



The United Thank Offering Presents:
Radical Welcome: A Conversation with LGBTQ+ Ministry Leaders
Tuesday, October 22, 2024
[Recording available here.](#)



About the panel:

The Rev. Gustavo Gilson Oliveira (he/him) is the Dean of the Anglican Cathedral of the Good Samaritan (Anglican Diocese of Recife, Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil). He is a professor of Theology at the Anglican Seminary of Recife, and of Education and Social Movements at the Faculty of Education, and in the Postgraduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Pernambuco. He has experience researching and advising social movements, social projects, and doing pastoral work with vulnerable populations. He is part of the Board of Directors of the “Gente é pra Brilhar” [People are made to shine] Project, aimed at promoting the dignity of LGBTQ+ people living on the streets and supported by UTO.

The Rev. Esdras Gusmão de Holanda Peixoto (he/him) is a lawyer, specialist in Human Rights, and Master in Religious Sciences. He has worked as a university professor since 2008. He is the rector of the Anglican Seminary of Recife, Secretary of Theological Education and Ongoing Formation of the Anglican Diocese of Recife, and diocesan representative for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. He is coadjutor minister and chaplain of the Pastoral of Diversity at the Anglican Cathedral of the Good Samaritan. He is the Executive Coordinator of the “Gente é pra Brilhar” Project, aimed at promoting the dignity of LGBTQ+ people living on the streets and supported by UTO.

The Rev. Dr. Christina O’Hara (she/her) is the rector of Church of the Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls, SD. She is also a Spiritual Director and a teacher in the “Listening People to Life” Spiritual Direction training through Kairos University. She is pleased to be working with ELCA Pastor Sawyer Vanden Heuvel as he plants a new, innovative dinner church called “Shepherd’s Table.” In her free time, she loves spending time with her husband and three adult children and their partners, as well as trail running with her exuberant dog Finn.

To learn more about Christina and Good Shepherd visit: <http://sfgoodshepherd.org>

To learn more about the Diocese of South Dakota visit: <https://www.episcopalchurchsd.org>

The Rev. Sawyer Vanden Heuvel (he/him) was called in October 2023 by St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD to serve as the associate pastor. He also serves as the mission developer and pastor of The Shepherd’s Table. He earned his Master of Divinity in 2023 from Luther Seminary (Saint Paul, MN), and his Bachelor of Arts (Business Administration) in 2012 from Augustana University (Sioux Falls, SD). Before answering the call to become a pastor, Pastor Sawyer served for six years as the Director of Communications for the South Dakota Synod, ELCA. In Sioux Falls, Pastor Sawyer works to build longer tables and create spaces of belonging so that all may be fed, seen, heard, and loved at Christ’s table. He is a firm believer that the Gospel is not exclusive.

To learn more about Sawyer and the Shepherd’s Table visit: <https://www.theplaceforall.org>

To support the ongoing work of the Shepherd’s Table visit: theplaceforall.org/donate

Moderators and Who to Contact for More Information:

Mr. Aaron Scott (he/him) (moderator) is the Staff Officer for Gender Justice, a member of the Presiding Bishop’s staff. He has worked for the church for 10 years, mostly as a grassroots organizer and lay minister with poor, incarcerated, and unhoused people at Chaplains on the Harbor in the Diocese of Olympia. In his free time, Aaron likes to hike, garden, read, and hang out with his eight-year-old child. He resides in Washington State—home to 29 federally recognized tribes and many other Indigenous people—and lives in Tacoma on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup people, to whom we give thanks, and who have lived on and stewarded this land since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. Aaron is also an author; his first solo work, “Bring Back Your People: Ten Ways Regular Folks Can Put a Dent in White Christian Nationalism,” is forthcoming from Broadleaf Books (January 2025).
ascott@episcopalchurch.org

The Reverend Canon Heather L. Melton (she/her) (chat moderator) is the Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering, a ministry of the Presiding Bishop’s office. She has worked for the church for over 20 years, with half of those years spent promoting gratitude through the work of UTO. In her free time, Heather enjoys volunteering on the crew of a hot air balloon team, hiking with her husband, and hanging out with her twin kiddos and cats. She currently lives in New Mexico, which is home to 23 federally recognized tribes (and many other Indigenous people) and lives on land which once was a part of the Isleta Pueblo. We recognize and give thanks for the indigenous people of New Mexico. She is also a certified trainer in The Daring Way™ with the Brené Brown Research and Education Group.

