



Biblical and theological resources on sexual and gender identity

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board recommends the following resources to congregations and individuals for prayerful study and discussion before the Mennonite Church USA convention and Delegate Assembly in Kansas City, Mo. (June 30-July 5, 2015). These resources focus on biblical and theological hermeneutics (the lenses through which we read the Bible) as they relate to sexuality, and they represent a variety of perspectives held by individuals across our church.

We invite you to choose texts for study in small groups and in your congregations. We also invite you to take the time to read resources that represent viewpoints different from your own.

The Mennonite Church USA resource on *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*, which is modeled on a biblical understanding of reconciliation, suggests that—especially in times of conflict—we are called to “go to the other in the spirit of humility. Be quick to listen. Be slow to judge.” May we carry this understanding with us as we engage these resources and prepare to gather in Kansas City.

Thanks to the following people for their help in compiling this list:

- Rachel Springer Gerber, denominational minister of youth and young adults (with help from the Mennonite Church USA Youth Ministry Leadership Team)
- Felipe Hinojosa, assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
- Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA
- Harold Miller, pastor of Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.
- Mark Thiessen Nation, professor at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.
- Carol Wise, of Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests

Note: If you would like resources to use in talking with youth and young adults about sexuality, gender and identity, please feel free to contact [Rachel Springer Gerber](#), denominational minister of youth and young adults, for a list of suggested reading material.

Resources are listed in alphabetical order by title. An asterisk by the title denotes that it was written by and/or published by an Anabaptist-Mennonite individual or publishing house.

Resources from congregations/individuals supporting a heterosexual definition of marriage

Bringing Sex into Focus: The Quest for Sexual Fidelity. (By Caroline J. Simon. Published by IVP Academic, 2012)

The author offers six “lenses” for helping us frame various approaches to sexuality today—the covenantal view, the procreative view, the romantic view, the plain sex view, the power view and the expressive view. Though one might differ with some of her framing, nonetheless the care with which she names the lenses is valuable for understanding differences in approach.

“Designer Sex.” (By Philip Yancey. Essay in *Rumors of Another World*, 73–95. Published by Zondervan, 2003)

Sex holds a mysterious power over us and our society. While sex can become an idolatrous obsession, it also reflects divine transcendence. Philip Yancey unveils the sacred nature of sex and shows how it was designed to point us not merely toward union with one another, but also with God.

Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment. (By Willard Swartley. Published by Herald Press, 2003)*

Grounded in a lifetime of biblical study, New Testament scholar Willard M. Swartley takes a fresh look at the Scriptures and what they would teach on the current and controversial subject of homosexuality. In a spirit of love and generosity, Swartley presents all sides of the issue, drawing from contemporary scholarship and cultural analysis. He concludes with a model for congregational discernment and suggestions for the path forward.

One of the Boys (Spanish: Uno De Los Chicos). (Oral presentation by Sy Rogers. DVD available from Cavalry Chapel Bookstore.)

This presentation is a combination of sermon and entertaining testimony by Sy Rogers, who for some years lived a promiscuous gay lifestyle. Rogers has been married to a woman for many years and has an international ministry counseling men with gender identity issues. This is a provocative, interesting and sensitive presentation.

“Search for light on the same-sex matter.” (By Harold Miller, 2014)*

In this article, Miller lays out a scriptural framework in support of the understanding of marriage presented in current Mennonite Church USA documents. Miller briefly examines the biblical passages that explicitly reference same-sex practice and then asks whether we should “correct” them like we do passages on the holy kiss, slavery, etc. [Available online.](#)

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor’s Journey into Christian Faith. (By Rosaria Champagne Butterfield. Published by Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012)

This is the story of two conversions—from being non-Christian to Christian and from being lesbian to being straight. The story is a reminder of how real stories add complexity to our understanding in various ways. It is also a powerful display of how love can be embodied in the way one witnesses to the transforming gospel of Christ. Oral presentations by Butterfield are also available online.

Sex and the iWorld: Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism. (By Dale S. Kuehne. Published by Baker Academic, 2009)

A pastor and professor of politics, Dale Kuehne contrasts the “tWorld,” in which traditional morality reigned, with the present “iWorld,” in which the immediate desires of the individual have been deemed paramount. He maintains that both fail to deliver the benefits of the proposed “rWorld,” in which a larger web of healthy and nourishing social relationships provides the most personally fulfilling context for sexuality and relational well-being (rooted in biblical teaching). [A 19-minute summary of the book and interview with the author are available online in issue 99 of “Mars Hill Audio Journal.”](#)

Unprotected: A Campus Psychiatrist Reveals How Political Correctness in Her Profession Endangers Every Student. (By Miriam Grossman. Published by Sentinel, 2006)

Written by a psychiatrist at UCLA’s student counseling services, this book was intended to be a wake-up call related to the psychological and physical dangers that are a result of casual sex (dangers Dr. Grossman was not allowed to discuss directly with her clients in the clinic at UCLA). What campus counselors and health providers must do, Dr. Grossman argues, is tell uncomfortable, politically incorrect truths, especially to young patients in their most vulnerable and confused moments.

Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality. (By Wesley Hill. Published by Zondervan, 2010)

Written by a young, gay and celibate New Testament professor, this is a mature and well-written set of theological reflections on what it means to live a story-shaped life—in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hill gives us a glimpse of what it looks like to wrestle firsthand with God’s “no” to same-sex relationships. What does it mean for gay Christians to live faithfully to God while struggling with the challenge of their homosexuality? What is God’s will for believers who experience same-sex desires?

What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense. (By Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson and Robert P. George. Published by Encounter Books, 2012)

This book—an expansion of a journal article—briefly names why it is important to understand what marriage is before we debate whether or not “gay marriage” (or “marriage equality”) makes sense. This is not a theological book, but it raises questions worth discussing in our current conversations (partly because they are often ignored).

Resources from congregations/individuals supporting a definition of marriage not related to heterosexuals

A La Familia: Una Conversación Sobre Nuestras Familias, la Biblia, la Orientación Sexual y la Identidad de Género. (By Miguel A. De La Torre, Ignacio Castuera, Lisbeth Meléndez Rivera, 2013)

This curriculum is developed by and for Spanish-speaking congregations and reflects the experience of Latina/o lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of faith, their families and church communities. In an effort to help in the process of acceptance and inclusion, this new bilingual guide was written by Latino/a and Hispanic pastors, educators and theologians. [Available for free download.](#)

Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships. (By James V. Brownson, Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013)

Writing to serve and inform the ongoing debate in many denominations over questions of homosexuality, James Brownson argues that Christians should reconsider whether the biblical strictures against same-sex relations as defined in the ancient world should apply to contemporary, committed same-sex relationships. Presenting two sides in the debate—“traditionalist” and “revisionist”—Brownson carefully analyzes each of the seven main biblical texts that appear to address intimate same-sex relations. Central to his argument is the need to uncover the moral logic behind the biblical text.

Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit 2.0. (Institute for Welcoming Resources, 2013)

An ecumenical resource that offers a step-by-step guide to facilitating a positive welcoming process in a local congregation. Rooted in graceful engagement, the resource includes scriptural reflections, storytelling, congregational assessment tools, and information about conflict resolution and change theory. [Available for free download.](#)

The Cost of Truth: Faith Stories of Mennonite and Brethren Leaders and Those Who Might Have Been. (By Roberta Showalter Kreider, editor. Published by Strategic Press, 2004)*

Editor Roberta Showalter Kreider has compiled a collection of 32 personal faith stories of Mennonite and Brethren individuals who have been denied leadership in the church relating in some way to their sexual orientation or their acceptance of other LGBTQ people. This collection of stories calls congregations to honest, faithful, and open dialogue around sexuality.

Doing Process Well (By Carol Wise. Published by the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, 2010)*

Much of the conversation within the church about LGBTQ lives has been done without the involvement of LGBTQ people which has resulted in great harm to individuals and families. This publication offers recommendations for congregational processes that are informed, positive and potentially less harmful. [Available for free download.](#)

Fashioned in Love: Biblical and Theological Foundations for Inclusion (By Megan M. Ramer. Published by the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, 2013)*

Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church, wrote this essay in response to a request from the Central District Conference Ministerial Committee for a biblical and theological case for her inclusion of LGBTQ people in the full life and ministry of the church. A DVD of Megan Ramer presenting this material at a special event sponsored by the Welcoming Dialogue Group of Lancaster is also available from BMC by request. [Available for free download.](#)

Hearts Unbound: Engaging Biblical Texts of God’s Radical Love through Reader’s Theater. (By David Weiss, Institute for Welcoming Resources, 2013)

A poet and writer, David Weiss offers a series of scripts that invite participants into a deeper engagement with biblical texts and the biblical world. [Available for free download.](#)

A Time to Every Purpose: The Language of Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing. (By Debra Haffner. Published by Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing, 2009)

A Time to Every Purpose is part of an ongoing series on sexual health for communities of faith. It is a compendium of progressive theological statements on a range of sexuality issues that enable religious leaders and faith communities to preach, teach and advocate for sexual justice. This study guide includes historical information and statistical data to establish the social and economic contexts for each of the sexuality issues addressed. It also provides responsive readings for use in congregational worship, as well as study group questions and lists of resources.

