



**“Hear, O Israel:  
the Lord our God,  
the Lord is one.”**



## It's not that we don't want you around....

- G. Gough

Many have experienced the loss of community as a result of personal decisions they have made. Sometimes decisions made regarding the embrace of ideologies in which there is conflict and tension within the community become difficult to navigate. As a result, the desire for balance wages war on the fabric of unity, held so dear to the community. It is impossible to generalize on these situations, but there are often times that these losses of community are not necessary and seemingly born more out of a mentality of punishment than a desire to exemplify life in Christ.

I have had the joy of journeying with a handful of individuals that have swayed the bar from left to right and right to left on what they believe about their own orientation, let alone what they believe about what God and the church have to say about their orientation. If I were to strictly adhere to an action plan, keeping their fight for embrace of the correct orientation in my crosshairs, I could be missing tremendous opportunity to evidence Christ to them in a real way. I may also miss out seeing a beautiful flower that blossoms over time. Sometimes it is important to just enjoy a gift that God has given you in the journey of another. Especially when that journey is not one you would take or even consider.

If I have only learned one thing, it is that I am further away from stamping ideological and socio-cultural imprints of correct orientation on the hearts of individuals than I ever thought I would

be. Falsely, it seems that if we have just the right mix of ingredients, we can truly love others; never to compromise our values. How much more is that about you and I than it is about another that we journey with? How much are the imprints we desire to leave on others, regarding their choices, rooted in our fears about what might happen if they embrace gay or straight identities? Even what we make up for them about what gay or straight identities are or should be.

If you desire to walk with someone who has faced or will face questions about orientation, consider the opportunity to journey unconditionally and not just with the prescriptive trajectory that seems to be in alignment right now. Only you can be the voice and action of love to them in the way God has allowed. No one else ever will step in those shoes.

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## Town Hall Meeting

- D. Hartig & G. Gough

*"Force of habit, you could say. The way they talk you're talking away."*

- S. Winwood, G. Fleming, and J. Hooker

"One hour is just not long enough to talk about this." – from an attendee at the *Engaging LGBT Issues Town Hall Meeting at Calvin Seminary*.

This panel discussion centered around questions addressing the Christian Reformed Church's stance and actions related to homosexuality and LGBT people. We sat on the panel with Julia Smith and Christina van Dyke of Calvin College. We appreciate the opportunity we were given to speak on this panel at the invitation of M. Kelley, a student at Calvin Seminary who is also the director of the Transgender Education Collaboration.

And it's true that one hour is just not long enough.

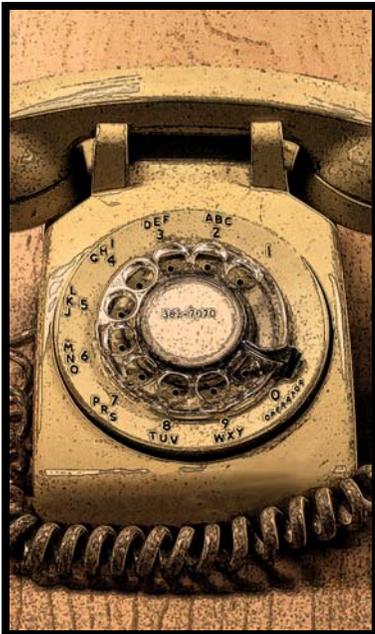
We're grateful that there are those who are willing to engage this issue, to enter the conversation. In some ways it's a very lengthy and very complex conversation, and then conversation is only a starting point.

"I don't understand this idea of a gay community, because I'm not part of a straight community" was another

comment from an attendee. Sometimes complexity is added to a conversation when it's really not a complexity of the issue at hand. Sometimes it's a complexity born instead out of a conflict in understanding a different way of

**"Now there's no point in placing the blame  
And you should know I suffer the same  
If I lose you  
My heart will be broken"**

**– M. Ciccone & P. Leonard**



seeing ourselves in socio-cultural boxes that have been developed over time.

Are you curious about how your theological framework impacts others? Are you willing to dissect what your framework is and what your impact is so that you can more fully be with others? Would you like to try?

*"Well I feel like they're talking in a language I don't speak, and they're talking it to me."*

- Coldplay

## Could we ask you for financial support?

If you're reading this, you may have some interest in the conversation between the LGBT and Christian communities. In light of this interest, we'd like to ask you to contribute financially to Bridge Evidence Group's efforts to improve this conversation. Much of our work is dependent on contributions. We are able to do more or less according to the financial support we receive. If you would like to join in this effort, you can make contributions securely, online via Paypal, from our website.

## Fourth Quarter 2011 Financial Statement

Previous balance	\$2238.48
Total gifts:	\$1228.50
Total expenses:	\$920.25
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Fund Balance:	\$2546.73

Bridge Evidence Group is a 501(c)(3) organization that is committed to financial transparency and accountability.