



**allsorts** youth  
project

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**ALLSORTS  
OF  
FAITH**

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a collection of writings by  
**LGBT+** people of faith



allsorts  
of love

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## WELCOME

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Welcome to *Allsorts of Faith*, a collection of writings and prayers by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+) people of faith who have faced adversity because of their identities. Many people, both within the LGBT+ community and outside of it, assume that being part of a faith group and being LGBT+ are dichotomies (polar opposites). At Allsorts Youth Project, we embrace and celebrate the amazing diversity of our service users, staff and volunteers and the rich tapestry of experiences and voices that we all contribute to.

It is often not our own sense of faith or relationship with God that is challenged by the discovery or acceptance of our LGBT+ identity, but our relationship with others in our faith community. Many faithful people feel that God is the embodiment of love and light in our lives, both love for others and for ourselves, and that everyone is worthy of this love.

Faith and religion are multifaceted and wide-reaching and therefore not all practices could be represented in a small resource like this one. We hope that all LGBT+ people of faith and their allies will be able to relate and reflect on this content, regardless of belief or background.

For more information and support, please see the list of LGBT+ faith organisations at the back of this booklet or you can get in touch with Allsorts via our website [www.allsortsyouth.org.uk](http://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk).





“The one who loves all intensely begins perceiving in all living beings a part of himself. He becomes a lover of all, a part and parcel of the Universal Joy. He flows with the stream of happiness, and is enriched by each soul.”

**-Yajur Veda (Hinduism)**

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

**-New Testament,  
Matthew 22:36-40 (Christianity)**

“O people! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into different races and tribes so you can come to know one another. The noblest (most significant) among you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous (moral/ethical). Truly, God knows and is aware.”

**-Quran 49:13 (Islam)**

**SALT & LIGHT -  
A POEM FOR THE OVERLY-INVESTED  
'ALLY' ON A JESUS CAMP**

A story I tell often -  
The setting's Christian summer camp  
in August 2014.

The protagonist's a younger  
and a 'straighter' version of me,  
asked what type of boy she liked  
on our dorm's private 'girl talk' night.  
She describes the girl she loves back home  
without using a single pronoun  
lists features boys don't often have  
and hopes nobody understands  
or reads between the lines;  
thanks God that in this darkness  
no-one tries to meet her eyes.

I laugh when I tell this story  
but the punchline wasn't me;  
Kids shaking in their sleeping bags  
are not a source of comedy  
there was no laughter in my voice  
when I raised a trembling hand  
during question time and tried to make  
a grown man understand  
the hypocrisy in his stance.  
I was fifteen, I was gay and scared  
I never stood a chance.

Yet for years I went on trying -  
And for years I went on lying  
And I suppose these were the biggest sins  
being gay made me commit.  
'Thou shalt not lie'; I did  
by omission of my truth.  
Defended gays with reference to 'them',  
not us, not me, not I.  
'Thou shalt not murder';  
Jesus says





to hate is to murder with your mind  
so accounting for the rage I stored  
in keeping up this fight  
I must have murdered tens or hundreds or thousands  
of times.

For those things I'll ask my Father forgiveness  
every single time. But I will not ask forgiveness  
for what was not my crime:

"Love the sinner, hate the sin", you say,  
but this sin is not mine -

I will not take responsibility for your ignorance  
and hate. If you're telling children that they're wrong  
for things they cannot change  
then you are not the victim - this was your mistake.

Mistake. Something that no divine God can make.

If He's out there watching, if He has a plan for me,  
it's a plan in which I believe my lesbianism was key.

I came into this world like this and I'll go out the same -

I was gay before the first time any human called my name.

No loving God creates someone already ripe for condemnation  
and I guess that what I'm asking here is who are you to question  
the purpose for which I was made? Why are you suggesting  
that my God would have betrayed me by subjecting me to hate?

It wasn't God's hatred; I wasn't God's mistake.

But there comes a point with these people  
when nothing really works

so I sit and listen to them judge me  
even though it hurts.

I'm brave enough to deal with it  
and I will be okay

but I worry for the other kids -  
the bi, the trans, the gay

who sit in churches, schools, or homes  
and wish themselves away, maybe pray

that when they next wake up they will not be the same.

I've been luckier than many - my family loves me for me  
but I know that on Christian summer camp that August 2014



I felt gross, I felt lonely, I felt small.  
And I cry for all the kids who go from their pews to their beds  
hating themselves so much they don't want to wake up at all  
So to those kids, I'd like to say:  
It's a blessing to be gay.

