A space to explore what it’s like to be LGBT+ and have a religion, faith or belief.

This resource holds stories, advice and information from an array of voices from LGBT+ people of faith of all ages and backgrounds and our allies.
In my life and work, my passion is carving space for people like us to exist. As much as we are aware of binaries within the LGBTQ community, we forget that other parts of our identities can live on binaries too.

Our faith exists on a binary, as does our sexuality, as does our gender. And we can move along this binary too. Queer is fluid. Gender is fluid. Faith is fluid. It is so important that we have intersectional and inclusive spaces to explore ourselves – and it may be for you that space to explore is the very space between these pages. Questioning our faith is a part of discovering our faith. We are not all raised with religious beliefs that will accept us. I reclaimed my Islam as I reclaimed my body and my skin. Find the Islam that will accept you and reclaim Islam for yourself.

Sabah Choudrey, Trans Youth Worker, Speaker and Writer

At KeshetUK we are working with schools, youth and young adult organisations, synagogues and wider community organisations to create a world where no one has to choose between their Jewish and LGBT identity. All of us are created b’tezem Elohim (In G-d’s Image). All of us have value, all of us are loved by G-d and we are exactly who we are meant to be. In Judaism there is a belief that to save a life, is to save a world and therefore we have to create a nurturing space for all young people. There is a growing understanding across all denominations of Judaism (liberal, orthodox, reform and masorti) that when society and community rejects and dismisses LGBT people – it causes real harm. We believe that all areas of the Jewish community can, should and in many cases they are, acting to ensure that the Jewish community is inclusive of LGBT people and their families.

Dalia Fleming, Executive Director of Keshet UK
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We had to move some content online as we had so much to fit into this resource, check out our Faith pages for more!

theproudtrust.org/for-young-people/faith-and-culture
Exploring and navigating our identities can be tricky. Finding out where we fit in the world can be a long and winding journey, with ups, downs, wrong turns and even U-turns. Lots of things impact our journeys, sometimes it’s our own thoughts about who we are, sometimes it’s thoughts from others and for some of us our culture, religion, faith and belief can present great comforts, but also great challenges to our identities too.

We’ve created this resource to have somewhere to hold young people’s stories, journeys and questions. It’s also somewhere to explore advice in navigating identity journeys as people who are LGBT+ and have religion, faith or belief. These pages we hope, will provide some reassurance and perhaps some answers to questions you may have been asking yourselves and the world.

Our biggest aim is to help you realise that you are complete in your whole identity. Your LGBT+ identity and religious or spiritual identity don’t have to be separate. Figuring out what you think, what God(s) or other deities think, and dealing with what LGBT+ communities and religious communities think can be a real struggle. Remember that throughout all of this you are loved, valued and important in all that you are!

Quotes you read in this resource have come from people of all ages who have religion, faith and belief. Most of these people are LGBT+ and some are LGBT+ allies. Thank you to everyone who gave their time and thoughts to contribute to the making of this!
LGBT TERMINOLOGY

**LGBT+**
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. The + represents the diversity and breadth of people whose gender, sexual orientation and identities fall outside being heterosexual and/or cisgender.

**Trans/ transgender**
A person who feels like their gender is different to the one given to them when they were born.

**Non-binary**
A person who feels that their gender identity does not fit into the “gender binary” of “men” and/or “women”.

**Cis/ cisgender**
A person who feels like their gender is the same as the one given to them when they were born.

Find a full LGBT+ glossary in the faith section on our website www.theproudtrust.org
WHAT IS RELIGION, FAITH AND BELIEF?

Religion, faith and belief mean different things to different people. We asked young people what the words mean to them:
We have so many parts to who we are that make us whole and when one or more of our identities seem to clash or be in opposition, it can feel like we have to choose between them.

Which one is a bigger part of me?

Which is more important?

Which do I identify with the most?

Questions like this can feel impossible to answer and they are questions we shouldn’t have to answer either.

“…Your sexuality is not a detached element of yourself. It’s you. Love and embrace it. It’s okay to have faith and be LGBT!”

