

Tyler Clementi's parents leave evangelical church over views on homosexuality

by [Dan Ivers](#)

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c. 2012 Religion News Service RIDGEWOOD, N.J. (RNS) The parents of Tyler Clementi have left their longtime evangelical church due to its views on homosexuality.

Jane and Joe Clementi told The New York Times that they had grown increasingly out of step with the Grace Church, a nondenominational evangelical church in Ridgewood, N.J., due to its casting of homosexuality as sinful.

Tyler Clementi committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge in 2010. His death came just days after his roommate, Dharun Ravi, had spied on him during a tryst with another man in their freshman dormitory at Rutgers University.

Ravi was convicted of 15 charges, including invasion of privacy and bias intimidation, in March. He was sentenced to 30 days in jail, of which he served 20.

The case garnered national attention from the media, as well as gay rights and anti-bullying activists. Clementi had come out to his parents just days before he left for college, and numerous news outlets reported that he had left feeling rejected.

Jane Clementi told the Times that she had previously regarded homosexuality as sinful, and that she "wasn't ready" to deal with the reality of a gay son.

Since her son's suicide, however, she said self-reflection has changed her views, and led her to leave her church. Clementi also told the paper that several friends and fellow parishioners have also confided in her that they have gay children, which they had previously been reluctant to reveal.

"I think some people think that sexual orientation can be changed or prayed over," she said now, in her kitchen. "But I know sexual orientation is not up for negotiation.

I don't think my children need to be changed. I think that what needed changing is attitudes, or myself, or maybe some other people I know."

Rob Minor, senior pastor for Grace Church, said on Monday (Aug. 27) that his church teaches that "God's ideal" is sexual abstinence before marriage, and monogamous heterosexual marriages. "But we also understand that we live in a world where everyone is striving to reach God's ideal," Minor said. Minor said he and an associate pastor relayed that message to Jane Clementi before she left the church.

"We love Jane and Joe and the family very much, and we respect their decision," Minor said.

Minor added that the church does not "bash" or "judge" people, nor does it make homosexuality a priority issue.

"The fact is at least in the six years I've been here, I never preached on it, never talked on it," Minor said. "It's just not been an issue for us."

Daniel Burke of Religion News Service contributed to this report.