

**Spiritually Directing LGBTIQA+ People of Faith:  
Investigating Contemporary Knowledge Gaps,  
Gauging Awareness, and Resourcing Personal  
and Professional Development**

**by Amanda Pilbrow**

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## **Abstract**

The growing edges of research and stories within and around LGBTIQ+<sup>1</sup> people of faith are an increasing area of interest, offering potential personal/professional growth within the task of spiritual direction. Awareness of resources and stories can unlock and open eyes, ears, hearts, and minds to the whispers of the Spirit in us, and the directee, in fresh and life-giving ways. The implications of identifying knowledge gaps and accessing and discerning credible resources for spiritual directors (SDs) are three-fold – personal/professional development, increased hospitable environments, and the directee's ongoing transformational growth within their SD's understanding of diverse sexuality, theology, and faith.

As SDs, we learn to discern and notice the movements of God, not only within personal/professional growth but within the people we direct from within Aotearoa's communities. Movement and growth are guaranteed constants – even if there is resistance, unconscious or otherwise. Specifically, within the space of LGBTIQ+ and faith, how can SDs become aware of knowledge gaps, locate resources, and be adequately equipped to personally/professionally navigate changes ahead for ourselves - and directees?

## **SIP Outline:**

While the equal God-given value of all persons is my bias, this special interest project (SIP) is not designed to argue for or against theological frameworks or enter biblical exegesis. Instead, employing a questionnaire format may enable a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities for Aotearoa's SDs concerning an increased awareness around LGBTIQ+ and faith. Moreover, the questionnaire aims to ascertain SDs' recognition of the 'clobber verses',<sup>2</sup> interpretive frameworks, statements of positions, and knowledge concerning inclusive resources.

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<sup>1</sup> NB: LGBTIQ+ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (with many expressions), intersex, queer (often used as an umbrella term for non-heterosexual identity), asexual. + acknowledges the wider and continuing spectrum of sexual identities.

<sup>2</sup> NB: Clobber verses are particular scriptural texts used to argue the exclusion of queer (LGBTIQ+) people from the Christian faith.

Correlating the findings, this SIP is presented in three parts.

Part 1 presents the questionnaire and the findings, beginning with data collected from Q. 1-8. Secondly, offering critical phrases from sub-questions a-e. Thirdly, presented are key and repetitive phrases from Q. 8-9.

Part 2 locates the clobber verses and offers a brief synopsis outlining traditionalist and revisionist frameworks and a broad understanding of the statements of position.

Part 3 offers recommended inclusive resources with an expanded appendix (2), including books, podcasts, websites, and videos. Finally, a 'flight plan' will be offered for SDs - finishing with the conclusion.

### **Introduction:**

Offering both challenge and opportunity, an area of growth and movement in Aotearoa is the recognition of the rights, dignity, and equity for LGBTIQA+ people – including those of faith. While this movement has been simmering below the surface, more recently the simmering has begun to bubble, breaking the surface. The steam produced, for some, is a welcome sign. For others, it is a challenge, if not a 'too hot to handle' issue. Nevertheless, within church and ministry roles, including SD, there has been a growing sense of imminent movement and change. Most recently, with the banning of conversion therapy (02.2022), investigations into church practice (2022), and Christian schools' statements of belief highlighted in the media (2022), there's an invitation for SDs to inquire and potentially embody a re-visioned perspective into what God might be doing in Aotearoa.

Living within a particular theology insisting LGBTIQA+ persons are excluded from the Christian faith, I understand how complex, confusing, and even 'unfaithful' it may feel to search for and locate credible theological and biblical resources, including self-identified examples of LGBTIQA+ people of faith. Often, I was left asking, "Is this allowed? Is it right? Can people be queer and Christian? Who can I trust, and who should I read?" These are excellent questions for SDs to ask – inviting curiosity and opportunity. However, such questions also invite the messiness and uncertainty of disorder – and equally re-order.<sup>3</sup> Could reading outside one's confirmation bias offer spirit-led transformation? Are there invitations to discover more of God's expansive and inclusive

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Rohr, *The Wisdom Pattern: Order, Disorder, Reorder* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2020).

nature? And for this project, can we identify and address knowledge gaps for personal/professional development around LGBTIQ+ faith and theology informing SDs and potentially, by default, directees?

### Part 1: Questionnaire findings

The questionnaire below (*Tables 1 and 2*) invited SDs across Aotearoa to answer ten questions gauging personal/professional understandings, including LGBTIQ+ faith resources (Q1), location of clobber verses (Q2-3), awareness of Traditionalist and Revisionist frameworks (Q4-5), personal triggers (Q6), statements of position (Q7), and interest in locating credible resources (Q8). In addition, sub-questions (a-e) asked interviewees to expand their answers if desired. The Questionnaire format is presented below in Tables 1 and 2.

