

After their son came out, this conservative Christian couple went into a closet of their own.

By John Blake, CNN

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As soon as Greg McDonald Jr. saw his parents, he knew he was in trouble. His father stood waiting for him with his arms folded and his brow furrowed. Beside him was Greg's mother, her eyes red and puffy.

"Quick, pretend you're interested in me," Greg Jr. told his friend Betsy as he steered the speedboat toward the dock at his parents' riverfront home outside Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Greg Jr. had just taken a group of friends out for a rollicking boat ride. It was late in the summer of 2001, and he was about to head off to his first year of college. In just a few weeks the 17-year-old thought he'd be free.

But while Greg Jr. was away his father, a conservative Christian, had checked his computer's search history. He'd heard stories of young men being corrupted by the internet and had discovered his son's secret: visits to gay porn sites.

As Greg Jr. stepped off the boat with his friends, his father looked sternly at the group. "You need to leave," he said to the other teens.

Once they were alone, the father turned toward his son.

"Are you—?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," Greg Jr. said, cutting his father off as he walked past his parents toward their house.

"You could be an axe murderer, and we would always love you," his father called out after him. "But we need to get you fixed."

You may think you know what happened next. Greg Jr. prayed to God for deliverance. Pastors condemned him. Church members shunned him. Long time friends disappeared, and he wrestled with shame because he felt like he had failed God and disobeyed the Bible.

But that's not what happened to Greg Jr. That's what happened to his parents, Greg Sr. and Lynn McDonald.

Their son's admission would send the McDonalds on a journey that forced them to make agonizing choices about their faith and family. They would be thrust into the middle of a hidden crisis afflicting the conservative Christian community. And how they responded to their son's admission would mushroom into a scandal — one that prompted two of the most prominent evangelical pastors in America to publicly question each other's faith.

What triggered all these events was one fateful decision: After their son came out, the McDonalds went into their own closet.

A hidden crisis among conservative Christian families

If you're seeking a model of a contemporary, conservative Christian couple, Greg and Lynn McDonald would seem right out of central casting. Warm and photogenic, they sprinkle their conversation with biblical quotations and self-deprecating humour.

The McDonalds live in a gated community along the banks of the Chattahoochee River, some 25 miles outside of Atlanta. Their neighbourhood looks like a real estate brochure, with rows of large, uniform houses, spotless sidewalks and American flags flying from front porches.

Their living room reflects their faith and love of family. A towering bookcase is lined with titles such as "[God Sex and Your Child](#)," Rob Bell's "[What Is the Bible?](#)" and [Charles Swindoll's "Getting Through the Tough Stuff."](#) Seven family photos adorn the wall. One of them is a portrait of their son, Greg Jr., around the time his parents confronted him about his secret.

Lynn, 65, steps to the wall and adjusts one of the photo frames.

"I can't think clearly if things aren't straight," she says with a sheepish smile. "I like things in order."

Greg Sr. is a solidly built man with a firm handshake who talks and moves with an air of crisp authority. He was an entrepreneur and a [food broker](#), a person who sells food products to buyers. He retired at 47.

"I'm a fixer, a problem solver," says Greg Sr., now 67. "Whenever there was a problem in business, they said, 'Send McDonald.'" "

For some people, the McDonalds' story may seem baffling. Having a gay child is no longer considered a problem that needs fixing. The Supreme Court established same-sex marriage as a fundamental right in its 2015 [Obergefell v. Hodges](#) decision. LGBTQ+ people are out in the workplace, hold hands in Ikea commercials and openly raise children. [Most mainline](#) Christian denominations affirm gay and lesbian people.

But there are millions of conservative Christians in the US who still do not accept what some call the "[homosexual agenda](#)." They say normalizing LGBTQ+ relationships represents a threat to the American family and religious liberty. And their perspective is gaining political momentum. A [record number](#) of anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced across the US in 2023.

This backlash against LGBTQ+ acceptance has led to a crisis in the conservative religious community.

An estimated [40% of](#) the nation's youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ. [Many](#) of these youths are being [cast out](#) by conservative religious families. Some parents [shun](#) their gay children when they can't change them. The harm that many LGBTQ kids suffer after being rejected by conservative religious families is widespread but barely acknowledged or addressed in conservative Christian communities, religious activists and LGBTQ+ youth advocates tell CNN.

