

# You are us, and we are you

*Lois Tucker, a young Methodist shares her experiences of being Christian and queer as part of LGBT History Month.*

When thinking of my experiences as a queer Methodist, and as a queer Christian, the first things that spring to mind are the “Oh yeah” moments. An OY moment is when, out of nowhere, you are abruptly reminded that you don't belong, that you might be (grudgingly) tolerated, but that you are not accepted.

A lot of different things can create that moment. Some of them more deliberate than others, anything from a passing comment about ‘traditional families’ or taking a ‘biblical view’ of relationships, to that surprised little “Oh! Oh Ok! That's so good!” that you get when you speak about queer issues in the first person and someone needs you to know that they are just “So Ok” with that.

Like I said, not every OY moment is meant to hurt you and not everyone who creates one is a homophobe but every single one reminds me that I will always be “other”, something to be rejected or affirmed and never able to just be in love and it not be a big deal.

There are a lot of ‘OYs’ to choose from, all of them from my Christian spheres, but I think the most painful of these came from my grandad just two years ago, I've been out since I was 18, and though I've never ‘come out’ to my grandparents, I've made no secret of it either, but denial is a powerful thing I suppose.

I don't remember how this conversation started, but I remember it went downhill from a comment from my gran about how gay relationships and queer people were ‘just not nice really’, like I was some kind of tasteless painting or tacky accessory. My gran is a woman of strong opinions, so this didn't faze me. I began to gently question why she felt that way and why gay marriage was any different from straight marriage.

This was when my grandad spoke up. As is often the case in a couple, my gran's strong opinions about things, from boats to marmalade to the EU, means that my grandad doesn't have many strong opinions at all, he's easy-going, gentle and I've heard him state a strong opinion about something maybe four times in my life. At that moment, he said that it wasn't just ‘not nice’ to be queer and in love, it was flat out wrong, it shouldn't be tolerated, it was against the Church and the traditions of marriage.

I felt like all the air had gone out of me, I love my grandad and I know he loves me, but the thought that he would never love any wife I had, that cut deeper than anything else I had heard before.

It was a complete rejection of something so important to me from someone I love, and he hadn't even realised that he wasn't discussing his dislike of the hypothetical queer person who wears fishnet tops, has one earring and goes to gay bars every night, he was telling his granddaughter that her love was tainted.

We have come a long way in the last 50 years and I'll never not be grateful for that, being queer is a huge part of my identity and it is nice to know that I won't be assaulted on the street for that and that no one could fire me for it or refuse me service without it coming back to bite them, but it does make me sad that the more Christian the circle, the more I feel like a puzzle piece in the wrong place. I have several wonderful groups of friends, many of them queer themselves, the rest are totally uncaring if I'm queer or not, and some of them with an amazing devotion to their faith, so it's easy for me to forget that people still care so much about my existence and who I might love.

It makes it all the more like a slap in the face when I'm reminded someone in one of my Christian settings might suddenly hate me if they knew I was queer.

I think the only way I know how to end this piece is by saying that I might not be disowned, excommunicated, killed or fired, but that those things aren't something I should have to be grateful for, they should come as standard. I also want to end this by saying that tolerance is no longer enough, I don't want to be tolerated, like the notion you're never more than 6ft from a rat, I don't even want to be 'accepted' as something that Christians graciously permit to be here, I want a real change and understanding that queer people have been around forever, that they're going to be around for the rest of time, and that we aren't 'like' you, we ARE you, fearfully wonderfully made.

We built the Church, we cracked Nazi codes, we wrote timeless plays and books, ruled nations and fought wars, changed the world for the better and loved and lived just like you do.

No tolerance, no acceptance. Just an understanding that you are us, and we are you, we aren't tenants of the Church, we built it as surely as you did.

**Lois Tucker**