
Dialogue

Volume 11 Issue 1 *Strength for the church's journey into wholeness in Christ* January 2010

The subject: *Sexual Morality Matters*

We have done a lot of talking about sex in the past quarter. So here we go again, creating dialogue when it might be more "prudent" to keep things quiet.

Hopefully everyone actually reads this column and this line before they get started: ***This issue is not meant to be Circle of Hope's last word on the subject of sexual morality.*** This issue is not a brief summary, a text book, or even representative of all we are thinking. But it is meant to demonstrate that we care about the subject. We have not lost it. And we are not going the way of a lot of people and just leaving it up to individuals to feel their way through all the decisions they are making about it. We think that God cares about how we couple and that how we couple makes a difference in the quality of our lives in the Spirit.

After that, as you will see, we are threading our way through the thickets of post-Christian cultural thinking just like everyone else. In some ways it feels great to be liberated from some of the nonsense of the past. In other ways it is threatening to be deluged with godless reasoning all day.

Toni sums up a story about an evangelical who made a real paradigm shift in how he saw his gay neighbors and is now calling everyone else to open their eyes.

Gwen ponders the growing trend of being married sexually before one is married communally.

Prayerhead has reasserted him/herself from out of the far reaches of COH past. No sex, particularly, but lots of Spirit, there.

Rod was asked to update a piece from the archives and test out the reasoning again. "How do we have a dialogue about "gayness?"

Handle with care, please. Sex and the soul are very intertwined. **-Ed.**

Getting Love from All the Wrong Places

"**F**or the first nineteen years of my life I was the biggest Bible-banging homophobic person I knew."

Those who grew up hearing Bible stories have probably come to learn, through the examples of people like Gideon, Moses, and David, that God uses some pretty unlikely candidates to do important works and bring Him glory. Using "foolish things to confound the wise" is nothing new for God, and author Andrew Marin would be the first



to categorize himself as a "fool." That "Bible-banging homophobe" was Marin, until the summer after his freshman year of college. Marin's religious foundation began buckling beneath his feet when three of his best friends, during three consecutive months, revealed themselves as being gay.

Struggling to reconcile his friendships and his faith, Marin sensed the Holy Spirit telling him that if he wanted to know the truth, he would have to deliberately seek it out himself. *Love is an Orientation: Elevating the Conversation with the Gay Community* shares the lessons and truths learned over the last decade as Andrew Marin followed God to "Boystown" and fully immersed himself in the GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) community of north Chicago.

Love is an Orientation, along with the non-profit The Marin Foundation, aims to encourage healthy dialogue and build bridges between the GLBT and religious communities in the name of Jesus. As a result of the painful and destructive history between gays and Christians, Marin calls for followers of Jesus to stop debating and be the first to start building relationships and seeking reconciliation. For genuine understanding to take place, he says that each side needs to recognize the other's differing experiences as being equally valid and give those resulting feelings weight. In *Love is an Orientation*, Marin shares deeply personal stories and interviews, research, and recent history in order to help heterosexual Christians better understand the unique issues that challenge the GLBT community. The book concludes with practical commitments that Jesus followers can make in order to begin this reconciliatory work in their own communities.

For all the persecution that gays and lesbians have suffered from Christians in the name of God, it is truly a miracle that the Holy Spirit still squeezes through the cracks of spiritual concrete barriers, sowing seeds of redemption and healing anyway. Personally knowing members of the GLBT community who feel a longing for God, I cannot justify turning my back and pointing them away from Jesus, instead of toward Him. If we are truly dedicated to bringing the Kingdom of God to Philadelphia (and the rest of the world), then the healing power of Jesus is not just for rich, white males. His compassion is not just for the poor. His bruises were not suffered only for those dying from malnutrition. The blood from His hands and side and head redeems more than just German scientists, Indonesian farmers, and Ghanaian politicians. Jesus' forgiveness, unconditional love, and peace are for all—Jew and Greek, slave and free, female and male, straight and gay.

Love is an Orientation: Elevating

(continued on page2)

the Conversation with the Gay Community is not a book for everyone. Those looking for easy one-word, cut-and-dry answers will not find them. The last ten years of Andrew Marin's life have not been about proving "right" or "wrong," about playing doctor or psychologist, or threatening the GLBT community to "repent" of their "wrongdoings." God has instead called Marin to a simple, albeit difficult, task—to be the hands and feet (and heart!) of Jesus to a group of people whom we, as a society, have cast aside and treated as inferior or broken. Following Jesus' example, a conservative Christian has found a way to become the radical embodiment of what he believes.

At Circle of Hope's public meetings, our leaders are quick to point out things in our world that, while not done in the explicit name of God, clearly have His handwriting all over them. Rod often says that believers and unbelievers alike "have the right idea." We recognize that God uses anything and everyone to teach us about what His Kingdom can be.

Marin declares in *Love is an Orientation* that the GLBT community is the most loving and widely-accepting community that he has ever seen—differences in physical appearance, wealth, social status, religion, and race do not stop people from connecting to and caring for each other. If Christians can be humbled to put their trust in God and be honest with themselves, we would realize that there is a great deal we can learn from this community. They have the "right idea" about what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

Right now, the GLBT community is getting love from all the wrong places. Praise God that there are many people willing to reach out and care for these whom we have cast aside! It is dismaying, however, that few are the ones who can share the freedom of true joy, peace, and eternal hope in Jesus Christ, along with unconditional acceptance. At Andrew Marin's blog (loveisanorientation.com), he writes about the Christian's "Kingdom Job Description"—"[I]t's the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge, and my job to

love." Being "little Christs" obliges us to love and serve all people; the day that we who have abundant love in Jesus are the people caring the most for the GLBT community, we can rejoice that the Kingdom of God is truly at hand.

Toni Thomas

Faux Marriages

It's often best to start with definitions and since this term, "faux marriage," could be understood in many ways, let me offer this definition. When I use the term faux marriage, I'm referring to relationships that involve the kind of interpersonal contact that once implied marriage in our culture, but now exist without the legal/social/public commitments associated with marriage. Let me apologize if the term strikes a negative chord in you. I don't mean to say that people in these sorts of relationship are false. I think many people in faux marriages are trying to relate openly and are in sync with many of the norms of the current cultural context in which they live. They are not bad people and they do not all have bad relationships. They are, however,

resolutely not married, thus the term "faux marriage" seems to me to offer some insight. These relationships include all the emotional and physical relating streams that humans enjoy, but do not include the public definitions and constraints that inhibit or restrict that relating to one person.

As I've listened to people lately and they have told me stories about their relationships and about their struggles, a pattern seems to be taking shape. Many of us are straining to find a way to relate with intimate partners that feels safe. Our culture seems to be offering us an alternative to all the promises and commitments of marriage (and the subsequent pain that comes when those marriages end) in a kind of relating that at-

tempts to keep definitions out of the picture. People talk about relationships in which they meet someone to whom they are attracted and they start spending most of their free time with this person, often looking to that person as a support in their most significant issues, and they have sex with this person regularly. They do not, however, think of the relationship in terms of dating that person or being committed by any sort of title for the relationship. The definition-less relating seems to be an attempt to avoid all the messy stuff of marriage or even of dating. You don't have to break up with a person you aren't even dating. You don't have to deal with feelings of confinement, since you are not committed to an exclusive relationship. You certainly don't have to fear divorce. It's cool not to live under any labels.

So if I've listened correctly, the hope that underlies the faux marriage is to remain free and so to remain protected from the panoply of emotions that can come with breaking up: the hurt of feeling rejected, the guilt of no longer desiring the person, etc. The faux marriage while it's working well provides support, sexual gratification, and a sense of freedom. The partners (who aren't overt in their partnering) can experiment in order to see if they continue to feel good about relating. A bit

(continued on page 3)

"Our culture seems to be offering us an alternative to all the promises and commitments of marriage (and the subsequent pain that comes when those marriages end) in a kind of relating that attempts to keep definitions out of the picture."

Dialogue

WHY? *This quarterly journal is a gift to everyone who wishes to be a part of the ongoing dialogue we share in Christ that forms us and deepens us as a real church. Whether you just arrived or have been with us from the beginning, we want you to be part of the conversation and an informed member of the team. We hope you will work with us to build a safe place to experience and share the love of Jesus Christ. Dialogue is a crucial part of that.*

If you would like to respond to any of the articles printed, that would be great. We have never turned a response away — but we reserve the right to do so.

like taking a car for a test drive. You see how the car responds and if/how it pleases you with its responses. I'd suggest that many of my friends who relate in these faux marriages take their relationship(s) on test drives to all sorts of new places. It seems like an ideal solution to a world that has proven that marriages often end in divorces which involve all kinds of pain.

