

# '...EXCEPT THE SYRIAN' EMBRACING THOSE EXCLUDED ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, YEAR C

Lectionary Texts: Jeremiah 1:4-10 Psalm 71:1-6 Luke 4:21-30 I Corinthians 13:1-13

Focus Text: Luke 4:21-30

<sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup> And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

NRSV

## ADDITIONAL TEXTS

But the LORD sits enthroned forever, [the LORD] has established [the LORD's] throne for judgment. [The LORD] judges the world with righteousness; [the LORD] judges the peoples with equity. The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 9: 7-10

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith for ever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; [the LORD] upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked [the LORD] brings to ruin.

Psalm 146:5-9

[Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:17b-19

## SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY STAN KIMER, LAY LEADER  
ST. JOHN'S METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY  
CHURCH, RALEIGH

In Luke 4:21-30, Jesus taught in his hometown, speaking eloquently and with authority. However, the people of Nazareth questioned his calling and credentials since they had seen him growing up as a common boy in a lowly carpenter's home. Most likely they presumed that a teacher with real authority would come to them from a mysterious place far away after many years of formal training at the feet of the best scholars. Perhaps they

could not fathom that God would work through Jesus, a common boy who grew up before their eyes in an average family. They had their preconceived notions of how God could work and through whom God would work.

So Jesus addresses this issue head-on with two examples from Hebrew scripture where God worked through, and in, the unconventional and unexpected. He references the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. Elijah was sent to her for sustenance (I Kings 17:1-16). It is interesting that from all the places Elijah's rescue could come, God chose to lead Elijah to an unlikely person and place, a poor person low in society (a widow) in a town which practiced idolatrous religions previously condemned by Elijah. Jesus reminds the hometown crowd that even though there were many lepers in Israel included among the faithful, none were healed except for Naaman the Syrian (II Kings 5:1-15). Naaman was a sworn enemy of Israel, and as an unclean leper he would have been cast out of society. Yet, God's miraculous healing occurred in this excluded man's life. Jesus' fellow townspeople were angered at the audacity of this teaching and drove him away.

Are many people in our churches and denominations today like these people of 2,000 years ago who drove Jesus away? Are there people who think God can only work through a certain type of person, perhaps a person just like them, white, straight, and middle class? Or do they believe God only chooses people with "clean" external lives and the best credentials? We must open our minds to the truth that all of humanity are God's children and that God can, and will, work through anyone and everyone.

The people of Nazareth were very uncomfortable receiving the word of God from a man who grew up in their midst within a humble family. Perhaps we need to be challenged to understand that people in our midst who come from different countries, cultures, races, economic backgrounds, and sexual orientations can equally be called by God into God's house, "a house of prayer for all people" (Isaiah 56:7). Instead of gay and lesbian people being driven from the church, perhaps God intends that they be embraced. Rather than concluding (like the foreigners in Isaiah 56:3) that they are supposed to be separated from God's people (and wither like dry trees), maybe people of faith should welcome their GLBT brothers and sisters and invite them to be nourished and encouraged within the church and to expand themselves within God's ministry.

## PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY STAN KIMER

The Rev. Dr. Mona West, a long time pastor and teacher within Metropolitan Community Churches, wrote the following words in a paper called "The Bible and Homosexuality":

Lesbians and gay men face discrimination because of societal attitudes. Unfortunately, these attitudes are often taught by churches, and sadly, the Bible is frequently used as a weapon to "bash" lesbians and gays. It is important to remember that such hurtful things are not a reflection of Christ, or the way God wants the church to be ... Only a small number of passages in the entire Bible reference same-sex sexual activity (only within six books of the Bible.) Obviously this topic is not of great concern to the biblical writers. Yet these verses have been used to justify hatred, condemnation and exclusion of God's lesbian and gay children..

[www.mcccchurch.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/SexualitySpirituality/Sexuality\\_Spirituali.htm](http://www.mcccchurch.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/SexualitySpirituality/Sexuality_Spirituali.htm)

In my own life, in my mid-thirties I started coming to terms with being gay. I experienced a great inner conflict between what was going on inside of me and my adherence to a faith which taught, I thought, that being gay was one of the gravest sins. When I finally "came out" to myself, I stopped going to church altogether, convinced I had completely and irreconcilably fallen away from God. But thankfully, within six months of coming out, a friend invited me to a service at St. John's Metropolitan Community Church. I felt I was home. I realized I could continue to grow as a Christian while also embracing my sexual orientation. In fact, since that time my spiritual life truly has blossomed, and I have experienced God in a way richer than ever before.