#### Questionnaire 1-8 (and sub-questions a-e)

1. As a SD, should you have a directee that is LGBT+ curious or is working towards making sense of their sexuality and faith, would you be currently aware of credible resources for your own professional development and/or personal growth? **No/Yes**
  - a) If **yes**, can you identify some resources or authors?
2. As a SD, from within your personal/professional development, and without googling, can you identify where any of the biblical verses are that are commonly referred to as the ‘clobber’ verses (those used to condemn non-heterosexual identities/relationships)? **No/Yes**
  - b) If **yes**, where?
3. Would you be curious to learn more about the wider context of these verses for your personal understanding? **No/Yes**
4. As a SD, are you aware of the term ‘Traditionalist Interpretive Framework’? **No/Yes**
  - c) If **yes**, can you briefly outline your understanding?
5. Are you aware of the term ‘Revisionist Interpretive Framework’? **No/Yes**
  - d) If **yes**, can you briefly outline your understanding?
6. As a SD, are you currently aware of any internal personal alarms being triggered either by a current LGBTIQ+ directee - or by this questionnaire? **No/Yes**
  - e) Can you describe these feelings?
7. As a SD, are you aware of what the following positions mean? **No/Yes**

<i>Unwelcome</i>	<i>Reparative</i>	<i>Welcome</i>	<i>Inclusive Affirming</i>	<i>Liberating</i>
	<i>(Conversion</i>	<i>(Celibacy)</i>		
	<i>Therapy)</i>			
8. As a SD, are you interested in locating credible inclusive LGBTIQ+ faith resources for professional development and/or personal growth? **No/Yes**

Table 1

Additionally, the questionnaire asked SDs how they envision personal/professional development and how they might ensure a hospitable space for LGBTIQ+ directees.

**Two additional questions were presented to the respondents: Questionnaire 9-10**

- 9.** As a SD, how might you envision making space in your personal or professional development around LGBTIQ+ and faith?
- 10.** As a SD, how might you envision ensuring a hospitable space for a LGBTIQ+ directee (regardless of your personal position)?

Table 2

The correlating data below (Table 3) presents a clear percentage scale of the No and Yes answers to Q's. 1-8 (Table 1).

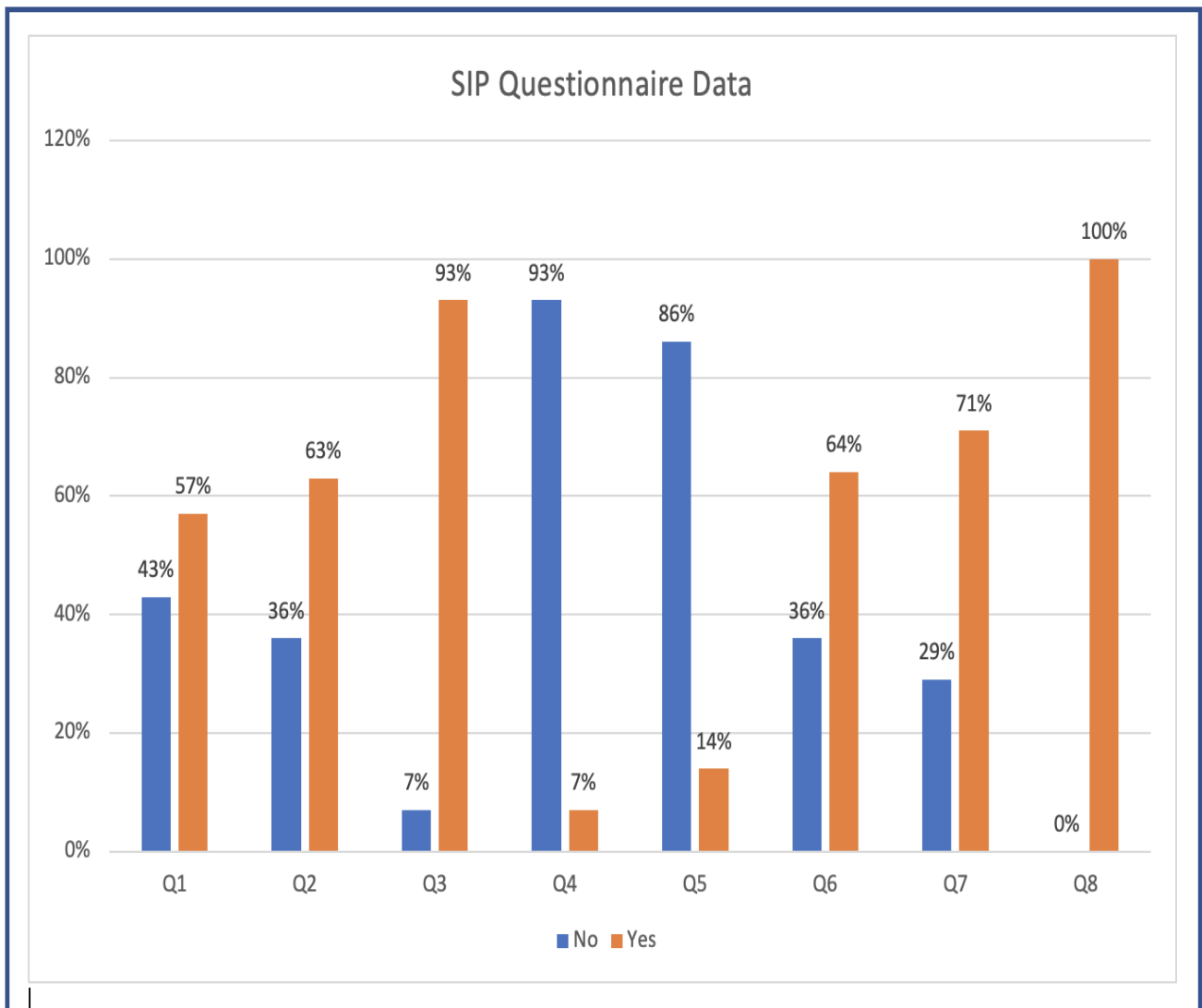


Table 3

### Sub-question findings.

Expanding on their Yes answers, interviewees offered the following critical comments.

Q.1: Sub-question (a). From the Yes answers, 12% were able to identify credible, inclusive resources citing Colby Martin,<sup>4</sup> David Gushee,<sup>5</sup> James Brownson,<sup>6</sup> Peter Fitch,<sup>7</sup> Nadia Bolz-Weber,<sup>8</sup> Justin Lee,<sup>9</sup> Sue Pickering,<sup>10</sup> and Kathy Baldock<sup>11</sup>.

Q.2 Sub-question (b). 11% were able to locate six out of seven of the clobber verses generally understood to exclude LGBTIQ+ people from an orthodox faith. 44% were able to locate up to three verses.

Q.4 Sub-question (c). 7% answered Yes to Q.4. The general theme implied that a Traditionalist framework suggests “God is against same-sex relationships” and “a narrow institutional way of applying theology.”

Q.5 Sub-question (d). 14% answered yes, expanding that a Revisionist framework indicates “there is a historical separation between what may have been considered sinful forms of homosexuality in the bible and committed gay or lesbian relationships in the present day.”

Q.6 Sub-question (e). Asked to describe if the theme of the questionnaire triggered feelings of internal alarm, 64% answered Yes. Though varied, key reflections are recorded in Table 4 below.

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<sup>4</sup> Colby Martin, *UnClobber* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind* (Canton, MI.: David Crumm Media LLC, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Fitch, *Learning to Interpret Toward Love: Actually Embracing People of Different Sexuality* (California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Nadia Bolz-Weber, *Shameless: A Sexual Reformation*, Kindle. (New York: Convergent Books, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Justin Lee, *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate* (New York: Jericho Books, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2008), 164–66.

<sup>11</sup> Kathy Baldock, *Walking the Bridgeless Canyon: Repairing the Breach Between the Church and the LGBT Community*, ed. Heidi Mann et al. (Reno, NV: Canyonwalker Press, 2014).

- Feel out of my depth
- A sense of ambiguity rather than alarms – seeing and understanding both sides
- I feel the opposite. I find myself excited by this research that you are doing
- Only a keenness to know/understand more
- Excitement, joy, thrilling, privileged, edgy that they are seeking SD and
- and endeavouring to integrate God into their experience of life. The alarm part is that I've had people want me to fix them and "pray the gay away". I find this problematic.
- "Yes" in the sense that I myself remain 'unsure' of where I 'stand' on some of these issues.
- This is an area on the edge of my comfort zone!
- I have had recent conversations with a young person linked with our church who is in the midst of transitioning from male to female, reminding me that I don't feel very equipped for these conversations. I would like to understand more.
- Some of the questions in this questionnaire remind me of the painful conversations we have been having in the church for the last 30 years. Bishop Godfrey Wilson preached in the 1970s about respecting gay men's love and relationships, and the church's need to practice hospitality yet here we still are, 50 years later, talking about the same thing as if Scripture could legitimate being less than loving and hospitable and emancipatory.
- Shows me I am not really knowledgeable enough to work in-depth with an LGBTIQA+ directee, especially one who feels rejected by their faith community!
- My only internal mild alarm bell is the prospect of facing judgment from fellow spiritual directors for holding a fairly conservative biblical view of sexuality – which I don't use to 'clobber' anyone.

*Table 4*

Findings from the sub-questions strongly indicate an identified information gap concerning awareness of credible, inclusive resources, the location of the clobber verses (and, by default, I believe, the context from which they speak), and unawareness of interpretive frameworks. However, reflections concerning feelings of being triggered by the theme of the questionnaire suggest an overarching desire to learn, converse, and personally/professionally be equipped towards understanding self and clients.

Answers to the two additional questions, Q.9 and Q.10, were equally insightful, providing an air of eagerness, longing, and hope. Envisioning spaces that might provide personal/professional development (Q.9), interviewees repeatedly offered the following suggestions: Professional workshops, guided reading, discussion groups (probably online), a list of recommended books, podcasts, and access to LGBTIQA+ faith stories. Finally, open dialogue with other spiritual directors in a workshop environment.

The final question, number 10, inquired how the SD might ensure a hospitable space for LGBTIQA+ directees (regardless of their position). The feedback was incredibly encouraging, displaying a desire to provide spaces and presence that were deeply authentic, respectful, non-judging, non-anxious, recognition of people's journeys, and a sense of self alongside an embodied spiritual discernment. Highlighted was the requirement for good supervision, displaying some form of inclusive welcome signage within their workspaces, asking directees their preferred pronoun (and offering their own). Equally, if feelings of internal conflict arise, be honest with a directee so as not to mislead. Repeated phrases also included – 'entrusting people to God', 'we all qualify equally', 'listen well for the movement of God', and 'discover God's agenda – not mine'. Genuine expressions of care and respect for LGBTIQA+ clients were unanimous by 100% of the SD's reflections.

The questionnaire makes clear two vital findings. First, gaps in personal and professional knowledge concerning clobber verses, interpretive frameworks, and statements of position are evident. Second, even though the knowledge gap is apparent, 100% of SDs interviewed expressed a desire to address this for themselves and for the spiritual well-being of LGBTIQA+ people of faith, their families, and church leaders as their directees.

## **Part 2: Brief synopsis**

First, addressing the gap concerning personal/professional knowledge, the following brief synopses are offered.

### *Locating Clobber Verses*

Verses understood to speak directly to the complexity of LGBTIQA+ sexuality (or non-heterosexuality) are located within Genesis 19:1–13; Judges 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; and 1 Timothy 1:9–10. So often, we are taught that they speak explicitly and definitively to the exclusion of non-heterosexuality. However, there is both a challenge and opportunity for SDs should we choose to inquire about these texts' more comprehensive contextual value. Equally, terms like homosexuality<sup>12</sup> may be misrepresented

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<sup>12</sup> Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2011), 41–43, 'The labels "heterosexual" and "homosexual" emerged in the late nineteenth century, but medical doctors were using the terms. Moreover, both types were deviants because they pursued sexual pleasure without concern for procreation.'



alongside guesstimates of crucial Greek words<sup>13</sup> and cultural meanings have changed over time and through different versions of the bible.

The challenge lies in the willingness to locate and read credible resources outside our confirmation bias. The opportunity, perhaps, comes through encountering new knowledge. With discernment and prayer, shifting our understanding, new knowledge potentially invokes unexpected transformation - personally and professionally. SDs might be encouraged to know that highly respected biblical and theological scholars have changed their minds<sup>14</sup> concerning the interpretation of the clobber verses. David Gushee<sup>15</sup> offers a readable synopsis of the clobber verses, while James Brownson offers a balanced deeper dive into the cultural contexts with a particular emphasis on Romans 1:24-27.<sup>16</sup>

### **Interpretive Frameworks**

An interpretive framework is a lens with which we view (and are taught about) scripture. However, ongoing disagreements over how scripture is to be interpreted are not uncommon.<sup>17</sup> More than one lens is available - with significant distinctions and outcomes.<sup>18</sup> Often, we don't recognise we are wearing glasses with a presupposed lens, preloaded with biases, unaware of upgrades, and resistant to how uncomfortable the lens becomes - perhaps in the name of loyalty, certainty, and, maybe, suffering. Indeed, our current lens might need a clean – or we may need an entirely new script. Alternative interpretive frameworks (lenses) could assist SDs (and their directees) to see another perspective with a life-giving outcome – for everyone. Traditionist and Revisionist is a phraseology employed universally to help explain interpretive frameworks.

The Traditionist framework conveys that the correct response to the LGBTIQ+ discussion is that scripture regards all non-heterosexual behaviour, or identity, as immoral. Traditionists argue that scripture offers LGBTIQ+ Christians no inalienable right to intimate relationships or marriage

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<sup>13</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 73–80.

<sup>14</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 4–7.

<sup>15</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 58–91.

<sup>16</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 149–255.

<sup>17</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 5–13.

(other than heterosexual marriage), suggesting a life of chastity in celibacy is the only acceptable option.<sup>19</sup>

Fundamentally, traditionalists claim that same-sex intimate relationships violate the physical union and divinely intended complementarity.<sup>20</sup> Many factors, including cultural, political, and religious attitudes and practices, influence how we, the church, and perhaps our directees, "make plain sense" of scripture.<sup>21</sup> Within this framework some will determine LGBTIQ+ sexuality/identity as a deliberate sinful choice towards acts of lust or rebellion against church, family, self, or God; while others may acknowledge the reality of genuine LGBTIQ+ sexuality/identity, they prescribe lifelong celibacy (Side B).<sup>22</sup>

Revisionist scholars discern that what the Bible says about non-heterosexuality in the ancient world context is not applicable for today's committed and covenanted LGBTIQ+ relationships.<sup>23</sup> Through the advancements in science, biology, and human experience, Phyllis Tickle reminds us that the church has deliberated and diverged from original contextual biblical and doctrine throughout history on many issues. Such changes have included: a belief that the sun revolves around the earth; flat earth theories; slavery; interracial relationships; divorce; women in leadership; and now, sexuality.<sup>24</sup>

Revisionists do not consider non-heterosexuality (identity, orientation, attraction, or expression) a choice - or a deliberate act of rebellion. They support a sexual and relational ethic, that includes a conventional, monogamous, and consensual relationship (side A).<sup>25</sup> However, a small minority may still maintain that lifelong celibacy is the appropriate moral and ethical response.

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<sup>19</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 127–46.

<sup>20</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 16–38.

<sup>21</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 34, 'Side B folks believe God does not ever bless same-sex relationships.'

<sup>23</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 53.

<sup>24</sup> Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2012), 55–56.

<sup>25</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 34, 'Side A Christians believe it is possible for gay believers to enter conventual same-sex relationships with God's blessing.'

Traditionist and Revisionist advocates alike might air their views with candidness. However, SDs might like to be aware of a third common framework that maintains a non-defined or 'Avoider'<sup>26</sup> position - evading the discussion for as long as possible. Non-defined factors might include theological uncertainty, genuine convictional uncertainty, fear of hurting people, attempts to be a non-biased peacekeeper, conflict or schism avoidance, denominational constitutions, criticism from peer groups, and self-preservation<sup>27</sup> (including current or future employment). Equally, an unawareness of credible resources might contribute.

Again, awareness of interpretive frameworks offers SDs the challenge of personally/professionally uncomfortable reflections and discernment. But equally provided is the opportunity to see through another lens, perhaps offering a life-giving and spirit-filled outcome not just for LGBTIQ+ people of faith but for everyone.

### **Statements of Position**

SDs expressed a desire to provide respectful, non-judgemental, and non-anxious spaces. While overlaps, variations, and ongoing adjustments exist within the statements of position, below are five condensed explanations. For a comprehensive outline, see Appendix 1.

*Unwelcoming:* Implicit exclusion of LGBTIQ+ people. It is believed to be sinful, rebellious, and an abomination.

*Welcoming:* An open-door policy for everyone. Caveats and boundaries around belonging, relationship status, membership, baptism and communion, and leadership positions are likely. Pastoral accommodation may be expected.<sup>28</sup>

*Inclusive:* The work, individually or congregationally, has begun – often by the church leaders – but may not have yet been embraced community-wide; some of the community are perhaps still fearful of or hostile to LGBTIQ+ people.

*Affirming:* No barriers exist for LGBTIQ+ people towards marriage, communion, baptism, serving, or employment. A fair and equal treatment of all people is expected and promoted.

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<sup>26</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 21–22.

<sup>27</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 21–22.

<sup>28</sup> NB: Pastoral accommodation might include programs towards heteronormative outcomes, requirement of lifelong celibacy or entering heteronormative marriage, conversion therapy including healing from same-sex attraction.

*Liberating*: Individually or congregationally, deliberate expressions and actions to promote allyship, human rights issues, and equity alongside LGBTIQ+ people.

Understanding the nuances within the positions offers SDs well-informed responses should directees enquire about the position an SD holds. Although SDs listen to their internal reactions, noticing and attending to any red flags,<sup>29</sup> awareness of how positions might affect authenticity and hospitality within SD in the future becomes essential.

### Part 3: Recommended Resources

So much ink, thought, karakia, kōrero, and tears have been poured into researching spaces of LGBTIQ+ sexuality and faith. But unfortunately, it isn't easy to know who is credible or safe, and even if we know where to start, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Completing a master's degree in applied theology<sup>30</sup> (including a literature review) and four further years of research (still ongoing) has enabled me to offer the following resources for informing the identified knowledge gap<sup>31</sup> for SDs in Aotearoa.

First, David Gushee's book *Changing our Mind*<sup>32</sup> is accessible and readable. Gushee, a highly respected Christian ethicist, professor, and pastor offers a powerfully inspiring and well-considered message of humility, hope, and healing for those desiring a solid yet readable starting place around clobber verses and interpretive frameworks.

Second, should SDs desire a deeper dig towards addressing the knowledge gap, James

"We do not interpret rightly any single passage of Scripture until we locate the text within this larger fabric of meaning in Scripture as a whole."  
*J. Brownson – Bible, Gender, Sexuality (pg9)*

Brownson's 'Bible, Gender, Sexuality'<sup>33</sup> presents both traditionist and revisionist frameworks, incorporating more comprehensive understandings beyond

<sup>29</sup> Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2008), 163–64.

<sup>30</sup> Amanda Pilbrow, "Navigating Faith, Sexuality, and Wholeness in Aotearoa New Zealand: Seven LGB-Christian Narratives." (Carey Baptist College, Thesis, 2019), <https://cdm20012.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p20012coll2/id/23>.

<sup>31</sup> NB: 100% of SD's engaging with the questionnaire expressed a desire for this gap in knowledge to be addressed, not only for themselves, but for the spiritual wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people of faith who may become their client.

<sup>32</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*.

<sup>33</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*.

sexuality. Included are critiques around foundational ideologies such as gender complementarity and patriarchy,<sup>34</sup> celibacy,<sup>35</sup> and procreation.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, unpacking the cultural complexities within Romans 1-2, Brownson presents a thoughtful and thought-provoking explanation for SDs to consider including, lust and desire, purity, honour and shame, and nature.<sup>37</sup>

Thirdly, through a Christian Anthropological lens, Jenell Williams Paris offers a readable and informative packed book titled, *The End of Sexual Identity*.<sup>38</sup> While Paris presents biblical interpretations, her primary aim is to redirect our unknowing energy into critical thinking within sexuality, humanity, holiness, discipleship, grace, and love.<sup>39</sup> Drawing perspective through cultural contexts and expectations (spoken and unspoken), past and present, Paris maps the journey, discovery, and mean-making human sexuality has taken.

A new genre of self-identified LGBTIQ+ Christians is making scriptural, theological, and ethical arguments for themselves, adding their voices to the conversation – rather than being the topic thereof. People's lived realities should shape our understanding of human sexuality - alongside theology and discernment. Essentially, SDs listen to stories of life and faith. Therefore locating stories from within the LGBTIQ+ community of faith becomes vital; informing further SDs' concepts of identity, belonging, and what it means, personally/professionally, to be human - made in the image of God.<sup>40</sup> And, perhaps as Matthew Fox offers, we are an 'Original Blessing'<sup>41</sup> because of, and in all of, our humanity; bodies, minds, spirit, and identities.

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<sup>34</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 57–84.

<sup>35</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 127–46.

<sup>36</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 110–26.

<sup>37</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 149–255.

<sup>38</sup> Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity*.

<sup>39</sup> Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity*, 34–35.

<sup>40</sup> Pilbrow, "Navigating Faith, Sexuality, and Wholeness in Aotearoa New Zealand: Seven LGB-Christian Narratives.," iii.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality Presented in Four Paths, Twenty-Six Themes, and Two Questions* (New York: TarcherPerigee, 2000).

Recommended LGBTIQ+ faith narratives include Vicky Beeching's book - *Undivided*.<sup>42</sup>

Beeching shares her story about being in the Christian music industry where there was no space for a gay worship leader. Beeching interweaves theology and story effortlessly - inviting us into her lived reality. Justin Lee's book, *Torn*,<sup>43</sup> helps to bridge the gaps between faith and sexuality through his heartfelt and courageous story.

**"The more that straight, non-affirming Christians witness the work of God in and through the lives and stories of LGBT+ people, the more I see hearts of stone soften..."**  
**Brandan Robertson – *Our Witness* (pg 11)**

Queer Youth Faith<sup>44</sup> equally offers powerful and personal narratives of heartbreak, hope, courage and compassion through the lens of youth, for SDs to engage with. Inquiring into journeys of faith, sexuality, and surprising reasons for coming-out, seven honest insights are interwoven with theology and reflection.

Additionally, for SDs seeking the witness of the Holy Spirit's work among devoted followers of Jesus within church ministry, *Our Witness*<sup>45</sup> offers twenty-seven often unheard honest and deeply authentic reflections on Rejection, Reconciliation, and Revival. As visual offerings, *Through My Eyes*<sup>46</sup> is a narrative video retelling personal stories of faith, reactions, and sexuality through the experience of LGBTIQ+ people of faith. And the website Beloved Arise provides Living Proof Stories<sup>47</sup> from queer youth and adults who have gone through their personal journey towards faith and freedom.

