



come together

2024 LGBTQ
advocacy summit

Workshops, Presenters, and Facilitators

A conversation with advocates, LGBTQ+ community members, friends, family, and allies.

Oct 12th, 2024 – Host Site: St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 2222 E Tudor Rd., Anchorage Alaska

Workshops

- A. Religious Trauma and The Damage of Purity Culture
- B. Ask Me Anything: Talking with the Mom of a Transgender Young Adult
- C. Effecting Policy Change 101
- D. Surviving Falling Empires
- E. Countering the Influence of White Christian Nationalism
- F. Life After Evangelicalism
- G. Churches Making Change: Insights for the Future
- H. Support vs. Allyship: Why Action Matters

Presenters and Workshop Descriptions



Helen Svoboda-Barber, DMin, LCMHCA

Helen (she/her) is a Mental Health Therapist, Leadership Coach, Episcopal Priest, and parent of a beloved transgender young adult.

She is currently partnering with the LGBTQ Center of Durham NC offering a series of workshops, "Keep Calm and Carry On: Election Season Edition." Helen is a USA founding mother of Leading Women and Leading from the Margins, conferences for women, transgender, and 2-Spirit clergy to develop skills and discern calls to executive leadership. She is a thought partner in the development in Durham's The Beloved Community at the Trees, an Episcopal faith community exploring together a life of faith "outside of a Church," and an advisor for Communities of Spiritual Vitality in Vermont and Massachusetts.

Helen is an active member of her Eno Commons cohousing community and enjoys reading cozy mysteries and short hikes in a favorite forest. She can be contacted through her coaching website, www.CardboardDogCoaching.com Helen will be offering two workshops:

Religious Trauma and The Damage of Purity Culture (Workshop A)

There are serious mental health implications for people impacted by purity culture, including but not limited to: feeling ashamed of your body, sexuality or gender identity, feeling controlled or pressured to behave in rigid ways with limiting rules, and a warping of one's worldview that can reduce autonomy and increase shame and stress. Many young- and middle-aged adults are seeking out therapy to repair their broken relationships with sexuality, their partners, their own bodies, and God— because of growing up in Purity Culture. This form of high-control religion can often result in Religious Trauma. Join Helen, a therapist and priest, for a time of learning and discussion about these topics.

Ask Me Anything: Talking with the Mom of a Transgender Young Adult (Workshop B)

Helen's children never knew an extended family without queer and trans members. Her oldest was a gender fluid child and came out as trans as an early teen. Helen and her daughter are passionate about helping others understand more about the trans experience. This workshop is geared towards family and loved ones of transgender people, as well as service providers, who may still have questions or want to know more – but need a safe and reliable place to ask and learn.



Mike Garvey

A runner, photographer, and social worker by training, Mike (he/him) comes to Alaska after six years at ACLU National, where he worked on advocacy projects at the federal and state levels. He focused primarily on advancing policy to support community living for people with disabilities, protect pregnant workers, and reduce harm students with disabilities face in schools. He also helped lead a collaborative effort to launch a new version of the ACLU's congressional scorecard. Prior to joining ACLU National, Mike was a graduate assistant in the Clara Bell Duvall Reproductive Freedom Project the ACLU of Pennsylvania.



Rose O'Hara Jolley

Rose O'Hara-Jolley (they/them) is the State Director for Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates, which serves Alaska, Washington, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, and Kentucky. In their role, Rose directs all of Planned Parenthood's advocacy in the state, including legislative advocacy, both direct lobbying and grassroots, electoral engagement and endorsed candidate programming, local organizing, and youth leadership development programming. They have lived in Alaska for almost a decade, moving from Ahtna lands (Cantwell) to lower Tanana Dene lands (Fairbanks), they now live on Dena'ina lands (Anchorage). Rose was born at home to quick for the midwife to make it on Seminole and Timucua lands (Gainesville, FL). After college, they moved to Lenape and Canarsie land (Brooklyn) where they were loved, embraced, and challenged by their amazing queer family in Brooklyn. Rose, as State Director for PPAA, is honored to work alongside both queer ancestors and those currently doing the work to help bring supportive policies and magical queer spaces to Alaska.