The discussion within many of our churches has really intensified in regard to lesbian and gay people, especially as gay people in general and gay religious leaders specifically have become more visible. What are some of the possible responses churches today can make to the issue of homosexuality? Let me mention three common approaches taken by mainstream Christian congregations.

One extreme response taken by some churches and denominations today is that of declaring homosexuality as one of the most heinous of all sins. Homosexuals, in this view, are horrible, immoral people who will certainly destroy the moral fabric of our country and families, and should be condemned and rooted out at all costs.

A more moderate position teaches that homosexuality is a sin like any other sin, and so the church should welcome these sinners with open arms but work with them so that they will turn away from their "sinful lifestyle". This alternative is not acceptable to the vast majority of gay people who believe that sexual orientation is not a sin, nor simply the "choosing of a lifestyle," but instead is an innate human characteristic, like gender and race. For gay people to be active in a church while hiding their relationships and their connections to the gay community is in some ways parallel to an upper middle class white church welcoming in black members with the caveat that they will be accepted as long as they act and worship like upper middle class white folks, or welcoming in Hispanic members only if they can first speak perfect English.

The third approach, and the one I would encourage, is adopted by churches wishing to take a fresh and honest look at the issue of sexual orientation. These congregations study the topic with an open mind, earnestly seeking God's wisdom and guidance. They believe that the church's role should not be to follow society's lead in condemning a subset of human population but instead should be to challenge the systems and structures which discriminate or oppress others on the basis of sexual orientation. Here are some practical ways in which churches can act on this belief.

First, churches can earnestly and openly study the scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to provide guidance in interpretation of those passages which are often used to condemn homosexuals (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Genesis 19; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:9-11; Romans 1:24-27). What words are used in the original text and how should they be translated, and what did they mean at that time? In what context were these verses written, and what is the meaning and intent of the larger passage? What is the historical and cultural backdrop of the passages that can provide insight into their true meaning? Are these passages speaking to nurturing, committed same-sex relationships?

Second, straight members of churches wanting to take an honest look at the issue of sexual orientation can seek dialogue with gay people in order to get to know them. They might invite a gay couple for dinner and interact with them, seeking to learn about each other. What are their passions and dreams? What gets them excited about life? What are their struggles and hardships? It is far better to develop a belief system about a group of people after you have gotten to know them personally. Instead of viewing gay people as some mysterious, unknown, impersonal group "out there" somewhere, consider gay people as your neighbors, your co-workers, and even your parishioners. That is what Jesus did. While the religious leaders of his time were looking down their noses and condemning tax collectors, prostitutes, people with disabilities, lepers, and Gentiles, Jesus ate with them and ministered to them in a loving, non-judgmental way.

Third, a church can evaluate the place gay and lesbian people hold in that congregation. Are there gay men and lesbians within your church today? Is your church in a neighborhood which has a high concentration of gay and lesbian people? Ask how you might minister to the GLBT persons in your church. Would you feel comfortable inviting a gay couple to attend a couples Bible study group or retreat? Many gay couples have children and are looking for churches with strong children's ministries. Would your children's ministry be a welcoming and affirming environment to a child who had two mommies or two daddies? What are ministries in your church where gay people would be welcome to serve?

Finally, your church can speak out on social justice issues relating to gay and lesbian people. Hate language and physical abuse of gay people, or any person for that matter, is not defensible. Consider whether all people, regardless of sexual orientation, should have equal and fair access to health benefits, housing and employment. Should gay teenagers have equal access to education and be protected from bullying and harassment so they can develop into productive members of society? And should the church be honoring healthy and loving, committed same-sex relationships?

This topic is not easy. It is difficult and often emotional. But following Christ often is not easy. We are taught to work out our salvation with trembling and fear and that the path of discipleship often goes counter to the ways of popular society.

## WORSHIP AID – 'NONE WERE CLEANSED EXCEPT THE SYRIAN'

### RESPONSIVE READING

Lord of all creation, we worship you this day with great adoration,  
As a people chosen by you to bear witness to your Kingdom.

Enlightened by the Spirit, we acknowledge that all are invited to participate in this Kingdom,  
"For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you."  
(Psalm 86:5)

We see throughout the Bible you often champion those who reside at the fringes of society,  
Just as you called Israel out of slavery in Egypt; just as Jesus dined with the outcast.

