

# **Dear mainline church people (a response to the Nashville Statement)**

**It's time to get clear about what it means to be welcoming and affirming to LGBTQIA+ people.**

By [Martha Spong](#)

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Dear mainline church people,

I'm writing this in response to the Nashville Statement, a pernicious manifesto issued yesterday by a coalition of conservative evangelical Christians. In a season when the church could be speaking out against white supremacy, agitating for peace in a troubled world, finally getting some clean water for Flint, and mobilizing to help after Hurricane Harvey, they felt it was instead the time to reiterate their condemnation of LGBTQIA+ people and to be particularly specific in their disdain for trans\* people.

Now, my church people, some of you make space for your LGBTQIA+ siblings; we can really be part of the body of Christ with you. Some of you think you do it, but maybe you stopped at making a statement without doing any further work to figure out what might make us feel welcome to do things beyond coming to worship, or worry that if you have a rainbow anywhere on your premises, people will think you're "the gay church."

Meanwhile, our evangelical cousins, empowered by the political success of the right, have doubled down on theology that is exclusive and cruel. They've affirmed their own superiority, denied the full humanity of LGBTQIA+ people, and declared that anyone who doesn't agree and come over to their side of the line they are drawing is not a faithful Christian.

For Jesus' sake and in Christ's name, mainline pastors and leaders, have the conversations you've been putting off. I say these things with all love. Get clear about what it means to be welcoming and affirming. Fix up the forms parents fill out at Sunday School; why do they need to be gendered? Consider new signage for your bathrooms. Be ready when one of your young people comes out to you, ready to love and embrace that young person instead of setting them on the path of rejection. Have a Bible study and discuss alternative interpretations of scripture used by others to condemn, equipping yourselves for larger conversations in your neighborhoods.

Maybe even buy that rainbow flag for the outside of your church, so we know it's safe to come inside.

Faithfully,  
Martha

*Originally posted at [Spong's blog](#)*