(Queer, Christian, age 25)
Imagine a red rose. Its petals are bright red. When you sniff it, it smells fresh and floral. When you touch it, it feels cool and delicate.

One way of thinking about our own identity is like the rose. We have many different aspects, just like the redness, the scent, and the feel of the rose. But none of those aspects can be separated from the rose. Perhaps that’s why it can feel so uncomfortable, or even painful, when we try to hide some of those things in certain places.

“I have heard that God has known me before I was even born, my queerness is not news to him; being my whole, authentic self is vital to being in relationship with God; I am wholly and fully loved, unconditionally.”

(Black, gay woman, Christian, age 35)
There may be periods in our lives where some parts of our identity feel more prevalent than others or that we give more of our attention to, but that doesn’t mean the other parts of us go away. They will always be there, informing and shaping who we are. And this is why it can feel impossible to choose because all of our parts make us who we are, even if at times they feel conflicting.

“Life is full of contradictions — be one!”

Common to many of the stories shared with us was the experience of having people in friendship groups, families and communities tell us “you can’t be LGBT+ and religious”, that being LGBT+ was “against religion”. “a Western thing”, “not in our culture”, that “our people don’t do that”. Lots of these ideas are as a result of a lack of visibility and representation of LGBT+ people, especially LGBT+ people of colour. Much of LGBT+ people’s histories have been erased and because of this, we see fewer examples of LGBT+ people from religions, faiths and communities from around the world. This can make people think we don’t exist or that who we are is wrong in some way.

Many had heard that it’s “forbidden” or “sinful”. People spoke about these experiences leading to them having many emotions, including feeling frustrated, confused, ashamed, upset and conflicted.

“It’s completely fine to have doubts with your religion, your self-image, your identity and more. What’s important is to understand that what you feel is natural and even if you’re confused, there’s a network of people from all different cultures ready to accept you.”
There are people all over the world, on every continent, in every country, from every race and background who have and are practising religion, faith, belief and are LGBT. We’re literally everywhere! Many people find loving, understanding and supportive friends, allies and communities. The journey to finding acceptance and understanding will look different for everyone – long, short, difficult, exhausting, liberating... one thing is for sure - you are not alone in this journey!
“Although there have been really tough times, by accepting that all parts of me – even my sexuality – reflect the image of God, I have begun to feel so much more alive and whole.”
(Cis, queer, Christian, age 21)

“You are not the first or the last to go through tough times. There are people who will support and cherish you.”
(Teacher, Loreto College)

There are lots of people who have religion, faith and belief who are accepting and supporting of LGBT+ identities and welcoming of LGBT+ people in their communities.

“We are an Ummah (community); no matter what, we should always have each other’s backs.”
(Young person of faith, Loreto College)

All over the UK and the world there are religious, faith and belief groups, congregations and communities who are LGBT+ welcoming and inclusive. Some of these are LGBT+ specific and some are open and welcoming to everyone, no matter what your identity is.

At the back of this resource, you can find a list of LGBT+ religious, faith and belief groups and organisations.
This section is about giving you some general advice. We know that what works for some people won’t be useful for others so, pick and choose what’s useful to you.

**LGBT+ People of Faith Stories:**

“I’m a 21 year old, Zimbabwean lesbian who was brought up in a Christian family, mainly protestant, but I attended Roman Catholic schools. Even though I would no longer call myself Catholic, a lot of the teachings by Jesus have stuck with me and are a huge part of my morals. I realised pretty young like six or seven that I liked girls, but it was never really at the front of my mind until high school. In high school I was very religious, reading the Bible a lot, attending church every week, but I remember when I was 15 asking myself if I could really marry a guy and live "normally" and the answer was no, so I decided to become a nun. I thought I had to choose my faith or my sexuality, so it only seemed right to either dedicate myself fully to Christianity or leave it behind entirely. It wasn’t until college that I figured out I could leave the institution of Christianity behind, but still have faith in the teachings of Jesus.

