision to be an accepting congregation?

Year Two



- ❖ Qualtrix Quantitative Study
- ❖ Add denominations, congregations, informal congregational affiliations, independent

Year Three



- ❖ Develop Model(s)
- ❖ Pilot – Test Model(s)
- ❖ Develop Resources
- ❖ Disseminate Resources

Scope and Limitations



❖ Limitations

- Possible weaknesses or issues with the study as defined by the researcher (Creswell, 2008).

❖ Scope

- Possible congregational positions
- Variances within a congregation
- The changing landscape during the study

Delimitations



❖ Delimitations

- Help define what the researcher is not going to do as part of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005)
- ❖ Will not address the rightness or wrongness of others' interpretation of scripture
- ❖ Will not necessarily address other factors like geographic location and political factors although we are trying to get a nation-wide data sample

Assumptions



❖ Assumptions

- What researchers take for granted or accept as true without having any empirical evidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005)
-
- ❖ Researchers have used supervision, and consultation to avoid and address bias.
 - ❖ There are best processes; there are not best decisions.

Summary and Conclusions

- ❖ The stories of marginalization and pain of Christians who identify as LGBTQ+ call the church to address the hard questions of inclusion.
- ❖ Denominations and congregations are struggling with competing values, difficult conversations, and decisions that leave individuals and congregations wounded.
- ❖ The opportunity before us is to explore the experiences of congregations and denominations and models for civil conversations and decision making to identify best practices and possibilities for faithful resolution.

Questions?

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