



A Monthly E-Newsletter For CenterPeace Parents Volume 3 August 2021

BE THAT SAFE PERSON AT SCHOOL

By Dawn Domasig

Fall approaches and the hallways are again filled with the sound of student chatter. As I begin my 22nd year of teaching middle school, I am mindful of the safe place that I have created in my classroom for all kids.

Part of our annual teacher training revolves around suicide prevention – a topic especially important with LGBTQ+ students. The CDC's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey show that 17.2% of high school students considered suicide. For middle school students, that number is 25%. The American Association of Suicidology has found that LGBTQ+ students, and students who are unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity, are **more than twice** as likely to attempt suicide, usually triggered by bullying, maltreatment, or rejection. On the contrary, having even one accepting adult in their lives made LGBTQ+ students 40% less likely to attempt suicide.

When our son came out to us his sophomore year of college, I did not want our family to become a statistic. So, how do we, as Christ-following parents, defy these statistics?



When I taught sixth grade, I bonded with a particular group of students. I loved, and still love, these four kids dearly. Last year, that same kids – now in eighth grade – came to me, clutching a piece of paper. On that paper were written four notes, one from each of them. I read the first note: "Miss, I'm gay." I smiled and hugged that student, telling her how proud I was of her for speaking her truth.

I read the second note: "Miss, I think I'm trans." I hugged her (who now identifies as "he") and addressed him with his chosen name. His eyes lit up. The third note said: "Miss, I'm trans, too." Another hug and a recognition of his chosen name. The fourth note: "Miss, I'm nonbinary." And another hug with words of acceptance.

I was honored to have been chosen to come out to, and I will forever cherish those precious moments with those students. They knew I was safe. They knew somebody cared. I changed lives that day in a new way. What a privilege.

95.8% LGBTQ+ students heard anti-gay remarks at school

95.7% heard negative remarks about gender expression
85.7% heard negative remarks about transgender people
85.2% of LGBTQ+ students reported being verbally harassed
27% reported being physically harassed

13% reported being physically assaulted at school
48.6% of LGBTQ+ students experienced cyberbullying

[For More Information from PFLAG Click Here](#)



MIKE & VICTORIA JUNEK

"Mom, I'm gay, and I will always call you my parents even if you are no longer able to call me your son." Reading those words written by our precious son Allen still brings a tear to my eye—not because I still grapple with his revelation, but with the realization that he carried that fear and shame for so many years.



Allen, a college junior at the time, took me for coffee that morning. I learned later that he clutched the keys tightly in his hands because he feared I would leave. Leave—how could I abandon my son? I shudder when I recall my first words to him, "Are you sure?" I was stunned, and the tears flowed freely that morning. So many thoughts and questions filled my mind. I thought we had done everything right. We had our children in church every time the doors were open, sat down for dinner together every evening, served together in many capacities. Allen played varsity football, dated a couple of young ladies, and started the Christian student organization on his campus. After entering college, he was a leader in the church's college ministry, lead devotionals and small groups, and even weekend mission trips.

Those first few days were very bleak and dark as I struggled to process. Over and over, I recited the lyrics to a favorite gospel song, and they became my mantra:

"Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives all fear is gone
Because I know, I know he holds the future
And life is worth the living just because he lives."

Coming out to his dad a few weeks later was much easier. His dad's response was, "You are my son, and I love you!" Could it really be as simple as that?

In the following months, I took great comfort in Romans 8:39 "...nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God." Together, my husband Mike and I also sought wise counsel and first learned of CenterPeace from a trusted minister—a Godly man who loved our son and knew him well.

We attended a PeacePrints Retreat in September that same year. While at the retreat, we rested in the knowledge that we were not alone on this journey which was wrought with many emotions and questions. We were reassured that all would be okay, and we certainly did not have to have all the answers. After returning home from that retreat, we began reading, studying and growing. I now refer to this as our faith evolution. It was a period of questioning what we had been taught and had always believed—a time of meditating on scripture and viewing it from a different lens.

"I thought God wanted to use me to show gay people how to be straight. Instead, God used people who are gay to show me how to be Christian."

- Rachel Held Evans

Now over five years later, I can reflect and confidently share that Allen's coming out united us as a family. Together we are on this journey—a beautiful journey—of living authentically and loving as we are called to love. Perhaps this can best be summed up in the words of the late Rachel Held Evans, "I thought God wanted to use me to show gay people how to be straight. Instead, God used people who are gay to show me how to be Christian."

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

IS YOUR SCHOOL SAFE?

By Dena A Edwards

We all want our kids to be safe in school, and when your child is LGBTQ+, safety becomes an even greater challenge. Bullying and lack of support and resources can and does cause serious mental health damage which often leads to self-harm.

