

David MacDonald Testimony in the Gay Community

This testimony can be found at www.GayTestimony.com David's music site is www.DavidMacD.com

I was invited to a birthday party for a gay co-worker as the "straight" one. They knew I was into my Christian faith. Most were pleasant, but then a guy lost it, raised his voice and gave me a forceful lecture on why I should throw away my "magic book" the Bible. He said it should be banned because it is full of hatred. His partner told him to calm down. I listened attentively to his pain, and thought to myself, "if he only knew my history, he might feel different." At the end of this I quietly said that my belief in God has given me the strength to stay out of sexual relationships for 20 years. He seemed quite taken back. Later, in private, several of them asked me how I did it, and why I seemed happy. I shared my experience that abstaining from sex is not "denial," but rather, freedom.



The next morning after Communion I had a vision in my mind that two rocks were closing a narrow passageway to the Light. I had my back against one and was pushing against the other trying to hold them apart. There were gay people who were depending on me so they could get through the passageway to the Light before the entrance closed. As I was holding apart the rocks, they were walking under my arms to the Light. The rock pressing against my back was the Church, which is angry at the gay community. The rock in front was the gay community which hates the Church.

In the past, I don't think many churches have done a very good job at trying to understand same sex attraction, nor has the gay community been willing follow Christ in any serious way. These two factors have made it very difficult for same sex attracted people to experience the love of God. But God loves each of us so very much. Thankfully, as "Theology of the Body" has spread, many churches are better prepared to face real life sexuality issues with compassion, patience, and faithfulness while helping congregation members stay committed to chastity.

I would rather not open my life up like this, and would not do it if I did not feel a burning in my heart. I hope it helps.

Early Years

I grew up in a non-religious family on a street named "Queen Mary," in Ottawa, Canada. It was a rough neighborhood and I got beat up a lot. I used to wake up with knots in my stomach. One night, when I woke up and looked out the window, I saw a neon Cross on the steeple of a Church and the light came into my room. It was beautiful. The knot left my stomach.

Soon after, I memorized Jesus Christ Superstar and danced around the house singing while the record was blasting. That record was about the only thing even remotely Christian in our house.

At 10 years old some of my friends said "get lost, you're gay!" Another time, my brother asked my mom, "Is he gay or what?" My dad always used to make jokes about "queers." I would disappear into playing the guitar that my older brothers had bought.



Photo: This is me at 10 years old on my great grandmother's 100th birthday.

By 14 years old, I didn't believe in God and I thought religion was ridiculous. Like my brother who later committed suicide, I was an atheist. Our entire family was anti-religious. Science was our God.



Photo: David MacDonald, 14 years old playing guitar with friends

Many years of practicing music paid off and at 18, I appeared on a TV show. Afterwards the host invited me to his house where he asked me to sleep with him. I refused. I felt betrayed because I had thought he was interested in my talent.

At 19, I was playing music in Club Med Bahamas. Many gay men worked there and several came onto me. One woman said "Don't you go that direction." I said "you have nothing to worry about" but felt a twinge of discomfort.

