

Residential 2017: LGBT+ Bodies are “Gifts of God’s Grace.”

Supporters of Outcome gathered at Luther King House in Manchester on 27th and 28th January for a 24-hour residential. Facilitated by poet, writer, blogger and broadcaster Rev. Rachel Mann, the theme for the weekend was ‘LGBT+ bodies as gifts of God’s grace.’ Sessions explored the stories of Simeon, Anna, Joseph and Mary, focusing on the birth narratives and presentation of Jesus in the Temple.



A rich array of themes relevant to the experience of LGBT+ people were explored and questioned. Re-reading the story of Simeon, we discussed whether waiting for a long time is an active or passive process, especially when we are awaiting changes that we feel are a promised part of God’s plan. We also considered the role of older people (in the church and the LGBT+ community) within a culture obsessed with youth. Exploring the story of Anna, we noted that her words are unrecorded – a reminder of the ongoing marginalisation of female voices and perspectives. We discussed the importance of finding your voice and of

the liberating and potentially subversive opportunity to ‘sing your song’ rather than simply uttering words.

Continuing to discuss gendered roles, we contemplated how Joseph’s traditional position as a man had been entirely undermined (fathering an ‘illegitimate’ child and still remaining faithful to a potentially ‘disgraced’ Mary). Had Joseph been emasculated or set free from gendered expectations and norms? In turning once again to Mary, we were aware of how she has been ‘over-interpreted’ down the centuries, as people have hung their own cultural perspectives and norms upon her. Has Mary become therefore almost a stereotyped, idealised woman and mother and as such ‘unreal’ to our lived experience? Or can we strip back the layers to discover a ‘queer hero’: someone who defied and deviated from established norms and expectations in order to be truly herself and to authentically follow God’s will?

All of this - and much more – we explored through narrative, discussion, poetry, prayer and reflection. It helped us to gain fresh perspectives on our own stories and experience as LGBT+ people. And it encouraged us to connect afresh with the biblical characters as ‘queer heroes’ and role models.

As per our usual pattern, the 24 hours finished with Holy Communion as we celebrated God’s unconditional, all-embracing love.

Following the residential, Rev Rachel Mann tweeted: *“Thank you for being wonderful. For showing how LGBTI people are gifts of grace. It was a privilege to join your community of hope.”*

Public Meeting

We are delighted that the President of Conference, Rev. Roger Walton, will be joining us for this year's Public Meeting. Roger will be our preacher and celebrant when we gather in Harrogate on Saturday 10th June, exploring the theme of 'holiness and justice.' We will share lunch together and this will be followed by a choice of workshops in the afternoon. Please save the date. Booking details will follow in due course.



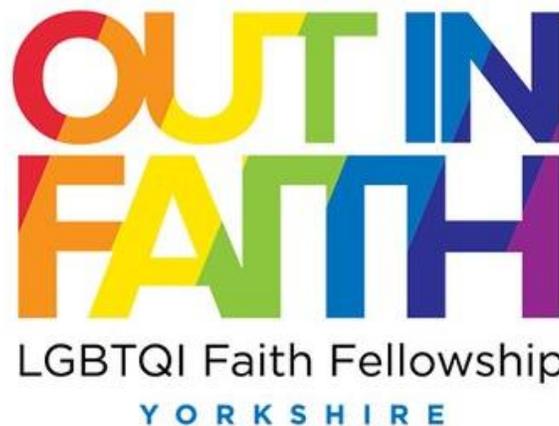
Finance Update

Since its beginning, Outcome has relied on the generosity of supporters who have given donations either on a one-off basis or by standing order. These last two years in particular the Co-ordinating Group has sought to develop its '2020 Vision' strategy. We have tried to increase our visibility at Methodist Conference, not only by maintaining our stall there, but this year having an advert in the Conference handbook (£210) and Outcome leaflets for every representative (also £210). We have financed members of the Co-ordinating Group to attend important events, for example the two-day Oasis Open Church conference in London. We have felt it right to pay for transport costs of CoG members to attend its meetings, although we have used Skype to reduce some of these costs. We hope this shows that we are trying to do the maximum while working on a fairly minimal budget. We recognise that not all our supporters are able to help financially, but working on the basis of us having around 200 supporters who receive our newsletter, if only half of that number were

