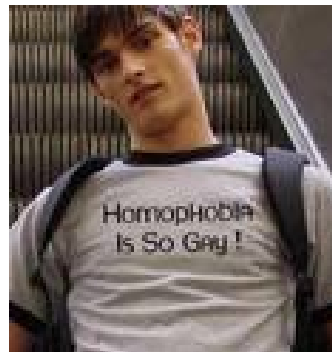
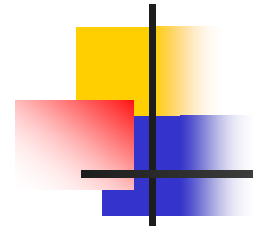


# HOMOPHOBIA

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*That's so gay!!!*





**Gay pupil Larry King killed for flirting, say friends**

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD  
REFUSES TO CONDUCT SURVEY  
ON 'HOMOPHOBIA'**

**Schools not tackling homophobia, says report**

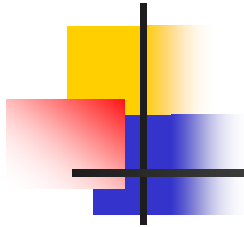


# Definition

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“Homophobia refers to the unreasoning fear or hatred of homosexuals and to anti-homosexual beliefs and prejudices.”

(Flood & Hamilton 2005)



Homophobic bullying is often present in an environment that fails to challenge and respond to homophobia.



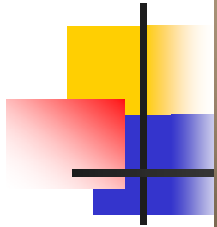


# What causes homophobia?

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“ Those who were taught to believe in the evil nature of homosexuality continue to condemn and fear,

....Those who were taught to be open-minded and respectful discovered the joys of diversity and were able to look beyond appearance or sexual orientation and discover the person beneath.” (Grace 1998)



# Neil Patrick Harris

The actor who played Doogie Howser MD



# Prejudices & presuppositions

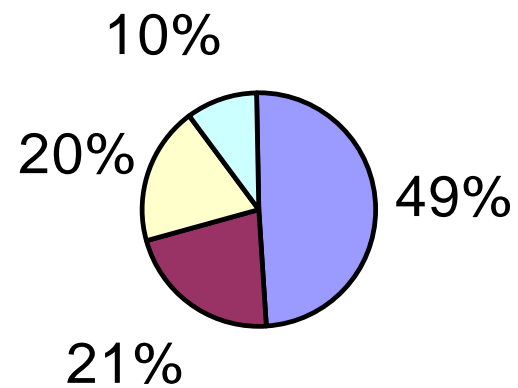
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“It is imperative that the faith community, in its dialogue with the Bible on the issues of sexuality and homosexuality, should search honestly for prejudicial attitudes which might be contaminating its presuppositions.”

(Dreyer 2006)

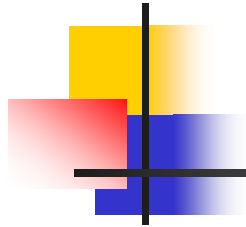
# Student Survey

## Homosexuality Survey

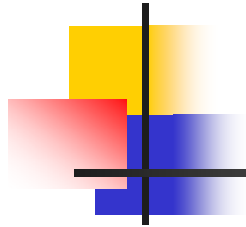


- It is OK
- It is a sin
- Don't like it
- Don't understand it

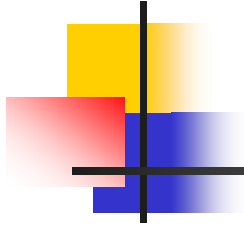




- 76% of the girls consider homosexuality to be OK whereas only 24% of the boys do.
- 39% of the boys consider homosexuality to be a sin whereas only 2% of the girls do.



- 10% of the students know an openly homosexual student at school
- 25% of the students have a friend or family member who is openly homosexual



- 73% of the students admit to making anti-homosexual comments daily
- 18% have heard teachers make anti-homosexual comments
- 75% think that the school is not a safe place for homosexuals



# Similar Results

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- These results are similar to The Australia Institute study 'Mapping Homophobia in Australia' completed in 2005
- "Homophobic attitudes and behaviours have been shown to be prevalent in schools" (Flood & Hamilton)



## How homophobia hurts school communities

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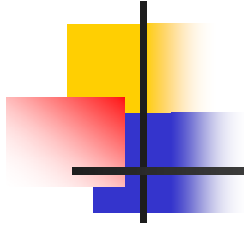
- Young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are three to five times more likely to seriously **consider suicide** because of homophobia.
- They are also more likely to be homeless, experience conflict with family and peers, abuse drugs and alcohol and **leave school early**.
- GLBT people are not the only victims of homophobia. People who are wrongly suspected of being GLBT are **also attacked** as are the friends and associates of GLBT people
- Studies show that boys avoid certain subject choices and deliberately **limit their academic achievement** in others so as not to appear "gay"
- Studies show that school communities which tolerate bullying on any grounds including sexuality, have **lower average academic outcomes and lower morale**



# Critical Questions

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- Can a Christian school ignore this level of intolerance and does it need to consider its own role in the promotion of these attitudes?
- Does the school help promote homophobic attitudes by its tacit support of the public stance of the church against homosexuality?



- Is there a viable theological stance?
- Is homophobia another expression of the intolerance associated with racism, sexism, misogyny, ageism and religious fundamentalism?

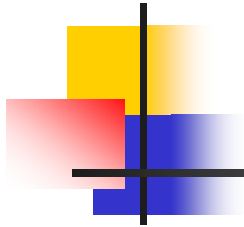


# A new approach

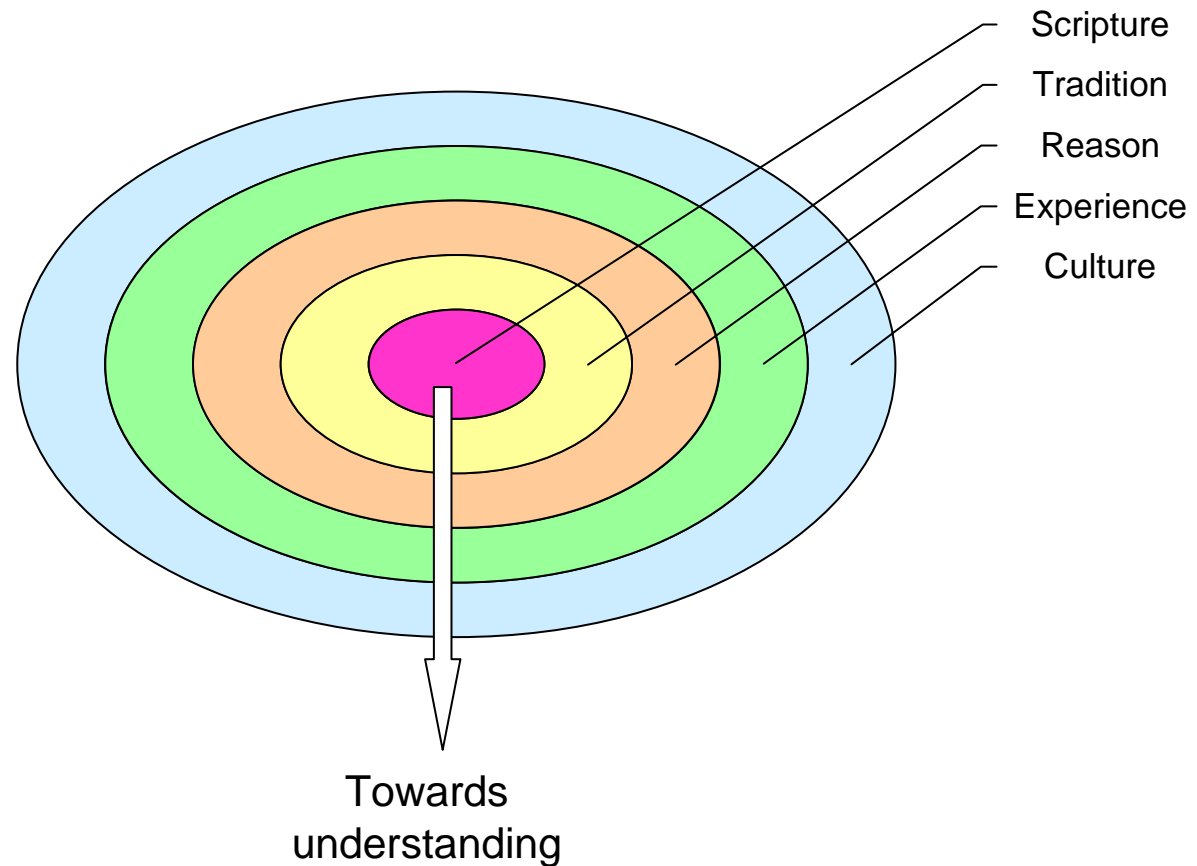
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When theology speaks to schools about homosexuality and homophobia it must refrain from using a narrow theological model approach and instead must demand a more holistic, experiential, yet 'fundamental' approach.





# A new understanding





# Using Scripture

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Beginning with the Bible means not limiting the theology to an academic process but also recognising that there is a spiritual component to 'doing theology'.



# Lutheran Theological Principles

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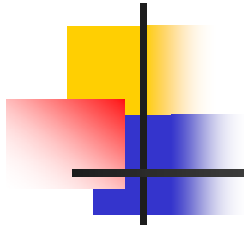
- The Bible must be interpreted in the light of Christ and the gospel.
- The teaching of justification by grace through faith (*sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus*)



# The 7 Texts

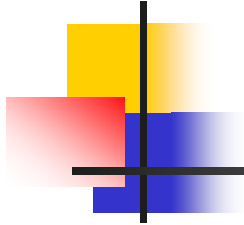
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- Genesis 19:1-9 and Judges 19:22-25, despite mentioning homosexual behaviour or intent, are really about rape and inhospitable behaviour.
- Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) are unqualified and absolute in their prohibition of homosexuality, they are part of the Holiness Code, much of which the Christian church no longer teaches as being determinative for Christian behaviour or ethics.



- 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 are also quite clear in their condemnation of homosexual behaviour but

*“must all homosexual acts be considered sinful just because the acts associated with the first-century people were regarded as such?”*



The text most commonly used to condemn homosexuality is Romans 1:18-32.

- One option is to believe that the passage does not understand homosexual orientation as we do today and that homosexuals are no more sinners than all other people.
- The other is to interpret the passage as condemning homosexuality then and now.



# Dilemma

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Dismissing these passages is not an option and neither is believing that the entire Old Testament & New Testament is binding on all Christians.

How then can a Lutheran theological perspective guide this dilemma?



# The Gospel Proclamation

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As we are all sinners we can all rely on God's radical grace and as a community of sinners we are all welcome, and to not be welcoming to homosexual people is to not proclaim the gospel.





# Regardless

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- Regardless of the variations in scriptural interpretations, an important consideration is that people are hurting and will be hurt on both sides of the debate.
- Perhaps the one agreed response is to focus on the words of healing, acceptance, community, love, and respect scattered throughout the Bible.

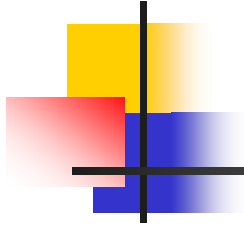


# Tradition

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Many theological teachings on human sexuality have changed or are changing over time –women, marriage, celibacy, contraception and divorce.

Is there a viable theological perspective that welcomes homosexuals, yet to be constructed?



The Church must recognise the dilemma for the homosexual, of God declaring that it is not good for a person to live alone and at the same time seemingly prohibiting same-sex intercourse.



# ELCA Statement

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*“Mindful of the sin to which all succumb, Christians are called to:*

*Respect the integrity and dignity of all persons, whatever their age, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.”*

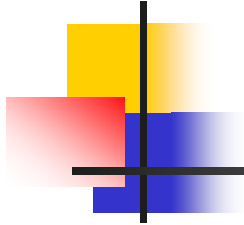
Is the LCA open to a similar journey or is the pathway to understanding stymied by tradition?



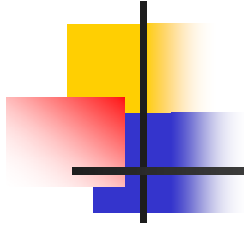
# Reason

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- What causes homosexuality?
- Can sexual orientation be changed?
- How do attitudes towards homosexuality develop?
- Are significant mental health issues associated with sexual orientation?
- Is child development affected by being raised by two same-sex parents?



Reason should not be dismissed as contributing to an understanding just because it does not provide definitive answers.



