

been baptized, the House of Bishops commends the rite of Affirmation of Baptismal Faith as the central feature of any service to recognize liturgically a person's gender transition.

For a trans person to be addressed liturgically by the minister for the first time by their chosen name may be a powerful moment in the service. Some trans people may not wish their former name or gender to be mentioned. It should be noted that the giving or adoption of a new name has a long history in the Judeo-Christian tradition as may be evidenced from Scripture.¹

Tellingly, the Church of England appeals to the widely held belief that all people, whether believers or unbelievers, are in the image of God, for the document states, "The image of God, in which we are all made, transcends gender, race, and any other characteristic." But this is contrary to Scripture, which teaches that only believers are restored according to the image of God lost in the fall of Adam (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10),

When the culture adopts the madness of the transgender movement, and even the established Church of England conforms to the spirit of the age, Christians like Mackereth will increasingly find themselves an isolated and ostracized minority in the United Kingdom.

The author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* repudiates the Christian faith

Joshua Eugene Harris (b. 1974) was a leading figure in the "Christian Purity" movement. His father, Greg Harris, was a leader among Christian homeschoolers in the 1980s and 1990s, a movement that his son, Joshua, enthusiastically embraced. At the age of 17 Harris began to speak at his father's homeschooling events, and from 1994-1997 he published *New Attitude Magazine*, a resource for homeschooled teenagers. In 1997 without any formal theological training, Harris moved from Oregon to Maryland to place himself under the mentorship of Charles Joseph (C. J.) Mahaney, pastor of Covenant Life Church and Sovereign Grace Ministries. The same year, Harris published his bestseller *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. A year later, 1998, he married Shannon Boone with whom he has three children. His second book, *Boy Meets Girl: Say Hello to Courtship* (2000), recounts the history of his relationship with Shannon.

Harris served as senior pastor of Covenant Life Church from 2004 to 2015. In January 2015 he an-

nounced that he was stepping down from his pastoral role to pursue formal, theological training at Regent College, Vancouver:

In reflecting on my own story, I can't help but think that I have lived a sort of backwards life. Without meaning to, I have experienced life out of the normal order and sequence of events. At the end of last year I turned 40 years old. Yet it is only now that I am going to school. I haven't completed any post-graduate study. I don't even have an undergraduate degree. In fact, I have never attended a formal school full-time in my life.... Seven years after I arrived at the church I was set in as the hand picked replacement for C.J. I was 30 years old, with no formal theological training and no formal training in organizational leadership, and I was the Senior Pastor of a 3,000-member church. That, my friends, is a crazy, backwards life!²

In addition, sexual abuse allegations rocked Covenant Life Church and Sovereign Grace Ministries around that time, although no allegations were ever made against Harris. In 2014 a former member of Covenant Life Church was convicted of the sexual abuse of children, which crimes took place in the 1980s. Allegations brought in a civil suit against Mahaney and others, that the leadership had covered up the abuse, were dismissed by the Maryland Court of Appeals in June 2014.³ Nevertheless, Harris expressed misgivings in an interview that "the isolation of Covenant Life, and of a small cluster of churches of which it was a part, may have fed leadership mistakes, including the decision of pastors—himself among them—to handle a child sexual abuse case internally instead of going to police."⁴

In 2016 Harris released a statement in which he repudiated the core teachings of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* and the Christian purity culture it promoted, and apologized for the "hurt" it had caused. He followed that apology with a "Ted Talk" in 2017 and a contribution to a film "I Survived I Kissed Dating Goodbye" (2018). As Albert Mohler astutely observes, "The obvious question that arose from the film and from his statement in 2016 is what was left of Harris' understanding of sex, and for that matter, of Christianity?"⁵

The answer to that question came in July 2019 when Harris announced his separation and divorce from his wife Shannon. He followed that with a repudiation of

1 <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/Pastoral%20Guidance-Affirmation-Baptismal-Faith.pdf>.

2 https://www.covlife.org/blog/joshua_harris_sunday_remarks.

3 <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/md-court-of-special-appeals/1671245.html>.

4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/long-an-outsider-popular-evangelical-pastor-heads-for-the-mainstream>.

5 <https://albertmohler.com/2019/08/01/joshua-harris>.

the Christian faith: “I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus,” he wrote. “The popular phrase for this is ‘deconstruction;’ the biblical phrase is ‘falling away.’ By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian.”⁶ Finally, Harris “repented” of his Christianity, lamenting that his advocacy of Christian sexual ethics had hurt many people:

I have lived in repentance for the past several years—repenting of my self-righteousness, my fear-based approach to life, the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to parenting to name a few. But I specifically want to add to this list now: to the LGBTQ+ community, I want to say that I am sorry for the views that I taught in my books and as a pastor regarding sexuality. I regret standing against marriage equality, for not affirming you and your place in the church, and for any ways that my writing and speaking contributed to a culture of exclusion and bigotry.

6 <https://www.newsweek.com/josh-harris-not-christian-dating>.

Notice how Harris now equates Christianity with self-righteousness, not the truth of the grace of God, which excludes all self-righteousness. He also views Christianity as oppressive to women and LGBT people, as well as exclusionary and bigoted. Finally, Harris confirmed his newfound “tolerance” by attending a “Pride March” in Vancouver on (Sunday) August 4, and proudly sharing photos of himself wearing a T-shirt with the message “Love Is Great” while holding a rainbow donut.⁷

Harris should find the words of Hebrews 6:4-6 sober reading, as should we all:

It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 <https://www.christianpost.com/news/joshua-harris-marches-in-pride-parade-after-apologizing-to-lgbt-community.html>.