The first girl I fell in love with  
broke my heart but not before  
she changed my life -  
if my God didn't make me gay  
I wouldn't know that love today  
no man I've ever met  
knew how to see a girl that way.  
And even putting romance aside  
I cannot count how much I've cried  
in the company of Godly people  
who couldn't be true friends to me.  
Yet I found my true friendship  
with my friends who are LGBT  
No movement or group is perfect  
but I've never known greater community.  
With people of all genders, sexualities, backgrounds, faiths,  
We gravitate together to comfort, heal, to educate,  
but mostly just to love. And if love is what God is  
then I know I found him here.  
You'll find him via being you  
and that is not something to fear.

But the hardest thing you'll have to learn  
is that there is no easy way  
to earn forgiveness from those who say  
your existence is the sin.  
Put each verse they condemn with back into context, wear  
the blood from your heart on your sleeve as a protest,  
disclose all the anecdotes, pray for the best:  
They will not understand, you may not pass their test.  
But when you leave them judging, confused, uninspired  
and crawl under the covers, weak and tired,



I want you to know this -  
That whoever you kiss  
tastes the salt and the light  
of the earth on your lips.  
Because if He's your Father  
as long as you live  
then your love's the one thing  
He won't have to forgive.

If you're the closeted kid on a Jesus camp  
or the overly invested 'ally'  
If you're God-fearing and LGBT  
and you're getting too tired to try,  
If you're not hearing this from anyone else  
today I want you to hear it from me.  
It's a blessing to be you.  
It's a blessing to be gay.  
I love you.  
You'll be okay.

**By Imogen Cook**  
**Former Allsorts young person**  
**Student of English Literature and Creative Writing**

## WE ARE ALL TESTED ON OUR FAITH

The closest I felt to Allah was the same night I felt furthest. It was during Ramadan 2015 and I was struggling with my Muslim identity. I was trying to connect with other LGBTQ Muslims and I just felt like such an imposter, a caricature, trying to be Muslim instead of just being Muslim. I was jealous of other Muslims who just knew Allah existed, and their faith was unquestionable; it was just there. I wasn't fasting, but it was the first Ramadan I had acknowledged since childhood, swept up without choice in our family rituals of sehri and iftar.

I was in bed reading *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker for the first time. I was reading the part where Celie loses her faith in God after everything that has happened, her religion was the last thing she was holding onto, but now she was done, she let go. She's walking with Shug, I think they're in a meadow or something, and Shug just comes right back at Celie for rejecting God.

"Here's the thing, say Shug... God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. ... I believe God is everything, say Shug. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that, and be happy to feel that, you've found it."

At the same time, a thunderstorm started. Lightning forks and bolts through a black sky. I don't even remember if it was raining; the midnight air was electric and it was absolutely beautiful. I got out of bed, turned all the lights off and went to the window. I stood there, losing track of time and reality as I simply watched the sky. I could feel something. Not just in the sky or on a page. Something all around me. But it wasn't scary or worrying and all those struggles I had about being Muslim seemed to just settle a bit. They didn't disappear, but that's okay. Faith isn't about me and my struggles, it's so much more than that. I think I found something that night.

As much as we are aware of spectrums within the LGBTQ community, we forget that other parts of our identities can live on spectrums too.





Our faith exists on a spectrum, as does our sexuality, as does our gender. Our faith is individual, our Islam is personal. And we can move along this spectrum too.

Queer is fluid. Gender is fluid. Faith is fluid.

We will continue to hear those messages about what people think Islam is and who people think Muslims are. But each message is an opportunity for reflection.

For those who ask, 'How can you be LGBTQ and Muslim?'  
Reply with, 'How can you accept those who are LGBTQ and Muslim?'

It's not our own self acceptance that is holding us back, it's those assumptions that hold us back.

For those who ask, 'How can LGBTQ people fit into intolerant Islamic beliefs?'  
Reply with, 'How can intolerant people fit into inclusive Islamic beliefs?'

We are all tested on our faith.

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear..." Surah Al-Baqarah (02:286)

I remind myself of this often. That Allah has not given us anything that we can't and won't overcome. I remind myself when I am faced with injustices. When I'm supporting and listening to LGBTQ Muslims who are isolated, who are unable to wear the clothes they want to wear, be called the name they call themselves, be recognised, respected and loved as the person that they truly are wherever they are, I remind us of these words of Allah. The challenges, rejection and pain we feel, I nor Allah can take away. But Allah has given us the strength, self-conservation and self-protection to get through it. And inshallah we learn patience, resilience and self-love that is so unique and precious to LGBTQ Muslim people.