Greg Jr. says he didn't tell his parents about his sexuality earlier because he'd heard stories of evangelical parents who refused to pay for their gay kid's college or kicked them out of the house. Once on the streets, these forsaken youths are more [likely](#) to experience sexual assault, HIV infection, hate crimes, depression and suicide, according to [True Colours United](#), a non-profit group formed to address youth homelessness in the US.

The current share of homeless youth who are LGBTQ+ is likely larger than the 40% estimate because many of them end up surfing on the couches of friends or avoiding places where homeless adults gather because they're afraid of being harmed, says Kahlil Barton, chief program officer with True Colours United.

Many LGBTQ+ youth tend to travel together, living in abandoned buildings and under freeway overpasses and often engaging in sex work for survival, Barton says. Virtually none of them go to the church for help.

"Most youth don't feel comfortable going to a church because they're either forced to engage in religious practices they don't agree with or their sexual identity is not appropriately respected," Barton says.

Greg Sr. didn't know any of those stories when he told his son that he had to be "fixed." He made that declaration 23 years ago, but he still winces at the memory.

"Boy, how I wish I could reel those words back," he says. "And I can't. We literally chased Greg Jr. away. Once those words leave your lips, it's like eating shoe leather. It's hard to recover from that."

Their son, though, knew what awaited his parents before they did. When they enlisted the church to "fix" him, he would say something to them that would prove prophetic:

"There is no hate like Christian love."

'Peer pressure will sort him out'

The McDonalds didn't think there was anything hateful about how they raised their son and his older sister, Connie. They wanted them to have the stability they never had as children. They

raised the two children in a conservative Christian cocoon: church every Sunday, mid-week Bible study, Christian private schools; Christian contemporary music tuned 24/7 on the car radio.

They saw signs early on that their son might be gay. They say they were tipped off by his body language and what Greg Sr. describes as his son's "tender-hearted" personality. They quietly took steps to address the issue.

"If a show came on TV, and it was '[Will & Grace](#)' or if there was touching between two men, I'd grab the remote and turn to another show," Greg Sr. says. When Greg Jr. was still a boy, the McDonalds shared their concerns with a Christian counsellor.

He'll be fine, the counsellor assured them. "Peer pressure will sort him out," he said.

Meanwhile, Greg Jr. was learning about hate at his Christian schools. He was bullied by classmates who hurled gay slurs at him. Teachers denounced homosexuality in classroom diatribes while looking directly at him. There were others who treated him with compassion, including art teachers who sensed his secret. He came out to several high school friends who made him feel accepted.

Even so, Greg Jr. learned to be quiet and blend in. That impulse was so ingrained that just before his parents confronted him after that speedboat ride, he still pretended to be straight by asking his friend, Betsy, to feign attraction to him.

"It was about being perfect all the time and not doing anything to stand out as deviant, or outside the norm," he would say later. "You try not to be noticed."

After their son came out to them, the McDonalds relied on the church to apply another form of peer pressure. They sent their son to youth counsellors and pastors.

They persuaded him to try Christian "conversion therapy," a widely [discredited](#) practice of trying to change a person's sexual orientation through [methods](#) such as intensive prayer, aversion conditioning, and in extreme cases, [exorcism](#). Greg Jr. went to one meeting and refused to return.

"We didn't realize the harm we were doing," Lynn says. "When you find out your child is gay in that environment, it's overwhelming. I hate to say it, but I was also looking at myself. I was thinking, 'This is disruptive. What is my life going to look like now?'"

Several months after their confrontation with their son, the McDonalds told their pastor and a select group of close friends. It took about two years for Greg Sr. to tell select business partners and co-workers. Some stopped talking to them. Others assured the McDonalds they would pray for their son's deliverance from homosexuality. One told Greg Sr., "You gotta get a handle on your son."

Still, Greg Jr. refused to be "fixed."

A Christian counsellor once asked him, "Don't you want to go to heaven?"

“Not if you’re there,” Greg Jr. said.

‘I felt I had to choose between loving God and loving my child’

By this time Greg Jr. had moved away to attend DePaul University in Chicago. He and his parents barely spoke. He rebuffed their attempts to cite scripture. Their occasional visits were so strained that their son avoided being alone with them and surrounded himself with friends.

