

Harry Van Belle I am one of the founding faculty members of Redeemer. I taught psychology from 1982-1992 and I have fond memories of my tenure there. Because of my qualifications as a therapist I became the trusted friend of many students. I deeply treasured the talks I had with them and the fact that I got to know them personally. But it also meant that I became privy to their most intimate secrets, about which I could not talk with anyone because of the confidentiality of the relationship. Among them were stories by students about their experiences of being gay at a Christian university college. Reading the testimonies on Facebook today brought back so many painful memories about what they told me. What impressed me most was the utter lonely agony of that experience. They would tell me about their passionate love for someone, or a desire to have that love, but being unable to express it because, as they put it, of their dual identity. They were Christian, but they were also gay and to their mind, and apparently to the mind of the people around them, the two were incompatible. It was clear to me that these young men who came to me for help had a deep love for God but also that, because of their sexual orientation, they felt that they were not worthy of God's love for them. It puzzled me that these students should feel that way in, of all places, a Christian university. To me they were just different from me, but for that reason no less worthy of God's love. I tried to help them as best I could. But I am as straight as an arrow and could not always live into what it felt like for them to be gay in a situation in which it was not safe to be gay openly. To this day, I do not understand why some Christians object to gays and lesbians. When I think of them, two elderly gay men in our neighbourhood come to mind. They have been living together for decades in a tender, loving, deeply committed relationship that rivals the relationship that Jenny and I now have had for almost 55 years. I mean, they finish each other's sentences, you know? How can those Christians not acknowledge that kind of relationship as a miracle from God in a world full of hatred and selfishness? They must read a different Bible than I do. When it comes to sexual orientation I take my cue from I Corinthians 12. Gays and lesbian Christians are no less members of the body of Christ than I am just because, unlike me, they desire to be intimate with someone who is of the same sex as they are. According to this bible passage, I ought to embrace them as my brothers and sisters. And I do. I celebrate their difference from me. In my opinion Redeemer would do well to celebrate their uniqueness. It would be the Reformed Christian thing to do. With love to y'all at Redeemer