



When one by his words or deeds gives occasion for unfavorable judgment, the consequence must come upon his own soul.

“Whatsoever a man soweth, so also shall he reap.”

But it is not safe for finite man to take upon himself the responsibility for judging others, for we cannot read the heart. Self-centered human beings are inclined to judge according to appearances and hence make grave mistakes.

–*Signs of the Times, March 14, 1892*

If men would see themselves as God sees them, they would have such a sense of their own weakness and defects and see such a work to be done for themselves, they would have such a sense of their own need of the long-suffering mercy of God and the forbearance of their fellow men, that they would have no disposition to judge and condemn others.

–*Signs of the Times, March 14, 1882*

Safe Places

Newsletter

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

October 2014

This issue of *Safe Places* is about conversation.

Over the summer I asked several writers to contribute articles about two issues: “What Makes God Angry?” and “What does God Bless?” I know the authors to varying degrees, but I really had no idea what their opinions are on these two topics. My goal is to begin to create a conversation with ourselves and with each other. I believe that great-controversy theology is about the character of God. I also believe that the issue of how we treat lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex people, *and* their allies is very much based on how we understand the character of God. David Coltheart from Australia wrote the first article. He is a former Seventh-day Adventist pastor and evangelist. We at *Building Safe Places—for Everyone* are interested in not only your responses to these articles but also your own personal thoughts on the topic. We’d love to hear from you. Feel free to write to us at info@buildingsafeplaces.org. Send a note or an article. Both will be appreciated.

During 2014, there have been two conferences on variations in human sexuality, held in South Africa. We brought you reports on the one hosted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Those reports are in our archived newsletters on the website. In August, **The Consultation on Human Sexuality and Equality** issued the **KwaZulu Natal Declaration**. I think you will find it interesting. We also shared a letter from people who have been leaders in the “ex-gay” movement.

Our **Research Section** shares recent reports on gay youth in foster care, LGB parenting, and health care issues for lesbian, gay, and transgender adults in the United States. For those of you who are new to reading our newsletter and who might be interested in other research issues, please feel most welcome to access them on our website, buildingsafeplaces.org. They include studies on brain function and development, hormones, relationships, self harm, and issues of suicidality, etc.

We have two offerings in our **Voices from the Heart** section. Andrew Dykstra writes about an email he received from a member of his Adventist church in Canada, and we are including one interview from *We are SDAs*.

The *Building Safe Places—for Everyone* team is delighted that we will be able to offer three “First Conversations” two-day meetings in 2015: January in North Carolina, February in Southern California, and March in Germany. If you or someone you know would be interested in attending you can contact us at info@buildingsafeplaces.org. You can find out more about our workshops on the consultation and training section of the website.

As always, if you would like to share this newsletter, please feel welcome to do so. If you are not subscribed and would like to be, you can do so on our home page. If you would like to unsubscribe or if you have questions or comments or would like to just talk with us, you can contact us at info@buildingsafeplaces.org.

We wish you gentle blessings,

Catherine Taylor and the Building Safe Places Team:

— Frieder Schmid, Ingrid Schmid, Dave Ferguson, Floyd Poenitz, and Ruud Kieboom.



What Makes God Angry?

The average Bible reader is quickly confronted by an apparent contradiction. After emerging from the Red Sea, Moses and the Israelites sang: "In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble" (Exodus 15:7). And yet, six verses later, they also sang: "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed." Burning anger and unfailing love—the two concepts can appear to be at odds with each other.

[Read more on page 4](#)

In Foster Care

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[Read more on page 6](#)

Parenting

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[Read more on page 8](#)

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[Read more on page 9](#)

In the News

- **The KwaZulu Natal Declaration**
- **Nine former ex-gay leaders**, from organizations like Exodus International and ministries like Love in Action, have signed onto a letter in partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) calling for a ban on gay conversion therapy and saying that LGBT people should be celebrated and embraced for who they are.

[Read more on page 11](#)

Hope

Why do I remain in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when the General Conference administration and so many of the congregations are not affirming or even able to lovingly accept me? Not so easy answer: I receive hope and affirmation from some people. I say not so easy, because those who consider themselves allies can receive the same kind of reception as those of us who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

[Read more on page 13](#)



What Makes God Angry?



By David Coltheart

The average Bible reader is quickly confronted by an apparent contradiction. After emerging from the Red Sea, Moses and the Israelites sang: “In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble” (Exodus 15:7). And yet, six verses later, they also sang: “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed.” Burning anger and unfailing love—the two concepts can appear to be at odds with each other.

God’s anger is described as “fierce” (Exodus 32:12) and “hostile” (Leviticus 26:28). God is described as burning with anger (Judges 3:8). “I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath” (Jeremiah 21:5). Sometimes his anger extends even to the apparently innocent: “My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.”

On the other hand, God is described as being a God of love (1 John 4:8). He is “compassionate and gracious...abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). There are dozens of texts that say that God’s love is unchanging, and His mercy is enduring, constant, never ceasing. “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:5). God forgives sins and extends unending, boundless love. “You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you” (Psalm 86:5). “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:10-12).



Angry or loving? For too many, the only way to reconcile the paradox has been to assume that God is capricious, alternating from love to hate, or anger to mercy, according to a whim, condemning one moment, redeeming the next. “Though in anger I struck you, in favour I will show you compassion” (Isaiah 60:10). And then God loves the whole world—all the people, all the time (John 3:16).

I would like to propose that human anger is often a feeling and is offensive or self-protective; that is, it often seeks to dominate others. I also propose that God’s anger is action against those who harm others and that, until the end of time, seeks to restore order within His creation and to bring humanity from a place of causing harm to one of healing. Historically, God has acted in judgment to limit the incursion of sin in society or among His people. He has intervened to destroy sin and sinners who are harming others (Genesis 6:17) and has withdrawn his powers over nature to allow destruction and death (Genesis 19). God’s anger is not a defining characteristic of God; rather, it is temporary. God’s judgments against the ungodly are a sign of His anger *against actions* that contradict His loving character and purposes. God’s anger is always provoked by sin and is a reaction to evil in the life of His creatures or His world. For this reason, God’s anger is short-lived and is extinguished when its purpose has been fulfilled.

What makes God angry? According to the wise man in the book of Proverbs, “There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed

innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community” (Proverbs 6:16-19). According to Isaiah 58, God is angry with those who exploit their workers, quarrel, act unjustly, refuse to share their food with the hungry, oppress others, and indulge in the pointing finger and malicious talk. According to Matthew, it is those who judge others. According to Ezekiel (16:49) God is angry with those who who are arrogant, overfed, unconcerned; who do not help the poor and needy, were haughty and “did detestable things before me.” The list has also included:

- Idolatry (Numbers 25:3; Romans 1:18-23)
- Disobedience and disloyalty (Joshua 7:1; Hebrews 4:11)
- Pride, arrogance, and hypocrisy (Isaiah 13:11; Matthew 23:27-28)
- Injustice (Zechariah 7:9-12; Matthew 23:23)
- Rejection of God’s servants (Zechariah 7:12)
- Those who “have trampled the Son of God underfoot” (Hebrews 10:29-31)

God’s anger is a demonstration of His justice. Justice includes fairness and equality. Justice is concerned with determining the rights and wrongs of a case or person, and meting out the conse-

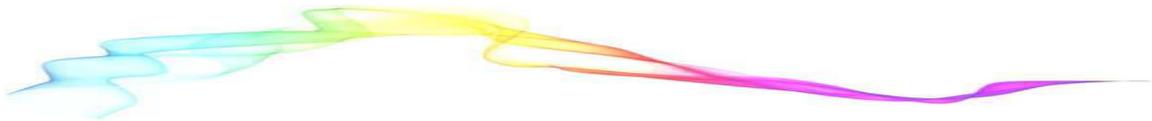
quences of a person’s actions or choices. Justice sees that every person receives exactly what he or she deserves. Justice is served in the protection of the vulnerable.