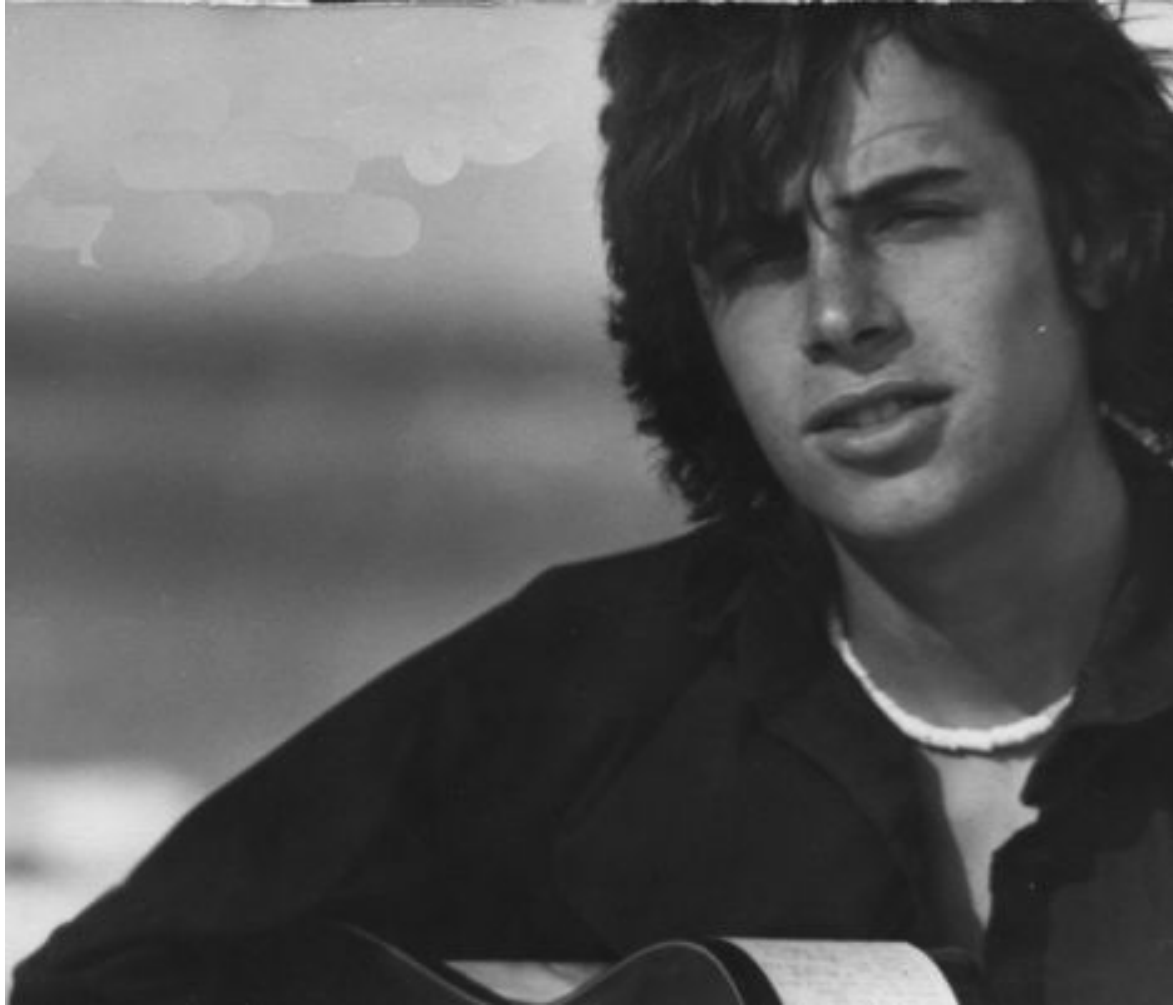


Photo: David MacDonald in the Bahamas 19 years old

I "fell in love" with a model who was in the Bahamas on a magazine shoot. I went to live with her in New York, which predictably only lasted a couple of nights. I wasn't aroused in bed, even though she was the most beautiful woman I had ever been with. It was the first time I had ever had trouble and it confused me. The next night, after a party for model Cheryl Teigs, she told me it was over. I went back to the party, and a man offered me a place to stay. He was gay. I had no trouble being aroused.

I inadvertently rented an apartment in Greenwich Village next to Christopher Street, the gay epicenter of the east coast. I began to have fears I might be gay. My voice teacher was into drag, and I crossed a few boundaries with him. Tragically, he was shot in a gay bar and died a year later - a gifted artist.

I started producing rap music in Harlem. They called me the "Mighty Whitey." A producer, who had several hits on the Billboard charts, took me to a huge gay club and told me I could be a star in the gay community. When I didn't to go to bed with him, he lost interest.

Broadway and Hollywood

At 21 years old, I was cast in a Broadway show and my career took off. I produced music that was distributed on CBS Records and on NBC TV, acted in a Levis commercial, an ABC After School Special, lead roles in movies for Paramount and Columbia Pictures, and was the Rock and Roll Cat, in the US National Tour of "CATS." I liked putting on make-up. The make-up artist used to say to me "paint girl!" She was a tall blond woman who took me home. In bed I found out that she was transsexual, which kind of messed things up.

Several directors and music producers wanted sex but I took to heart the advice of an older gay man who said "in show business you can build a thousand bridges, but if you kiss one ass, you're an ass kisser." I never slept with any directors but I was a flirt. The arts community in NYC at that time was primarily gay. It confused me why men with same sex attraction tended to be more artistic, but it was true. Below is a clipping from The New York Times the week of my Broadway opening.



