



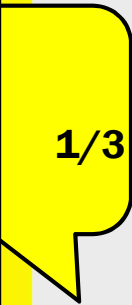
**Ministry to LGBTQ Teens**  
Eric Woods  
www.ericdwoods.com



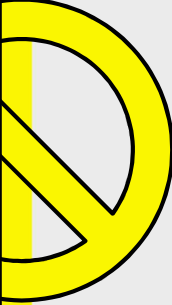

**Hope. Wellbeing. Optimism.**



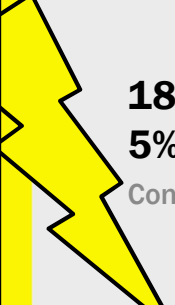

**37% Happy**  
Compared to 67% happy.




**1/3 have no adult to talk to.**  
Compared to 1/6.

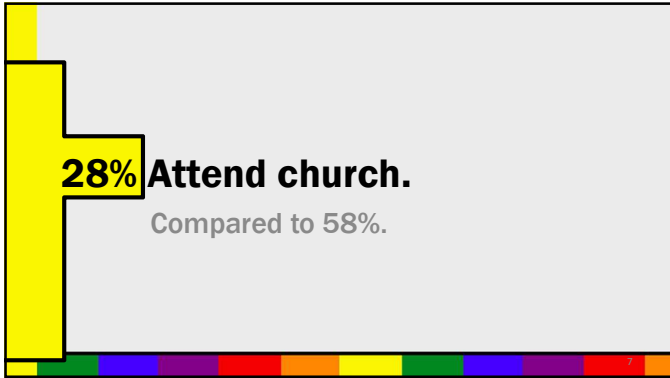


**Half have used alcohol or drugs.**  
Compared to one-fourth.



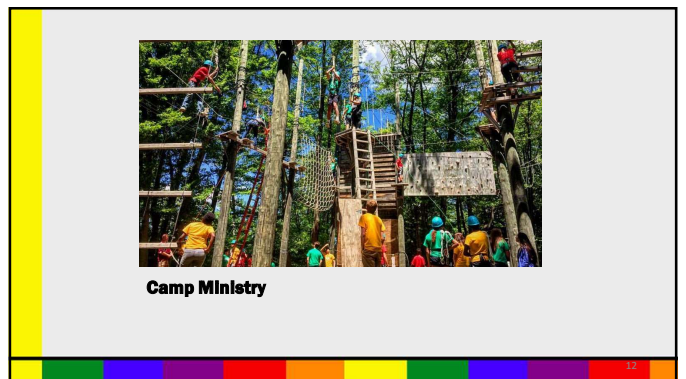
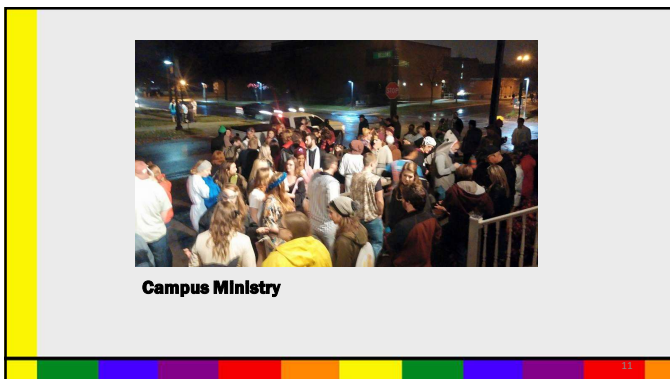
**18% Verbal harassment.**  
**5% Physical assault.**  
Compared to 10% and 3%.





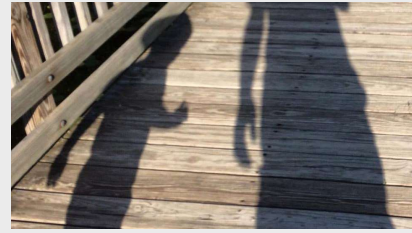
*Growing up LGBT in America*  
The Human Rights Campaign, 2015  
[www.ericdwoods.com/lgbtqministry](http://www.ericdwoods.com/lgbtqministry)

The slide has a grey background with a yellow vertical bar on the left. The text is centered. The bottom of the slide features a rainbow-colored bar.





