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**Title**

Jason Frey Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

November 13, 2017

**Extant**

1 hour 20 minutes and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history, Jason Frey discusses his experience in the Mennonite Church and with its theology as a gay man; the connections and acceptance he found among his classmates, but also the remaining opposition in more conservative sects. He discusses challenging traditional Mennonite attitudes with his writing.

**Biographical**

Jason Frey was born in Northwestern Ohio and grew up with two older brothers in Eastern Pennsylvania. His mother was raised Methodist but became Mennonite after marrying Jason's father. And while the family identified as Mennonite, they would attend an Evangelical church as there were no Mennonite Churches in the surrounding area. Jason recalls his parents discussing certain parts of services at the Evangelical Church that they did not agree with, such as Veterans Day celebrations.

Jason would attend public school in the area. He recalls having Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu classmates, but was one of the only Mennonite students. Starting in 2006, Jason attended Bluffton University, which he recounts as feeling intensely Mennonite to him as he grew up on the sort of "fringe" of the Mennonite community. At Bluffton Jason focused on religious studies. He also became very involved on campus and was a hall chaplain and a Resident Advisor for part of his time at Bluffton; he also was active with music and drama ministry groups. He also attended First Mennonite Church during his undergraduate years. In 2010, his senior year at Bluffton, Jason came out to his family and friends as gay. His friends and family were

supportive, although his parents were concerned that their community would not be as receptive to this news and felt they had to keep quiet.

After graduating from Bluffton University, Jason began to seek out higher education opportunities. He had always felt that his calling was to pastoral care before turning more academic. He would attend Princeton Seminary from 2010-2013. He was interested in pursuing queer studies, disability studies, and critical race theory as he moved into his Master of Divinity program. He would also end up exploring the work of Augustine.

Around 2012, Jason would begin interning at Mennonite Congregation of Boston and recalls thoroughly enjoying his time there. He also has done work with Pink Menno at several Mennonite conventions as well as preached at several UCC congregations.

After completing his Masters at Princeton Seminary, Jason started a doctorate program at Chicago Theological Seminary. He wanted to write more fully on challenging the two-Kingdom notion that is in Mennonite faith as well as how the non-violence stance can be problematic for confronting issues such as racism and oppression. While working on his doctorate, he was chosen to become the Director of Admissions and Recruitment for the school. He also became connected to Chicago Community Mennonite Church.

When asked about his optimism in the Mennonite community moving forward with regards to the LGBTQ+ community, he has a sense of optimism, but is also worried that without radical change within, that many might see it as being “too little, too late”.

Jason is married to his longtime partner, Chad, who is a member of the Presbyterian Church. Jason currently serves as the Dean of Students and the Vice President of Student Services at Chicago Theological Seminary.

### **Scope and Content**

In this oral history, Jason Frey discusses his experience as a gay man in the Mennonite Church given its theology; the connections and acceptance he found among classmates at Princeton Seminary and Chicago Theological Seminary; the limits to a career in more conservative sects. He discusses challenging traditional Mennonite attitudes with his writing.

This interview was conducted by Rachel Waltner Goossen, professor of history emerita at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan and author of *Women against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

### **Access**

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/jason-frey>.

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## **Languages**

Collection material is in English

## **Existence and Location of Originals**

This recording was given to the Mennonite Church USA Archives by interviewer per their agreement to transcribe it and then allow LGBTQ-RAN to host the interview and its transcription on its website.

## **Cite as**

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## **Tags**

Mennonite Church USA

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Author/editor

Frey, Jason