

Atlanta Pride Speech
Rev. Chris Glaser
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“Pride is faith in the idea that God had when God made us.”

In other words, as the theme of this weekend reminds us, “Pride begins with you” because:

“Pride is faith in the idea that God had when God made us.”

Danish writer Karen Blixen wrote those words under the pseudonym “Isak Dinesen” in the days when women were not supposed to write books. Her words on pride are to be found in her now famous memoir turned film, *Out of Africa*.

“Pride is faith in the idea that God had when God made us.”

This is the pride that we celebrate this weekend in Atlanta. We are proud that God made us lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual. We are proud that God made us transgender and intersex and female and male! We are proud that God made us all colors of the rainbow, of varying abilities and ages and conditions!

Our cultures and our governments and our religions have not always shared our pride. They have not always had faith in God’s creations gathered here today. Some have tried to marginalize or legislate or preach shame rather than pride. They have tried to exclude us from the workplace or from what I call the “Three M’s”: the military, the ministry, and marriage. But we are everywhere, and what’s more, we BELONG everywhere. The passage and the signing of the James Byrd / Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes bill this week is only the beginning!

My name is Chris Glaser, and I have spent my life working on the church to help it fully welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. I’ve written eleven books, my latest being, *As My Own Soul: The Blessing of Same-Gender Marriage*.

I am gay and I confess to you that I am also transdenominational! I began as a Baptist, have spent most of my adult life as a Presbyterian, served the interfaith Midtown Spiritual Community here in Atlanta, was ordained in 2005 by Christ Covenant Metropolitan Community Church in Decatur, and now serve Virginia Highland Church here in Atlanta, a United Church of Christ congregation with a Baptist heritage. Virginia Highland Church lost its association with Southern Baptists because we ordain women, we welcome LGBT people, and we perform same-gender marriages—in other words, we affirm our faith in the idea that God had when God made each one of us.

Karen Blixen added a corollary to that affirmation. She wrote, “Love the pride of God above all things, and the pride of your neighbor as your own.” That’s what makes me proud of Atlanta’s Pride Festival and Parade. It’s not just about gay pride. It emphasizes that all of us, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, regardless of race, or creed, or condition have a right to take pride in ourselves as God’s beloved children. That’s why I’m proud to be one of your grand marshals in the parade tomorrow. Pride begins with you! Celebrating our pride is the best prayer we can offer!