The tension filtered into the McDonalds’ marriage. They blamed one another.

“You should have taken him on more fishing trips—”

“Whose idea was it to let him take those art classes?”

“Well, you didn’t play baseball with him enough...”

The McDonalds thought a gay child was a failure of parenting. That was the dominant teaching in their conservative Christian culture.

They followed leaders like the author and psychologist [James Dobson](#), founder of “[Focus on the Family](#).” Dobson has ascribed homosexuality to such external factors as a domineering mother, an emotionally abusive father and being sexually molested as a child — beliefs that have been debunked by many scientific researchers.

“We were Focus on the Family groupies,” Greg Sr. says. “We drank from the fire hose. If they published it, printed it or did a video, we owned it.”

Lynn McDonald says her reaction to her son’s disclosure was also shaped by another source: the [Old Testament story](#) in which God demanded that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac to prove his faith.

“I felt I had to choose between loving God and loving my child,” she says.

Her words may seem melodramatic, but not if you know her background. She grew up in a family where relatives struggled with mental illness and alcoholism. She married Greg Sr. when they were right out of high school. Both now say they were too young and immature. It took 12 years of counselling and prayer to preserve their marriage.

What saved her through it all? She says it was following the words in the Bible.

“My safe spot was the church,” she says. “There were parameters. If you followed them, nothing harmful will happen to you.”

But in the evangelical world, that safe spot came with a price. The McDonalds felt tremendous pressure to hide having a gay child. Not long after their son told them he was gay, they asked their minister if he could put them in touch with other parents of LGBTQ+ children in their congregation. He couldn't. He didn't know a single family in a congregation of about 5,000 people who were willing to talk about having a gay child.

The McDonalds joined this silence. They shared their son's sexual orientation with a select group of friends and church members, but otherwise kept a tight lid on their family struggles. They worried about being disowned by friends, relatives, their church and their employers.

"There's the fear about my reputation and my family's reputation," Greg Sr. says. "You have to keep this image just so."

One night, the pressures of maintaining that image threatened to overwhelm Greg Sr. He was driving home, mired in depression. He felt like a failure as a father.

He spotted a bridge in front of him. As he drew closer, he accelerated. He aimed his car at the bridge's concrete abutment. The slapping of his tires on the highway grew louder as he sped toward the bridge.

"As I got closer, I just decided that's it," he says.

But at the last second, he jerked the wheel and turned away from the bridge. He pulled off the highway and sat in his car, shaking. He then called his doctor to get a prescription for anti-depressants.

A conservative Christian walks into a gay bar

Not long after, Lynn was shaken by her own brush with mortality—one that led to a different result.

She and Greg Sr. had remained closeted for more than a decade, struggling with shame, after they learned their son's secret. But in 2013, she faced another battle: She was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I had to put on my big girl pants and get through this," Lynn says.

What followed was months of chemotherapy, multiple surgeries and her hair falling out in clumps. She spent much of her time in bed and barely had enough energy to move. Her husband stood by her, but another person soon appeared at her bedside: Greg Jr.

Their son was now 29 and living in Chicago after attending DePaul and the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. At Greg Jr.'s invitation, his parents moved briefly into his Chicago condo. He washed his mother's laundry and tucked her in at night. He took her shopping and purchased stylish caps and scarves to cover her hair loss.

Lynn began thinking of the years she had spent raising her son in a home where he was afraid to be himself. The years she spent quoting scriptures at him that condemned his homosexuality. But here he was, showing her compassion. Instead of anger, he was embodying Christ's example — loving those who had scorned him.

She lost her zest to preach at him.

“I saw my life flash before my eyes,” Lynn says. “I didn’t know how many days I was going to have on Earth to even be with my son. It wasn’t about changing him. It was about loving him and trying to make up for the years that I did lose with him when he was raised in our home.”

Around the same time, Greg Jr. reached out to his father in a different way. One night he asked his dad, “Wanna get a drink?” He took his father to a bar in Chicago called The Closet. It was, of course, a gay bar.

As Greg Sr. walked inside, he caught himself thinking: *Gosh, if my conservative friends could see me now.* His son introduced him to the bartender. Her name was Karen, but his son described her as his “momma bear.” She was the one who steered him away from guys who meant trouble and helped him with his college homework by holding up flash cards at the bar.