Open our haughty hearts that we may see the plight of those considered "worthless;"  
Remind us that you see us all as your children; no one is beyond the reach of your redeeming love.

Inspire us to seek justice for excluded peoples, whether that includes us or our neighbors;  
Show us how to extend your compassion to all who call upon your name.

We seek your guidance in gathering those excluded, those whom the world labels "others;"  
We listen when you say, "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you."  
(John 15:18)

Preserve us from passing judgment upon others on the basis of color, sexual orientation, or class;  
And grant that we may keep your Church open to all who seek your Name.

Amen.

(by Jason R. Jenkins)

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Wise and wonderful Creator of infinite variety,  
Forgive our petty striving to squeeze You and Your creation into our conventions.  
God of mercy and compassion for the oppressed, the excluded, the ignored,  
Forgive the many ways we pass judgment on others different from ourselves.  
Though You created us with wondrous diversity,  
We have tried to restrict one another into limited ways of being and doing, and we are all the losers.  
Forgive us and heal us of our racism, heterosexism, classism, sexism and all other evils that keep us  
From appreciating Your abundant, manifold creation.

Amen.

(Adapted from Jann Aldredge-Clanton's prayer, "Wise and Wonderful Creator of Infinite Variety," in *Courage to Love: An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material*, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan, 2002.)

### SUGGESTED HYMNS

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Community of Christ               | CH 655/NCH 314   |
| ✓ You Are Salt of the Earth         | NCH 181  |
| ✓ All Creatures of Our God and King | TH 400/UMH 62/ CM 5/AM 50<br>BH 27/PH 455/CH 22/GA 533 |
| ✓ Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross     | CM 94/UMH 301/NCH 197<br>BH 280/ CH 587                |

### w Hymnal Legend w

- † UMH – United Methodist Hymnal
- † BH – Baptist Hymnal
- † PH – Presbyterian Hymnal
- † TH – The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal)
- † AM – African Methodist Episcopal
- † CM – Christian Methodist Episcopal
- † CH—Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ)
- † NCH—New Century Hymnal (UCC)
- † GA—Gather Hymnal (Roman Catholic)

### ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

#### Sexual Justice

Sexuality is God's gift and our responsibility.

We celebrate our sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality.

We suffer because of the pain, brokenness, oppression, and loss of meaning that too many experience about their sexuality.

We celebrate the goodness of creation, our bodies, and our sexuality.

We suffer when this sacred gift is abused or exploited.

We celebrate sexuality which expresses love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent, and pleasure.

We suffer because of discrimination against people because of sex, gender, color, age, bodily condition, marital status, or sexual orientation.

We celebrate when we are truth seeking, courageous, and just.

We suffer because of violence against women and sexual minorities, and the HIV pandemic.  
We celebrate the full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in our congregational life.

We suffer because of unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

We celebrate those who challenge sexual oppression and who work for sexual justice.

All: God rejoices when we celebrate our sexuality with holiness and integrity.

(adapted from Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing, "Religious Declaration," [www.religioustheology.org/declaration.html](http://www.religioustheology.org/declaration.html))

### Prayer for the Spirit

God, source of all life, we pray:

Fulfill your promise and bless us with your presence.

Without you we cannot live as a new creation.

Only you lead us into the truth.

Only you broaden our horizon and our heart

So that we can accept each other

With empathy and without prejudice—

Whatever our culture and tradition,

Our gender, our sexual orientation,

Or our age and education may be.

Each day transform us so that we may become more human,

More friendly towards our neighbor

And all your creation.

Make us co-workers and partners

In your work of love and liberation.

May evil be overcome with good in us and around us.

May your will prevail.

For your endless mercy hear our prayers

And accept the grateful praise of your name.

Amen.

(by Jana Opocenska, "Prayer for the Spirit," in *Courage to Love: An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material*, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan, 2002.)

## ADDITIONAL HELPS

### EPIPHANY MATERIALS

#### RESPONSIVE READING

#### An Epiphany Prayer

Eternal God, we remember that in the story of the wise men Jesus is acknowledged by people who knew nothing of him beyond what the silent stars told.

Lord, help us to move beyond the narrow faith that wants to confine Jesus to the church and fails to see you as Lord of the universe.

Give us humility and strength, that we may trust you even when we do not understand.

And as we, like the wise men, take again the road that always goes on, help us to see beyond the perils of the way to the horizons of your love, and to the goal to which you call us.

