

JUNE 2022 Pride Month Asia-Pacific Panel Discussion

'It was a great experience of community as we discussed our paths to UUism and coming out'. That's how Australian representative, Darren Moir, from the Perth Unitarians congregation described recent Pride Month Asia Pacific LGBTQIA panel.

The topic *How Religion Should Not Be a Hindrance to Being Queer* was discussed by a diverse range of members including Elle Lewellyn (leader of [YouYou](#), an LGBTQ support group, Singapore) and Kordor Lyngdoh Tron, a transwoman from Meghalaya, India who is President of Shamakami an NGO that advocates for the state's marginalized LGBTQ+ community.

Rev Tet Gallardo, founder of the new LGBTIQ UA Fellowship in the Philippines organized and welcomed the panel. It was moderated by Paula Maria Gregg originally from Maryland, US, who has settled in Dumaguete with her family. She serves as pastor for the UU LGBTIQ UA Fellowship. James and Renee Hills from Brisbane UU Fellowship joined the Zoom call as allies and were inspired by the courage of panel members to live true to themselves.

As Darren wrote: *'...many of the struggles our Asian siblings are engaged in have been won here already, but love and justice will win everywhere in the end. Simply to be yourself as an LGBTQIA+ person is an act of faith'*

Darren Moir

On Saturday the 25th of June I was honoured to join a discussion on an Asia Pacific LGBTQIA UU panel for Pride Month, the topic being "How should religion not be a hindrance in being queer?" The panel consisted of clergy and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community from across Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Thanks to the advocacy of James and Renee Hills, Australia, too. 😊

It was a great experience of community as we discussed our paths to UUism and coming out. The topic under discussion was quite quickly dealt with as it is self-evident that religion should not be a hindrance to being queer. It was great to hear how members of the panel were challenging perceptions and impediments to queerness within their own societies, local communities, and families.

It was a reminder to me of the privilege I enjoy living as a gay family man in Australia. Many of the struggles our Asian siblings are engaged in have been won here already but love and justice will win everywhere in the end. Simply to be yourself as an LGBTQIA+ person is an act of faith. To be your true self, at peace with your God and living in the faith that your fellow humans will see and nurture your inherent worth and dignity. This is what any religion worth following is all about.

From Elle Lewellyn, Singapore

Queer couple Elle and Mel, representing [YouYou](#), UU, and Singapore's interfaith and LGBTQ+ minorities, wish to stand in solidarity with all LGBTQIA+ persons who feel left out and alone. YOU are okay just the way YOU are; no one else can be specially You more than Yourself. We love you for being you. Elle will be the point of contact, and she is happy to

welcome anyone who requires connection with her group, or just needs a Public Universal Friend. 😊

Elle can be contacted via

Email: youyouwuv@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/elle.hans.llewelyn>

Panel Members

- 1 . Paula Maria Gregg, moderator and Divinity student from Union Theological Seminary. Paula is from Maryland, US, and has settled in Dumaguete, Negros Island, Philippines, with her family. She is pastor for the UU LGBTIQA Fellowship there.
2. Rev. Leslie Mae Minasalvas is a new minister of the UU Church of the Philippines and leads a church in the hills of Don Salvador Benedicto. She is a lesbian.
3. May Gimang is the elder of the UU LGBTIQA Fellowship, also lesbian.
4. Lui Sayre is a transman, an entrepreneur and a Deacon of the UU LGBTIQA Fellowship.
5. Coriander Gunn is a new graduate of Silliman University, Dumaguete, who also identifies as a man.
6. Apollo Marr Bugay is in the faculty of theology in Siaton, Negros Island, and identifies as gay.
7. Berna Jumoad is a transwoman who is a self-employed artist in Dumaguete.
8. Kordor Lyngdoh Tron was a transwoman from India in Meghalaya state. She was a Project Coordinator of SAATHII (Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India). She is also a member of Transgender Social Justice Welfare Board & President of Shamakami, an NGO that advocates for a marginalized (LGBTQ+) community in Meghalaya.
9. Elle Llewelyn is from Singapore and is the leader of YouYou, an LGBT group.
10. Darren Moir, a farmer from Perth who is a member of the [Perth Unitarians, WA](#).

Rev. Tet Gallardo, panel organiser and founder of the LGBTIQA UU Fellowship, