



Center for
LGBTQ and Gender Studies
in Religion (CLGS)

The Nashville 2.0 Statement

A Christian Response to the anti-LGBT Nashville Statement

*“...for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen,
cannot love God whom they have not seen.”*

I John 4:20 NRSV

Many Christians are placed in a quandary by religious leaders who promote a view of sexuality and gender based upon a perspective of “one size fits all.” Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people *do* exist and many of them are faithful Christians. They are not mythical creatures like unicorns and, thus, they need to be treated with respect and dignity. The religious leaders who signed the Nashville Statement, written by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, have described LGBT people as helping to usher in a “post-Christian” era that “no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life” and that they are on a “path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.”

How should Christians who identify as LGBT – and those who believe that every person should be treated with respect and dignity – respond to such slanderous attacks? The authors of the Nashville Statement wrongly conclude that the goodness and grace of God belong only to those individuals who agree with their particular – and mistaken – interpretations of the Bible on matters of sexuality and gender.

We, the signers of this **Nashville 2.0 Statement**, believe that the original Nashville Statement promotes an intolerance of LGBT people that is unbiblical and unjust because it inflicts spiritual harm upon LGBT people.

Approaching any scriptural passage from a “one size fits all” perspective disrespects the Word of God because it promotes a view of the Bible that ignores the reality of people’s lived experience of God and it denies the reality of the Holy Spirit moving among us in our present day. Just as the Bible has been used to sanction human slavery, a clear evil, it is now being used to endorse a view of sexuality and gender that prioritizes a male, heterosexual, and cisgender perspective while ignoring or downplaying the beautiful variety of humanity found in God’s wondrous creation. LGBT Christians find their stories in the pages of the Living Word of God and they attest to the love and acceptance of God by the faithful lives that they lead.

This Nashville 2.0 Statement has been written by religious leaders who promote the following **Five Affirmations**:

1. Everyone is created in the image of God and deserves our care and love. No person is an abomination and it is never permissible to discriminate against others based upon their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.
2. We call upon all people to take the time to get to know LGBT people and listen to their life stories – instead of issuing pronouncements that condemn them based on a dangerous misreading of God’s Holy Word.
3. Following Jesus’ example, we value the Love of the Law over the Letter of the Law. When one elevates the letter of the law over God’s bountiful love for all people, one risks falling into a religious practice that is sterile and lifeless, a religion that disobeys the Gospel command to love all people, especially those who are deemed to be outcast and “the other.”
4. We believe that God calls us to open our hearts, our congregations, and our worship spaces to LGBT people and their families because we believe that the Gospel calls us to issue an expansive welcome to all people, especially those in our society who are oppressed and marginalized.
5. We stand against every form of spiritual violence, that is, the use of words or actions that harm others in the name of God. In addition, we declare that the Nashville Statement, which condemns and shames LGBT persons, is a spiritually-violent document that is not rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe that Christians who disagree on matters of faith and morals should enter into respectful dialogue with one another, rather than stand in judgment of others. We believe that all followers of Jesus are called to listen to the stories and testimonies of LGBT Christians and understand how they attest to the love and acceptance of God in their lives.

To our colleagues and friends in other faith traditions: we invite you, in the spirit of inclusivity and as members of one human family, to support us in promoting justice, tolerance, and spiritual integrity by signing this Nashville 2.0 Statement.

Therefore, we invite everyone to join us at the **Souls a’ Fire 6 Conference** in Nashville, Tennessee, from 23-25 March 2018 at the **Metropolitan Interdenominational Church** (2128 11th Ave N, Nashville, 37208).

This conference will feature seasoned and up-and-coming theologians as well as faith-filled preachers who will explore with us the rich and life-giving intersections of African-American culture, Christian faith, and LGBT identities. Cosponsored by The Center for LGBTQ and

Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS) and The Vanderbilt Divinity School, the **Souls a' Fire 6 Conference** will open with the 44th Annual Antoinette Brown Lecture on Thursday, 22 March 2018 at 7:00pm in the Benton Chapel on the Vanderbilt Divinity School campus.

For more information on the **Souls a' Fire 6 Conference** (including registration details), see: <http://soulsafire.org/>.

For more information on the 44th Annual Antoinette Brown Lecture, see: <https://divinity.vanderbilt.edu/news/lectures/brown.php>.

We invite everyone to this join us for respectful conversation and loving dialogue. Come join us!