There's a hitch here, however. The problem with the faux marriage is that all the sticky emotional issues of traditional marriage do get implied even though the labels aren't applied. Faux marriage can't deliver on the promises of safety or control of our feelings anymore than traditional marriage. In fact, I'd suggest that faux marriages leave people more deeply confused and perhaps even more hurt than we may realize. Without definitions and commitments agreed upon, our capacity to imagine seems to be activated. We want to avoid mistakes, to come up with better solutions, to exceed expectations. Our minds are fertile fields of such

hope. I believe God created us with this capacity, but as is true about everything in our world today, things are not fully as God intended. What we imagine is also shaped by yearnings for safety from past hurts that we have buried in the unconscious reaches of our minds; our expectations are shaped by a desire to avoid anxiety that begins in unconscious attempts to control our partners so they do not hurt us as others have; we even 'see' or interpret others' behavior based on these unconscious patterns of hurt that we only dimly recognize at best. So we are quite a bubbling cauldron of emotion that we may only superficially understand. We bring all this feeling to our relationships. This is, of course, true for people who marry as well. No one escapes the need to grow through our issues, to confront and allow healing at the deepest level of our beings.

My argument is simply that relating without definition or label doesn't provide what we might wish it did. I see evidence of this constantly in my work listening to people. Freedom from the risk of failure, rejection, or guilt simply does not exist. The messages from our culture, however, are stuck in an information loop that keeps spinning out these assumptions that there *is* such a

freedom and particularly naming *sexual* freedom as the best means to human fulfillment. It's easy to see why we hold so many faulty expectations. Ultimately we end up tricked into expecting that if we have a 'good' relationship it will eliminate what truly intimate relationships simply reveal: our need to change and grow beyond our fears. A faux marriage adds to this challenge a large dose of confusion, since the definition-less experience leaves the partners wondering what they might offer or ask for. This sort of freedom doesn't allow for a confrontation with inner fear, but merely points to a decision to move away from it when it emerges. There's no commitment to contain the fear; no pressure to persevere. The high divorce rate implies that we are eliminating that in traditional marriage, as well, but that is a subject for another day.

When I consider faux marriages and their impact on people I care about, my concern focuses on the experimental

"The messages from our culture, however, are stuck in an information loop that keeps spinning out these assumptions that there *is* such a freedom and particularly naming *sexual* freedom as the best means to human fulfillment."

nature of these enterprises that I believe hampers the relationships drastically. As we seek loving relationships, fear emerges: the fear of losing love, never finding lasting love, not being able to give love — all these are basic to the human condition. The faux marriage without definition or label, under the presumption of freedom, seems to bind people to a continual testing of the relationship. Given the power of these basic fears and hopes that we all share, it seems clear to me that love does not grow well in the midst of a test, even if we don't call it a test.

Gwen White

Readers, please respond!

Your responses may just be printed in the next Dialogue! We love hearing what you are thinking.
sarah@circleofhope.net



Stretching Prayer

When we pray it can be tempting to focus too much on trying to make something happen; we can be distracted by concerns that we aren't doing it right. We can be overly focused on ourselves and our feelings of shame—

avoiding God because of what we've done/are doing/thinking about doing or feelings of guilt—

I don't pray often enough or know how to develop a vibrant inner life through prayer.

But take it from Prayerhead, we've got to stick with it, anyway. God loves to relate to us through prayer. I've been trying what I call "stretching prayer" and it has been getting me a bit farther along the road to where I'd like to be. See what you think.

Seems strange, but it is a stretch to pray in a way that is more about God than about me. Rather than being distant because of my sense of frailty, I wonder what God is experiencing, how God is trying to relate, and how I am received by your loving creator.

For athletes, regular stretching is crucial to being able to maintain a healthy body and ability to perform. For us to be able to do what we're given to do by God, we also require regular soul "stretching."

I need to keep myself spiritually limber by having a regular workout schedule. I keep a regular length of devoted time and schedule a time-slot each day

(continued on page 4)

(If you are a beginner, go for 3-5 days a week). I use times of silence, a paragraph of Scripture, and maybe prepare a sacred space. I have some material to suggest what I should pray about: for the church, for the incarcerated, for the suffering—sometimes I am specific, sometimes general. I pray for God to be revealed to me today, and for the courage to respond.