Your beliefs should never leave you ashamed of who you are naturally. The way you were made is perfect and good. If what you believe in now doesn’t sit right with you or makes you uncomfortable, change it.”
Major religious traditions are so big that there are usually lots of different perspectives on LGBT issues within them. Maybe you’ve only heard one perspective because that’s the perspective your family, religious leader or prominent community leaders take. The internet might be a useful place to look (though be careful – remember anyone can put anything online, and just because it’s on the internet doesn’t make it true). Try searching LGBT+ and your faith, e.g. ‘LGBT Hindu’, and see what comes up. There are groups in pretty much every tradition that believe that being LGBT+ is totally compatible with their faith.

“Morals are what are important in religion, not what individuals think, this shouldn’t affect whether you can be religious – we are all individual.”
(Young person of faith, Whalley Range High School)

“I felt God made a mistake by making me gay, but I realised later that it was my church, not God, that was homophobic.”
(Christian young person, The Proud Trust)

“You don’t have to do anything to earn God’s love.”
(Young person of faith, Loreto College)
Do you know what your own local religious community believes?

Many people feel they already know what their own local religious community think about LGBT+ issues. Though, often it’s not a topic that’s mentioned very much or explored from diverse perspectives. You might be surprised to find that, for example, many Christian priests in the UK are totally fine with LGBT+ identities and believe they are welcome in the church. Remember not to assume what people think until they tell you themselves.

“As a bisexual Roman Catholic, I have been accepted by my family and church. There is always someone who understands your journey.”

(Young person of faith, Loreto College)

Connect with people who understand your situation

There are lots of places online you can go to talk to other people who are also LGBT+ and share your faith. We’ve signposted some trusted organisations on page (page 39).

“Finding a community of queer Muslims who understand and love me has saved my life.”

(Cis, gay, Muslim, age 28)
Sometimes we get caught up in what others around us believe and tell us, and we can forget that our personal thoughts and beliefs are really important too. Religion, faith and belief can be collective and based in and around communities, but ultimately, your faith is yours. Give yourself time to reflect on what you personally feel is central to being a Muslim or Buddhist, for example. Do you feel your LGBT+ identity is at odds with these things? You might find that they are not.

“There are so many ways to believe and be part of your tradition. Your faith and beliefs will always be personal to you. They are fluid and may grow and develop as you do. It’s important to give space to your personal beliefs and not just what others in your tradition say.”

(Trans, Christian, age 26)
In lots of traditions, it’s usual to pray to God(s) or other deities. If this is something you do, you might find praying about your difficulties can help. Sometimes it’s useful just to vent about what’s going on, to reflect on yourself and others, or to hear from God what they think about what you’re going through.

“Your conscious is the voice of God – it’s ok to listen to this voice too and not just external voices.”
(Young person, Loreto College)

Many traditions hold that God is absolutely perfect and is never wrong, but humans definitely can be. In every tradition, it’s humans that interpret scripture and create customs, and those interpretations are often different and sometimes even conflicting. Even people we respect can make mistakes and are influenced by their society and culture in how they interpret religious teachings. A very recent example is in the Catholic Church, where Pope Francis has changed the teaching on the death penalty to say that it is never allowed. Even when teachings seem permanent and unchangeable, the reality is that they can and do change.
LGBT+ People of Faith Stories:

“Being a Sikh is one part of me, and it exists in harmony with all the other aspects of my identity. A Queer Desi, a British Punjabi, a Northerner, a Sporty Spice, whatever. It took me a long time to find my home within Sikhism because I used to think these different worlds were in conflict. I used to be ashamed that I was Sikh and I’d sit in the Gurudwara feeling like an imposter, waiting to eat the langar so that I could leave! Now I wear my Kara and long hair proudly. I feel a strong sense of rootedness because I come from a long lineage of Sikh ancestry whose core value is to respect the oneness amongst humanity. Sikhism as a religion is genuinely LGBTQ+ inclusive, and I was able to embrace it when I learned that it was due to conservative patriarchal forces within traditional Punjabi culture that prevented this glorious knowledge from being shared!