God’s judgment is not the inevitable destiny of mortals unless we choose to continue to harm others. Jesus rescued us from the “coming wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1:10) by becoming our substitute and taking the law’s curse on Himself. Because we have been justified by faith, we have been “saved from God’s wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9).

The final expression of God’s anger is a future, prophetic event when harm, sin, and evil are destroyed and the universe is restored to its original gentle harmony. God’s justice is the act of mercy that allows the wicked their right of choice and the final antiseptic that cleanses the universe of the destructiveness of sin. It is God’s “strange work” (Isa 28:21) that occupies only a moment but has eternal consequences and is designed to bring peace and reconciliation to all of creation.

(All texts quoted from the New International Version.)

David Coltheart is a former Seventh-day Adventist pastor and evangelist who is still involved in ministry.



...in Foster Care



Gay foster youth are twice as likely to report being treated poorly by the foster care system than their straight counterparts, according to a new study of Los Angeles County's foster care system.

They have more foster care placements, are more likely to be living in a group home, and are three times more likely than straight youths to have been hospitalized for emotional reasons at some point in their lives.

They are also highly overrepresented in the county system, according to a study released Wednesday by UCLA's Williams Institute, which studies LGBT demographics, and Holarchy Consulting.

Nearly 1 in 5 L.A. County foster youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexuality—twice as many as are believed to be in the general population.

People refer to it as the 'dirty little secret' that there are so many LGBTQ kids in foster care, but nobody's been able to document it," said Lorri L. Jean, chief executive of the Los Angeles LGBT Center, which commissioned the study.

"We need to know who these kids are because only if we know who they are can we help them," she said.

In any given month, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services has about 7,400 youth between the ages of 12 and 21 in out-of-home care, according to the study. Of those, about 1,400 identify as LGBTQ.

The study, funded by a federal grant, is the first of its kind quantifying sexual orientation and gender identity of youth in any foster system, its authors say.

Despite their large numbers in the foster care system, LGBTQ youth have been "relatively invisible," the study said. Many do not feel safe telling their foster families or social workers about having same-sex attractions or questioning their gender identity.

Often, social workers wait for children to come out to them instead of inquiring because they don't know how to ask or are trying to be respectful of the child's privacy, experts say.

The Los Angeles LGBT Center has conducted training for social workers and foster parents about how to work with gay youths, Jean said. Some have resisted.

There have been some social workers who were angry about the training, sitting with arms crossed and saying things like, "I'm only here because I have to be here, but it's against my religion," Jean said.

"What we say is...you're required to make sure all youth are treated well," Jean said.

Many homeless youths who come to the center have run away from the foster care system or have been kicked out by their foster families because they are gay, bisexual, or transgender, she said.

The state and county prohibit foster parents from discriminating against youths based on, among other things, sexual orientation or gender identity, said Leslie Starr Heimov, executive director of the Children's Law Center of California, the court-appointed firm representing foster children.

About 15 years ago, advocates created a countywide Task Force to End Homophobia in Foster Care, and because of that the department changed forms that then listed a child's sexual orientation in the same category as bed wetting and other behavioral issues, Heimov said.

"We have seen decreases in overt homophobia in the foster care system, but that doesn't mean it's not subtly still present," Heimov said. One recent case involved a child who was adopted and kicked out after her parents learned she was a lesbian.

The Williams Institute study noted that most of the LGBTQ foster youth in L.A. County were, like their straight counterparts, racial minorities. The study found that 83% of LGBTQ youth in foster care were Latino or black.

Bianca Wilson, a Williams Institute researcher and author of the study, said many of these youths can face added discrimination for “being both sexual minorities and ethnic and racial minorities.”

Giovanni Fernandez, a former foster child who is gay, said he hoped the study would let LGBTQ youth know that they are not alone.

When Fernandez, who is now 38, came out to his foster mother in Pico Rivera as a teenager, he said she made him spend holidays alone in his room because she didn’t want his “gay germs” affecting her family members. When he came out to his social worker, she changed the subject. He became depressed, dropped out of high school, and left the system.

“I just didn’t know if there were others like me,” said Fernandez, who is studying to become a social worker. “When you feel like you’re the only one, it’s a lonely place to be.”