Stretching prayer-regular, patient, and incremental, is a way to keep our spiritual antennae tuned in, our spiritual sails up, and our souls loose and prepared for where God is leading each of us right now.

Prayerhead

We Don't Have a Gay Policy

I first ventured into this discussion in 2001 because I had the awkward responsibility, as pastor for Circle of Hope in Center City, of having several conversations with people I barely knew about what our "policy" is toward gays (or to the so-called LGBT community). I'm not sure if your acquaintances have asked you about such things, but I have had quite a few honest, good people come up to me and ask, like they are asking if we are "smoking or non-smoking,"

"What is your stand on gays? Or "What is your gay policy?"

So we keep talking. If anything, the subject has become more relevant and heated in the last four years. Because of that volatility, many people wish I wouldn't even bring the subject up, since homosexuality has become one of the most divisive subjects in the church and in politics these days. A PBS special was filmed about a church in Germantown that was disciplined for employing a publicly lesbian pastor. Whole denominations are splitting down the middle about "gay policies." Whole communities are trapped in a stand-off. It seems like any way one talks about the subject, someone will disapprove. But we've got to talk.

Before I'm done I hope you understand a bit of how we are trying to stay out of the traps and stay in the process of re-

demption with people, no matter how they identify themselves.

Do your best, please, not to turn my thoughts into the "policy-about-not-having-a-policy." We're in process, here, and that is what our Dialogue Quarterly is supposed to promote: a good, honest process of loving and truthing.

First, why might someone ask, "What is your gay policy?" I think there are two very good reasons:

1) A person could get hurt!

A man who used to live down the street from our offices wouldn't come up to our public meeting, even though he wanted to, because he was sure he would defile the worship. He thought he would be disrespectful if he, as a gay person, came to worship. He had been convinced that he was a damned person, and he liked me too much to wreck my worship with his damnedness. Periodically, we would stop and talk on the street and he would ask me to pray for him and his family for the many problems they were having. But he wouldn't come to the PM.

Many people who consider themselves homosexual are quite sure that Christians are likely to "bomb" them with judgment—and for good reason. It makes good sense to know what the church's gay policy is before one gets into range! During the 70's and 80's, you might say that the most conservative Christians (who some people label fundamentalists) stopped fearing communists and started fearing homosexuals. From Anita Bryant on, there has been a small sector of the church who have been outspoken in their opposition to gay people and to what they consider the "special rights" that the government might bestow on them. They are the ones who show up at Pridefest with bullhorns to tell everyone they are going to hell. It seems wise for a person to see if the Christians they are connecting with will be dead set against you if they get to know you.

2) It is politically normal.

Gwen and I have an old friend who is now a popular elected official in California. He considers himself gay. He has been at the forefront of securing equal rights and influence for people who think like him. He has been active in forming the political power to advance an increasingly well-organized and defined gay rights agenda. He once sent us a copy of a two-page spread about him from a San Jose paper. It is kind of weird to see someone from your high school days looking rather famous in the paper. He's amazing.

If you express yourself sexually with people of the same gender these days, it is often more than a personal issue. It is a public policy issue. It is a matter of justice. When Mayor John Street hired a lesbian to be the Human Resources Director, that was a big political statement. These days, if you are having sex with people of your own gender, the politicians want to make it a statement, they want you "out." The TV show *Will and Grace* was all about that not long ago. On the show, Will had a boyfriend who was hiding the fact that he was together with Will. He called Will his brother, instead of his partner, in front of his boss. Grace was appalled that Will would violate his cherished convictions by going along with the deception. She

"We are trying to stay out of the traps and stay in the process of redemption with people, no matter how they identify themselves."

wouldn't even have dinner with them, because she would not participate in the falseness. People who decide to express themselves in a homosexual way are under a lot of pressure these days to go along with the political program. So it would be normal

to see if your prospective church was going along with the political program.

So there I am, trying to figure out what I am getting into when the person asks me, "So what is your policy? Is this a safe place for me?" Are they asking – "Are you anything like the Christians who bombed me?" Are they asking – "Are you going to leave my political philosophy undisturbed?" It's a tough question to answer before a relationship is formed.

Personally, I have been walking a middle road, between the proverbial rock and a hard place, when it comes to answering the question, "What is your gay policy?" I can understand why the person is asking the question.