12 year old me would have laughed if you told me that I would only truly feel like a Sikh after I began exploring my sexuality and going through the confusing (and at times very painful!) process of coming out. I wish all LGBTQ+ Sikhs could know that Sikhism is and always has been an LGBTQ+ inclusive religion. Sikhism at its core is about tolerance and equality of all; especially marginalised communities. Sikhism is a dynamic religion that is not about imposing strict doctrine or idol worship on its followers, so for me this means I can carry my Sikhism on my own terms whilst living the life I seek to lead.”
This section is designed to give you some ideas about how to read and interpret Holy Scriptures if your religion has them. It's very general, because we're talking about people with a wide range of beliefs.

You might find that even within your own faith, beliefs about scripture vary a lot. Some people hold that they're totally right and there cannot even be one mistake, because they're directly from God. Others might say that they're inspired by God, but interpreted and written down by imperfect humans, so the scriptures themselves aren't always perfect. Some scriptures are translated from ancient languages, and the words we use in translation might not always carry the original meaning. Scriptures often originate in cultures and times very different from our own, so the things they talk about or consider important could be different to that which we consider important now.

“Holy scriptures are open to interpretation and can work in harmony. You shouldn’t have to choose bits of it yourself.”

(Teacher, Loreto College)
There will be a lot of ways of thinking about and interpreting scripture within your own tradition. For example, many Muslims when trying to find a correct interpretation of the Qur’an will look at how the Prophet Muhammad interpreted it, what his earliest followers said about it, and perhaps look at Arabic meanings of words or what saints have said. Do you believe that parts of your scripture have more authority than other parts? Some Christians believe that the words of Jesus carry more importance than other parts of the Bible, so they try to interpret the rest of the Bible through the things Jesus said.

“I grew up in a Christian household, and one of the many reasons that I am not a Christian anymore is because of the huge emphasis on sin (sin being anything that separates a person from God), and the idea that some genders and sexualities are sinful and would therefore put you at odds with your faith. I was taught that all sin was equal in the eyes of God, and so as a teenager I desperately looked for God’s approval by combing through scripture, looking for a way out...as a young person, I really would have benefited from knowing that it is possible to find harmony between faith and sexuality.”

(Black, mixed-race, lesbian, Quaker, age 22)
Some people spend their entire lives learning about their scriptures and thinking about what it means. There is always more to learn about our religious texts. It might be learning a new language like Ancient Hebrew, reading books by scholars in your tradition, or talking to people in your tradition that you respect. Learning more about a text can change what you think about it. It might also give you more confidence in what you believe.

“There is nothing that says you cannot be religious and LGBT. Being LGBT+ is part of who you are. If you are in the right religion, it will not tell you to be ashamed of your sexuality or gender. Mine does not. It may take a bit of digging, a bit more research to find out your religion’s true opinion on being LGBT, but that doesn’t mean you cannot keep your faith as a part of your identity, just as being LGBT+ is a part of your identity.”

(Transmasculine, Christian, age 18)
HOW CONCERNED IS SCRIPTURE WITH LGBT+ ISSUES?

This is a difficult one to answer, because it depends on how much importance you give to different parts of scripture. If your text criticises what we might think of as sex between men only once, but mentions poverty 500 times, what does that mean?

“It’s mostly other people’s personal views, not religion saying that being LGBT+ is wrong.”
(Young person of faith, Loreto College)

“We don’t have to agree with everything you read. Take what you get and adapt it to today’s age and your life.”
(Young person of faith, Loreto College)

What do you think about how often your scriptures mention LGBT+ issues? How can we know it’s talking about what we think of as LGBT+ today? Were LGBT+ identities known about when it was written?

“The story of Sodom and Gomorrah gets referred to a lot, people say it’s condemning sex between two men, but actually it was about lack of hospitality and rape. It’s not about being gay.”
(Lesbian, Christian, age 35)
“I am a 25 year old trans man, I was raised Christian and transitioned in my teens while at an Evangelical church. I had a generally neutral response, with some people being very positive and some negative. A few years later I moved to a traditional Anglican church with my family. I lived stealth (not out as trans) for a while, but decided I wanted to have an affirmation of baptism in my correct name. I wrote a short piece for the church magazine which came out a month before the service and then had the ceremony in the regular church service like any other baptism. I had a very positive response to both and still attend the church.