Parenting



By Eliel Cruz

Report: Children of LGB Parents Functioning “Quite Well”

The study also shows a high proportion of bisexual adults are parents.

Another study released this summer shows that lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents are as effective and nurturing as heterosexual parents, if not more so.

The July report by the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law's Williams Institute [indicates](#) that LGB families deal with extra pressures such as heterosexism in various societal settings, added legal implications in states that don’t allow same-sex marriage or adoption, and discrimination in medical settings. Despite these pressures, however, LGB families continue to prosper.

“The findings are consistent in suggesting that despite confronting heterosexism in a variety of social contexts—including the health care system, the legal system, and the school system—LGB parents and their children are functioning quite well,” the report’s authors write.

The study mirrors others that cite the benefits of LGB-headed families, including one released in early July from the University of Melbourne, which said children raised by same-sex couples are [healthier and happier](#) than those raised by opposite-sex pairs.



The report also points to the large portion of LGB parents—64 percent—who are openly bisexual. The Williams Institute cited a 2013 Pew Research survey, which found that more than a third of all LGBT individuals report being a parent. An estimated 59 percent of bisexual women and 32 percent of bisexual men report having had children, while 31 percent of lesbians and 16 percent of gay men are parents.

Although many LGB parents are bisexual, most of the research on LGB parenting has been limited to specific gender, racial, and economic demographics.

“The research on LGB parenting is characterized by a variety of sampling- and methodological-related problems,” the authors of the Williams Institute report wrote. “The samples that are utilized in studies of LGB parents tend to be small, white, well-educated, and financially stable, and are often drawn from metropolitan areas.”

Health Care

In U.S., LGBT More Likely Than Non-LGBT to Be Uninsured

LGBT adults more likely to lack a personal doctor and enough money for healthcare



By Gary J. Gate

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Americans who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are more likely than non-LGBT Americans to report that they lack health insurance. While the percentage of LGBT adults without health insurance has decreased significantly since the Affordable Care Act’s provisions requiring Americans to have health insurance took effect at the beginning of 2014, they are still more likely to be uninsured than their non-LGBT counterparts.

The LGBT community is one of the many constituencies targeted by the Obama administration for participation in open enrollment for health insurance under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as “Obamacare.” Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data suggest that both LGBT and non-LGBT populations saw similar drops in their uninsured rates. The most useful time periods for comparison are the fourth quarter of 2013—the three months before provisions requiring insurance took effect—and the second quarter of 2014, after open enrollment ended. Between those two periods, the percentage of uninsured LGBT adults fell by 4.4 percentage points, similar to the 3.5-point drop among non-LGBT Americans.

For LGBT Adults, Struggling to Afford Healthcare More Common

One possible symptom of the health insurance gap by LGBT status is that LGBT adults are significantly more likely to say they did not have enough money for healthcare needs at least once in the past year. One-quarter of LGBT adults report they did not have



enough for money for healthcare needs at least once in the last year, compared with 17% of non-LGBT individuals. This disparity is evident for both men and women.

LGBT Women More Likely Than Non-LGBT Women to Lack a Personal Doctor

LGBT adults are more likely than non-LGBT adults to report that they do not have a personal doctor (29% vs. 21%, respectively). But this difference is driven primarily by LGBT women, who are nearly twice as likely as non-LGBT women to lack a personal doctor, 29% vs. 16%. The difference between LGBT men and their non-LGBT counterparts is not significant.

Implications

Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data suggest that LGBT adults experience hurdles in accessing health insurance and resources. These findings are consistent with a 2013 NHIS report showing that LGB individuals experience some disadvantages in their access to healthcare. Compared with their straight counterparts, bisexual adults, both men and women, and lesbians were less likely to report a usual place to go for medical care and more likely to report not seeking needed medical care because they could not afford it. However, unlike the results from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, there were no differences in health insurance coverage by sexual orientation in that study.

Population-based data sources that provide insights into the health and well-being of Americans

and include the measurement of sexual orientation and gender identity remain rare. More routine inclusion of these data on demographic, economic, and health-related surveys would improve the ability of researchers to not only document whether LGBT Americans experience negative health and well-being disparities, but why that might be the case. Understanding the “why” is crucial information to assist policymakers and health advocates in the development of policies and programs designed to reduce health and well-being disparities associated with LGBT status.

