# Queering Faith, an event for LGBTQ+s wrestling with religion



The Community United Church of Christ in Champaign, Illinois, hosted the eighth edition of Queering Faith on Friday evening, creating a meaningful and affirming space for LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies. This annual event is part of a series that seeks to encourage artistic and spiritual expression within the LGBTQ+ community by inviting writers, artists, and activists to share their journeys and perspectives on faith through a queer lens.

This year's keynote address was delivered by Rev. Malcolm Himschoot [pictured; YouTube], who is an established figure within the LGBTQ+ faith community. He shared insights from his forthcoming book, Reading Secrets: A Queer Inheritance of Life and Scripture, and underscored the challenges faced by transgender individuals in today’s sociopolitical climate. “In these times, it seems like trans folks are getting an extra-heavy dose of the carbonate of hatred, all wrapped up in a bigger project,” Himschoot remarked, emphasising the urgency of the current situation.

Having lived openly as a transgender man for over two decades and ordained as a minister in 2005, Himschoot has used his platform to advocate for healing and inclusion. He has previously been the subject of the documentary Call Me Malcolm, which chronicles his transition. However, his current focus is to deepen the dialogue around spirituality and the journey of healing for individuals and communities. “What I want to do with this speaking circuit related to launching my book is really evoke the conversation that’s at the intersection of spirituality for all people … and journeys of harm and healing that can transform not just ourselves, but all of society,” he stated.

During his address, Himschoot connected his personal experiences with faith and identity, reading excerpts that juxtaposed impactful Bible verses with poignant childhood memories. His reflections also touched on the strained relationship he had with his father, who held conservative views on gender and sexuality, affecting their bond profoundly. “Interpretation is always a very human endeavor, and it’s influenced by who you’re with and what kinds of lives people lead,” he noted, alluding to the harmful templates of belief that affected many in his communal experience.

Pastor Nicole Havelka, who serves as the director of Campus and Youth Ministries at the church, expressed that the event aimed to create a sanctuary for individuals from the LGBTQ+ community, especially in light of recent societal challenges. “I think what this particular church does is really tries to be a safe haven and a place of reconciliation and liberation for people in the LGBTQ+ community,” she explained, pointing to the unfortunate history many have had with faith institutions that failed to provide support.

The emphasis on including transgender voices at such events has become increasingly vital, as Havelka stated, “trans lives are really under attack.”

For attendees like D.J. Thomas, a senior in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Queering Faith offered a chance for connection and reflection among individuals facing similar struggles. Thomas articulated the significance of faith in contributing to the well-being of marginalized communities, asserting, “I want to be a part of that. The church helps my own sanity, and I wish to perpetuate that.”

As the evening came to a close, student volunteers distributed stickers that simply read, “You are loved,” a gesture that reinforced the community spirit of the event. Looking ahead, those interested in delving deeper into queer theology are invited to participate in a Queering the Bible study hosted by the Community UCC, which will take place on Mondays at the University YMCA starting February 18.

This gathering and ongoing series underscore the importance of inclusivity and the need for dialogues that address both spiritual and personal journeys within the LGBTQ+ community, highlighting the unique challenges and triumphs experienced along the way.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://dailyillini.com/life_and_culture-stories/2025/02/09/queering-faith-event-reconciles-gender-identity-god/> - This article discusses an event similar to Queering Faith, focusing on reconciling gender identity with faith through a queer lens. It highlights the importance of such events in fostering inclusivity and dialogue within the LGBTQ+ community.
* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0478193/> - This link provides information about the documentary 'Call Me Malcolm,' which chronicles Rev. Malcolm Himschoot's journey as a transgender man. The documentary is relevant to Himschoot's background and advocacy.