able and willing to donate £10 per year to Outcome, our income would increase by £1,000. That would be of great help in what we seek to do. If you are able to help financially, our bank details are as follows. Account Name: Outcome; Account Number: 50602578; Sort Code: 60-17-27. One-off donations can be sent to Outcome Treasurer, 19 Lea Road, Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley, PR6 7PF. Cheques payable to 'Outcome'. Our grateful thanks for any gift you feel able to give.

Regional Focus: Yorkshire

Leonora Wassell writes: *"'Out in Faith' meets in Leeds at the Cosmopolitan Hotel and in Harrogate at Wetherspoons. It provides a safe space to meet together, where LGBTQI people and straight allies can explore their spirituality and feel totally accepted. Everyone is welcome without prejudice, believing our spirituality and sexuality is an expression of our humanity. We have also had a meeting as an interfaith*



group. Jewish, Muslim and Christian LGBTQI people met to share their stories and worshipped together. It was beautifully moving. We even had a lady join us thinking it was the MWiB meeting! When we explained what in fact we were she chose to stay and participate in the day.

We hope to set more of these groups up firstly in Yorkshire but want to go nationwide. We see ourselves in the Methodist tradition of a movement for change, as a meeting of like-minded people and a place of spiritual growth." Find 'Out in Faith' on Facebook or contact: rainbowrev94@hotmail.co.uk

AGM and Coordinating Group

Our AGM was held as part of our residential, on 28th January. In addition to receiving reports we discussed matters relevant to the future direction and priorities of Outcome. Barbara Pettitt (Convenor), Roger Stubbings (Treasurer), Karl Rutledge, Leonora Wassell, Katy Dunn and Phil East (Communications) were appointed to serve as the Coordinating Group for the coming year.



Barbara Pettitt (pictured) writes: *“Hi my name is Barbara. I am the Convenor for Outcome and chair the co-ordinating group’s meetings (the CoG). I also hold the theology portfolio as part of the CoG. I am married to Alison and we have two children, Timmy and Chelsea. Both have additional needs and keep us pretty busy. I am a minister without appointment as I am a full time parent and carer for our two children. I enjoy reading, photography and have recently joined a gym.... who knows how long that will last! I have just signed up with Cancer Research to ‘walk all over cancer’ by doing 10,000 steps every day through March.*

I love being part of the CoG for Outcome and have found the annual stall at Methodist Conference a great way of sharing who we are and what we do. I am currently compiling our next publication which will be 50% theological reflection on aspects of sexuality and gender and 50% liturgies, prayers and meditations.”

LGBT History Month: Exhibition

LGBT History Month is celebrated in February in the UK. Last year’s theme was ‘Religion, Belief and Philosophy’ and this year is looking at ‘Citizenship, PSHE and Law.’ 2017 also marks the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales.

Christian Voices Coming Out is a Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) heritage project which is capturing the stories of pioneering LGBT Christian activists, advocates and allies. Over the past 40 years, these individuals have worked for the acceptance, affirmation and welcome of gay and lesbian people, have challenged the churches when they have diminished and dismissed our lives, loves and identities, and borne witness to a Christian faith built on principles of justice, compassion and love. Volunteers have been working to record interviews with around 30 people, from across the UK, from different church backgrounds, each with a unique story to tell. Some will be well known as leaders and activists, others have worked tirelessly in communities, often unrecognised until now.



To coincide with LGBT History Month, the ‘Christian Voices Coming Out’ exhibition is taking place at Leicester’s Bishop Street Methodist Church from Thursday 2 February to Wednesday 22 February 2017. This is a great opportunity to see something of the work-in-progress on the project – featuring 14 of the initial participants along with items from the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement’s archives.

The exhibition is open during café hours: weekdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-3pm at Bishop Street Methodist Church, 10a Bishop Street, Leicester, LE1 6AF.