Photo: David MacDonald, in the centre clapping his hands, Broadway opening, NYC.

I was living the Jet Set, and was at Studio 54 a lot. Within a couple of years, things started to unravel. I was involved in a couple of abortions and I spiraled emotionally. I was doing a fair amount of drugs, and had a terrible eating disorder and had several encounters with guys.

A girlfriend took me to a Hollywood movie called "Making Love" about a doctor who left his wife for a male patient. I felt uneasy during the romance scenes between the men, intrigued but repelled. I hung on close to my girlfriend out of concern of what people might think of my presence at the movie.

I had a lead role in the US National tour of "Cats," but my bad living caught up with me. I got sick and burned out my voice completely on the tour before our Chicago opening. It was the end of my career. I was 24 years old. For the next 3 years, I communicated by writing on a note pad and could only talk in a whisper 10 minutes a day. MTV called me up to be a host, Kenny Ortega (who directed the "Material Girl" video and later directed High School Musical) called me to audition for a tour with Madonna as singer/dancer, but my career was over, and life as I knew it. I had a gay roommate in New York who was a dancer in "Cats." He was the son of a minister in the Midwest. I think he was kind of annoyed with me because I never admitted being gay. A couple of years later when I came out to him he said he wasn't surprised.

I was looking for answers and "natural" healing for my voice and thought it might be partially psychological or spiritual. I booked an EST seminar (New Age) in San Francisco and an acquaintance connected me with his gay friends who gave me a place to stay. I saw the San Francisco gay scene up close. The guys seemed really obsessed with their weight and how they could best be noticed in bars. They were in and out of relationships every few weeks. They seemed to be desperately looking for love and acceptance in an environment which was driven by physical looks and charisma. HIV was breaking loose at that time and everybody was scared, but that didn't change the amount of sex that was happening. I remained an outsider to this, saying I was "straight." I'm sure they had some laughs about that behind my back. In the gay world there is all kinds of gossip and speculation about who "might be gay."

I eventually ran out of money because I couldn't sing, and returned home to Canada - broken.

Coming out in my hometown

I began counseling with our family physician, who had been our doctor since I was a child. I told him that I wondered about my sexuality. He suggested a group called Coming-Out Right, at Pink Triangle Services. They presented a five stage model.

Stage One - Denial

They told me that all my years up until that point had been spent in denial. I believed this because same sex thoughts and fears were recurring, they would not go away by simply ignoring them, wishing them away, or by being promiscuously hetero.

Stage Two - Admitting to self

I saw that I had had a history of same sex issues persistent from childhood. Deep down I knew it was more than youthful experimentation. I admitted it to myself. At first there was an incredible sense of freedom. I cranked up the volume on the Diana Ross song "I'm coming out - I want the world to know, I'm gonna let it show" and danced around my bedroom with my arms in the air. I was energized.

Stage Three - Disclosure to others

I told my family and relatives that I was gay, wrote letters to ex-girlfriends, and at a high school reunion I came out to everyone. Most people were very supportive. A few said they knew all along. One guy told me he had a crush on me in high school.

Even though I was "coming out right," by the end of the three day reunion, my shoulders were hunched, my clothing was disheveled and my self-esteem was rock-bottom. I wondered if I was "coming down" from the "pink cloud" that I initially felt when I accepted it.

In my search for wholeness I went to New Age conferences, was reading self awareness magazines and books, visiting transmediums, and spending hours in meditation, tai chi and yoga. The New Age was totally accepting of gay sex or any other sexuality. My mentors said:

"Each of us is a sexual being and our sexual nature needs to express itself, otherwise we become unhealthy. We each have an internal 'moral compass' and if we follow our own inner truth we will gain enlightenment, happiness and contentment."

I thought there is no such thing as sin and I believed that evil was simply human ignorance. I didn't understand the human mind's almost limitless capacity for self-justification. I liked the New Age because it made no moral demands on me.

I had my right ear pierced, a public declaration that I was into men. But for some reason, in meditation, I sensed I should not have done it. This confused me. I removed the earring and told the Coming-Out Right group that I felt God was steering me away from having an earring. One guy made a very expletive comment about what I should say back to God.