**Dominican Republic**



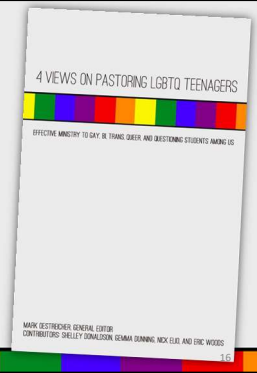
**Foster Care**



**Eagle Village**

**Outline**

- Ministry Scenarios
- Understand Some Words
- Look at 3 Views
- Break
- My View
- My Practice
- Key Issues for Camps
- Q & A



**Camper comes out at campfire.**



**Parents concerned for transgender camper.**



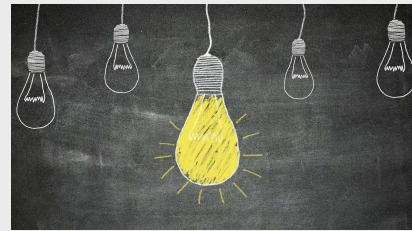
**Counselor has strong views on LGBT issues.**



**Colleague doesn't know what to do.**



**Church is updating wedding policy.**



**Brainstorm additional scenarios.**

**Terms explored.**



## **LGBTQ**

An abbreviation/acronym for the identifiers or adjectives that cover various sexual orientations and gender identities.

*{ the LGBTQ community; ministering to an LGBTQ teenager }*

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual

Bisexual, or bi, refers to being emotionally and physically attracted to people who identify as male and/or female.

Lesbian and gay refer to same sex attraction, typically female and male respectively.

## Sexual Orientation

The type of emotional and physical attraction one feels for others.

{ Same-Sex Attraction, or SSA, refers to those feelings whether or not one acts on them. }

## Gender Identity

A person's internal experience and perception of themselves as a man, woman, blend of both, or neither.

{ It may or may not align with the gender assigned at birth. }

## Transgender, Cisgender

{ Adjectives describing gender identity or expression, not sexual orientation. }

Transgender, or trans, is identifying with a gender that is different from the one assigned at birth.

Cisgender describes identifying with the gender assigned at birth.

## Gender Fluid

Having a gender identity that is not fixed.

## Binary, non-Binary

Binary describes systems, languages, attitudes and beliefs that divide gender into only male and female.

{ Non-Binary allows for genders which are not exclusively male or female. Expression varies, some use the term *Gender Neutral*. }

## Queer

A broad term used to describe people who do not identify as straight or heterosexual, and may have a non-normative gender identity.

{ Historically a derogatory term, it is often used positively in the LGBTQ community now. }

## Homosexual

Term used to describe a person emotionally and physically attracted to a person of the same sex.

{ Considered stigmatizing and offensive due to its historical use as a psychiatric classification for mental illness. This term is not widely used outside the church today. }

## Questioning

Describes a person with uncertainty about their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

## Imago Dei.

Gemma Dunning

“What message were the young people of our town hearing not just from me but from the wider church? It taught me that silence has its own voice...”

Many people struggle to reconcile their theological position with their personal experience.

Show an interest in all aspects of a young person's life, not just their LGBTQ status and struggles.

Be present for your LGBTQ teens as a support and champion.

## Unity.

Nick Elio

"We need to remember that when we are having the 'LGBTQ conversation,' we are talking about people, students, and families. We are talking about sons and daughters, moms and dads, brothers and sisters... We simply treat LGBTQ students the way we treat any other student."

Young people are typically far more progressive in their belief and practice than the general church population.

The primary concern is helping youth understand that their sole identity comes from being an image bearer and beloved child of God.


**Affirming.**  
Shelley Donaldson

“It looks like reconciliation, reparations, hard conversations, open hearts and minds, radical welcome that most of us think we are practicing but really aren’t, and most of all grace on all sides of the table.”

LGBTQ people want the opportunity to live their lives fully, without the church imposing an agenda on changing “who it is God has created them to be.”

Until our hearts are changed and can truly feel those numbers in terms of people that are loved by God, then nothing will change.

**Discussion.**



**My View.**



## Transformation.

And that is what some of you were.

Transformation is true and real and possible, no matter what has defined a person's past.

## Transformation.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, he wrote, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

And that is what some of you were.

Transformation is true and real and possible, no matter what has defined a person's past.

## The Church and Family.

Instead, she got a welcome—a consistent welcome. She got a welcome just the same as every other broken life that walks into our chapel. She got a smile, a pat on the back and a side hug. And now, she gets an opportunity to ask and answer questions. She gets to hear week after week about a God who loves her from a ministry that embraces her in all of her brokenness and hurt, just like any other teen.

Several weeks after she joined our community, she approached me

## Safety.

this realm, causing the church to be a safe and welcoming place for students, regardless of our position on these topics. "We just need to decide," he said, "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."

We've already agreed that the church should be a safe place for

## My Practice.

## Be Pastoral.

They need me to be there to work through their issues of faith and doubt, their disagreements with their parents, and their friendship troubles—the same as any other students.