**-Sabah Choudrey, Inclusive Mosque Initiative, London**  
**[www.sabahchoudrey.com](http://www.sabahchoudrey.com)**

Dear Lord

You have created your people in all colours, all shapes, all sizes. You love them all. Alas there are some who struggle with their identity. Lord please give them strength so that they may rejoice in themselves, and feel happy and content.

Let them know that they are loved.

There are also those who wish to ridicule and persecute those who are not like them. Remind them of your words, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Please help those to understand that not everyone is the same, but deep down there is love in everyone's hearts. Grant them the wisdom to understand, the patience to accept, and the ability to love, as you love us all. Thank you Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**-M, Friend of Allsorts**



Supporting a family member, partner or friend who is LGBT+ and struggling with faith related issues can be heartbreaking and challenging. You might try to imagine the problems that they are facing and feel helpless in how to support them.

In my experience as a LGBT+ Atheist who supported a LGBT+ loved one of faith, a critical understanding that I reached was that they didn't choose to be LGBT+ and they didn't choose to have faith, that's just who they are. Being resistant to their experiences and beliefs will not change who they are and the more time I took to understand their perspective, the better I was able to support them.

Another thing I have learned is to just be there to listen, support them in their decisions, their boundaries and their beliefs. Don't try to push them down a certain path, let them find their own path that they are comfortable with and seek external support from a professional if needed. You might not have all of the answers, but no one does and that's okay!

**-Jasmine, Allsorts Community Volunteer**



**EXCERPT FROM PRIDE CHAVURAH EREV  
SHABBAT SERVICE  
WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE  
27TH JUNE 2014 – 30TH SIVAN 5774**

When I applied to Leo Baeck College in 1984, I was determined that 'Jewish life' would include my Jewish life as a lesbian and a woman, and wanted to help transform Jewish teaching and practice to encompass the lives of all Jews on equal terms. There have been huge changes since 1989. LBC now practices a non-discriminatory selection process – hence the increasing numbers of LGBT rabbis. Liberal Judaism – with significant input from LGBT rabbis – published liturgy for same-sex kiddushin, in December 2005, to coincide with the Civil Partnership Act, and, later, supported the Equal Marriage campaign. More recently, Liberal Judaism hosted the Heritage Lottery funded Rainbow Jews project, co-ordinated by Surat Rathgeber Knan, and extended outreach to transgender Jews. Meanwhile, Reform Judaism has now got behind LGBT equality, and the Masorti movement is also making moves.

So, what about the United Synagogue? I took Tikvah, 'Hope', as my middle name because I am ever-hopeful!

**-Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah, Brighton and Hove  
Progressive Synagogue  
[www.rabbiellisarah.com](http://www.rabbiellisarah.com)**



**RESEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

Being a member of an organised religious community whilst being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community can be difficult. I was very concerned because if my religious scriptures came across as discriminatory in any way, it would be very difficult for me as I would have to reject the culture I was raised into. This is why I



decided to research these scriptures and find out exactly what they say.

“If one man is to lay with another man as with a woman, it is an abomination and they shall surely be put to death.” This quote from Leviticus is paraphrased and, on the face of it, sounds awful and homophobic. However, for me, the Torah has always been meant to be interpreted anyway, I see it as more of a book of fairy tales meant to teach you the morals behind them more than anything else. So, if you have this opinion of religious scriptures it makes it a lot easier because when they say two men laying together is a death sentence, you can reason that in the time it was written sexually transmitted diseases were common and largely untreatable, so one could reason that this section is just warning us about the threat of STDs.

Another interpretation of this same quote could be that, again, important in the time that the Torah was written, two cisgender men could not have a baby together, the death sentence mentioned would be upon their household as it would not be continued. Additionally the abomination mentioned could refer to any sexual intercourse that is not for the production of children, as it says this in alternative sections of the Torah.

You may think that this thought process is just me clutching at straws, and you are of course entitled to your opinion, but this has helped me a lot because, as I mentioned earlier, I didn't want to leave or feel shunned out of my religious community.

Another and possibly more prevalent issue that LGBTQIA+ people of faith experience is discrimination from within their community. This has also been an issue for me but I have found a way round it by involvement in a religious youth group that is openly accepting of the LGBTQIA+ community. It means a great deal to me and has really helped me to keep my faith. It is very important to find an accepting community whom you can be honest and yourself with, so if your community isn't like that, maybe find a different one.

