



The Rev. Brett Webb-Mitchell (right) raises 19-year-old Adrienne and 15-year-old Parker with the help of his partner, Dean Blackburn.

stands fully the burden of introducing "Mom," "Dad" and "Dad's partner." Our own openness—not only about ourselves, but our openness of spirit—can foster the friendships that help humanize us, instead of ostracize us.

"Change comes from living authentic lives," Webb-Mitchell says. "I'm still the friend, father you knew before. You now just know more about me. Thus I'm able to be a better friend to you in giving a part of myself to you that I hold dear. That self-giving is an act of love. Through this authenticity and transparency, we can build the world."

Webb-Mitchell rebukes the condemnation of fundamentalists who wield the Bible "like a dagger." He says he thinks of the words of fellow Duke Divinity professor Mickey Efrid, who says, "If you read the Bible one way, you have to read the entire Bible that way."

Webb-Mitchell continues: "It all depends on how you understand Scripture and its place in the context of the church. It's a book that is alive. It needs to be read in the context of who, to, toward and how [in order] to understand it in this day and age. So I always read it with an appreciation for history. We now know that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is not cultural, but part of our genetic code. Biblical writers didn't have that to base their writing off of. Recent versions of the Bible often do a disservice of the ancient texts. I'd suggest not reading the Bible as moral absolutes but with an appreciation for the age."

Studies show that children raised in a household headed by queer parents show no negative effects on the well-being of the children. In fact,

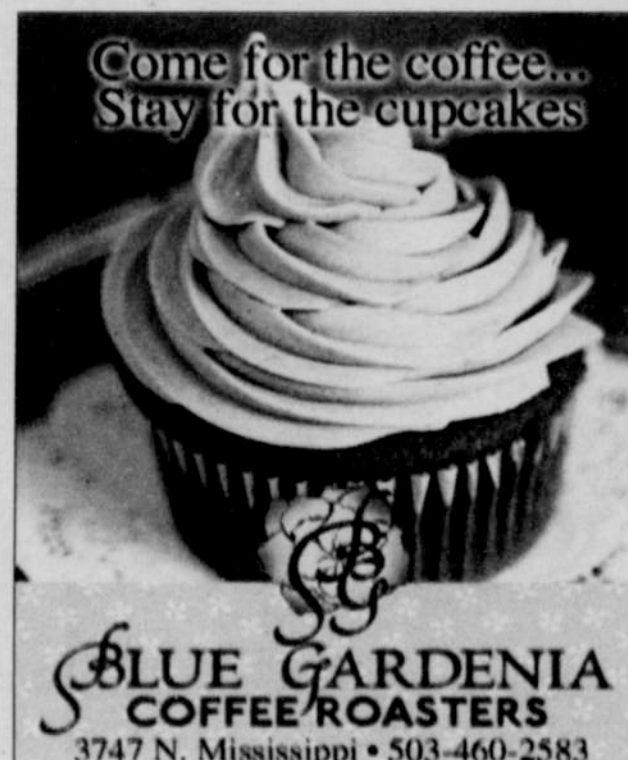
the only significant difference social scientists find is that "children of lesbian parents are more tolerant of diversity and are more nurturing toward younger children than children whose parents are heterosexual."

Children of queer households also feel freer to explore occupations and behaviors unhampered by traditional gender roles. In Webb-Mitchell's family, "we have more appreciation for how we can laugh at one another. My son can say, 'That's so gay,' and we laugh. We push the social order to explain itself. We have a capacity to be imaginative and creative. This leads to the ability to reimagine the world with a certain brashness because, for so long, we've had to make do with what we have."

He adds: "I want to communicate to the world that it's just fine to be gay and be a parent and to be who I am. To be a family. There's nothing I have to apologize for. I'm know I'm not the only one. How I live my life is not a sin; how the church treats us is the sin. I want to say, in so many words, 'Get over yourself, dear church, I'm interested in good parenting.' It demands from me to be fully who I am. We have to make that kind of declaration."

"This is the next step, to not only be married, but to have kids. We have kids who are graduating [high school].... The sequel to my book is undoubtedly going to be on being a gay grandfather." 10

THE REV. BRETT WEBB-MITCHELL reads from *On Being a Gay Parent* 7 p.m. Dec. 14 at Southminster Presbyterian Church, 12250 S.W. Denney Road in Beaverton, and 3 p.m. Dec. 15 at Q Center, 69 S.E. Taylor St.



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