Stage Four - Socialization with other gay men

I started going to gay dance clubs. A camera crew unexpectedly showed up and I ended up on the news that night, dancing. The clubs were full of drugs, alcoholism and sex in the washrooms. I was trying to stay off drugs, so I learned the club scene was not for me.

One of my friends was lesbian and a doctor. She invited us to a "Christmas" party and said "can all the men masturbate into the same bottle and I will use the sperm to inseminate my partner, and no one will know who the real father is." Luckily, the men thought it was a dumb idea. That was before invitro. Today, most invitro children never meet their fathers.

I ran into my first girlfriend from grade 7 at the gay pride parade. I hadn't seen her in years. She had her top off as we marched thorough downtown. She married a gay man who was a dealer of sadomasochist sex paraphernalia. She later told me she was taking hormones and preparing for breast removal surgery and a sex change. It made me very sad because it seemed like self mutilation and self hatred. When she was young, her alcoholic mom used to go on screaming binges and later died without much reconciliation. I hope she's going to be OK.

Stage Five - Acceptance and integration into the gay community

I integrated in several ways: (1) politics (2) a committed relationship (3) parties/clubs (4) the AIDS movement (5) Getting involved with a gay "church".

Gay politics

I began writing political letters and got involved in activism. I was invited to an EGALE (Equal Rights for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) "coming out" banquet for the first Canadian politician to "come out" in the public media. The TV cameras came around while I was talking to him. I said "when you came out on TV, it was like when I saw Neil Armstrong land on the moon, at 8 years old." I was on the news that night, province wide.

Svend went on to battle for abortion, euthanasia, human cloning, lowering the age of consent for anal sex, gay marriage, and the removal the word "God" from the Canadian Constitution. He later passed hate crime legislation that made it illegal to say gay sex was wrong. (Note: a couple of years ago, his career in politics ended when he was caught stealing a \$50,000 ring for his gay "marriage." At his resignation, he said he had been very depressed and on medication.) I thought all I had to do was to convince society that same sex relationships were perfectly normal and that all the problems with same sex attraction would go away if society would simply accept it. I didn't realize that by trying to convince everyone else of this, I was deep down, trying to quiet my own conscience.

I used to read "The Advocate" which was the most popular gay magazine for arts, culture and sophistication. But I couldn't understand why a high class magazine would get so sleazy on the back pages with ads for sex toys, pornography, hotlines, and escorting services. It seemed like a lust based reality. Many people at the coming out right sessions were into group sex, sex in bathrooms, bathhouses, and park sex. The only time I tried any kind of park sex, I came home feeling incredibly empty. One night they showed us bondage porn movies to "explore" sexual fetishes. This was a government supported centre where doctors sent mixed up youth who had questions about their sexuality.

Getting into a committed loving relationship

I met Steve, a middle class high school teacher, and we started getting serious. We went to parties as a couple. I spent a lot of time at his house, long talks, candle light meals and movies. I brought him to meet my parents and all our relatives. It was committed and monogamous.

Surprisingly, the more I identified with the gay community, even while I was committed to one partner, the lower my self-esteem went, and the worse the eating disorder became. This was true for many in the community around me, including those in steady relationships. In areas like Greenwich village, New York City, and San Francisco, where same sex was accepted and normalized, it was worse for things like addiction, anti-depression medication, partner abuse, infidelity, and eating disorders. That confused me because I thought people would be getting healthier in environments where it was accepted. And I thought I would be getting healthier if I just accepted it. But I was not getting well even in this "loving" relationship. We eventually broke up.

HIV Scare

I began to hear about some of my dancer friends dying from AIDS in New York. These were gifted people at the top of their careers on Broadway and TV, who were plucked from this world in the prime of their lives. It didn't make sense to me and really affected me. My boss at work also died of AIDS. I felt powerless to stop it.

At a safer-sex seminar we were taught how to have sex without exchanging body fluids. We were advised to go for testing regularly because over 20% of men in gay clubs are HIV positive. They said that safer sex does not guarantee anything. We learned about the other illnesses such as anal gonorrhea, hepatitis B and C, HPV, anal cancer and so on. We were told to "double bag" (use 2 condoms), and not "bareback" (no condoms). Many didn't listen to that advice in the heat of the moment. Even with all of these dangers, we were encouraged to have sex and were told anal sex is perfectly natural. They were adamant that it is "unnatural" and "unhealthy" to abstain from sex if you are same sex attracted.