Effecting Policy Change 101 (Workshop C)-

In 2023 alone, over 510 anti-LGBT bills were introduced into state legislatures, a three-fold increase over the previous year. These bills sought to limit the ability of trans, non-binary, and intersex people to update gender information on driver's licenses, birth certificates, and other vital documents, putting people at risk of losing jobs, facing harassment, and other harms. According to the New York Times, over 4240 individual book titles were targeted for removal from public libraries in 2023, as censorship efforts reached record levels. Other bills sought to prohibit drag shows, outlaw gender-affirming health care, regulate curriculum in schools, and limit discussions around human sexuality and gender identity. In this workshop, we will review policy related to LGBTQ+ rights, and how to effectively organize, advocate with the legislature, and impact the policy process. Mike and Rose will be leading this workshop.

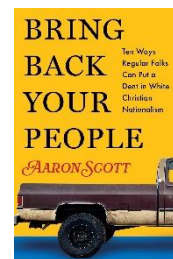


Aaron Scott, M.A.

Aaron (he/him/his) is transgender, a layperson, and 39 years old. He grew up in a tongues-talking United Methodist Church in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains, where his dad was the pastor. It was a poor congregation in a poor community, deeply divided over the inclusion and dignity of LGBTQ+ people. Aaron remembers thinking to himself, even as a kid, “Why are we so obsessed with gay people? Half this congregation can’t afford heat in the winter whether they’re gay or not.” Lots of early experiences like that shaped Aaron’s sense that issues of justice and dignity are always interconnected—that white supremacy, patriarchy, and queer- and transphobia aren’t about individual meanness but serve

to divide and conquer the masses, and hurt people. When we’re constantly at each other’s throats, it’s impossible to look up the food chain and see who’s benefitting from our lack of solidarity.

Aaron serves as the national Gender Justice Officer for The Episcopal Church and has been a grass-roots organizer for twenty years, a leader with the Poor People's Campaign, and co-founder of Chaplains on the Harbor. A second-generation preacher and third-generation organizer, he is a trans father and a Christian who grew up in poverty. Scott, who received his MA in Biblical Studies from Union Theological Seminary in 2009, is a contributing author to both *We Cry Justice* and *Jesus Led a Poor People's Campaign*. He is the author of the recently released book, *Bring Back Your People: Ten Ways Regular Folks Can Put a Dent in White Christian Nationalism*. He and his family live in Tacoma, Washington, and he will be offering two workshops:



1. **Surviving Falling Empires: (Workshop D)** A session on the parallels between the late Roman Empire’s attacks on sexual diversity and the current attacks on LGBTQ+ people across the U.S., with a focus on the inclusive counter of the Jesus movement then and now.
2. **Countering the Influence of White Christian Nationalism: (Workshop E)** Discussion on how and why White Christian Nationalism scapegoats people on the basis of gender and sexuality, and how we can out-organize this trend as people of faith.



Merrick Brown, OTR/L, OTD, CSRS, C-NDT

Raised in Alaska, Merrik grew up in the mountains of Eagle River, deeply immersed in Evangelicalism, particularly as a young musician writing worship songs and leading music for a local congregation led by her grandfather. With her dad serving as a youth pastor for the same congregation, Merrik began participating as a pianist and singer for both the youth group and primary congregation in her freshman year of high school. She also led her fundamentalist secondary school's worship team starting in seventh grade.

While attending Wheaton College—an institution rooted in fundamentalism and evangelicalism, with notable alumni like Billy Graham, John Piper, and Rob Bell—Merrick studied piano and embarked on a journey of deconstruction that ultimately led her

back to Alaska, and away from the systems and communities in which she was raised.

While most of her professional time is spent as an occupational therapist working with survivors of neurological emergencies, Merrik is passionate about creating space for survivors of Evangelicalism to process shared traumas and foster solidarity. She and her husband live in Anchorage with their two dogs.

Life After Evangelicalism (Workshop F)

Wherever deconstruction takes you, processing the experiences of being part of a shame-based religious system is essential for living authentically. Join Merrik for a workshop focused on reclaiming the aspects of self-identity that many of us have been taught to hide, and discovering joy and meaning beyond our foundational faith practices.



