

Affirming Love

a Christian caregivers guide for families of children
questioning identity



Why it's important to me



1 in 6

Gen. Z adults (18-23)
identify as LGBTQ+¹

¹US Gallup poll released 2021



42%

LGBTQ Youth seriously considered
suicide in the past year²

²Trevor Project survey 2021



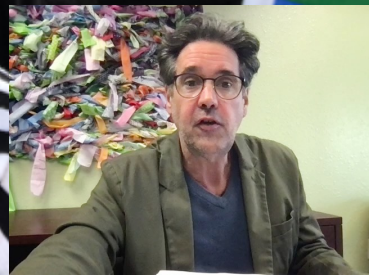
16.7%

hate crimes based on
sexual orientation³

³FBI Hate Crimes re

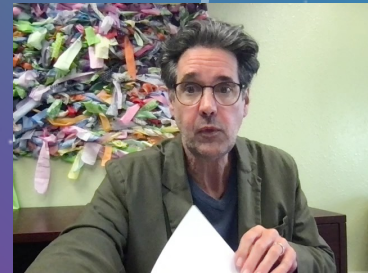
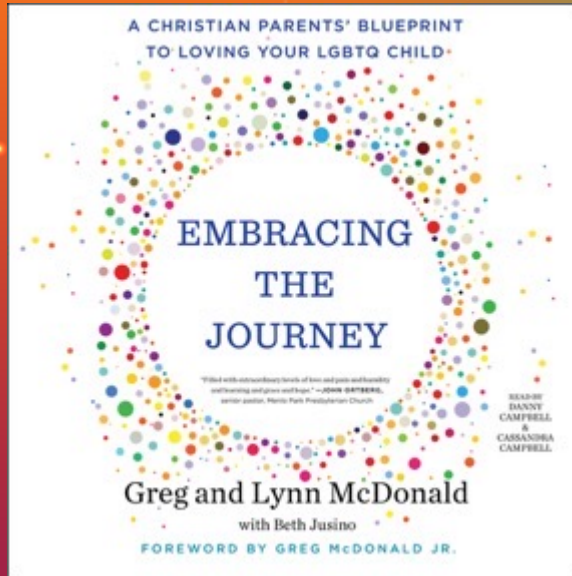


Proud Parent



Embracing the Journey

Greg & Lynn McDonald



Life Continuum

for families of LGBTQ children

Fear

- world rocked
- parents go in closet
- time of mourning
- can't see purpose

Survival

- surrender
- love
- relate
- begin to see purpose

Thriving

- trust God
- grateful & hopeful
- encouraging others
- live out your purpose
- peace & contentment



Coming Out

Are you?



“Then, for good measure, I said the thing I most regret:

“We need to get you fixed.”

—Greg McDonald



Caregiving for coming out

- If you think your child might be LGBTQ but they have not come out to you, don't ignore it, but don't rush into it, either. If you decide to initiate a conversation with your child, wait until you're emotionally and spiritually ready to have it.
- Find someone to counsel you – a pastor, mentor, Stephen Minister
- Chose your words carefully. Avoid ultimatums or making extreme statements in the heat of a moment.
- Offer your child love, no matter what. Even if your internal reaction is negative or confused, every child needs the love of their parents!
- Don't pressure them to recant or "act straight."
- This is not the time to express your own feelings. Your job in this moment is to hear them and give them a safe place to share.
- Seek a Christlike response. Ask yourself: *If Jesus were talking with your child, what would he them? Follow the footsteps of the Son of God, who extends grace and offers love first.*



Survival

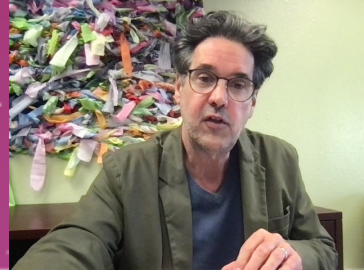
loving in the new normal



“I’m not entirely sure I’d be a Christian if I wasn’t gay. Being gay forced me to really examine my faith.”

“Nothing forces you to examine your faith like having everyone tell you ‘You’re not a Christian, God hates you, and you’re going to hell.’”

— friends of Greg Jr.