My great uncle was gay and he invited me to Toronto to introduce me to the scene down there. At a party I was talking to an older man. We were talking about homosexuality vs. bisexuality. He said "actually I'm bisexual, I'm into men and boys." It took me a while to catch what he was saying, it stunned me. My uncle and I left the party and went to a club. I ended up with a partner that night and spent the next couple of days having "safer" sex. On the last morning, my partner told me that he had had over two hundred partners and was probably HIV-positive but didn't want to get tested because it might hurt his insurance and employment. I knew that I should go for testing. I was vomiting from bulimia six times a day, my weight dropped to 118 pounds which is very thin for a 5'9" man. The whispering started from people who wondered if I had the big "A".

I went back to the doctor who had directed me to the Coming-Out Right sessions and asked him for an HIV test. He said "you shouldn't go for testing because it puts you at legal risk." I found it odd that my doctor was discouraging a high risk patient from getting tested. That was before anonymous testing. But finally, he agreed and sent me to be tested, which was negative. I didn't have HIV, and I decided not to screw around after that.

Catholic nuns and members of the gay community worked side by side for the common good of those with HIV even though they had radically different beliefs. I learned that Mother Theresa started one of the first AIDS hospices in New York. I was not Christian, but I was impressed by the compassion of the nuns.

(Years later, I went back as a summer bookkeeper at the AIDS Committee of Ottawa - ACO. The entire baseball team of a friend in Toronto died, except for him. It was devastating. This fellow worked at the Gay Archives, which later led a Human Rights case against a Christian print shop owner, who wouldn't print gay stationary. The Christian lost the case which cost him \$200,000 in legal fees.)

I was not talking to my family, and instead of seeing my parents at Thanksgiving and Christmas, I went to the Pink Triangle Services centre where they had turkey and a potluck, where others in the gay community who didn't have a place to go also went. Although it was good that there was somewhere to go, and there were people all around me, I had an incredibly empty feeling. Something was wrong.

Metropolitan Community Church

I was trying to find spiritual answers for my unhappiness, bulimia, grief, and self destructive behaviour. I was invited to the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) which was affirming to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people. The founder was in town that week. He had been a Baptist minister who was married with kids, but gave into his desire for men, divorced his wife and became estranged from his family. I didn't think it was very spiritual for a father to walk away from his kids, but I couldn't judge. I had aborted mine.

The founder was an overweight middle aged man who fell in "love" with a handsome young man in his 20's. It seemed like plain old lust to me, like the New York directors who went after me. However, I could appreciate his heartbreaking struggle with same sex attraction during his marriage and his desire to bring Christ to the gay community. This pastor got one part of God's message right:

"God loves us just the way we are..."

But I think he ignored the important part

"... God loves us too much to leave us that way."

Many in the MCC believed in God, but no one dared question the morality of same sex relationships. They considered such questions "hate." People were encouraged to consider the Bible cafeteria style, and dismissed Bible quotes against gay sex by saying, "God is love, the Bible is outdated, theologians disagree with each other, Sodom was about rape - not homosexuality, Jonathan was gay, Jesus never said anything against homosexuality...." I didn't think too much about the Bible, but I did read a book that attempted to reconcile gay sex with Scripture. It seemed to make sense to me. It had lot's of Bible references so I thought they must have done their research.

A lesbian told me "it is so hard to find a man to get us pregnant, and then just f*ck off!" I had to step back from a friendship with a woman who was looking for that from me. The church was a virtual soap opera of sexual relationships and break-ups that everyone rationalized as "healthy sexuality." The MCC became a major "Christian" voice in Canada's legalization of same sex marriage.

I was at a friend's house and on the coffee table there was a gay community newspaper. There was an article about a guy who left the gay community. The paper was saying he was in denial and was a traitor, and stuff like that. I asked my friend about it. He said "oh yeah, they are a bunch of Christian freaks who try to turn gay people straight." I didn't know what to think. In another article, there was a huge gay march on Washington, and even though the article was disapproving of some Christians who were praying silently beside the march, I was very moved by it. I didn't know why.

My family doctor asks me out on a date

The doctor who originally sent me to the Coming-Out Right sessions had been our family doctor since I was a child. During an office visit, he said:

"David, even though I have a wife and children, I have always been attracted to you. Would you like to go out on a date?"