Karen was a lesbian, but that didn’t matter to Greg Sr. She loved and protected his son. He felt his attitudes shift.

“The reality is that I didn’t care anymore what my friends and co-workers thought,” he says. “I was far more concerned about my son and having a relationship with him.”

Lynn’s cancer went into remission. And a dozen years after that riverside confrontation, the McDonalds’ relationship with their son also started to heal.

But they still had to square this with their faith. They didn’t know how to answer this question: Can you still love God, the Bible and your gay son?

The search for that answer would lead Greg Sr. to an unexpected friendship. For Lynn, it would end one.

‘The Bible was not as black and white as I once thought’

To reconcile his son’s sexuality with his Christian views, Greg Sr. entered another arena that for evangelicals was as taboo as a gay bar: He started reading books and listening to sermons from religious and LGBTQ+ scholars who challenged his views on homosexuality. He came across a YouTube video of the man delivering a lecture at a New Zealand church. His name was David [Gushee](#), one of the leading Christian ethicists in the US.

Gushee had White evangelical Christian roots. He became a born-again Christian in high school and later a Baptist minister. He, too, once believed that there could be no moral acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships.

A family crisis prompted the shift in his views. Gushee learned that his younger sister, Katey, had been [hospitalized with depression](#), including one stay after a suicide attempt. She had struggled to accept her sexual identity as a lesbian before finally coming out.

Gushee started re-examining scriptures and the formation of the Bible. He talked to other LGBTQ+ people who grew up in the church but left. He heard horror stories about religious parents casting their kids onto the streets, where many fall prey to drug use and sexual predators.

Gushee took a stand. He urged for the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the church.

He rejected the “welcoming but not affirming” approach that many churches attempt to avoid demonizing LGBTQ+ people and alienating traditional conservatives.

“They ultimately fail to include LGBTQ+ people in the Christian community on equal terms with everyone else, while doing continued spiritual, psychological, familial, and ecclesial harm,” Gushee wrote in his book, “[Changing Our Mind](#).”

By this time the McDonalds had moved to Georgia, where Gushee lived and taught at a university. Greg Sr. was so taken by Gushee’s book that he wrote a letter to him and invited him to lunch. The two men met and became friends.

“David’s book helped open my mind, not change my mind,” Greg Sr. says. “I began to realize that the Bible was not as black and white as I once thought.”

Greg Sr.’s solution to his theological questions was to focus on another color in the Bible — the red letters in the New Testament that are attributed to Jesus.

And he came to a conclusion: A Christian parent can love their LGBTQ child not in spite of their faith, but because of it.

“There are things in the Bible that may or may not make sense, but what you can be assured of is that Jesus says to love our neighbors as ourselves, and that includes our children, straight or gay,” he said.

Greg Sr. also says he realized something else.

“It was as much of a choice for Greg Jr. to be gay as it was for me to have brown hair.”

The McDonalds lose some old friends — and make new ones

Twelve years after they confronted their son about his homosexuality, the McDonalds started sharing their story with anyone who would listen.

“Once we stepped out of the closet, our phone started ringing,” Greg Sr. says.

They met Christian parents who shared their struggles. A community was formed. And in 2015, they formed a support group for Christian parents with LGBTQ children called [“Embracing the Journey”](#) — the signature line Greg used in his emails while his wife fought breast cancer. They filed articles of incorporation one month before Lynn’s last major surgery.

In doing so they met new people and lost some old friends. Lynn had befriended several women in a home Bible study group, where her ministry never came up in the discussion. One day she finally asked her friends what they thought about it.

One woman said she didn’t like to think about the religious debate over homosexuality because the subject was “horrible” and “full of pain.” She told Lynn she had a nephew who was gay and that she thought homosexuality was “disgusting.”

“And she just went on about how awful it must be to do this ministry, and I’m thinking, ‘That’s my life she’s talking about,’” Lynn says.

Lynn says her friendship with the woman ended after that Bible study. She never met with that group again.

There were others, though, who affirmed the McDonalds’ ministry. One of them was [David Quinones](#). He was a lay leader in the Episcopal Church when it started to [split](#) in 2003 over the ordination of a gay bishop. Quinones opposed the ordination.

One night, Quinones and his wife, Deb, received a call from the hospital. It was their son, Josh, then a senior in college. He told them he had attempted suicide because he was tormented over being bisexual (he was scared at the time to tell them he was gay).