Conversations from various perspectives

- **Body and Soul: Healthy Sexuality and the People of God.** (Faith & Life Resources, 2010)

Everyone seems to be talking about sex these days—at work, at school, on the Internet, in books, in the media. Everywhere, it seems, but in the church. Which is too bad; the church should be a great place to talk about how Christians can respond biblically and faithfully to this important subject. These resources guide a celebrative, four-part congregational focus on sexuality. Through worship and interactive Bible study, church members explore the topics Our Bodies, God’s Image; Created for Intimacy; Honoring the Gift of Sex; and Holy Desires. Purchase as a boxed set with separate guides for coordinator, worship leader, adult study leader and youth study leader. Also included are a parents’ book, a book of essays, and a Christian education book for families. All materials also available individually.

- **To Continue the Dialogue: Biblical Interpretation and Homosexuality.** (By C. Norman Kraus. Published by Pandora Press, 2001)*

Includes essays from a variety of writers who care about biblical interpretation, homosexuality, and discerning a way forward together. The writers suggest that, no matter their perspectives, they hope to move forward together in sober and prayerful deliberation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- **“The Narrative of the One Jesus, Compassionate Evangelist and Commanding Lord.”** (By Mark Thiessen Nation. Published in *The Mennonite*, June 2014)*

This essay should be read in conversation with the essay by Marty Shupack listed below. These essays are written by long-time friends. Written by a professor at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, the essay briefly names why it still makes sense in 2014 to affirm the biblical teaching that was perceived to be clear across the history of the church until roughly 40 years ago. (The essay has even more meaning if read together with Nation’s earlier essay, “Naming What Unites Us,” *The Mennonite*, April 2012.) [Available online.](#)

- **“Dual[ing] Narratives on Same-sex Marriage”** (By Marty Shupack. Published in *The Mennonite*, June 2014)*

To be read in conversation with the above essay from Mark Thiessen Nation. These essays are written by long-time friends. Shupack’s essay suggests two different ways to read the Bible: one of which can lead us to affirm same-sex marriages and the other of which doesn’t. The article asks the rhetorical questions, “Is one narrative superior to the other? Or are both quite legitimate?” [Available online.](#)

- **What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage.** (By David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni. Published by HarperSanFrancisco, 2005)

This is a popular-style book written by a Christian psychologist and sociologist. They suggest that gay marriage has become the most important domestic social issue facing 21st century American Christians. Drawing on scientific research and biblical sources, the authors suggest that marriage is emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually beneficial for everyone, not just heterosexuals. *For a response to this book, also drawing on scientific research and biblical sources, see Robert Gagnon’s essay below.*

- **Why the Disagreement over the Biblical Witness on Homosexual Practice: A Response to Myers and Scanzoni** (By Robert A.J. Gagnon)

This essay is meant to be read in conversation with the book by David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni listed above. Why is the debate in the church about homosexual practice so difficult to talk about, to do scholarship about, and, for some, to decide about? In this response to David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni, Gagnon uses scientific and scriptural scholarship to make the case that there are no substantive exegetical and hermeneutical arguments for claiming that Scripture does not give a decisive witness against homosexuality. [Available for free download.](#)

Interested readers may also want to check out Gagnon's own book, 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice, for an extended exposition on these themes.

- **Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality.** (By Mark Thiessen Nation and Ted Grimsrud. Published by Herald Press, 2008)*

Two theologians, Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen Nation, argue both sides of an issue that is vexing the postmodern church: homosexuality. This book develops the give-and-take over the differences between the two scholars, but it also offers areas of agreement and consensus.

*This piece was written or published by an Anabaptist-Mennonite individual or group.

Mennonite denominational statements on sexuality

A Call for Affirmation, Confession and Covenant Regarding Human Sexuality.
(Mennonite Church, Purdue, Ind., 1987) [Available online.](#)

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (Published by Faith and Life Resources, 1995)

The Confession of Faith, written in 1995, lays out 24 articles, each exploring a different tenet of Mennonite-Anabaptist faith. [Available online.](#)

Human sexuality in the Christian life: a working document for study and dialogue.
[Available online.](#)

Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines. (Approved by the Nashville Delegate Assembly in 2001) [Available online.](#)

Resolution on Human Sexuality. (General Conference Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, 1986) [Available online.](#)