I felt betrayed. I cancelled therapy. It really affected me. Later, a gay acquaintance told me that this is common in the same sex world between doctors and patients. My life had become a mess, and my eating disorder was not improving. Karen Carpenter died of anorexia a few years earlier, I wondered if I would be next. I didn't know where to turn. It seemed I had tried everything.

"Coming out" of the same sex world

I ended up in a non-religious recovery program for anorexia/bulimia. I was still following the New Age and I went to Montreal to meet a famous Guru but got lost and ended up at Saint Joseph's Oratory by "accident." I was struck by its beauty and majesty and went inside.

Elderly women put their hands on the feet of the statue of Jesus, whispering prayers and humbly walked away with their heads bowed. I was very moved and thought, "These women have faith! Maybe the Church isn't a cold stone building full of hypocrites" - which was my attitude before that moment. I went to an upper sanctuary and alone in front of the Cross, I lay face down and said:

"Lord Jesus, I don't know you at all ... but I'm a mess ... could you please come into my life? Take my heart, take my health, take my circumstances, take everything about me. I'm yours."

An amazing feeling came over me. As I got up from the floor, I knew something was different. I had a sense that I had found what I was looking for all along. Shortly after that I stood in front of a Crucifix in a Church yard. I asked God to heal my ways and the misery I had caused myself and others. Then something incredible happened.

I felt the burden of same sex attraction lifted off of my shoulders

I suddenly felt very light, and certain of my direction. I stopped going to the "coming out right sessions," stopped the political letter writing and left the gay community. This was before I became involved in any Church. No one "brain washed" me out of the gay world. I had simply been given freedom from it.