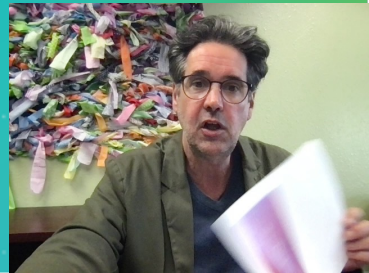
“It says something really terrible when the least safe place to deal with sexual orientation and identity issues is the Christian family and the church.”

— Dr. David P. Gushee *Changing Our Mind*



Caregiving in the new 'normal'

- Trying to keep a major life change a secret makes the emotional impact harder to bear. As soon as possible include people who are safe for you: friends, families, mentors. Pray about how/when to open your experiences up to others, including younger siblings.
- Find safe affirming places and spaces.
- Offer grace to the people who respond awkwardly to this significant life change.
- Acknowledge that you cannot "fix" your child.
- Learn how to **listen**. Learn how to **speak** (affirming language) – avoid words like "homosexual," "sexual preference", "gay lifestyle"
- Make an effort to get to your child's friends



Thriving

No strings attached



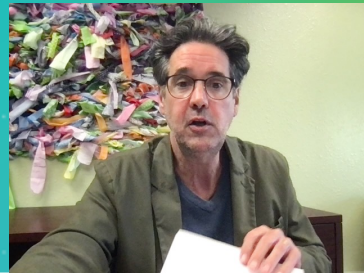
“When I look back, our path toward a ministry of reconciliation happened not *in spite* of the Bible, but *because* of it.

—Greg McDonald



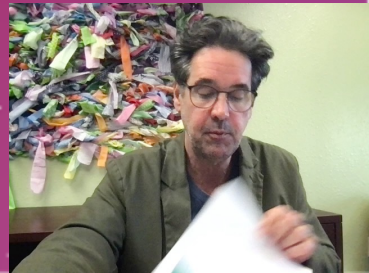
Embracing the Journey

- Continue to invest yourself in deepening your understanding of your child's world.
- Look at your community in light of the Greatest Commandment – to love your neighbor. Ask, *is God calling you to do something with the new experience in your families life?*
- Sponsor bible studies and Christian support groups of parents and LGBTQ children.
- Remember – God created your child, and he crated you to be exactly the parent that your child needs. Continue to trust God.



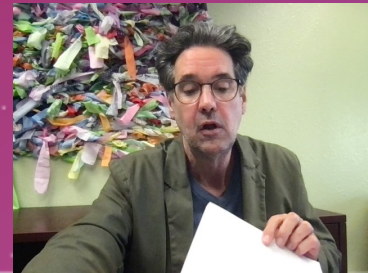
“Parenting a child is one of the biggest testers of faith that a person will ever face. Until a parent can say to God, “My child is yours, and we trust you,” our experiences with our child will be strained. Our relationship with God will be strained. And our lives will lack the fullness and joy that God wants us to have.”

—Greg McDonald



“We just need to decide from now on in our churches when a middle-school kid comes out to his small-group leader, or a high school young lady comes out to her parents ... We just need to decide, regardless of what you think about this topic – no more students are going to feel like they have to leave the local church because they’re same-sex attracted or because they’re gay. That ends with us.”

—Pastor, Andy Stanley



Resources

WEBSITES:

- [Trevor Project –Survey](#)
- [Resources for Gender Expansive Youth from HRC](#)
- [An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking about LGBT People & Equity](#)
- [QChristian.org – family resources](#)
- [Relational guide for parents of LGBTQ children](#)

BOOKS:

- [Embracing the Journey – Greg & Lynn McDonald](#)
- [Resources for Gender Expansive Youth from HRC](#)
- [An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking about LGBT People & Equity](#)
- [Building an Inclusive Church](#)
- [Ashes to Rainbows – a Queer Lenten devotional](#)

ARTICLES :

- [Yes, Queer Kids Can Grow Up With Faith & Church, But it Takes a Village – Parenting Magazine –](#)
- [LGBTQ Presbyterians on 'coming out' – Presbyterian Outlook](#)
- [Affirmed and Celebrated – Reformed T](#)



Thanks!

Questions?

