

# Allen: Homosexuality is not a choice, it's an identity

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Recent *Star-Telegram* editions featured separate but equally troubling articles regarding homosexuality.

The first was about the unfortunate decision made by the Southern Baptist Convention to sever ties with Fort Worth's Broadway Baptist Church over what was perceived to be the church's lenient stance on homosexuality. (See: "Broadway Baptist expelled by Southern Baptist Convention," June 24) The second was about a Connecticut church attempting to rid a 16-year-old boy of a "homosexual demon." (See: "On video, church casts out 'gay demon,'?" June 25)

Saddened as I was to read the articles, I found an interesting connection between the responses of ministers at both churches. The Rev. Jorene Taylor Swift from Broadway Baptist said, "While we extend hospitality to everyone — including homosexuals — we do not endorse, approve or affirm homosexual behavior."

The Rev. Patricia McKinney from the Connecticut church said, "We have nothing against homosexuals. I just don't agree with their lifestyles."

I'm curious to know how many individuals who are uncomfortable with the concept of homosexuality have ever had close, personal friendships with homosexuals. Really got to know them, really listened to their stories, their journeys, their struggles. Because if they did, they might realize that homosexuality is not a choice someone makes. It's not a lifestyle choice, or a behavioral choice. It is an identity.

I am certain of this, as I am the proud parent of a gay son. I can tell you that my husband and I knew that our son was gay before he did. In fact, we suspected as much before he was even old enough to go to kindergarten.

It was not who he became, it was who he always was, as much a part of him as the color of his eyes, or his amazing artistic ability, or his incredible smile.

When he finally came out to us in high school, it was not with fear or shame, but with pride that he truly could be comfortable and happy with the amazing person he is.

To reject my son's identity would be tantamount to denying who my son is; it's simply not possible to separate the two.

I am encouraged to see that tolerance and acceptance are slowly replacing fear and narrow-mindedness. There are a number of states where homosexuals can be legally married. And even Webster's dictionary has broadened the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions.

I hope that in my lifetime I will be able to see equal rights extended across the board to homosexuals and be able to laugh with my grandchildren someday about how it could have ever been any other way. In the meantime, I'll settle for attempts at greater understanding and acceptance.

<http://www.star-telegram.com/242/v-print/story/1478591.html>