

# *Welcoming Community Network*

# SAFE

“How many deaths will it take ‘til we know that too many people have died?” So goes a line from a song many of us grew up singing at Youth Camp. Blowin’ In The Wind is an anti-war song, but the question in that line is a good one when we think about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender persons. We may have made progress in the portrayal of Gay characters in TV and film, but being in the wrong place at the wrong time can still be a matter of life and death for GLBT folks. The wrong place for Larry King was his Jr High School in Oxnard, CA, and the wrong time was the middle of the school day on February 12, 2008. Larry was shot to death by a fellow student that day. Larry is just one of thousands of GLBT persons who were victims of bias-motivated violence in 2008. We must not simply shake our heads at these attacks and think there is nothing we can do. We can at least put our own house in order. Policies that treat GLBT persons as something less than others can be used as justification for other acts of discrimination.

Please visit our web site to join us or to get more information.

[www.welcomingcommunitynetwork.org](http://www.welcomingcommunitynetwork.org)

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# OUT

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender people know too well what it is to be out. We spend too much of our lives on the outside. Too many of us live hidden lives: on the outside from our classmates; from our neighbors; from our communities; from our churches; even from our families. We retreat to our closet to stay where it is safe; where we will not be rejected, harassed, or victimized by violence. We exclude ourselves to avoid the hurt of being excluded by others.

Welcoming Community Network (WCN) is an international grassroots organization that tries to eliminate the sources of this exclusion. WCN exists to enable full participation of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life and ministry of Community of Christ both in policy and practice. Most of us are members of Community of Christ, but WCN has no official tie to the church. We provide printed resources, training, communication, and guidance to congregations that want to be welcoming.

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# NOW

It's been over 40 years since the beginning of the Gay rights movement in the United States. There have been remarkable changes in many places in that time.

But progress has been painfully slow in many places. In some places, prison is the best outcome for a person caught in a homosexual act. Lynching is more likely. Parents have turned their gay children over to murderous mobs, and popular music extols a world without gay persons.

Progress has also been slow in Community of Christ. Despite thousands of hours of conversation and debate, despite the fact that the current policy does not have the approval of World Conference and conflicts with the church's non-discrimination policy that does, we still do not extend full inclusion to our GLBT brothers and sisters. To those who ask us to wait a little longer, wait for everyone to become comfortable, we say people are dying for the inclusive gospel; we say it is never too soon to do the right thing.

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# *Welcoming Community Network*

# LOVE

At WCN, we believe who you love is far less important than that you love. We believe Jesus taught us to celebrate every life: gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, and that we will not be a true Community of Christ until all are fully welcome at the table without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. We believe that disciples must be found continuing in the forefront of those organizations and movements which are recognizing the worth of persons. We believe God's Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls who will respond if God's people will bear affirmative testimony of God's love. We believe we must open our hearts and feel the yearnings of our brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. We believe that just as Jesus reached out to those who were rejected and marginalized, we must do the same. We believe God's nature as revealed in Jesus is the standard by which scripture is to be interpreted and it should not be used to oppress races, genders, or classes of human beings.

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# JUST

The Philippian letter tells us to think on whatever things are just. At Welcoming Community Network, we think a lot about what is just.

Those who are reluctant to support full inclusion in Community of Christ for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender persons often point to Leviticus to make the case that homosexuality is against God's law. What we don't understand is why these folks focus on sexuality but disregard the rest of the book. Leviticus also condemns wearing blended fabrics and eating shellfish among many, many other rules and regulations. How do we decide that it is ok to eat a crab, but not to love another person of the same gender? At WCN, we try to focus on the gospel.

We believe that God created a diverse humanity and that each of us is an expression of God's love. We believe that God loves and welcomes all of us at God's table. It's only right. It's only just.

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