(continued on page 5)

But I rarely want to answer it right away because I am afraid they won't be able to hear all the reasoning behind why we don't have one before I'm already packed into one of their pre-conceived categories. I'm not sure I will get to tell them how I am going against prevalent thought, with much the same reasoning that the apostles used when they were going against the prevailing thinking of their day, as described in Acts 5:28-32:

The authorities told the first followers not to teach in the name of Jesus. *Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."*

I don't want to get trapped in discussions that arise from a worldview that doesn't allow for God. Anything I say in a context that is already against God or just mindlessly godless is probably going to sound insulting. So, if I get the chance, before I am stereotyped with my first word, I want to ask, "Is it OK if we try to understand where each of us is coming from before I try to tell you why we have no policy and what that means?"

Here is something of what I would like to say if I got to say where I am coming from:

On the one hand, I am not in total agreement with how some of the vocal fundamentalists have painted the views of Christians for the media.

Jerry Falwell said extreme things about homosexuality on his TV show, the Old Time Gospel Hour, when he was forming the Moral Majority. Pat Robertson used the homosexual "threat" a few too many times until the Christian Coalition had to hire Ralph Reed to restore some respect for the organization. You may not know who these people are, but they are politicized Christians trying to "save America for God and protect families from evil." They have a commonly accepted way of reading the Bible that reduces it to its parts and pieces and principles and then recombines these elements according to a system. One can prove almost any point by recombining Bible pieces se-

lectively. They are afraid of homosexuality, so they make a case against it using this method.

Honestly, I think the basic morality they are protecting is true. I think they know what God has built into creation. What I am uncomfortable with is that I think they focus on the behavior God is looking at and miss *how* God is looking. Anyone can find clear Bible verses in Leviticus and Romans and elsewhere that more than imply that homosexual behavior is not God's design for us, and that it is a soul damaging activity. I can't imagine that we will be talking to any writer of any part of the Bible when we meet them in heaven who will not tell us that they assumed that sex between the two complementary genders was the obvious design of creation.

But that is only one point. It is the law point. It is true, but not true enough. And Jesus has done much better to reveal God than to just stick us with the laws of right and wrong. Our sexual behavior is subject to our will and obedience, but our sexual feelings and desires, the temptations and imaginations we feel, the inbred tendencies and almost inexplicable drives we have, need a lot more than law to bring us peace and give us hope.

God may want to convince you that how you are expressing yourself sexually is damaging and alienating. But he didn't come to you as Jesus to hit you over the head. He has gone as far as anyone can go to demonstrate that he cares about each of us as we are right now. He died for us sinners before we even knew he had done it. I don't think I can have a good discussion with someone about how God transforms the deepest parts of us until I can be sure that we are together on how God sees people.

So if I wanted a good verse on which to build a gay policy, I'd probably choose this one.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do

so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

In this statement, I think Paul is teaching us to see people like God sees us. I don't want to have a tender discussion about someone's sexuality until they are relatively convinced that I am going to see them through the eyes of hope for their fullness, the eyes of total sympathy for their condition, whatever it is. Those are Jesus eyes. The same eyes God sees us all in all our unique brokenness. It is hope for our fullness that brought God to earth, it is sympathy for our plight that took him to the cross. We don't start with policies

anymore; we start with persons. If we are Jesus-followers, no matter what a person does, we see that person in Christ.

Let me add something more about how people seem to see themselves, these days. I'm not sure I understand all this perfectly, but it seems that people have totally bought into a philosophy that is bent on finding the *identity* of things, as if

"God repeatedly tells us that we fallen-away-creations find our true identity, or self, or purpose, or destiny in relationship to God, not in relation to ourselves or to another person or to our sexual impulses."

we can reduce things, and even people, down to their essence and understand them. Christians and unbelievers alike, all seem to believe this. So everyone is either "this" or "that." So most people are very interested in finding out "Who I am" and being true to that.

There is real logic to this way of thinking, of course, but I think it gets taken way too far. In the case of what is called homosexuality, I'm not sure I even believe in an identity called "homosexual," (like I don't believe "race" is more than an illusion spawned from the same thinking). I'm not sure a person can or should be defined by their sexual desires. I don't want to see anyone in such a small way. I think God repeatedly tells us that we fallen-away-creations find our true identity, or self, or purpose, or destiny in relationship to God, not in relation to ourselves or to another person or to our sexual impulses. Defining oneself as a homosexual and seeing whether I will join in with that is too much to ask of me. I'm not really sure I can play that game. I'm not sure I can see it that way. I'm *trying* to go with how Jesus sees us getting a true self:

(continued on page 6)

Those who want to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for me will save them. What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self? Luke 9:24-5 (NRSV)

The struggle with our bent up sexuality, defined as hetero, homo, whatever is too deep, too precious, too mysterious to reduce that struggle to some scientific formula, or some rationalistic definition. It is not enough. It must be handled in Christ.