**"Stories witness the inside and outside of scripture; the messy and complicated narratives of people learning what it means to be in relationship with God, and, recognising God's presence in others."**  
**A. Pilbrow**

Finally, as a personal offering, employing narrative inquiry, stories from seven LGB-Christians can be found in *Navigating Faith, Sexuality, and Wholeness in Aotearoa: Seven LGB-Christian Narratives*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Vicky Beeching, *Undivided: Coming Out, Becoming Whole, and Living Free from Shame* (New York: HarperOne, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> Justin Lee, *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate*, Reprint edition. (Jericho Books, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Beloved Arise, *QYF: Personal Narratives by Queer Youth of Faith* (Independently published, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Brandan Robertson, ed., *Our Witness: The Unheard Stories of LGBT+ Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2017).

<sup>46</sup> "Through My Eyes": *True Stories of Young Gay Christians*, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QImNx1JA3BI>

<sup>47</sup> "LIVING PROOF STORIES," *Beloved Arise*, n.d., <https://www.belovedarise.org/stories>.

<sup>48</sup> Pilbrow, "Navigating Faith, Sexuality, and Wholeness in Aotearoa New Zealand: Seven LGB-Christian Narratives."

## Flight Plan.

The flight plan is simple. Gushee's book becomes the inflight safety briefing to get us out of the hangar, onto the tarmac, and buckled into our seats. Taxiing along the runway, the Through My Eyes video should help gain momentum and curiosity for the flight ahead. We might find Beeching's Undivided provides the speed and thrust we need for take-off. Then, to truly gain altitude, we could choose Paris's book for some entertaining yet gripping anthropological reading (it will entertain!), or, if we long for a good solid meal to last the journey - Brownson's Bible, Gender, Sexuality is highly recommended, though you might need time to digest between chapter servings.

Additionally, as SDs envision spaces that could further provide personal/professional development (Q.9), [www.alreadyenough.co.nz](http://www.alreadyenough.co.nz) is a recent resource sorting website. Alreadyenough delivers a wide range of credible and creative inclusive resources for LGBTIQA+ people, parents, church leaders, and people re-visioning their faith and God - informing an inclusive space for all.

Where an SD lands concerning LGBTIQA+ people of faith, personally or professionally, is between them and God. With a new perspective, SDs might desire a new place to touch down. The location

“When the apostle James declared, “It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us,” He was not elevating human wisdom to an equivalent status with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but instead underscoring the way the Spirit works through these complex human processes of constructing patterns of discernment, meaning and vision.”

*J. Brownson – Bible, Gender, Sexuality (pg 10).*

you took off from might now look very different – it may not feel safe any longer, you may not be able to land back there again – or maybe you will – that's okay too. The challenge and opportunity are to get off the runway, check out the resources offered, and trust the process and holy invitations that may arise.

One final offering, though not explicitly addressing sexuality, is Peter Enns' book, *The Sin of Certainty*.<sup>49</sup> Unlearning can feel, as I have indicated, messy, vulnerable, complicated, and unfaithful. We long for answers where there may be none. And we may have confused doubt with a lack of faith. Enns offers a sigh of relief, reminding us that doubt is not the opposite of faith – certainty is the opposite of faith. Welcome to being uncertain.

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Enns, *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our “Correct” Beliefs* (New York: HarperOne, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

SDs questionnaire responses convincingly highlighted the collective challenge concerning a knowledge gap around clobber verses, interpretive frameworks, and statements of position. Equally, the reflections indicated that SDs desired the opportunity to address these gaps through recommended resources, workshops, and open dialogue. Upskilling, engaging with movements and growth, discerning, and noticing the presence of God's invitation in self and others, SDs unanimously expressed an eagerness toward a deeper authentic, hospitable space for LGBTIQ+ directees. As SDs, identifying and moving towards addressing the knowledge gap for personal/professional growth is encouraging – not just for the SD – but for the wider community. Finally, having a flight plan and access to credible and inclusive resources will ensure Aotearoa SDs are well equipped to navigate changes personally and professionally for themselves, LGBTIQ+ directees, families, and church leaders.



