

The Gay Preacher's Wife

LGBT, God, and Marriage in Atlanta



*Growing up in the church in the 1950s and 1960s, homosexuality wasn't discussed, especially not in the black community. Lydia Meredith's [memoir](#) *The Gay Preacher's Wife* is a personal account of how life can become a testimony of tolerance, love and acceptance even within the confines of the church.*

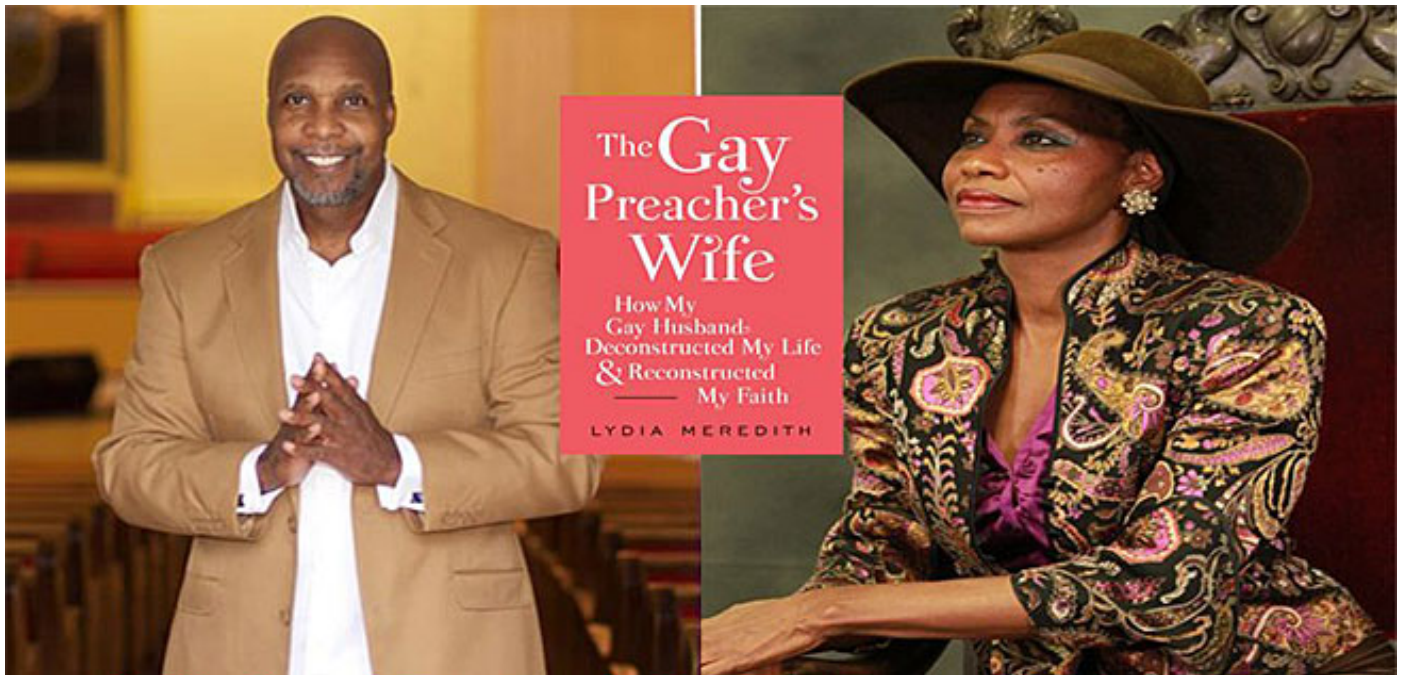


"I was one of those preachers' wives who sat in the pew many a Sunday morning while my "real" life was a fraud. I discovered several years into my marriage that my husband was cheating on me—with men—numerous men. (And women too, I later found out). I watched my husband stand in that pulpit on Sunday morning, preaching one message and living out yet another."



An estimated 4.2 percent of metro Atlanta's population identify themselves as LGBTQ, placing the region in the top half of a list of 50 U.S. metropolitan areas, according to a [Gallup analysis](#). The data is based on surveys of 473,243 adults across the 50 largest metropolitan areas, conducted between June 2012 and December 2014.

These results are based on responses to the question, "Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?" which was included in 206,186 Gallup Daily tracking interviews. This is the largest single study of the distribution of the LGBT population in the U.S. on record. It is the first time a study has had a large enough sample sizes to provide estimates of the LGBT population by state.



After being married to [Reverend Dennis A. Meredith](#) for almost thirty years and having three sons, Lydia Meredith and the pastor divorced in 2008. "The media reached out to Dennis Meredith, to respond to the [Reverend Eddie Long](#) sex scandal. I understood why they contacted him. His church was the only African-American church in Atlanta to welcome openly gay members. And he had just come out as gay himself. It was a natural fit."

"While I didn't know Dennis to have sexual relations with minors, he was a middle-aged pastor living with a boyfriend who was twenty-something years old when they got together. The affair started while Dennis was still married to me. There would be countless scandals to uncover in Dennis's life if the media wanted to start digging."

Her ex-husband is now an openly gay pastor and leading a congregation of over one thousand members that are predominantly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Lydia and Dennis remain close and one of their sons came out as being gay and HIV positive.

"Society should be comfortable with the diversity of humankind, instead of attacking people because of their [sexual identity](#). Such practice is dehumanizing and abhorrent. Humankind needs to live in truth and be strong and comfortable in that truth. Regardless of being a man, woman, transgender, bisexual, gay or lesbian, you should be able to live openly, not closeted."



Inspired through her new life, Lydia decided to go back to school to learn more about theology. She believes Jesus' ministry and teachings are about tolerance and love for people who are labeled different. "The church needs a new kind of ministry, one steeped in the tradition of the ministry started by Jesus that is free of bias, discrimination, hate, or prejudice; and marked by loving God and loving others. That is the key to social transformation."

Lydia Meredith is now focusing her efforts on breaking the code of secrecy that supports inappropriate behavior by church members and the clergy. She believes the true sins are hate and hypocrisy not homosexuality, and the church needs to return to its roots by serving others.

*Photos Courtesy of **Lydia Meredith, Dennis Meredith, Gallery Books***