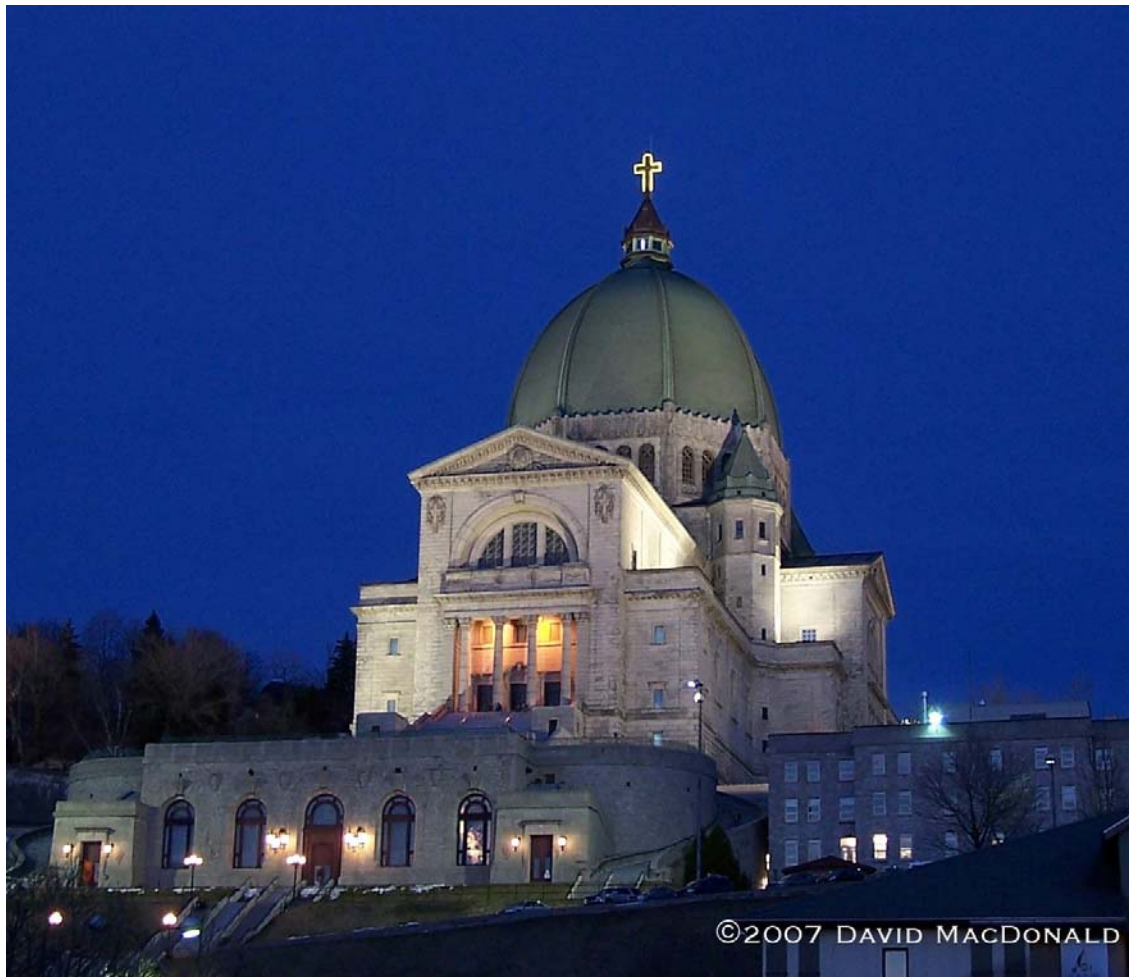


Photo: St. Joseph's Oratory Montreal

The Oratory in Montreal has a neon cross like the one I saw as a kid in Ottawa. It is on Queen Mary Street (in Montreal), which is the same street name as where I grew up. It was on Queen Mary Street in Ottawa that I had the spiritual experience as a child. I had come full circle to the One who anonymously healed the knots in my stomach as a kid.



Photos: Queen Mary St. Ottawa (left) where I grew up, Queen Mary Street Montreal (right) where the Oratory is, and where I was given a new life.

Single and celibate

Some Christian groups present hetero marriage as the goal for same sex attracted men. I don't think that is necessarily the goal. I believe the Lord has called me to follow the example of Paul, to lead a life of service as a consecrated single chaste person. I now understand that my search all along was a journey home to Jesus. I have not used porn or had "sex with self" in 5 years. I belong to an accountability group of people (some straight, some gay) who want to live free of all that stuff.

I learned that sex is not like food or water, you don't die without it!

I think the gay community's 5 stage model of "coming out" is like half the 12 steps, missing the recovery part. Admitting same sex attraction was an important part of the solution. I never would have made it if I'd stayed in the closet. But the paradox is that by truly accepting it and handing it to Jesus, I was given freedom, one day at a time. I am inspired by the apostle Paul's call to a consecrated celibate single life:

...to the unmarried ... I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am ...In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God. ...it is well for you to remain as you are...Do not seek a wife ...I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord ... he who refrains from marriage will do better. (1 Cor 7:6-40)

Jesus says:

"... it is better not to marry.... Let anyone accept this who can." (Mat 19:10-12).

Of course many are called to marriage, but I believe I've been called to follow the steps of St. Paul.

What's it like now?

Through involvement with various groups I recovered from anorexia-bulimia, and other addictions. I went back to high school, and then University, graduating with a B. Com, Magna Cum Laude. I still had some brain cells left! Today, I am the vice president of a company that helps people with disabilities gain access to computers. I don't take medication like Prozac, I don't even eat sugar or drink coffee. I have been eating normally for years and am a normal weight. I get regular exercise and generally have no trouble sleeping. My relationship with my family and relatives is good, even though most of them don't believe in God. I still love them and we get along fine. I pray for them all the time. I have many friends.

I became a Catholic in 1995, and for several years I have been going to Mass every morning, and I spend an hour a day in prayer. I have remained free of sexual relations. I can count the times I've thought or dreamed about gay sex since that day in front of the Crucifix 20 years ago. I don't think the real enemy is "sexual orientation," but rather it is lust. I now understand what Jesus meant when he said "If you even look at a woman [or man] with lust you have committed adultery in your heart." (Mat. 5:28) The only successful remedy for lust that I have found is a relationship with Jesus.

On a retreat, I began singing again, not with the voice of my Broadway days, and sometimes it gets sore and I lose it, because I did permanent damage in New York. A series of miracles got me a little recording studio and I got airplay on some Christian radio stations.

I try to help people who are struggling with the sin that is interfering with their experience of God. I also help out with my nephews who were orphaned by my brother's suicide. I have been able to collaborate with some great musicians who also love the Lord. I am sometimes asked to travel to other countries to share my music and experience.

