

IAMS Study Group on Child, Youth and Mission

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**Where is the welcome for those  
who identify as Gay Youth in the church**

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The Gay debate is controversially the most inflammatory issue that currently faces most denominations of the church. The majority of denominations have either taken a firm stance, rejecting membership or at least leadership of those who practice homosexuality or it ignores the issue with a “heads in the sand” approach in the hope that it will go away. Very few denominations such as the Friends (Quakers) have embraced them and created space for dialogue.

The challenge with rejecting membership or ‘heads in the sand’ approach is that even children or youth who feel attracted to people of the same sex or who feel they are in the wrong gender body and who might otherwise be attracted to the church feel rejected from the outset. When Jesus became indignant with his disciples for turning the children away he didn’t make any exceptions. God’s intention is that all should come into the Kingdom.

Different churches will have different attitudes about how a gay person should be helped. But isn’t the priority for them to come into a personal relationship with Jesus? The Corinthian church were full of characters who were used to a permissive life-style and Paul had much to say to them but the fact was that they were IN the church, not on the outside.

Then when they are part of the church like youth of all sexualities they need instructing in the ways of the Lord and to listen to God’s voice as he speaks to them about things that need addressing; recognizing sin, understanding God’s forgiveness and love and treating others with respect and dignity.

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