“He was afraid we weren’t going to love him anymore and that we would reject him,” Quinones says.

Quinones says he and his wife also reacted with shame and secrecy after their son’s admission. That changed after they attended an “Embracing the Journey” session and met other parents who shared their struggle. Many of those meetings ended in tears. The Quinoneses have since joined the McDonalds’ ministry.

“What we needed was to be able to talk to other people who were struggling,” David Quinones says. “There’s this false narrative out there: Either I love my gay child, or I love God.”

That narrative, though, still holds tremendous power in the evangelical world. That’s what the McDonalds discovered when they got swept up in a controversy over something they did for their son.

What happened, Greg Sr. says, would “break my heart.”

A ‘Satan-drenched theology’ comes under attack

It was called the “[Unconditional Conference](#),” and was scheduled for September 2023 at North Point Community Church in suburban Atlanta. Led by [Andy Stanley](#), North Point is one of the largest evangelical churches in America. The McDonalds had joined North Point during the same year they moved to Georgia.

The McDonalds organized the conference with “Embracing The Journey” volunteers, and Stanley agreed to host it. The two-day event was promoted with a tagline: “In a world that makes us choose sides, experience a conference from the quieter middle.”

But what happened after the conference was announced was anything but quiet. Critics pounced. One [said](#) the conference promoted “Satan-drenched theology.” Others [said](#) the McDonalds had become part of a campaign to shift traditional views on marriage and sexuality. Social media fanned the flames.

One of the conference’s most prominent critics was the [Rev. R. Albert Mohler](#), an author, podcaster and president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Mohler wrote a [column](#) arguing the McDonalds’ conference was designed as a platform “for normalizing the LGBTQ+ revolution.” He wrote that “in truth, there is no ‘middle space’” on homosexuality because all “same-sex sexual behaviors” are clearly forbidden by the Bible.

He then took aim at Stanley, saying that his decision to allow the conference to be held at North Point was proof that the pastor was inching away from “historic normative Biblical Christianity.”

“Sadly, it looks like the train is about to leave the station,” Mohler wrote.

Not long after Mohler’s column appeared, Stanley stepped before his congregation on a Sunday morning and [did something](#) he’d had never done before: devote an entire sermon to directly responding to his critics outside his church.

Stanley addressed Mohler near the beginning of his sermon.

“I want to go on record and say I have never subscribed to his version of biblical Christianity to begin with, so I’m not leaving anything,” he said.

Stanley then proceeded to defend the conference, and the McDonalds. He said North Point wasn’t backtracking on its belief that biblical marriage is between a man and woman. But he argued that evangelicals must deal with what was happening to LGBTQ+ children in their churches because “86%” of LGBTQ+ people in the US grow up in church, “but they leave at twice the rate of straight people.”

Stanley cited the McDonalds’ relationship with their son, and the isolation faced by many LGBTQ+ youth in the evangelical world. He also distanced his church from Mohler’s brand of Christianity.

“Bottom line, that version of Christianity draws lines. And Jesus drew circles,” Stanley said. “He drew circles so large and included so many people in his circle that it consistently made religious leaders nervous.”

While Stanley faced criticism from evangelicals, others would say he didn’t go far enough. They say a pastor should affirm, not accept, their gay members. But it’s what Stanley did before the sermon, though, that spoke just as loudly.

Greg Jr. had traveled to North Point’s sprawling campus before that Sunday to help his parents plan the conference. It was the first time he had set foot in a church in years. During one planning session, Stanley came by to greet the conference organizers. When he spotted Greg Jr., he dropped his backpack, walked up to him and gave him a hug.

Lynn McDonald looked on in amazement. Tears welled in her eyes.

“It was a healing moment, to see Andy love on my son,” she says. “Greg Jr. was finally being seen and heard.”

Stung by a deluge of public criticism, the McDonalds could have used a hug as well. For the first time, they were facing an army of anonymous Christian commentators trying to “fix” them. They wondered if they had inadvertently dragged their pastor into a no-win situation.

“It broke my heart,” Greg McDonald Sr. says today about Stanley’s sermon. “That he (Stanley) felt the need to do that to help his congregation understand why he would allow a conference to come to his church. There are plenty of LGBTQ+ people in churches, whether their pastors know it or not.”