I knew I wanted to be a boy, and I knew I wasn’t attracted to them, so I assumed I must be a butch lesbian. After learning about trans, I realised pretty quickly that made far more sense for me. There were a few years when I was hiding my identity, going through the wrong puberty, trying desperately to be a cis lesbian as that was more “normal” to my mind. I got bullied for it and I didn’t want to make things worse. I fell out of faith around then, not really an atheist, just angry with God for making me this way. I was able to come to terms with myself with the help of support groups (mainly Mermaids) and began transition.

Transition helped so much with my mood, particularly medical transition, which was key for reducing, and removing in some parts, my dysphoria. Living stealth also helped and my decision to out myself at church was an incredibly difficult one, but one I felt called to. The overwhelmingly positive response I had to it was an incredible boost, particularly as my church is quite old-fashioned and traditional, so I had expected some issues.”
This section will suggest some hurdles you might come up against when you are a LGBT+ person of faith and ideas about how to solve them. We’ll talk about coming out as LGBT, but also coming out as someone with religious beliefs.

**MY FAMILY/CULTURAL COMMUNITY BELIEVE BEING LGBT+ IS AGAINST OUR RELIGION**

Coming out to your family/community when they don’t see your LGBT+ identity as compatible with your/their faith and traditions is really tough. First of all, make sure you’re safe before you choose to come out. Remember that you don’t have to come out until you feel safe and ready to, and making sure it’s on your terms. Maybe there is a family member who you know will take it better, or who will make sure you’re protected. If not, you might be able to get a member of school/college staff, youth worker, religious leader (many are totally ok with LGBT+ issues) or another adult you trust to be with you when you do it. They can help mediate between you and your family and prevent an emotional reaction that they may later regret.
LGBT+ People of Faith Stories:

“I am 31 years old. I am a gay female and have been since I was 13! From the age of 22 I have been practising Buddhism. From my Buddhist practice I have learnt that we all possess an infinite precious potential and that our gender/sexuality doesn’t define us as who we really are within. We’re all beautiful and whole just as we are and we are all equal and worthy. Before I started Buddhism, I was a little weary how people would accept my sexuality, but to my surprise there are quite a few LGBT+ members which was very heart warming. I love the emphasis on embracing the whole person despite gender, race, status or sexuality. When I first came out I was very young, 13 years old, and came out to my Hindu parents. My father was absolutely amazing about it and accepted me straight away, but my mother did initially struggle with accepting me. She never told me she didn’t accept me, but was quiet about things. I think she was scared what the Hindu community would say. But when I was 19, out of the blue she said she fully accepted me now, which was beautiful. Being accepted by both my parents is beautiful and I’m very grateful as I know how many South Asian LGBT+ people struggle because of society’s judgements and non-acceptance.”

Remember that what your family believe is not your fault. It’s easy to blame ourselves when others don’t accept us, but everyone makes their own choices as to what they believe, and we aren’t responsible for that. Likewise, don’t put pressure on yourself to change their beliefs. Many people in families and communities do change beliefs over time when someone comes out, but this process usually takes a while and is a journey they have to go on themselves.
“I’ve heard a lot of people say that I can’t be LGBTQ+ and religious. I’m not allowed to come out to my extended family due to religion. I’ve been told that I’m going to hell because I’m LGBTQ+. On the positive side, my rabbi emailed me to say that there’s nothing wrong with being trans and the Talmud (teachings) accept it. There are also six genders outlined within the Talmud which is quite cool to read up on.”  
(Trans/non-binary, pansexual, Reform Jew, age 17)

Finally, consider other places and people you can be with who can value and love you in the way that you, and all people, deserve. We aren’t going to pretend that all families and communities will come around and change how they think. The reality is that some LGBT+ people are rejected by family and communities when they come out, and aren’t able to go back. That experience is incredibly painful and there are no words we could write that can make it hurt any less.