The Human Rights Campaign suggests five questions for parents to think about when determining whether your kid's school is a safe environment:

- Are educators and staff building LGBTQ+ allyship amongst all students through intentional activities, modeling and using teachable moments?
- Do educators and staff use inclusive, non-gendered language such as "students" or "folks" to address all members of the school community?
- Does your school have a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)?
- Have educators and staff members established processes to ensure that every LGBTQ student has a caring adult in the building who connects with them?
- Are educators and staff members specifically trained to prevent and respond to bullying incidents involving gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation?

If your answer is "no" to any of these, you need to understand that your school may be harming your child. Call the administration and help them learn how best to support the LGBTQ+ community.



Nourish Your Faith

PALMS DOWN, PALMS UP

By Chris Albrock



In his book "Prayer," Richard Foster shares a prayer exercise called "Palms Down, Palms Up" – an effective way to experience God's comfort and provision, especially in stressful times. This is my revised version of it.

First, with eyes closed, place your hands palms down (palms facing the floor), resting on your legs/knees or a table/desk. Second, picture your hands filling with things that worry or stress you or cause you fear. Include anything related to your loving journey with your LGBTQ+ child. Silently name each one as it appears in your hands. Third, after a few minutes have passed and you've named all you can, clench your fists,

feeling the weight of these worries. Fourth, unclench your hands and picture each of the things you've named falling from your open hands down into the open hands of God. Silently name each one as it leaves your hands, saying, "Father, into your hands I commit" Fifth, place your hands palms up, resting on your legs or a table. Sixth, picture your hands filling now with what you most need from God. Include anything related to your loving journey with your LGBTQ+ child. Seventh, as you picture each thing being placed in your hands by God, give thanks for each one: "Father, thank you for" Eighth, rest for a few seconds quietly in the presence of God.

SALLY GARY

RECONCILE AND REFORM CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 28-30
PHOENIX, AZ

[More Information](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

PeacePrints Retreats

A safe place for parents to express their feelings with fellow believers in Christ

[More information](#) on PeacePrints

- Oct. 15-17, 2021 - Nashville TN - [register here](#)
- Mar 25-27, 2022 - North Texas



Group Spiritual Direction for Parents

A place to help grow your awareness of God's work in your and your family's life and to share this spiritual journey with others

[More information](#) on Group Spiritual Direction

Tapestry Retreats for LGBTQ+ Christians

A place for adult LGBTQ+ Christians to find community

and a deeper connection with God [More information](#) on Tapestry

BOOK REVIEW: "UNCLOBBER"

By a Loving Mom

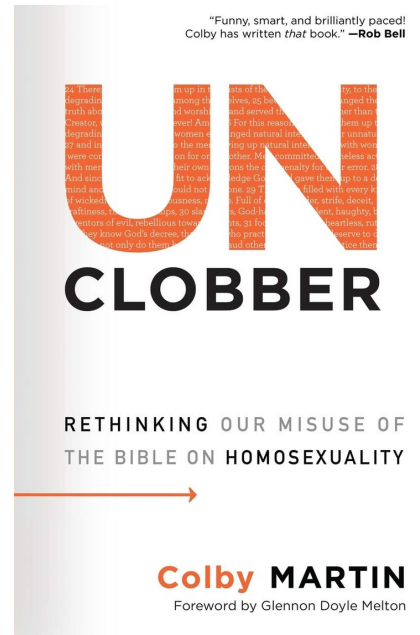
I think I had always known (or rather feared) that one day our son would tell us he was gay. It happened April 2018 when he was 14 years old. I was full of fear. Fear of what my friends would say, fear or what our church would do, fear that he was going to be "promiscuous" (that's what gay meant, right?). But mostly, I was afraid he was going to hell.

I bought "Unclobber" by Colby Martin the day our son came out and I devoured it in less than 24 hours. I needed someone to tell me it was going to be OK. I appreciated the fact that Martin had no vested interest in the conversation. He was not gay (he is a happily married, straight pastor with four sons) and he had no gay relative, so he couldn't be accused of "rationalizing." He was just looking at the text.

"Unclobber" tackles the six verses known as the "clobber passages" (often used to attack gay Christians). Martin addresses each one, looking at the historical context as well as the original language to open up the idea that maybe we've read scripture wrong all this time.

The book is also interspersed with Martin's personal story of coming to this realization and the price he paid for considering a new way of looking at scriptures that we have always held to be true.

"Unclobber" was exactly what I needed, when I needed it. Is it the best book written on the topic? Maybe not. Are there more in depth, scholarly looks at the text? Probably. But for me, Martin provided space to breathe, which was something I hadn't done in a long time. This book will always hold a special place in my heart because it was the first, so I am always eager to recommend it.



A recommended resource list can be found on the [CenterPeace Resource Page](#)



CenterPeace

A place to belong

10805 Walnut Hill Ln, Dallas, TX 75238

469-955-2407

info@centerpeace.net