Why did the McDonalds attract such withering criticism? The debate over homosexuality in the church is not new. Why was their public support for their son and other families like theirs so infuriating to many conservative Christians?

Gushee, the Christian ethicist, has a theory.

“They chose love over dogma,” he says. “The whole premise of their ministry is, ‘We’re not trying to tell you how to interpret scripture. But the bottom line is, love your child, stay in a relationship with them and go on the journey with them.’”

The McDonalds find a new family

One might say Greg McDonald Sr. stood up to all the criticism because of his faith, but there is another reason. He was bullied as a child because he had [dyslexia](#). He failed the fourth and eighth grade. Some kids called him “retard” and teased him for riding on the “[short bus](#),” a miniature school bus used to transport kids with physical and mental disabilities.

He hates seeing LGBTQ+ youth bullied.

“When I see someone being harassed and they can’t really fend for themselves, it makes the hair on my neck stand on end,” he says. “Especially when they’re bullied in the name of God.”

The McDonalds now have plenty of company on their journey. A year after the conference, they say their ministry has a team of 91 volunteers who offer support to families in England, South Africa, Australia, Ethiopia and other countries. They’ve written a self-help guide for parents of LGBTQ+ children called “[Embracing the Journey](#),” and they speak at churches and conferences.

“The need is immense,” Greg Sr. says. “It just keeps growing. We wouldn’t be doing this if the church was already doing this. There are a lot of churches that are starting to do this, and we applaud them for that. But we need more churches entering in this conversation.”

The McDonalds have earned new nicknames within some parts of the LGBTQ+ community. They’ve been dubbed “McMom” and “McDad” by an assortment of LGBTQ+ children who have adopted them as surrogate parents after being rejected by their own families.

One of them is Patrick Potulski, who met the McDonalds through their son. Potulski was 21 when he says he fell out with his parents over his homosexuality. His parents are immigrants from Poland, a heavily Catholic country where homosexuality is still stigmatized.

He says the McDonalds invited him over to stay on weekends. They cooked dinner for him, played board games and watched movies with him. His parents eventually accepted him, but he says he won’t forget the McDonalds’ kindness.

“They were always so welcoming and accepting,” Potulski says. “Always offering a hug when I needed one.”

And Greg Jr.? He’s now a 40-year-old man with a thick moustache and a cheerfully blunt manner. An interior designer, he lives in Georgia and helps his parents with their ministry.

He no longer attends church, but he says he still considers himself a follower of Jesus. When asked what advice he would share with Christian parents with gay children, he says:

“Tell your kids you love them, teach them to be kind, let them be weirdos and let them fly their freak flag,” he says.

He then adds: “And don’t be an a**hole.”

Greg Jr. is a stoic man, but his pride in his parents’ ministry is evident.

“My mom is the heart and soul of the ministry — my dad is everything else,” he says.

In recent years the McDonalds have added another face to the wall of family portraits hanging in their immaculate living room.

The largest photo shows Greg and Lynn with Greg Jr., and their daughter, along with her husband. Standing next to a beaming Greg Sr. is another person. He's a tall, clean-shaven man with a boyish face. His name is Jon, and he's Greg Jr.'s husband.

Greg Jr. and Jon were married in 2019. Jon has gone on vacations with the McDonalds and been to their house many times to cook meals and play board games.

"He loves my family," Greg Jr. says. "He's like their son."

The McDonalds attended their son's courthouse wedding. Lynn says it was "pretty surreal" to witness the ceremony.

"There was always a little glimmer of hope that maybe he'd find a wonderful Christian girl and get married," she says. "I was grieving when they said their vows. But I was also joyfully crying. I was grieving for my dream of what I wanted for my son, but also joyful that my son doesn't have to do life alone anymore and he found someone who cares and loves him."

How people regard the McDonalds' journey may depend on their religious beliefs. Some say they have betrayed their faith. But the McDonalds say they're even more committed to their Christianity — a faith that they say draws circles instead of lines.

The McDonald's days of shame and secrecy are over. The Christian cocoon they built to shield their son may have crumbled, but once they broke free from it, their family soared.

After they discovered their son was gay, the McDonalds prayed to God that He would change him.

Their prayers were answered, they say — just not in the way they expected.

God changed them instead.