

friends and families. Keep in mind that the most important thing is that you honor your own values and beliefs. Religious events can be wonderful opportunities to create new traditions and bring families and friends even closer.

What can I do to help others?

Speaking about your experiences, either one-on-one or in small or large groups, is a great way to lend support to others. Everyone feels better once they realize that they are not alone. You can also get involved with interfaith alliances or other groups working for religious change. PFLAG-Westchester can put you in touch with some of these groups and is always looking for new people to assist with its own educational program on faith issues.

For more information, ask for our brochures *Faith in Our Families: Parents, Families, and Friends Talk About Religion and Homosexuality* and *Is Homosexuality a Sin?*

Additional pamphlets available:

Answers to Parents' Questions About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered People
Answers to Common Questions About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgendered Youth

Additional brochures available at www.pflag.org:

Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality
(American Psychological Association)
Be Yourself! (for gay youth)
Faith in Our Families
Is Homosexuality a Sin?
Our Daughters and Sons
Our Trans Children
(for parents of transgendered children)
Read This Before Coming Out To Your Parents
(for parents and children)
Opening the Straight Spouse's Closet
Recommended Reading List

Monthly Meetings

PFLAG-Westchester meets once a month in Westchester

Second Monday of every month

at 7:30 p.m.

The Loft

250/252 Bryant Avenue

White Plains, NY

(on the campus of Memorial United Methodist Church)

All are welcome, including parents, friends, family members and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, with or without their families.

(914) 245-8236

(914) 948-2487

Info@pflagwestchester.org



Answers to Questions About Religion and Homosexuality

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Westchester County NY**

914-245-8236

914-948-2487

**www.pflagwestchester.org
info@pflagwestchester.org**

This brochure is designed to answer some common questions regarding religion and homosexuality. If you are reading this, chances are that someone you care about has come out to you as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or as someone who is questioning his/her sexuality. (From this point on, "gay" will be used as a blanket term for those who are not heterosexual.) Finding out that someone you know is gay may conflict with a long-held belief system and you may be left wondering how having a family member or friend who is gay will affect your own religious beliefs. Rest assured that many others have experienced the same feelings and have had similar questions.

Can gay people change?

Ex-gay ministries use out-moded medical theories and radical religious beliefs to justify trying to alter gay and lesbian peoples' natural sexual orientation. Homosexuality is not a disease. The American Psychological Association states that "It does not require treatment and is not changeable."

"Reparative therapy" is dangerous and doesn't work. The American Psychiatric Association opposes attempts to change a person's sexual orientation because treatment is ineffective and increases risk of depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior.

"Most of the emotional disturbance experienced by gay men and lesbians around their sexual identity is not based on physiological causes but is due more

to a sense of alienation in an un-accepting environment," the American Medical Association states.

How can I reconcile my love for my friend/family member with my religious beliefs?

Many have experienced the feeling of being pulled in two seemingly opposite directions. The first step is to examine your beliefs and, in doing so, to ask yourself if homosexuality is, indeed, contrary to your religion. As you explore, keep in mind that many religious groups with varied backgrounds and teachings have revised earlier teachings against homosexuality and have moved towards a more open and accepting philosophy. Though your current congregation may be firmly against homosexuality, there may be other congregations of the same religious denomination in your area that have more open and welcoming attitudes. PFLAG Westchester can provide you with the names of open and affirming congregations in New York City.

Everything I once believed I now question. How can I deal with this confusion?

Without a doubt, calling into question your own long-held beliefs can be a frightening experience. The journey of self-exploration is one that should not be taken without some kind of support system in place to help you deal with this fear and examine your conflicting

feelings. It is very important that those to whom you turn for support are able to listen without judgment. At PFLAG Westchester's monthly support meetings, you can talk with people who have had similar experiences. If you would like religious counseling, try to find a congregation that is either gay friendly or that is willing to embark on the journey of discovery with you.

What if my religion does not accept gays?

If your congregation does not accept gays, you have several options and will have to choose which the best is for you. You can stay and worship without further action or you can choose to stay and worship, but also work to make it a more accepting congregation. You may decide to change congregations or, if there are no affirming congregations, to change denominations. Some choose to leave organized religion and to instead find faith on their own. None of these is easy, so you should be sure to give yourself plenty of time to consider all of your options before making a decision.

What about traditional religious ceremonies?

Religious ceremonies such as weddings, christenings, and funerals can become complicated for gay people and their