



Out Loud and Silent

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This Friday, April 16, marks the fourteenth annual [Day of Silence](#), observed by individuals in more than 8,000 middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities around the country where students remain silent in solidarity with queer youth who have been harassed, beaten or bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This grass roots movement seeks to change attitudes and policies on the part of school officials in order to end bullying against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.

The church—a place where people, especially young people, should feel safe to explore their identities and be nurtured by communities of caring individuals—has also been silent too often in the face of persecution suffered by LGBT persons. [Recent surveys](#) indicate that there is a wide discrepancy between what congregational leaders in many mainline churches **say** they believe about LGBT inclusion and what they actually **do** to support LGBT members. It is curious to wonder **why** officials—in our schools or in our churches—have chosen to duck this issue. Is it because they are afraid of what others will think? Unsure about their own views or orientation? Feel ill-informed? Fearful of losing members or funding? Concerned about a perceived social stigma?

If we begin with the premise that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God; if we follow Jesus' commandment to love one another; if we see justice and human dignity as central to the Gospel; if we hunger and thirst for righteousness, are meek and merciful, are willing to stand with the oppressed when others would persecute us; then the handful of problematic passages in scripture that allude to homosexuality rapidly pale in comparison to the overwhelming narrative arc of the Bible, and we find ourselves compelled to speak out on behalf of our LGBT brothers and sisters.

There is a [new player](#) in the movement for LGBT equality in our society called **Believe Out Loud** which offers web-based resources to counter the exclusion and oppression suffered by those whose gender identity and sexual orientation do not fit traditional molds. This web-based, social networking, interactive effort helps individuals, congregations and groups begin conversations that can open hearts and minds towards LGBT inclusion and prompt meaningful personal actions so that by believing out loud, days of silence will become unnecessary. Join the movement. Visit www.believeoutloud.com.

Rev. Robert Chase is the author of this publication and is the Founding Director of *Intersections International*, a multi-cultural, multi-faith global social justice initiative based in New York City. Rev. Chase is ordained in the United Church of Christ and previously served as the

denomination's Director of Communication. Intersections is the project manager of **Believe Out Loud**, a trans-denominational effort that promotes LGBT inclusion in mainline Protestant churches with the ultimate goal of LGBT equality throughout all of our society.

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