

## **Across the border, Gay Pride Week 2014 Amsterdam**

### **Speech of Jeroen Windhorst, Chairman of CHJC, organization of Christian LGBTs**

First of all, as representative of LCC Plus projects, I would like to welcome you in the Netherlands and specifically in Amsterdam.

LCC Plus projects, which is a collaboration of LKP, CHJC, Contrario, Mirre network and Holyfemales.nl. Five Christian LGBT organizations who are working closely together on improving social acceptance of Christian LGBT's and LGBT's in a Christian environment in the Netherlands, but also outside of the Netherlands.

And today I'm proud to stand here in front of you. But even though I'm able to speak openly about homosexuality in the Netherlands; are we receiving subsidy from our Government to execute projects; are we collaborating with churches to publish a declaration against homophobia and homophobic violence; do we have close contact with Christian media like the Evangelic TV broadcast, Newspapers etc, we're still not there yet. And also we weren't able to come this far without years of standing up for ourselves and others, without going public and without patience.

Let's go back into Dutch history for a moment.

Till 1811 you would receive death penalty on sodomy in the Netherlands. And even if you were not receiving death penalty anymore after 1811, there wasn't any acceptance across the country. No, instead of death penalty you would receive a 'psychiatric disorder' as diagnose.

In the 60's and 70's the circle of sin, crime and disease became broken.

But even then it still took more than 20 years before the law on equality was being adapted by the government in 1993. 'Finally!'; you would think, but it was still a weakened version of the original law that was being submitted. Why? The Christian community was against this law.

Late 70s and begin 80s several Christian LGBT's started with their own groups to have meeting places. Places where they understood each other, where they were being accepted, places where you could be gay and Christian. Being gay was not the only issue. Many people thought being gay and being a Christian wasn't possible at that time.

Like I said in the beginning, it took a long time till where we are right now. We still keep working on improving acceptance. Even these days I still see people who think being gay is a sin. Or don't believe in a combination of being Christian and Gay.

Recently one young guy was standing in front of me at our stand at a Christian Music festival. He was about this close in front of me and said: 'Homosexuality is a sin and being put inside your brain by the devil'. Yes, even today it's still something we are facing. But you know... Patience and being loyal to yourself and your faith will increase social acceptance. This same guy left our conversation by giving me a hug and without that same anger he had in his eyes before our conversation.

This can only happen by listening. Listen, this year's theme of the Gay Pride. Listening to our experience, listening to your stories, but also listen to people who you are talking with in the future in your home country.

Where is their anger coming from? What are they afraid of?

This will give you the position of really understand where to focus on and how to bring your message to them. The message that the combination of being Christian and being gay is possible. The message of love. The message of social acceptance.

Churches and the Christian community will not change their opinion on LGBT by pressure or laws. You have to start from inside out. Then people will be able to start a conversation in the 'Christian language' they understand. Finally this will have positive influence on the community and even on political choices made in your country.

There is a saying that says: You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Therefore this week, and beyond, we would like to work together with you, share our knowledge with you, but most important of all listen to you.

I wish you a very pleasant and blessed stay here with us this week.