



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 17, 2013

Evangelical Fuller Seminary Says “Yes” to Homosexual Campus Club

[Fuller Theological Seminary](#), one of the most esteemed evangelical theology training schools in the nation, has given its nod to a new campus club for homosexuals. [CBN News](#) reported that the California-based seminary has approved as an official student organization an LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) group calling itself [One Table](#). The homosexual group explains on its website that it exists to support the “LGBTQ community at Fuller Seminary,” while also offering “a safe place for dialogue between LGBTQ students and the wider Fuller community.” CBN noted that the group formed last fall and now boasts some three dozen members.



The news, which many conservative evangelical Christians find troubling, came to light via an [Associated Press](#) article that highlighted the group’s founder, Nick Palacios. The article recalled how Palacios, a Fuller student, “struggled to get his conservative Pentecostal parents to accept him as a gay evangelical Christian for nearly a decade before his family found a common ground through faith.” Now, continued AP, the homosexual seminarian “hopes to carve out a similar acceptance for other gays in the broader evangelical community through his role as president of the nation’s first LGBT student club sanctioned by a major evangelical seminary.”

In spite of overwhelming scriptural evidence condemning homosexual behavior, Palacios came to the conclusion that he would not have to give up his gay lifestyle to be a Christian. “It quickly became apparent to me that I was going to be OK and that I wasn’t going to have to forsake my faith for my sexuality,” Palacios told AP. He said he hoped to expand that attitude into the Fuller community. “I really hope that people will see Fuller and OneTable as a model of what the body of the church is supposed to do in this situation,” he said.

While a few other Christian schools have taken Fuller’s approach toward tolerating homosexual expression on campus, others have stuck to biblical principles. AP recalled that last year “a group called the Biola Queer Underground was quashed by Biola University, a small, conservative Christian school” not far from Fuller.

Juan Martinez, who oversees the approval of Fuller’s student groups, insisted that allowing One Table to have a presence on campus does not equate into acceptance of homosexuality by the seminary. Fuller told AP that as long as One Table members adhere to Fuller’s standards there are no problems with the group meeting at Fuller. Those standards include the stipulation that unmarried students remain celibate, and that only traditional marriage between a man and a woman is acceptable. Additionally, homosexual students may not advocate politically for their lifestyle of choice.



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“If you are ready to make that kind of commitment, then we’re ready to walk with you,” Martinez said. “We’re not going to turn around and say, ‘No, you can’t be here because you like girls or you like guys as opposed to the opposite sex.’”

The [Christian News Network](#) noted that in years past the 66-year-old evangelical seminary was more intentional in making a distinction about what constitutes behavior that accords with biblical principles. “In 1983, [Fuller] leaders published a document titled ‘Mission Beyond the Mission,’” noted the Christian website, “which outlines several of the school’s key priorities and beliefs. While the document does not express unequivocal opposition to homosexuality, it does mention several ‘concerns that rightly evoke the attention of many Christians,’ including alcoholism, drug abuse, abortion, pornography, and — notably — ‘the promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.’” Presently the seminary’s website specifies that under “the authority of Scripture we seek to fulfill our commitment to ministry through graduate education, professional development, and spiritual formation. In all of our activities ... Fuller Theological Seminary strives for excellence in the service of Jesus Christ, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of the Father.”

Richard Flory of the University of Southern California’s Center for Religion and Civic Culture took a mildly critical stab at Fuller’s attempt at tolerance, noting that it is little more than experimentation. “It sounds like they want to have it both ways,” Flory offered: “Jesus loves you as you are, however there are limitations to what you can be. It’s like sticking your toe in the deep end of the water to see what happens.”

Not surprisingly, a few conservative Christian leaders have stepped forward to criticize Fuller’s approach, warning that the school is dealing in compromise. For example, Peter Sprigg of the conservative Christian [Family Research Council](#) said that Fuller should be encouraging students who identify as homosexual to separate from the lifestyle. “It’s possible to change any or all of these attractions,” he insisted.

Such comments prompted Fuller’s new president, Mark Labberton, to [issue a statement](#) in an attempt to clarify the school’s somewhat muddied position on homosexuality. “Fuller’s position on same-sex marriage and behavior, reflective of our evangelical tradition’s reliance on the scriptures, affirms that every student, faculty member, administrator, and staff person at Fuller is expected to abide by the Community Standards that ‘premarital, extramarital, and homosexual forms of explicit sexual conduct (are) inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture,’” Labberton explained, insisting, “This position is clear.”

Labberton then mouthed One Table’s own slogan, that the homosexual group exists to provide “a safe place to discuss issues related to sexuality and gender — issues that are vitally important, personal, and fraught with debate that is frequently divisive and contentious, not least in an evangelical context.” Ignoring that One Table was formed by a confirmed homosexual who is convinced he can embrace the Christian faith without rejecting what the Bible clearly says is sin, Labberton nonetheless insisted that the gay club “is not an advocacy group to alter seminary policy nor to direct any efforts in that direction.”

The Fuller president said that in welcoming the homosexual club, the erstwhile conservative evangelical seminary “hopes to be a context in which many of the significant issues of our day can be discussed in relation to the Bible’s teaching for the life and witness of the church.”

Photo of Payton Hall on the Pasadena campus of Fuller Theological Seminary



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