So all of that was about responding to people who might ask “What is your gay policy” expecting the usual Christian fear and defensiveness about sin. If a person is coming with the predictable woundedness from past experiences with the church, then I would like to start over, somehow.

But I am no more comfortable with having the discussion when people are revealing an agenda from the other angle. So here I go with “on the other hand,” the political hand.

A remarkable thing has happened to sexual behavior ever since some people in the 70's were hanging out at a bar in Greenwich Village and got fed up with the police harassing them for being homosexuals. They became so enraged, they started a famous riot that marks the beginning of aggressive homosexual pressure for equal treatment under the law.

I tend to agree with most of their political demands. Personally, my politics run toward the libertarian side of the spectrum. If you leave minorities alone, you will probably leave me alone to be a Christian, too, and I value that. So I think equal protection under the law is a good thing for them and for me. That is all most people are asking for when they want to share

medical benefits with their partners and share the benefits that married partners get.

But that is not where the discussion ends. In Philadelphia, I think you can actually enter a gay “world,” in which all sorts of new ideas make sense because

there is a gay culture, with gay habits and new angles on religion to reinforce the world view. I have talked to more and more people who can describe the party line to which an outsider must conform to be acceptable in gay world. The litmus test has been applied to me and to our church many times. To be friends with people who are convinced of this way of thinking and promoting this social movement, one must be converted to gay politics and a new philosophical and religious way of life.

If I got a chance to have a friendship and a real discussion without having to be converted, I would probably want to share the basics of my faith, too. It is like what Paul did when he met the big thinkers in Corinth. He said to people who were after him with a lot of philosophizing, writing the letter called 1 Corinthians:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

1) “We see people as people, not objects of policy or as some thing that can be boxed into some pseudo-scientific identity. 2) We relate out of a world view that begins with Jesus and isn't being cobbled together from the philosophies of the day.”

I don't want to have a gay policy, because it would then appear as if life were about making policies. Like Paul felt then, I don't have much faith in the policies the philosophers and gov-

ernments are coming up with right now. I wish them well and I want to participate, but when it comes down to it, I don't have a lot to offer that does not arise from my total reliance on what God did for me in Jesus. Even in the case of the most powerless—and often

homosexuals feel powerless over their sexuality and disempowered by the society — even then, about all I can say is that Christ is the power and wisdom of God. Other solutions are end points, not beginnings, and I can't say I go along with them.

So if a highly politicized person asked, “What is your gay policy” expecting me to be for or against their stand, I'd rather talk about how they got their stand before I respond. I might have more problems with how they are thinking than with what they are concluding. I also have a feeling that they might have some problems if they actually explored what is behind some of the propaganda people keep passing around these days..

Discussion of sexuality and sexual morality has become even more complex.

I have not tried to tidy it up for you too much. But I hope this brief attempt helps you see why we don't make a lot of statements about it. We have resisted writing things down that require dialogue between people and God and between mutually respectful people to sort out — sometimes over years! Our reasons for not making policy are basic: 1) We see people as people, not objects of policy or as some thing that can be boxed into some pseudo-scientific identity. 2) We relate out of a world view that begins with Jesus and isn't being cobbled together from the philosophies of the day. I don't know how our reasoning works out completely or practically, but I want to help figure that out.

I think we will figure it out step by step and person by person because the Holy Spirit will help us see people like God does and will help us love each other and work for the redemption we all need just like he does. We all came from somewhere far away from God and He is drawing us all closer and hoping to get us all home. It doesn't matter to me what it is that alienates any of us from God. I just want to be on his side in bridging the gap .

My prayer: Lord, help us to bask in the warmth of being seen through your death and resurrection—free us to enjoy the hope of finding our true selves and our destiny in relationship to you—release us from the pressures of worldly philosophies that ignore you and try to install something else to guide us—give us courage to think and live with you, to love with hope and empathy.

Rod White