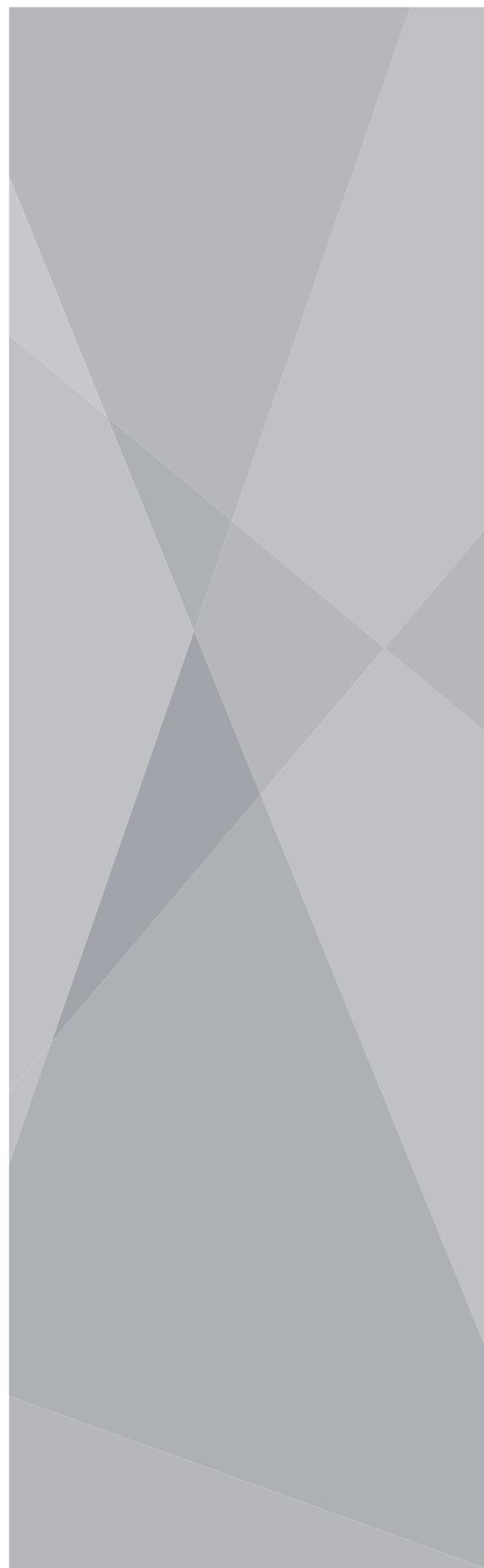


christian role models

FOR LGBT EQUALITY



‘Being attracted to people of the same gender is just who I am. It cannot be the will of God that I should have to force myself into a straight relationship.’

In this story, a gay man from the Caribbean tells of his personal journey in faith.

I grew up in a very conservative society. I attended Pentecostal churches as a young person, which were very anti-gay. My parents were considered pillars of the church and we never missed a service. I rejected my same-sex attraction for many years and fought against it. I believed it was a manifestation of evil.

As a university student, I was part of the missions group on campus and was actively in charge of recruiting people into Christianity. I thought if I immersed myself into my faith it would take the place of my homosexual attraction, but I would constantly have bouts of same-sex intimacy, followed by guilt. It was a very problematic time in my life, going in and out of the closet like that. I tried gay cures and even got married to a female friend to try to fix myself.

She knew about my sexual orientation, but we honestly believed that prayer and marital sex would cure me. I became even more involved in the church and took charge of the Sunday school and choir, but, no matter how hard I tried, of course it didn't work. I still desired men and I had to end the marriage. It didn't go down well with our church, but I didn't think it was fair to my wife; I was mentally cheating on her. To me, it wasn't what Christ would have wanted.

After we parted, I threw myself into ministering to other men who were trying to reject their sexual orientation. I held meetings at my home, but it didn't help us; in fact, we ended up coupling up, having flings with each other, then feeling guilty, then going off with someone else and repeating the cycle! But I never saw myself as a promiscuous person. It wasn't me. I wanted an intimate, longstanding relationship with someone, so I stopped. In time, I became a little more comfortable with my sexual orientation, but became increasingly uncomfortable with my spirituality, so I left the church.

Ironically, it was at an ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) Conference where I met the Christian man who would become my husband. When I found out that he had been a Catholic priest, I wasn't too keen on the idea, but I suppose my spirituality had never really left me. It hadn't died; it had just gone into hibernation.

I moved from having nothing to do with the church, to church becoming a total way of life again. As a pastor's spouse, I support my husband's ministry and, as a member of our church, I receive counselling, spiritual assistance and support in return. My relationship with God is a very personal one; it's a conversation, it's a daily working out, it's

a peace. It's a relationship that I'm excited about, but I don't throw it in people's faces. I share the Gospel where necessary and through the work I get involved with. My faith and my relationship with God enable me to do the work I do. If God was willing to die for me, I must be willing to live for Him.

I think God wants us to be authentic, genuine and caring towards each other. As long as I'm not hurting anyone or being dishonest, then I really think those biblical functions that talk about love have the same meaning for me too. It's also about the specific cultural context; scriptures are interpreted based on where people are at the time. There was a time when slavery was spiritually and scripturally endorsed, but this is not the case anymore. We evolve, and, as we do, we develop a better appreciation of what the love of God is and how it should be manifested among us. We can't take parts of the Bible in isolation.

Being attracted to people of the same gender is just who I am. It cannot be the will of God that I should have to force myself into a straight relationship, and be deceitful towards the person I'm supposedly in that relationship with, just to please man. I just can't see that's what God would want. If anyone thinks that homosexuality is a choice, then I dare them, for just one day, to try and be attracted to someone of the same gender. They'll realise it's not possible to change the gender you are attracted to and hopefully they'll see it's not possible for me to be attracted to someone of the opposite gender. Sexuality is what it is.

We need more allies, and we need to amplify their voices to counteract the negativity that's out there. We must speak love louder than hate, so that we can help those who hate us understand they are no longer on the right side of history; they are now the minority and they must be silenced – not through fear, but through an overwhelming manifestation of love.