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www.unitedthankoffering.org

Links to other information shared:

Churchwide Episcopal Initiatives

Information on the **United Thank Offering**, an organization for all Episcopalians who wish to commit to a spiritual practice of gratitude, can be [found here](#). To learn more about the UTO grant process, through which 100% of thank offerings received by UTO are given away to support mission and ministry, [visit this page](#). To support this work, you can donate online [here](#).

Gender Justice Jams for The Episcopal Church, are a great opportunity to learn more about gender issues. You can find out more about them [here](#) in English and Spanish. On December 9th, the Gender Justice Jam will feature the Episcopal Church in Brazil.

The Rainbow Initiative is Episcopal Migration Ministries' response to General Convention 2022 Resolution **D045 "On Supporting LGBTQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers"**. "Our goals for the Rainbow Initiative include: working with Episcopal congregations and others to bring visibility and aid to LGBTQ+ forced migrants, and reviewing and revising EMM materials and procedures in order to ensure that they are fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ forced migrants." The Rainbow Initiative also received a UTO grant in 2024.

Other Resources:

Sawyer recommended [enfleshed](#), a website offering affirming language ideas for worship which speaks truth to LGBTQ+ people.

Brazil

The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Church of Brazil are connected via a bilateral committee. You can read more about it [here](#).

[Here is the website for the Episcopal Church in Brazil](#) - it is in Portuguese but is filled with great photos and information.

To watch a video about the project, *People are Made to Shine!*, [click here](#).

Esdras also suggested having something, like rainbow rosaries, available to giveaway to show your support in a tangible way to the community.

South Dakota

The ELCA has a great website that explains full communion between The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and The Episcopal Church, [read it here](#).

Links to book shared:

Please note: Most links will take you to bookshop.org, UTO does not have any affiliation with Bookshop.org but we do love independent local booksellers, which bookshop.org supports. If not available there, the link will take you to Amazon, again, UTO does not have any affiliation and does not receive any funds if you purchase from them.

[One Coin Found: How God's Love Stretches to the Margins](#) by Emmy Kegler

[In Search of Braver Angels: Getting Along Together in Troubled Times](#) by David Blankenhorn

[I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times](#) by Mónica Guzmán

Gustavo shared that there are two textbooks in Portuguese used by The Episcopal Church of Brazil, one is on gender and the other on sexuality. Please contact Heather to be put in touch with Gustavo if you're interested in these textbooks.

Sawyer also recommends:

[Queerfully and Wonderfully Made: A Guide for LGBTQ+ Christian Teens](#) edited by Leigh Finke

[Welcoming and Affirming: A Guide to Supporting and Working with LGBTQ+ Christian Youth](#) edited by Leigh Finke

[Unclobber: Rethinking our misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality](#), by Colby Martin

[Outside the Lines: How Embracing Queerness Will Transform Your Faith](#) by Mihee Kim-Kort

[Made Known, Loved: Developing LGBTQ Inclusive Youth Ministry](#) by Ross Murray

[Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians](#) by Austen Hartke

[Language for God: A Lutheran Perspective](#) by Mary Streufert

[Queer: A Graphic History](#) by Meg-John Barker, Illustrated by Jules Scheele

[Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology](#) by Patrick S. Cheng

[God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships](#) by Matthew Vines

[Still Stace: My Gay Christian Coming-of-Age Story](#) by Stacey Chomiak

[Queer Theology](#) by Linn M. Tonstad

[Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible Again](#) by Rachel Held Evans

[The Queer Bible Commentary](#) (Second Edition) Edited by Mona West, Robert E. Shore-Goss

Films and Documentaries

Boy Erased (2018, Focus Features)

1946: The Mistranslation that Shifted a Culture (2023, ACOWSAY)

Pray Away (2021, Netflix)

Podcasts

[Yass, Jesus!](#) (with Daniel Franzese and Azariah Southworth)

Websites

[The Trevor Project](#) is the leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention nonprofit organization for LGBTQ+ young people.
[Human Rights Campaign](#) – has great resources on Religion and Faith on this page to get you started.