Survey Methods

Results for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4, 2013, insurance rates are based on telephone interviews conducted as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index survey July 1-Dec. 29, 2013, with a random sample in Quarter 3, 2013, of 1,831 LGBT adults, and 43,906 non-LGBT adults, and a random sample in Quarter 4, 2013, of 1,569 LGBT adults, and 41,222 non-LGBT adults. All samples are based on those aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of LGBT adults in the 3rd and 4th quarters in 2013, the margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the total sample of non-LGBT adults in the 3rd and 4th quarters in 2013, the margin of sampling error is ± 1 percentage point at the 95% confidence level.

Results for the questions asking about healthcare or medicine affordability and having a personal doctor are based on telephone interviews conducted as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index survey Jan. 1-June 23, 2014, with a random sample of 2,964 LGBT adults and 81,134 non-LGBT adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of LGBT adults interviewed Jan. 1-June 23, 2014, the margin of sampling error is ± 2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the total sample of non-LGBT adults Jan. 1-June 23, 2014, the margin of sampling error is ± 0.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

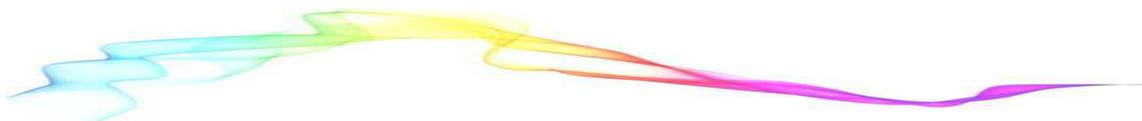
Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 50% cellphone respondents and 50% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability, nonresponse, and double coverage of landline and cell users in the two sampling frames. They are also weighted to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, population density, and phone status (cellphone only/landline only/both, and cellphone mostly). Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. population. Phone status targets are based on the most recent National Health Interview Survey. Population density targets are based on the most recent U.S. census. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

Gary J. Gates is a Williams Distinguished Scholar at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. A national expert in LGBT demographics, he has a Ph.D. in public policy from Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University.



The KwaZulu Natal Declaration

I am grateful to share with you one of the outcomes from the recent Consultation on Human Sexuality, Religion and Equality forum that was held August 28-31 in South Africa.

It is “The KwaZulu Natal Declaration” which is a call for LGBTI equality from African faith leaders, scholars, activists, and civil society leaders. It is a call from African leaders to the continent and the African diaspora around the world.

The context for this declaration is shared within this blog post and the full text of the declaration is at the end of the blog.

<http://www.lgbtglobalfaith.org/because-you-are-therefore-i-am/>

On behalf of the African leaders and scholars who bring this call to the continent. I respectfully ask each of you to post and share this Declaration with your network, organization, and via social media.

Thank you.

*All the best,
Michael*



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Former Advocates of the Ex-gay Movement Opposed to Conversion Therapy



By Tony Merevick, Staff of BuzzFeed

As advocates mount a national campaign against the practice, several former leaders of the ex-gay conversion therapy movement are now coming out in opposition to conversion therapy, or efforts to turn gay people straight, BuzzFeed has learned.

Nine former ex-gay leaders, from organizations like Exodus International and ministries like Love in Action, have signed onto a letter in partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) calling for a ban on gay conversion therapy and saying that LGBT people should be celebrated and embraced for who they are.

“At one time, we were not only deeply involved in these ‘ex-gay’ programs, we were the founders, the leaders, and the promoters,” they said in the letter. “Together we represent more than half a century of experience, so few people are more knowledgeable about the ineffectiveness and harm of conversion therapy. We know firsthand the terrible emotional and spiritual damage it can cause, especially for LGBT youth.”

The former ex-gay leaders, many of whom worked at organizations involved in the practice for several years, say they “know better now.” And many of the

organizations they were involved in have shuttered or rebranded, like Exodus International, which very publicly announced it would shut down last summer. But gay conversion therapy is still practiced in many parts of the country, according to the NCLR.