“I grew up being told “practising homosexuals” would go to hell. By my late teens that had made me suicidal. I rejected faith for the next eight years and called myself an agnostic. Things changed and I found myself looking for answers, and in the end came back to the Bible – reluctantly. But as I read it I saw a new thing – a God who loved all of us, passionately. I started praying again and experienced healing and then met Christians who had no issue with LGBT+ people. Their input was revolutionary to me. Suddenly I had hope and love, I felt included and welcome as I am. For the first time I knew you could be gay and Christian and there’s no conflict. That’s left me with a deep and lasting peace and sense of who I am.”  
(Gay man, Evangelical Christian, Baptist background)
Finding other communities is one way of replacing some of the things that people often get from their families, such as LGBT+ religious groups or LGBT+ South Asian or black groups. For many people, these communities cannot truly replace their family, and we don’t want to suggest that your family or communities are simply replaceable. What we do want you to know is that you are loved, that you are valuable, and that no one deserves to be rejected on the basis of their LGBT+ identity. Being rejected because of this is never your fault.

“My dad was accepting but my mum was really worried about what our wider family would think. This hurt for a long time, until I started to build my own community and embrace my independence and who I was... Once you start digging beneath the surface level of negative messages about being of Faith and LGBT, there is a really rich, interesting and educational history to prove you can be both of these things.”

(Queer Punjabi woman, Sikh, age 27)

MY PLACE OF WORSHIP HAS MADE IT REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE FOR ME SINCE COMING OUT

We’ve thought of two ways to tackle this. The first way is to try to make things more comfortable in the place of worship you’re in. Who or what’s causing the problem? If there’s someone in authority there who you trust, try talking to them about the situation. They might be able to address the problem or change the way things are structured so that your needs are met. It might also be that, over time, people just get their heads around it and stop bothering you.
“I now avoid religion cos of my negative experiences … I am not against the church in general, but I am against this culture about punishing people who don’t fit the norm.”
(Young person, The Proud Trust)

If things aren’t getting better, or if you just can’t put the time or energy into dealing with the problem, you could try finding a different place of worship. This can be easier said than done, we have included some organisations on page 39 where you can try to find an inclusive place of worship for some traditions. If you’re not sure whether a new place is going to be okay with your LGBT+ identity, you could try emailing them to ask. It’ll remind them that it’s important to make it obvious if they are inclusive, and you’ll know whether it’s safe to go before even setting foot inside. You can create an anonymous email address if you’re worried about them knowing who you are.

“My faith means everything to me. I’ve encountered God in some of the darkest points of my life. I love the Church I now attend (which is affirming of LGBT+ people), so it’s about my relationship with God and an amazing church family. I now can’t imagine life without Jesus in it, and wouldn’t have it any other way.”
(Gay man, Evangelical Christian, Baptist background)
PEOPLE IN MY LGBT+ COMMUNITY MAKE NASTY COMMENTS ABOUT RELIGION AND BELIEVERS

Unfortunately, this is quite common. A lot of this happens because people rarely question those who make these comments, and people who have had no experience of a religious tradition often make lots of assumptions about them.

“A lot of people in the LGBT+ community have had bad experiences with religion, and this makes them really negative towards LGBT+ folk with faith, so I get a lot of people telling me I can’t be religious and be queer, or that my religion is homophobic, and that can be upsetting.”

(Bisexual, Muslim, age 23)

Are there group leaders or informal leaders you can speak to about the problem? Unless they are the ones making the comments, they should be able to address it and make sure you feel welcome. If you want to, you could share information with others about your tradition, bust some myths and show that LGBT+ identities and your faith can go hand in hand. It’s not your responsibility to educate everyone else about your faith though, and sometimes it can be easier to find another LGBT+ community that respects your faith and accepts you for who you are.

You deserve to be accepted and respected in both LGBT+ communities and faith communities.

People’s lack of knowledge or unkindness is never your fault. Don’t hesitate to reach out for support from other places.
We should not have to justify our identities to anyone, but there will be some people who we may want to talk about our identities with and for them to hear and try to understand our experiences.

We’ve collected responses to some of the most common challenges that people have to being LGBT+ and a person with religion, faith or belief, to use if needed.