Jennifer Knapp, Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter, author, speaker, and advocate

Jennifer has made a significant impact on the music industry over two decades. Her first three albums, including the Gold-certified "Kansas," collectively sold over one million copies, earning her four Dove Awards and two Grammy nominations. Known for her poignant exploration of the human experience and spirituality, Knapp is also a trailblazer in advocacy, notably discussing LGBTQ+ identity. She founded the non-profit Inside Out Faith in 2012, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights within faith communities. Recently completing a master's degree in theological studies, Knapp remains dedicated to advancing social justice through music and discourse. Her multifaceted talents and unwavering commitment to advocacy inspire audiences worldwide with her message of inclusivity and acceptance.

Churches Making Change: Insights for the Future (Workshop G)

Join us for a transformative workshop with Jennifer Knapp, a seasoned voice in the conversation about faith and transformation. With over 30 years of experience navigating the evolving landscape of faith in America, Jennifer has journeyed from conservative evangelical environments to her current work with progressive faith communities.

In this session, Jennifer will share her insights on the common traits of churches that thrive amid change. Participants will engage in thoughtful discussions and gain practical insights on how to foster resilience, inclusivity, and relevance in their communities. This workshop will inspire and equip you to be a catalyst for positive change.



Tom Pittman, MHA

Tom is passionate about breaking down barriers that limit access to quality healthcare, particularly for marginalized communities. Over the past decade, Tom has managed various outpatient clinics, including tribal health, retail health, and specialty surgical units. He earned his Master's in Health Administration from the University of Washington while managing dental health operations for his tribe at SEARHC in Southeast Alaska.

Tom's experience includes serving as Senior Director at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, where he led the launch of a new surgical service line. He later transitioned to a role as Regional Director, overseeing clinics across California and Washington.

Tom is the Executive Director at Identity Alaska, a healthcare provider and community organization focused on the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Since joining in January, Identity has increased access to healthcare providers by 87% and reduced operational expenses by 30%. Tom's leadership is rooted in collaborative strategies and a commitment to expanding healthcare equity.

Tom also completed the CDC's Indigenous Public Health Leadership Program in July 2023. He resides in Wasilla, where he enjoys connecting with his Tlingit heritage, hiking, cross-country skiing, and traveling.



Vincent A. Feuilles, BHS

Vincent Feuilles holds a Bachelor's degree in human services from the University of Alaska and is the Director of Community Development and Support for Identity, Inc. in Anchorage, Alaska. At Identity, Vincent works to create a thriving, inclusive community and organizing events that promote equality and respect for all individuals, aligning with Identity's mission to advance Alaska's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through advocacy, education, and connectivity.

As the founder and president of The Queen's Guard, a 501c3 organization, Vincent is dedicated to empowering the LGBTQ+ community by providing a safe space, fostering resilience, and promoting acceptance and support. The Queen's Guard's mission to uplift voices, especially LGBTQ+ youth, aligns seamlessly with Identity's broader goals.

One of his key projects, Underground Pride at the Alaska State Fairgrounds, has grown significantly, recently celebrating its 5th year with over 2,000 attendees. This event creates an inclusive and family-friendly atmosphere. Attendees have praised the event for its sense of community and acceptance, with many noting the positive energy and pride it fosters. Underground Pride has made a significant impact by providing a joyful and safe space for everyone to celebrate diversity and support one another, thereby strengthening community bonds and promoting equality. Vincent is committed to making a meaningful impact in community development.

Support vs. Allyship: Why Action Matters (Workshop H)

With Tom Pittman and Vincent Feuilles. Join us in exploring the critical distinctions between support and allyship, and why taking action is essential. This group is dedicated to understanding and practicing genuine allyship in various contexts, highlighting the importance of moving beyond passive support. We will discuss real-world examples, strategies for effective allyship, and ways to make a tangible impact through volunteering. Whether you're new to these concepts or looking to deepen your understanding, this group offers a space for learning, discussion, and meaningful action.

Facilitator / M.C.



