

LGBTQ People's Experiences in the Church

Thank you for your interest in this research project! I appreciate you taking the time to learn more about it.

The purpose of this project is to hear about your experiences as an LGBTQ person who is a member of a church congregation that is open and welcoming of LGBTQ people. Many research studies have shown the ways that some Christian churches are hostile toward LGBTQ people; as a result, many LGBTQ people leave their traditions or stay within them despite the hostility they face. But not as much research has instead looked at LGBTQ people who belong to churches that are explicitly open to and affirming of LGBTQ people. This study is designed to learn more about LGBTQ people who have found a home in a welcoming and open denomination or congregation.

If you choose to participate, you will log into a secure survey website where you will be asked to complete scales relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, experiences with the church and with private religious/spiritual practices, and some attitude scales. You will also be asked to write a spiritual autobiography (an essay that describes your spiritual journey – please see the prompt on page 3). The full survey should take approximately one hour, although everyone reads and writes at a different rate.

On page 2, you will find a description of the research process, an explanation of your rights as a research participant, and information about the \$15 honorarium. Please read this information carefully. I am happy to answer any questions you may have (all of my contact information is listed here).

If you agree to participate, you can log into the secure survey system to complete the survey by typing this address into your web browser: <https://tinyurl.com/ys86y6jb> If you prefer to handwrite, you can complete a printed version of the same survey (please call or email me to have a survey sent to you).

Thank you for considering this, and best wishes,

Megan Yost, Ph.D., Principal Investigator (she/her)
yostm@dickinson.edu
(717) 245-1357

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE: You have been asked to participate in a research study entitled *LGBTQ People's Experiences in the Church*, conducted by Dr. Megan Yost, a professor in the Departments of Psychology and Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. To participate, you must: be 18 years of age or older, identify as LGBTQ, be a member of a welcoming church or spiritual community, and reside in the United States.

RESEARCHER INFORMATION: The Principal Investigator for this research is Megan Yost, Ph.D. (she/her). Office phone: (717) 245-1357. Email address: yostm@dickinson.edu

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS: We do not anticipate any risks to you from participating in this research, but writing about past church experiences may bring up uncomfortable emotions for some people. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS: Many people enjoy writing, and you may experience gains in self-knowledge from participating in this study. This research will help further social scientific knowledge on LGBTQ-positive religious contexts. This research will also have practical benefits: studying LGBTQ people in welcoming congregations may have implications for LGBTQ individuals who have felt unwelcome in the church but are now seeking out such a community.

HONORARIUM: As a token of appreciation for the time you spent completing the survey, you will be offered a \$15 electronic gift card to Starbucks or Amazon.com. If you take the survey online, this will be sent to the email you specify; if you complete the survey in hard copy, you may provide an email address or a physical address for this purpose. If, after beginning the survey, you decide to discontinue your participation, you will receive a prorated portion of the honorarium.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY: Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty. You may skip any questions in the survey that you do not wish to answer.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report that is published, no information that will make it possible to identify you or any participant will be provided (only basic demographic information would be given when quoting participants). Fully anonymized data may be used for teaching purposes in Professor Yost's advanced research methods courses at Dickinson.

You will be asked to provide your first name and email (or physical address, if you choose) in order to receive the honorarium. You will also be asked for this information if you'd like to be contacted for a possible follow-up interview. This contact information will be retained separately from your data and only used for these stated purposes. Student research assistants will have access to the anonymized data (survey responses *without* names and email addresses), but only the Principal Investigator (Megan Yost) will have access to the master list of names. This master list will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project (both this survey and the subsequent interviews) and when full financial reconciliation has been completed.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS: If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Dickinson College Institutional Review Board, a board charged with protecting the rights and welfare of research subjects at (717) 245-1902. Additional contact information is available at: http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/78/institutional_review_board

What to Expect on the Survey

When you open the survey, you will find multiple scales to complete and a prompt asking you to write a spiritual autobiography. You might appreciate time to think about the writing prompt before starting the survey, so I am providing the full instructions here.

Spiritual Autobiography Instructions

A spiritual autobiography is an essay in which you explore your religious and spiritual journey, often (but not always) in chronological order. This type of essay focuses on:

- an exploration of how you have felt about religion and spirituality across your life, and,
- a description of anything that has influenced those feelings (for example, individual people like family members, a close friend, a religious leader; life milestones like graduating high school, births, deaths; social and political events).

To organize this essay, it can be helpful to think about your life as a series of chapters. Each chapter would probably be a paragraph long.

For a chronological organization, each chapter break might be marked by a change in your approach to religion/spirituality. Each chapter would describe how you thought about religion, spirituality, God, church, etc., during that specific time and until there is the next change.

For a thematic organization, each chapter might focus in on an important belief that has shifted or has been affirmed for you. You could explore as many themes as are important to you.

Because this research study is concerned with LGBTQ people's experiences, please be sure to include any examples of times when your religious/spiritual beliefs and practices intersected with your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For some people, there might have been conflict, for others there might have been support and acceptance, and for others there might have been a complex mix. For some people, spirituality/religion and LGBTQ identity may not be related at all. I'm interested in hearing all types of stories.