Bartsch(2001) states

“ Reason is a good gift of God to be used in exploring God’s creation.....It is not seen as an easy or comfortable activity, especially when established patterns of thought and action are challenged.”

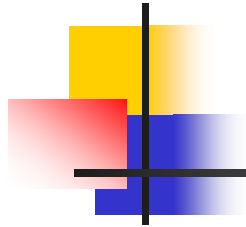


# Experience

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- Everyone is an expert – everyone has their own lens of experience.





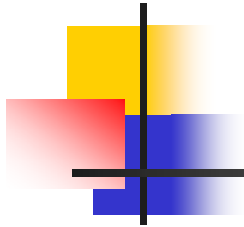
- To dismiss experience is to dismiss those Christians who are homosexual and yet whose faith is bound by the gospel.



# Culture

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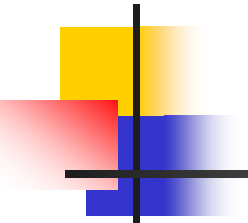
- Lutherans have traditionally understood that God (Christ) and culture are in a relationship of tension, and this tension is in the form of a choice between God and being human.



“...one should listen to the stories of homosexual and heterosexual Christian people as well as the stories of the multitude of cultures. In other words, Lutherans want to embrace the stories because the Holy Spirit may be leading us into a newer and deeper understanding of God’s grace.”

(Perry & Rodriguez 2003)

# What now for Lutheran schools?

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- There can be little doubt that there are homosexual students and (despite unwritten staffing policies) homosexual staff in Lutheran schools.
  - Currently the public silence from the schools and the church is deafening. This silence may well be a contributing cause to the level of homophobia in schools.



# The “Community of Faith”

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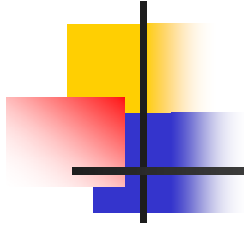
- There exists within each Lutheran school a ‘community of faith’ – those who belong to Christ.
- It is beholden on this community to be a catalyst and a voice in this theological dialogue.
- A voice that not only has “a clear understanding of the relevant theology” (Bartsch 2007) but that is prepared to listen to the pains and problems of the wider school community.



## A way forward?

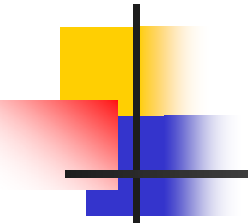
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Perhaps a legitimate way forward is to begin by focusing on developing an attitude of 'welcoming for all', by using the theology of 'inclusivity' explicit in the Gospel.



*The Scriptures of both Testaments emphasize that welcoming is at its most profound when our open arms are extended to the most marginalised within our society.*

# Challenging homophobia in Schools

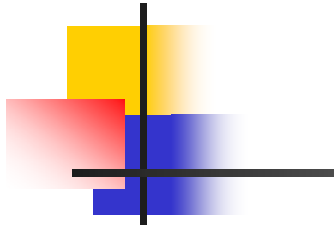
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- **Stand Up For Us** – UK program – a whole school approach
    - 10 aspects:
      1. Leadership managing change
      2. Policy development
      3. Curriculum planning
      4. Teaching & learning
      5. School culture
      6. Giving students a voice
      7. Student support services
      8. Staff PD
      9. Partnerships with parents & community
      10. Assessing & recording



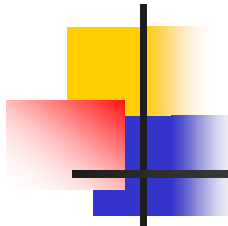
# A Charter against homophobic bullying.

This charter against homophobic bullying was drawn up by Yr 10 students:

- Promote the self-esteem of all students
- Value other cultures and lifestyles – it's OK to be different
- Treat all people with respect regardless of sexuality
- Ensure equal rights for everyone
- Offer counselling/support around issues concerning sexuality
- Create more opportunities for discussion in school to raise awareness about homophobia
- Challenge name-calling no matter what the nature of it
- Publish telephone help-lines around school
- Punish those who use homophobic language



No Name-Calling Week  
Battles Homophobia In Schools



**SHE'S GAY  
AND WE'RE  
COOL WITH THAT**

**HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING  
IS NOT ACCEPTABLE  
IN OUR SCHOOL**

 [www.does.gov.ie](http://www.does.gov.ie)  [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

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