And the caution that must be raised is that we must fight to not let the issue of sexuality preclude all the other issues in these students' lives. It would be unfair to suggest that sexual healing has to be first

## Be Willing to Learn.

...don't know the answer, I'll make one up on the spot. I chuckled as I said it; but really, I was only half joking.

However, this doesn't work with our LGBTQ youth. And I've found that more important than being able to have an answer or verse on the spot is my ability to ask good questions and genuinely learn from those I often don't understand well. After all, the best source of information about the needs and struggles of LGBTQ students is not prime-time television, it's LGBTQ students.

...with more questions—questions

## Be Open.

...be open towards  
LGBTQ youth is not a theological one. It is, in fact, a practical one. I have come to be comfortable with a fair amount of tension between my theological view on sexuality and my practical response to those whose sexuality doesn't fit within it.

...what they really need is not another person to argue with but someone to open their arms and demonstrate love in the most practical sense."

...theological view on sexuality and my practical response to those whose sexuality doesn't fit within it.

...believing that being gay is "wrong" or that marriage

## Be Gospel Focused.

But that view assumes a view of salvation that looks a lot like a point on a map, rather than a route on a map. And salvation is often referred to in a present and ongoing way. (Look at 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 2:15, for example.<sup>4</sup>) And the idea that we "are being saved" allows for the possibility that we can be followers of Christ, much like the tax collectors and sinners, but not yet have worked out all of our sin issues.

So, can an LGBTQ teen be a Christian? Absolutely.

## Be Unshockable.

...trying to know who they are and how to identify and whether there is a place for them in the church today.

We can show them shock, or we can show them they are loved and welcome in our churches—welcome to wrestle through difficult issues with the support of a youth leader who may not understand what they're going through but is willing to listen, to learn, and to journey with them towards ultimate Christlikeness.

## Issues for Camps.

## Staffing

"...for the most part, provide that religious organizations can consider religion when deciding who to hire and fire. However, this freedom is increasingly being contested..."

-Christian Legal Society

## Title VII

“Sufficiently religious” organizations can require conformation to:

- a. Religious doctrine
- b. Religious beliefs
- c. Religion-based code of conduct

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## Religious Protections

Adopt thoughtful, theological statements:

- a. Theological beliefs
- b. Spiritual authority
- c. Christian dispute resolution
- d. The doctrines of sin, grace, repentance and restoration

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## Religious Protections

Be clear about the religious nature of your organization:

- a. In all of your documents
- b. Publicly on your website and social media

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## Religious Protections

Train your staff and volunteers on the nature and application of your theological beliefs.

Develop teaching positions and make them available to your staff.

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## Religious Protections

Apply your policies consistently.

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## Hiring

Hire people who align with your view

- Be totally transparent about your views from the beginning
- Be clear about Christian requirements for service in job descriptions, postings, bylaws
- Designate positions as “minister” where relevant

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## Resources

[www.ericdwoods.com/LGBTQministry](http://www.ericdwoods.com/LGBTQministry)

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## Policy

Ensure corporate purpose/mission is clearly Christian

Update bylaws to include:

1. Statement of faith
2. Statement on Biblical sexuality
3. Procedure for Christian conflict resolution
4. Required agreement with statement of faith for board

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## Campers & Guests

Develop a communication plan.  
Partner with parents and caregivers.

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## Campers & Guests

Ask parents and campers what would make them feel safe.

1. Accommodate
2. Use Neutral Space
3. House with "birth gender"

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## Campers & Guests

Whatever you do, make sure it is consistent with:

- Your theological position,
- Your Christian lifestyle expectations for staff, and
- Your facilities use policies.

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## Campers & Guests

Maintain a Ministry focus

1. Show love
2. Seek to retain opportunities to minister
3. Educate your staff and volunteers
4. Partner with churches for follow-up

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## Weddings & Rentals

Adopt and consistently follow a facility use policy that reinforces the organization's identity.

Indicate accepted uses publicly.

For weddings: Require pre-marital counseling with a licensed or ordained Christian minister

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## Q & A

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[www.ericdwoods.com/LGBTQministry](http://www.ericdwoods.com/LGBTQministry)

4 VIEWS ON PASTORING LGBTQ TEENAGERS

EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TO GAY, IR TRANS, GLEET, AND QUESTIONING STUDENTS AMONG US

MARK ECKSTEINER, GENERAL EDITOR  
CONTRIBUTORS: SHEILEY DONALDSON, DEBRA DANNING, NICK ELD, AND ERIC WOODS

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