



## Session 4: LGBTQIA+ Exclusion & Imagining a New Reality

Video Presentation by the Rev. Susan Russell, Diocese of Los Angeles (See webpage for biography)

### Opening Prayer

Almighty God, through your Holy Spirit you created unity in the midst of diversity;  
We acknowledge that human diversity is an expression of your manifold love for your creation;  
We confess that in our brokenness as human beings we turn diversity into a source of alienation, injustice, oppression, and wounding.  
Empower us to recognize and celebrate differences as your great gift to the human family.  
Enable us to be the architects of understanding, of respect and love;  
Through the Lord, the ground of all unity, we pray. *Amen.*

~ [\*Author Unknown\*](#)

### Bible Verse Referenced in Susan Russell's Video

#### **John 12:20-25**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

### Questions for Reflection & Discussion

*There are likely more questions than you have time for, so select those you feel most meaningful for your group at this time.*

1. What is the current reality of LGBTQIA+ people in the Church? In the Episcopal Church? In our own congregation?
2. Do people in our churches get to see Jesus for themselves or do we act as gatekeepers?
3. What does the Jesus of judgment look like? What about the Christ of faith?
4. Do people who come to our congregation find the Jesus of judgment or the Christ of faith?

5. Jesus said when he is lifted up he will draw all people to himself. Do we believe him? Does this include you? Does it really mean All people?
6. What is the difference between saying we are welcoming and inclusive and actually being welcoming and inclusive?
7. How might we benefit from a process of archiving our history, auditing our present, and recommending steps forward into our future?
8. How do we live with disagreement, honor the tension of diversity, and focus on the things that bind us together?
9. What experiences of “church” might be more invitational to people than coming to church on a Sunday morning?
10. What would the Church look like if the following statement were true: *If you come to us seeking Jesus, you don’t have to ask to see Jesus, because he’s already here waiting for you with open arms.*

## Sending Prayer

Open unto Me

Open unto me—light for my darkness.  
Open unto me—courage for my fear.  
Open unto me—hope for my despair.  
Open unto me—peace for my turmoil.  
Open unto me—joy for my sorrow.  
Open unto me—strength for my weakness.  
Open unto me—wisdom for my confusion.  
Open unto me—forgiveness for my sins.  
Open unto me—love for my hates.  
Open unto me—thy Self for my self.  
Lord, Lord, open unto me. Amen.

~ Howard Thurman