(adapted from Terry Falla and Eduard Schweizer, [www.stephens.org.nz/bulletins\\_2004/bulletin\\_11Jan2004.PDF](http://www.stephens.org.nz/bulletins_2004/bulletin_11Jan2004.PDF).)

• QUOTES •

No [person] is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all [persons]: neither is there any other thing which keeps us back from entering in, save only our unbelief.

John Calvin

I believe all Americans who believe in freedom, tolerance and human rights have a responsibility to oppose bigotry and prejudice based on sexual orientation.

Coretta Scott King

'Gay panic' is insidious. It is corrupt because it appeals to a public that is used to discarding and disregarding gay lives.

Jeffrey Montgomery

Disapproval of homosexuality cannot justify invading the houses, hearts and minds of citizens who choose to live their lives differently.

Harry A. Blackmun

• PERSONAL VIGNETTE •

## AN ORDAINING MOMENT

BY REV. MAHAN SILER, FORMER PASTOR, PULLEN MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH, RALEIGH

Persons of same-sex orientation face an excruciating question: will I or will I not "come out of the closet"? If "yes," then --- when, with whom and how?

As a pastor in Raleigh, I was faced with a similar dilemma: will I "come out of the closet," declaring openly a welcome to GLBT persons who have felt unwelcome, if not condemned, by the church? My decision crystallized on August 12, 1987 at a public hearing on violence against lesbians and gay men. The Human Relations Council of Raleigh wanted to recommend that "sexual orientation" be added to the city's non-discrimination ordinance. I was unprepared for the impact of this hearing upon my ministry. I tell the story in my book, *Exile or Embrace? Congregations Discerning Their Response to Gay and Lesbian Christians*, pg. 23:

What a night!

At the public hearing tonight my name is placed at the end of the docket, requiring me to sit through over two hours of testimony. Most of the witnesses are lesbians and gay men who, at considerable risk, report specific acts of violence and discrimination against them. Typical are stories of police abuse, loss of children, unfair job evaluations, lack of employment opportunities, and dismissals for trumped up reasons. Two or three of these stories I could have managed. However, being one of the last ones to speak, I had to sit through story after story after story. The crescendo effect from back-to-back testimonies eventually broke through my well-honed defenses.

Most disturbing are their experiences with the church, especially from preachers. Witnesses speak of pulpit messages that declare homosexuality as sin, an "abomination" before God, worthy of punishment. Even the feelings of homosexual attraction could warrant the wrath of God.

Tonight there was no wiggle room left for sidestepping a conviction that's been forming within me. An alternative message from the church, especially from preachers, must be voiced publicly, and this voice must be as compelling as the messages these witnesses have internalized.

It was an ordaining moment.

The process of "coming out" continued. I wrote an editorial for the local newspaper about the council hearing and made other public stands for explicit gay inclusion in the church. Increasingly, the Pullen Memorial congregation became a safe, welcoming place for GLBT persons and their families, fostering friendships across sexual orientation lines. Then, in the fall of 1991, two gay men came to me requesting a service of blessing upon their commitment to each other. I presented their request and the possibility of this additional ritual to the lay leadership of the church and gave it my support. After weeks of intense soul searching, they in turn went to the congregation with a recommendation that such a ritual of blessing be part of our liturgical life.

The congregation, in the midst of public controversy, entered into a two-month process of discernment that issued into a near unanimous welcome of gay Christians into full membership, as well as a two-thirds majority of members affirming the covenant ceremony between couples of the same gender orientation. To our surprise, this "coming out" of our congregation became a "light set on a lamp stand," giving light throughout the larger church and nation ---a light that was a disturbing glare to some, while a warm, revealing witness to others.

The ordaining moment in 1987 opened a door, and led me, and eventually our congregation, down a path toward joys beyond our imagining.

#### • CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES •

- W [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/sexual\\_orientation/sexual\\_orientation\\_issue.html](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/sexual_orientation/sexual_orientation_issue.html) - North Carolina Council of Churches' "Sexual Orientation" page, which gives the Council's focus statement on the issue. Also included are links to resources of various denominations for facilitating discussion on homosexuality in the church, as well as links to relevant Council policy statements.
- W [www.equalitync.org](http://www.equalitync.org) – Equality NC, a statewide organization dedicated to securing equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Equality NC works toward that goal by effectively lobbying the North Carolina General Assembly, executive branch, and local governments on issues like employment discrimination, hate violence, privacy rights, sexuality education, adoption, domestic partnership, HIV/AIDS, and more.
- W [www.whosoever.org](http://www.whosoever.org) – Whosoever Magazine, an online magazine intended for the spiritual growth of anyone who believes in God, with a special focus on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Christians.
- W [www.religiousinstitute.org](http://www.religiousinstitute.org) – Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing, an organization founded in 2001, it is an ecumenical, interfaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society.
- W [www.welcomingresources.org](http://www.welcomingresources.org)—Institute for Welcoming Resources, a national ecumenical organization under the auspices of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, seeks to provide the resources to facilitate a paradigm shift in multiple denominations whereby churches become welcoming and affirming of all congregants regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- W [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)—Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest civil rights organization working to achieve full equality for GLBT persons. HRC strives to end discrimination against GLBT citizens and to realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. HRC was founded in 1980 and currently has a membership of almost 600,000.

## North Carolina Council of Churches Official Statements<sup>1</sup>

In 1992, the North Carolina Council of Churches' House of Delegates adopted the following statements concerning violence, harassment and discrimination against the GLBT community:

- Intolerance cannot be tolerated. Silence and passivity by the churches allow hostility, and are unfaithful responses to the Christian gospel. Justice, respect, and freedom must be claimed and pursued for all persons in the service of the justice and peace of God's sovereignty in history.
- The North Carolina Council of Churches rejects the fear, prejudice, and hatred that foster societal and religious attitudes which either encourage, condone or ignore violence and discrimination against gay men and lesbians.
- The Council stands with gay men and lesbians in their struggle to achieve equal human and civil rights under the laws of North Carolina and of the United States.
- We unite in affirming that no person or class of persons should be subjected to violence, harassment, and discrimination because of sexual orientation. The church's firm support of civil rights for gay persons ought not depend upon agreement concerning the theological and ethical appropriateness of the homosexual orientation or of specific same-sex acts. Civil rights support ought to be considered an expression of Christian concern for basic social justice.

In 2004, the Council's Executive Board adopted a policy statement on a constitutional amendment regarding marriage. In it, the Council emphatically stated:

- The North Carolina Council of Churches opposes a marriage amendment to the federal or state constitution because it would enshrine at the constitutional level discrimination based on sexual orientation.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- q A statewide poll in 2005 of 25,000 North Carolinians, conducted by the Common Sense Foundation, found that:
  - 73 percent of respondents agreed that all North Carolinians should have equal rights under the law regardless of sexual orientation.
  - 51 percent said that it is not fair to define marriage in such a way that it excludes same-sex couples.
  - 57 percent stated that it is not fair for an employer to discriminate against an employee based solely on his or her sexual orientation.
  - 69 percent agreed that it is unfair for a landlord to deny housing to a tenant based solely on sexual orientation.<sup>2</sup>
- q At the federal level, the U.S. General Accounting Office has recently identified 1,138 federal statutory provisions in the U.S. Code in which marital status is a factor in determining or receiving benefits, rights and privileges. These benefits, rights and privileges are currently denied to same-sex couples.<sup>3</sup>
- q In 2001, the Human Rights Campaign estimated that the gay and lesbian population of North Carolina was over 16,000 persons. The Triangle and Triad areas have the highest concentrations of gay and lesbian persons.<sup>4</sup>
- q From 2001-2004, there were 37 recorded hate crimes in North Carolina based on sexual orientation. Current North Carolina law makes no provision to prosecute hate crimes motivated by biases against the victim's gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status or age.<sup>5</sup>

1. See [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/sexual\\_orientation/sexual\\_orientation\\_issue.html](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/sexual_orientation/sexual_orientation_issue.html).

2. The Common Sense Foundation, "Liberty and Justice for All: A Study of Issues Affecting the LGBT Community in North Carolina," [http://common-sense.org/pdfs/LGBT\\_report\\_2005.pdf](http://common-sense.org/pdfs/LGBT_report_2005.pdf).

3. United States General Accounting Office, letter to Senator Bill Frist, [www.gao.gov/new.items/d04353r.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04353r.pdf).

4. Research Briefs, "Gay and Lesbian Families," [http://sww.unc.edu/jif/famtrend/briefs\\_gayles\\_main.htm](http://sww.unc.edu/jif/famtrend/briefs_gayles_main.htm).

5. FBI Hate Crimes Data, [www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2004/openpage.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2004/openpage.htm). Equality NC, "House Bill 1322: Safer Communities Act," [www.equalitync.org/leg/05/2005h1322](http://www.equalitync.org/leg/05/2005h1322).