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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In our scripture it says that homosexuality is a sin/forbidden.”</td>
<td>Where exactly in the scripture does it say that? Do you know which interpretation of the scripture you are reading? Did the original text use these words and actually mean this? What about other things that scriptures mention are forbidden but which people ignore? Why the focus on singling LGBT+ identities for criticism?</td>
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<td>“All religion is anti-LGBT, why would you believe in and want to be part of something that doesn’t accept you?”</td>
<td>My religion, just like my identity is personal and both parts are important, valid and a part of who I am. How is it that you know all religion is anti-LGBT+ and all religious people feel the same way? There are many people and religious groups who are religious and accepting and welcoming of LGBT+ people.</td>
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| “God created man and woman to be together. Not man and man or woman and woman. It’s not natural.” | If everyone is created by God, then LGBT+ people were also created by God.  
My experiences, my thoughts and who I am all feels completely natural to me.  
Being LGBT+ is not hurting anyone and shouldn’t affect anyone else, so where is the harm? |
|---|---|
| “You can’t have children if you are LGBT, it’s not natural.” | What about people who biologically cannot have children, are they unnatural too?  
LGBT+ people can still have children and are just as worthy of being parents as non-LGBT+ people. |
| “That doesn’t happen in our culture.” | Just because something isn’t talked about openly in our community or culture, doesn’t mean it’s not happening.  
LGBT+ people exist in every country in the world and exploring gender and sexuality is not new. |
| “Marriage is only between a man and a woman.” | Marriage is about two people loving and committing to each other; in the UK and many other countries it is legal for people of the same gender to get married. Many religions offer LGBT+ couples blessings within their services. |
“Praying more and being more devoutly religious will help you to stop being LGBT.”

Being LGBT+ is not a choice, it is who people are. No one can make you become LGBT+ and no one and nothing can make you stop.

Forcing people to try and change will not help. It will likely make them feel worse about themselves and negatively affect their wellbeing.

“God made you a woman/man, so you can’t change that.”

If I got appendicitis, would that mean I couldn’t have surgery to remove it as God gave me the appendix?

God made me who I am, including my gender identity. The body God gave me isn’t the same thing as my gender.

God made me with the intention of me having a happy and full life, which includes transition.

We change our bodies all the time – haircuts, tattoos, medical surgeries, taking hormones. Cisgender people do all of these things, so why not trans people?
It can be difficult to find people with identities and backgrounds similar to ours in the mainstream. One of the reasons for this is because mainstream society and history has a white, European, heterosexual and cisgender bias. This means our stories and lives are told, talked about and documented a lot less. There are also lots of people out there of all backgrounds, cultures, religions, faiths and LGBT+ identities who don’t want or feel able to talk about this publically.

One thing we know for sure though, is that LGBT+ people of faith and our allies are everywhere!

Here are some well-known LGBT+ people of faith who were suggested to us during our workshops for this resource.

Blair Imani
(Activist)
Lord Waheed Alli (Politician, businessman)

Janelle Monae (Musician, actress)

Cannon Rachel Mann (Anglican priest, poet and feminist theologian)

Surat-Shaan Knan (Activist)

Vicky Beeching (Musician)

Reverend Jide Macaulay (Reverend, activist)
An ally is someone who is supportive of a cause that doesn’t necessarily affect them – this could be a person who is not LGBT+, but who fights for LGBT+ rights and stands up against LGBTphobia.

We asked some LGBT+ allies who have religion, faith or belief what they would say to a LGBT+ friend:

“You are loved and valued by God.”
(School Chaplain)

“We are an Ummah (community) – no matter what we should always have each other’s backs.”

“Take your time to understand who you are, but know that God loves you all the same.”

“Only you know and decide who you are. Remember that and if someone doesn’t accept you, that’s their problem.”

“You can and should only be yourself and I will accept that.”
Many celebrities and prominent figures have used their platforms to advocate for LGBT+ people; some through music videos, speeches, campaigning and more. Our allies are important! And so we have included a handful of well-known people of faith who are LGBT+ allies here too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadiq Khan</td>
<td>Mayor of London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Chalke</td>
<td>British Baptist Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oprah Winfrey</td>
<td>Talk show host, philanthropist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desmond Tutu</td>
<td>Former Anglican Bishop in South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barack Obama</td>
<td>Former president of the USA</td>
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“Life can seem impossible sometimes. Finding happiness can seem impossible sometimes. We may choose to have difficult conversations. We may choose to keep parts of ourselves hidden from others, but as long as we do what we can to find happiness for ourselves, we’ll be ok. Finding a community of queer Muslims who understand and love me has saved my life.”