## Appendix 1

### Statements of Position

Unwelcome – Welcoming – Inclusive – Affirming - Liberating

<b>Unwelcoming:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implicit exclusion of LGBTIQ+ people. Expressions of sexuality/identity other than heteronormative is believed sinful. LGBTIQ people are going to hell.</li> <li>○ Vocal about being unwelcome (at least they are being upfront so no deception is offered).</li> <li>○ Scripture makes no distinction between same-sex orientation and acts: both are condemned and an abomination.</li> <li>○ LBGTIQ+ is an act of rebellion against family, community, church, and God.</li> <li>○ Families expected to shun LGBTIQ+ family members</li> </ul>
<b>Welcoming:</b>  (also known as Reparative or Pastoral Accommodation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Claim a theology of welcome, providing an open-door policy for everyone, but probably does not extend beyond that.</li> <li>○ Caveats around belonging, relationship status, membership, receiving baptism and communion, and positions of employment, serving, and leadership are likely.</li> <li>○ Potentially proving harmful when LGBTIQ+ people believe they belong, but later find that their ability to become fully part of the community is limited.</li> <li>○ Pastoral accommodation might include programs toward a heteronormative outcome.</li> <li>○ Stating that LGBTIQ+ is a result of 'The Fall' - Not as God intended.</li> <li>○ Requirement of lifelong celibacy (side B) or entering heteronormative marriage, conversion therapy including 'healing' from same-sex attraction may be encouraged or required.</li> <li>○ Reparative: Through inner healing, LGBTIQ+ people can move into a heterosexual orientation, though a struggle with same-sex attraction may continue.</li> <li>○ Welcome is not the same as belonging, participation, or employment, potentially enabling a form of selective moralism.</li> <li>○ Theological ideas of complementarian gender roles and heteronormativity.</li> <li>○ An unclear welcoming position can cause more harm than an unwelcome position.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The work, individually or congregationally, has begun to understand and research the impact exclusion has on LGBTIQ+ people of faith.</li> <li>○ However, if the minister or leadership are inclusive but some in the wider community are not inclusive; or are perhaps fearful of, or hostile to, LGBTIQ+ people, then the church might still not a safe space for LGBTIQ+ people.</li> <li>○ Lifelong celibacy (side B) might still be required.</li> </ul>
<b>Affirming:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having done the work alongside LGBTIQ+ people of faith they are in no doubt of God's full inclusivity and belonging for all.</li> <li>○ Equal marriage rights including God's blessing (side A).</li> <li>○ Affirming communicates to LGBTIQ+ people that individually and congregationally there are no barriers towards relationships, marriage, communion, baptism, serving, or employment in the fair and equal treatment and relationship of all people (including sexuality and gender identity).</li> </ul>
<b>Liberating:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individually or congregationally, there is a deliberate expression and action to promote allyship, human rights issues, and equity alongside and in support of LGBTIQ+ people.</li> <li>○ Justice requires advocacy for full equality. <a href="mailto:@alreadyenough.co.nz">@alreadyenough.co.nz</a></li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Additional Resources

- **C. Norman Kraus**, *On Being Human: Sexual Orientation and the Image of God*
- **Kathy Baldock**, *Walking the Bridgeless Canyon: Repairing the Breach Between the Church and the LGBT Community*, (Reno, NV: Canyonwalker Press, 2014).
- **Rogers, Eugene F.** *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God.*
- **Marin, Andrew.** *Us versus Us: The Untold Story of Religion and the LGBT Community.*
- **Fitch, Peter.** *Learning to Interpret Toward Love: Actually Embracing People of Different Sexuality.*
- **Cantorna, Amber.** *Refocusing My Family: Coming Out, Being Cast Out, and Discovering the True Love of God.*
- Beloved Arise: Living Proof Stories <https://www.belovedarise.org/stories>
- **Into the second closet.** <https://johnpavlovitz.com/2014/09/04/into-the-second-closet-christian-parents-with-gay-children/>
- **Queer Eye's Bobby Berk's message** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zocPLUIDHxI>
- **Danny Cortez** - Why I changed my mind on homosexuality – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqYvkVqVLFo&t=1s>
- Support for parents and LGBTQ kids and families <https://www.freedhearts.org/>
- **Vicki Beeching** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICgJMFPmhVs>
- **Vicki Beeching** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_U8T-vY6hU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_U8T-vY6hU)
- **Megan DeFranza** Podcast on Intersex and faith – 'Bible for normal people' Episode 109:– The Bible and Intersex Believers
- **David Gushee** <https://www.davidpgushee.com/>
- **David Gushee** <https://www.davidpgushee.com/ten-reasons-i-changed-my-mind/>
- **Alan Chambers** *My Exodus: From Fear to Grace*
- **Andrew Marin** *Us Versus Us: The Untold Story of Religion and the LGBT Community.*
- **A question of Belonging**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVnQ9ejixDk&t=3s&ab\\_channel=escfilms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVnQ9ejixDk&t=3s&ab_channel=escfilms)  
**PÁDRAIG's Story**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cns\\_dUQ3Vng&ab\\_channel=escfilms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cns_dUQ3Vng&ab_channel=escfilms)  
[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=a+question+of+belonging](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=a+question+of+belonging)

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