**-Lucas, Allsorts Young Person, 19**

## PRAYER FOR LGBTQ+ PRIDE

Tzur Yisrael, Rock of Israel, as we celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride, we give thanks for strength, courage, determination and endurance – and for all that has enabled us to survive the long and sometimes arduous journey from persecution and bigotry to liberation and inclusion. M'kor Ha-B'rachah, Fountain of Blessing, as we celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride as LGBTQ+ Jews, we feel deep gratitude for the blessings of mutual support and solidarity, friendship and companionship that have enabled us to find one another and to find a home in the Jewish community, so that each one of us may be affirmed in our Jewishness, our sexuality and our gender and feel complete as human beings made in Your image. Eyn Ha-Chayyim, Source of Life, as we gather together as LGBTQ+ Jews in pride and solidarity and rejoice in the diversity encompassed by all our lives, we thank You, above all, for teaching us to embrace ourselves and one another. And let us say: Amen.

**-Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah**

**Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue**

**[www.rabbiellisarah.com](http://www.rabbiellisarah.com)**



My prayer for the LGBTQ+ community is for serenity in mind and body, for understanding of oneself and others. This community can be one where the understanding of self may be more challenging. If we were made in God's own image, why does society challenge the way we feel within our God-made bodies? These are things that we, as a race of humans, face daily. Questions of sex, gender, self and community are not easy ones, and ones that the LGBTQ+ community in particular run into more often than most, and horrifyingly, are challenged on more often than most. Finding yourself, made in God's image, can be a journey. Feeling the need to explain or justify to others can feel insurmountable. My prayer is that, regardless of the reaction of others, we can strive for understanding and serenity. Sometimes when dealing with the reaction of others, we may need to settle for either understanding or serenity, however I pray that you rest in the comfort and knowledge of God, who made you. May either your serenity or understanding lead to compassion for others.

**-N, Friend of Allsorts**



## FAITH IS A JOURNEY

Faith and religious belief have always been a complex subject for me. I have both Jewish and Christian heritage and although both my parents are atheist we celebrated the festivals of both religions. When I was younger I felt religion was forced on me by school, being made to sing hymns and say grace made me rather resentful of the idea of god, who I saw as some old man who demanded I worship him. I was pretty sure he didn't exist anyway so worshipping him seemed a huge waste of time.

As I got older I began to feel more connected to my Jewish side, I realised that Judaism is not just a religion but a culture all of its own. I also received some anti-Semitic bullying at school which made me feel more like an outsider, part of a different culture. I began to identify as culturally Jewish, although still very much an atheist.

A couple of years ago I got into Paganism. Worshiping the elements and the natural world seemed a religious path that I could truly believe in. Over the last couple of years I have been on a journey of self-discovery, meeting my spirit guide and learning the arts of reading Tarot and Runes. Many people do not seem to understand how I can reconcile my paganism with my Jewish heritage, to be honest I'm still figuring it out myself. But my faith is a journey I am looking forward to continuing.

**-Ziggy, Allsorts young person, 19**



Almighty God, you have known us before we were knit together, you call us by our name and gather each of us as your beloved children. We bless you for our difference, we pray for your courage to make a difference in your world. Help us to bind wounds, lift the fallen, promise solidarity to those you have drawn us to as family. Your love is how we love, why we love, and who we love. Give us courage and hope to open the hearts of all to let your love reign forever. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, author of love and prince of peace. Amen

**-Father Anthony Murley, Church of the Annunciation (Anglican), Brighton**



"...nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

**-New Testament,  
Romans 8:38-39 (Christianity)**

"Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.  
Verily, with every difficulty there is relief."

**-Qur'an 94:5-6 (Islam)**

"The lord of the World is the Mender of the broken. He Himself cherishes all beings. The cares of all are on His Mind; no one is turned away from Him."

**-Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 282 (Sikhism)**

I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and in thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world.

**-Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, chapter 67 [translation  
by Stephen Mitchell] (Taoism)**

**If you live in Sussex or the South East,  
are aged 5-25, LGBT+ or unsure and in need  
of support, contact us via**

**[youth@allsortsyouth.org.uk](mailto:youth@allsortsyouth.org.uk)  
[www.allsortsyouth.org.uk](http://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk)**

**For organisations outside of the South East  
area, visit**

**[stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/whats-my-  
area](http://stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/whats-my-area)**



**Faith and Belief Forum (multi-faith)- [faithbeliefforum.org](http://faithbeliefforum.org)**

**Inclusive Mosque Initiative (Islam)- [inclusivemosque.org](http://inclusivemosque.org)**

**Keshet UK (Judaism)- [www.keshetuk.org](http://www.keshetuk.org)**

**OneBodyOneFaith (Christianity)- [onebodyonefaith.org.uk](http://onebodyonefaith.org.uk)**

**Sarbat (Sikhism)- [sarbat.net](http://sarbat.net)**

**For more LGBT+ Faith organisations visit**

**[www.stonewall.org.uk/  
resources-lgbt-people-faith](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources-lgbt-people-faith)**

