

## The Elephant in the Church

Three blind people encounter an elephant for the first time.  
One encounters the tail and declares that it is a rope.  
The second bumps into a leg and exclaims that it is a tree.  
The third, grasping at its trunk, fears it is a large snake.  
The moral; we make false judgments if we can't see the whole thing.

LGBTQI Christians are often invisible in our churches. Why should we make ourselves known when our very existence is contested? If we are out, we are often ignored. So churches encounter only a part of the elephant. Some encounter the Christian individual trying to live a celibate life; some bump into the Christian couple living a faithful monogamous relationship; others, in fear, grasp the idea that there's a "gay conspiracy" to undermine their beliefs. We end up at cross-purposes and don't understand each other – or the elephant!

We need to stop ignoring the elephant. It isn't going to vanish. We need to continue the genuine conversations that have begun, and we need to get to know the 'whole elephant'. We need to laugh together, cry together, read scripture together, pray together, and be together.

Twenty years ago when, as a preliminary to "coming out" to those I trusted, I first prayed in church for lesbian and gay Christians. Expecting condemnation, I actually got support, but also surprisingly an elderly, well-respected member of the church "came out" to me.



Martin Stears-Handscomb April 2016

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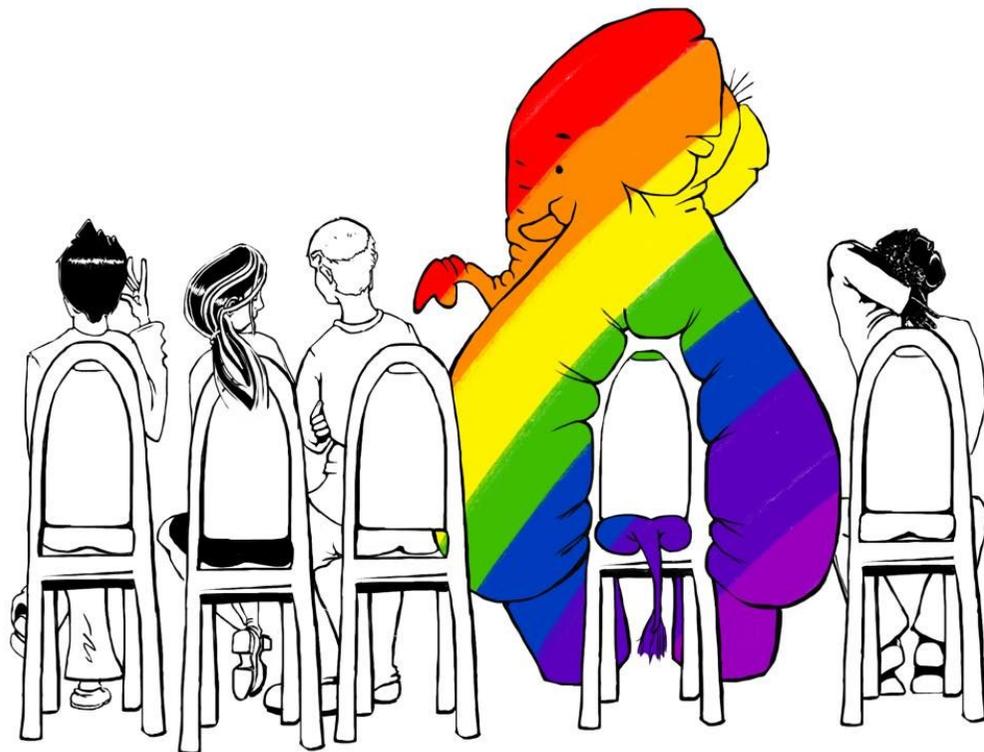


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**Some amazing people who can teach us about the elephant:**

- Affirm; [affirmingbaptists.org.uk](http://affirmingbaptists.org.uk)
- Soho Gathering; [sohogathering.org](http://sohogathering.org)
- Two:23; [two23.net](http://two23.net)
- LGCM; [lgcm.org.uk](http://lgcm.org.uk)

Your local association should also be able to provide you with a facilitator.

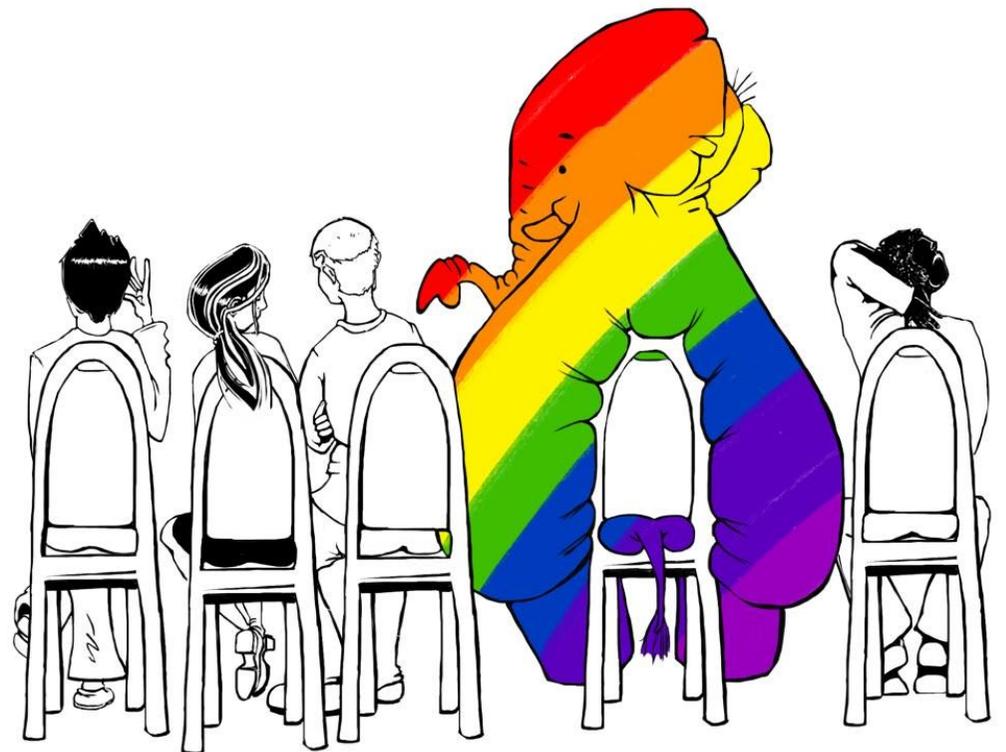


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