Many of the signatories on the letter have previously spoken out against—and in some cases apologized for—supporting and advocating for gay conversion therapy. But for some included, it’s the most public statement they’ve made since renouncing the practice, like John Smid, who was a member of Exodus International and who served on its board for 11 years.

“We all got together and said it’s time to produce a statement that is not a statement of apology, but a statement of our beliefs on how conversion therapy harms people,” Smid told BuzzFeed. “We felt like we needed to make that statement.”

Smid said he experienced the harms of gay conversion or reparative therapy firsthand—enduring what he described as the damaging message that gay people are somehow “broken and sick and that they need to be repaired,” he said. Leading medical and psychological associations, such as the American Psychological Association, have discredited and criticized gay conversion therapy.

“In my own life, that message kept me trapped in a cycle of believing that I was emotionally ill and incapable of having a healthy life until those things are fixed,” he said. “For over two decades, I lived in that mindset. That’s why reparative therapy is so damaging. That was the message that I received and that I taught in my involvement with Exodus and Love in Action.”

On Monday, Yvette Cantu Schneider announced via GLAAD that she is sorry for her work in the ex-gay and conversion therapy movement “and is now fully supportive of LGBT people.” She, too, has signed on to the letter in support of banning gay conversion therapy efforts.

The former ex-gay leaders coming forward to unite in opposition to the practice comes as LGBT advocates such as those at NCLR and other organizations are pushing for a movement against gay conversion therapy, including in state legislatures. Just this month, Michigan State Rep. Adam Zemke (D-Ann Arbor) introduced a bill that would ban conversion therapy for minors.

“This is about the civil rights of children,” Zemke told BuzzFeed. “A lot of children look up to adults and follow their advice blindly and innocently. They’re kids—they don’t know any better in some cases. As

lawmakers, we have the responsibility to protect those kids from things proven to be harmful; and this is no different. This is protecting the right for kids to be kids, whoever they are.”

Zemke said he is seeking support from lawmakers in the chamber, particularly among members of the Republican majority, to whom he points out that GOP New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie signed similar legislation into law just last year. Action or progress on the bill, though, likely won’t happen until later this fall, Zemke said.

However, recent efforts to ban gay conversion therapy for minors in some states have fallen short. Last month, GOP leadership in the New York State Senate blocked [such legislation](#); and in April, a similar bill was defeated on the floor of the Illinois House.

Either way, advocates and other critics of gay conversion therapy hope to expand the debate over the practice coast to coast. The letter from the former leaders comes as part of NCLR ramping up its Born-Perfect campaign, which it launched last month.

“We are committed to protecting LGBT children and their families from the severe harms caused by these dangerous practices,” NCLR Executive Director Kate Kendell said in a statement. “These practices have been thoroughly discredited by every major mental health organization; and yet, every day, young lives are wrecked. We intend to stop the practices once and for all.”

The people making the statement included:

- * Brad Allen
Lay Leader Volunteer (2005-2007)
Church Network Coordinator (2007)
Exodus International Headquarters
- * Darlene Bogle
Founder, Director, Counselor (1985-1992)
Paraklete Ministries
- * Michael Bussee
EXIT (1974-1979)
Co-founder (1976-1979)
Exodus International
- * Catherine Chapman
Project Coordinator (2000-2003)
Women’s Ministry Director (2005-2007)
Portland Fellowship
- * Jeremy Marks
Founder (1988-2000)
Courage UK
Exodus Europe (1988-1989)

* Bill Prickett

Founder, Executive Director (1986-1988)

Coming Back

* Tim Rymel

Outreach Director (1991-1996)

Love in Action

* Yvette Cantu Schneider

Executive Director (2001-2005)

Living in Victory Ministry

Director of Women's Ministry (2008-2011)

Exodus International

* John J Smid

Executive Director (1987-2008)

Love in Action

Exodus International Board of Directors (1990-1995;
2002-2008)

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/tonymerevick/exclusive-9-former-ex-gay-leaders-join-movement-to-ban-gay-c>



Hope



By Andrew Dykstra

Why do I remain in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when the General Conference administration and so many of the congregations are not affirming or even able to lovingly accept me? Not so easy answer: I receive hope and affirmation from some people. I say not so easy, because those who consider themselves allies can receive the same kind of reception as those of us who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Here's an encouraging e-mail I received from someone who was unable to attend a homosexuality forum at my church last Saturday afternoon.