(Cis, gay, Muslim, age 28)

“You are made in the image of God, you are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. You are loved. Find a church that completely and utterly accepts you as you are... Please don’t let anyone turn you away from God’s love. If you need to, find another church, but God loves you just the way you are.”

(Gay, Christian, age 35)

“When I realised that there were other Muslim LGBT+ folk out there, it meant the world, because I realised I wasn’t alone... You’re not alone, and you’ll find your place amongst people who are just like you.”

(Bisexual, Muslim, age 23)
“You may be struggling now, but God doesn’t hate you. You will find a community that is accepting and you will be able to unapologetically live your OWN life for yourself.”
(Trans/non-binary, pansexual, Reform Jew, age 17)

“Depression, anxiety and sadness have now been moulded into strength and activism… Your faith is you. Your sexuality is you. Nobody has authority for yourself except you. God knows who you are, have him with you during life and he will guide you. Seek help with others in similar circumstances; I assure you that you are not alone!”
(Gay male, Muslim, age 27)

“The most important thing I would say is this. Don’t run from God. God is love, the Bible says. And it’s true. Why would you run from that? Open your heart and mind to Him. In Him you will find peace, you’ll find the deepest love, acceptance and healing. Don’t abandon him. He has not, and will never abandon you. Find a church that will welcome you and journey with you. Church can be an amazing place. Finally, let God’s love fill you and flow through you. Have no fear in following Him.”
(Gay man, Evangelical Christian, Baptist background)

“I still experience a lot of self-hatred and internalised homophobia/transphobia due to my current and past religious beliefs, though my friends tend to neutralise that by being so accepting… No religion should make you hate yourself. You’re great the way God made you, He/She/They DO NOT hate you.”
(Trans guy, Wiccan, age 18)
We’ve listed some UK based groups and resources below that may be helpful. You can find more details under the Faith section on our website and on our youth group finder page:

[theproudtrust.org/for-young-people/lgbt-youth-groups/where-can-i-find-a-youth-group](http://theproudtrust.org/for-young-people/lgbt-youth-groups/where-can-i-find-a-youth-group)

Our LGBT+ youth groups and support:

**The Proud Trust**
For LGBT+ young people aged 11–25 based in and around Manchester. In addition to our LGBT+ youth groups, we have groups based around identity too, including:

- Fusion – for LGBT+ young people of colour.
- Trans youth groups – including a transfeminine group and an under and over 18s group.
- Young Women’s Health Project – for lesbian, bisexual and pansexual women and non-binary young people.

[www.theproudtrust.org](http://www.theproudtrust.org)

**42nd Street: Q42**
Q42 are a LGBT+ youth project based in Manchester
[www.q42.org.uk/faith](http://www.q42.org.uk/faith)

**Gendered Intelligence BAME group**
[www.genderedintelligence.co.uk](http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk)
LGBT+ RELIGION AND FAITH GROUPS

Imaan (Muslim)
www.imaanlondon.wordpress.com

Naz and Matt Foundation (Muslim)
www.nazandmattfoundation.org

Inclusive Mosque (Muslim)
www.inclusivemosqueinitiative.org

Keshet (Jewish)
www.keshetuk.org

Sarbat (Sikh)
www.sarbat.net

Quest (Catholic)
www.questlgbti.uk

Metropolitan Community Church (Christian)
www.mccchurch.org

House of Rainbow Fellowship (Christian, BAME)
www.houseofrainbow.org

Twilight People
www.twilightpeople.com
Remember to trust yourself and if you feel lost – reach out! There are lots of people and organisations out there who understand and who can listen and help. There are also lots of people who will see, accept and celebrate you in all that you are. You really are not alone.

We moved some of the content from this resource online so that it wasn’t too long, check out the Faith pages on our website to read more about allies, what LGBT+ people of faith contribute to our society, expectations and a bigger glossary.