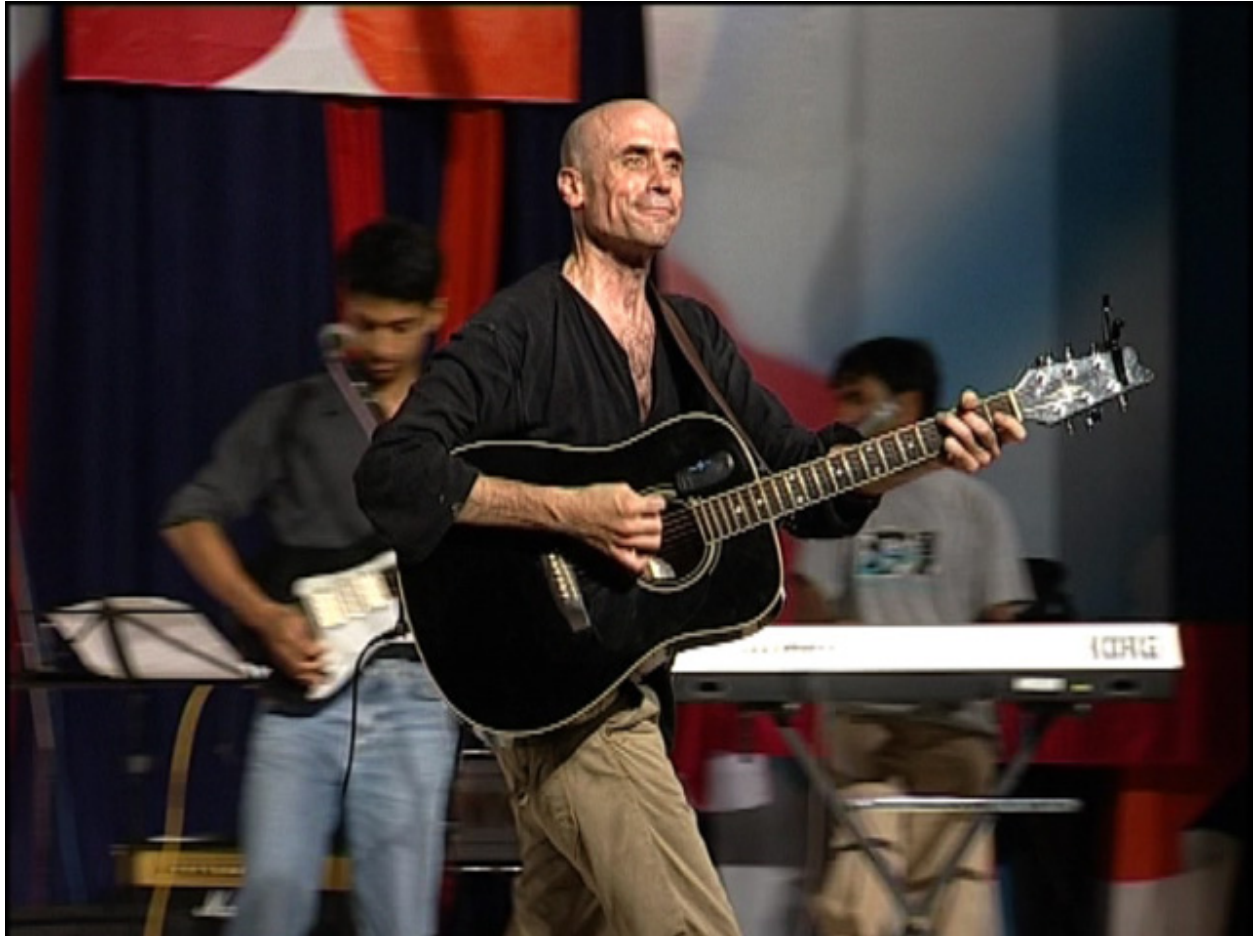


Photo: David MacDonald in India

These days my goal is to become "radically moderate," although I have to admit I sometimes spread myself too thin on the many things I'm involved with, which is not great for a "high maintenance" guy like me.

The favorite part of my life is experiencing the presence of my Lord after Communion. In those moments, I feel a connection with the men and women of old who left us this great legacy. In prayer, I feel a powerful connection with He who made me, and He who will return me to himself when my time is over on this earth.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for all you have given me. I thank you for all I have lost. And I thank you for all the hearts that you've touched through me and the hearts that have loved me to health and happiness in your most precious and Holy Name. Amen.