Hi, Andrew, thank you for your email. I love your details; I feel like I am having a conversation with you and you took me right there. I have checked online; only the morning service is available to watch, not the afternoon session, as you guessed. I am very glad Robert spoke; it is very easy for us to make comments, share opinions, and say hurtful things until we are face to face with a child of God on the other end who is hurt by them. I hope I can meet him one day. But I am sorry the afternoon went the way it did.

I have been asked by a number of members as to "Why do we even need to talk about it?" It makes me angry and sad at the same time. My response was that if there was a family member in their house that was hurting because of the way they were being treated, their family would talk about it. Well, here at Immanuel, one of our members is hurting, so we must talk about it until the love of God helps us to all be united as one. In my understanding, our bond as a church family should run deeper than even our extended families at home.

My hope is that one day very soon you will feel loved and respected and accepted at Immanuel. God will use your amazing talents and gifts for His glory in ministry to others.

I want you to feel a part of the church family and not shunned by it.

Let me be honest with you on where I stand with homosexuality. I do not believe that being gay (lesbian, etc.) is a sin. Just as some are born blind, lame, or with childhood illnesses due to the sin in the world that has changed even our very makeup. I believe there are truly some born gay, more now than ever before. I believe there are hormone and DNA changes that can make a man look like a man on the outside, but not feel what Adam felt towards a woman. This is not a sin; it's not a disease either. It's just the way you are; and God will use you, bless you, and love you all the same.

Where I struggle a bit is what I believe we disagree on. Just as the act of fornication is a sin, I believe the sexual acts (be it between straight or gay people) is where the sin is. Is it fair to expect a gay person to be single all their life and not have companionship when their God-given desire is to be with someone? No, it's not fair, it's not fair at all. But I don't believe it's right. So this is my struggle and something I am praying about for God to give me clear direction and understanding.

I have quite a few friends that are over 40 or 50 who are straight and single. They long to have a companion, but it just has not happened yet for them; so they have lived as a single person all their life. That is not fair either, but it's the road they must travel.

So I'm not yet convinced that it is okay with God for a gay person to have a gay partner. I'm not there yet. But being homosexual is not a sin; and it really, really gets to me when I hear our members act like it is a sin and something you have chosen and can just jump out of at any time. As members, we need to be more sensitive and realize that that kind of attitude is hurtful and not from God. It's also incorrect and an unfair way to label homosexuality. I know this is not a "lifestyle" choice you made. I truly believe you

were born gay and truly believe that God can, will, and probably already has “used it for good,” as his Word promises us.

You should be embraced, loved, and involved in the church Sabbath to Sabbath without any fear of rejection. I’m praying that it will not be long before you feel this love from us, as a church, and feel like you can participate and take part in the service.

Most of all, I want you to feel like you are truly are a part of the family of God. I don’t think you feel that way right now, but I’m praying we can all get there.

Know that, from me to you, you are loved, respected, and thought of highly. I think you are incredibly intelligent, spiritual, thoughtful, loving and just fun to be around. You still have a childlike innocence about you that takes joy in the simple beauties of God. I really admire that about you. You are being very patient with your church family, taking

a lot of heavy blows. I know God is giving you great strength and you are setting a important road before us that will allow many others who will come after you to tread down safely.

I’m blessed to know you, Andrew, and appreciate you always staying in touch.

I disagree with my correspondant’s belief that I should be celibate. That belief takes away my hope for companionship and all the benefits that come from being in a loving relationship. That said, I don’t mind talking with people with whom I disagree on some issues, as long as they are able to accept my decisions in life that harm no one, and do not exclude me because of them. I am incredibly moved by this email. This person, writing to me in his loving honesty, gives me hope.

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