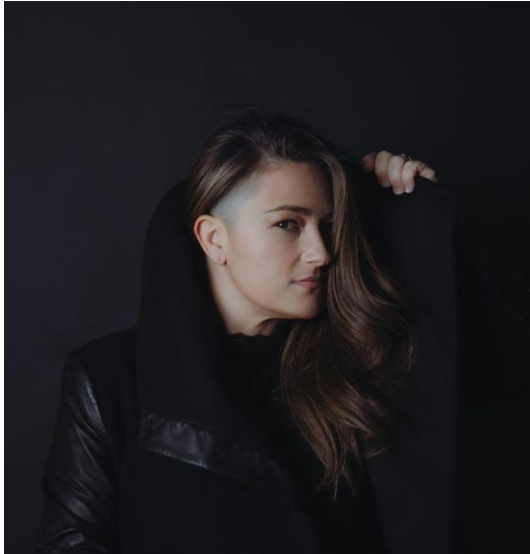
Cassidy S. Burke

Cassidy is currently a social work student at the University of Alaska Anchorage who has done previous study at the University of Auckland, New Zealand and at UAF. A graduate of Polaris and Dimond High, she has served as both staff and a volunteer in various political campaigns, and is committed to the work of justice and equality. She is on the logistics and program organizing teams for this Come Together 2024 Conference.

During her summers, you can find her living and working in the wild in Katchemak Bay at the Yukon Island Center for Research & Education.

She lives with Bobcat. But don't be alarmed. He is just a cat.

Musicians



Jennifer Knapp is a Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter, author, speaker, and advocate, known for her musical talents and commitment to social causes. With a rich history spanning over two decades, Knapp has left an indelible mark on the music industry.

Her career includes the remarkable achievement of selling over one million albums with her first three releases: the Gold-certified “Kansas” (1998), “Lay It Down” (2000), and “The Way I Am” (2001). Alongside this commercial success, Knapp has been honored with four Dove Awards and garnered two Grammy nominations.

Hailing from Kansas, Knapp’s musical journey has taken her across the globe, sharing stages with renowned artists like Jars of Clay and gracing the prestigious Lilith Fair Tour in 1999 and 2010. Her artistry has been lauded for its poignant exploration of the human experience intertwined with themes of spirituality.

Despite reaching the pinnacle of her career, Knapp embarked on a transformative hiatus in 2002, only to return seven years later with a renewed sense of purpose and passion for music. Her comeback album, “Letting Go” (2010), debuted at No. 73 on the Billboard Hot 200 Chart, marking a triumphant return to the spotlight.

In addition to her musical endeavors, Knapp is a trailblazer in advocacy, notably becoming the first major artist in the Christian music realm to openly discuss LGBTQ+ identity. This courageous stance sparked national dialogue and led to appearances on influential platforms like Larry King Live and the TEDx stage. In 2012, she founded the non-profit organization Inside Out Faith, dedicated to advocating for LGBTQ+ rights within faith communities.

Continuing to evolve as an artist and activist, Knapp recently completed a master’s degree in theological studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School, further solidifying her commitment to advancing social justice through music and discourse.

Jennifer Knapp’s multifaceted talents and unwavering dedication to advocacy make her a true Renaissance woman, inspiring audiences worldwide with her music and message of inclusivity and acceptance.

For more information and to hear music clips, visit jenniferknapp.com



Pepper Kit

One of Alaska's fastest-growing artists, Pepper Kit (Katie Judge) has been captivating the local music scene since launching her music career in late 2019.

Like if you took Phoebe Bridgers and dropped her into the 90's, Pepper Kit's music speaks to both your current self and that of your childhood. "Pepper Kit is somehow the soundtrack of 14-year-old me and 34-year-old me at the same time." - Alaska Music Zine.

Pepper grew up in the evangelical movement and knows firsthand the impact that religious trauma can have. She spent her formative years attending youth group and Bible College, staying up late studying while listening to Jennifer Knapp, but she found herself more and more dissatisfied with the rigid belief systems that many churches held. You can hear Pepper Kit work through her struggles with religion on songs like "Fall" and "Bag of Bones."

Pepper is the mastermind behind the Girl Crush event series, Anchorage's only regular musical showcase featuring an all-female lineup. She's funny, honest, and a bit lovingly self-deprecating, treating every audience like they're close friends. Pepper Kit released her debut EP "Stranger" in July 2022, followed by her most popular single "Growing Pains," and is currently working on producing new music.

Playlist for the Conference

Thank you for asking! Use the QR code below to listen on Spotify.

2024 Come Together Spotify Playlist



Notes

Notes

Sponsors and Supporters

This conference has been supported by gifts from St. Mary's Episcopal Church, The Caroline Penniman Wohlforth Memorial Fund, Follow the Star United Church of Christ (UCC) Church, Christians for Equality, and donors like you.

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