

Coming out is a courageous and spiritual act

By [Janet Edwards](#)

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Now that October 2011 has drawn to an end, I want to express my gratitude to all the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people who were inspired by the tradition of October being Coming Out month to come out to themselves and those around them.

Coming out is a courageous and [spiritual act](#) that benefits everyone in a ripple effect beyond all our horizons. I want this meditation upon Coming Out — letting ourselves and the world know truly who we are and how we understand ourselves — to be a tribute to all those who gave us this gift of honest integrity this October 2011.

Coming out is a spiritual act. When I asked [Rev. Scott Anderson](#) what sustained him in stressful times he [responded](#) immediately with the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). After the stone at the tomb has been rolled back, Jesus “cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him and let him go (John 11:43-44).’” Scott shared that his coming out felt as life-giving as that. It felt like resurrection to him.

I am also struck by Jesus’ reference here to the central story of Jewish history when He echoes the constant refrain of Moses to Pharaoh on God’s behalf, “Let my people go (Exodus 7:16)!”

In my own experience, recognizing myself as being bisexual was hugely freeing. A confusion that felt like shackles fell away. It was as if the Holy Spirit was able to flow through my soul in an unburdened way I

had never known before. Others I have spoken with report similar experiences.

Coming out is a courageous act. While remaining in the closet may be confining and uncomfortable, for many it is familiar and therefore often easier than risking the unknown to be open and honest about who they are. When Rev. Scott Anderson was ordained, the Westboro Baptist Church — associates of Rev. Fred Phelps in Wichita KS — stood across the street from Scott's church in Madison, WI with extremely hateful signs. This kind of bullying and misunderstanding can be so present and real that at times, LGBT Christians feel they face losing everything, including the compassion and support of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

And yet, at Scott's ordination there was also a large group who witnessed silently for God's love for all God's children in front of the church and across the street from the Westboro Baptist demonstration. It was a stark contrast that showed how the church continues to be engaged in a deep conversation about the place of LGBT people in God's heart and also in our midst.

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By claiming a place in the church that reflects the place Jesus holds for us before God, we help the whole church waken to the wideness of God's mercy and love. This spiritual courage is also clear in straight allies who stand with us in the structures of our denominations until the rules change to allow us to openly participate in discerning God's will for the church.

That transformation in both the church and the world will continue because courageous and faithful LGBT people respond to Jesus' cry to come out and know the freedom of His Word to let us go.

Please receive my gratitude to God for you all.

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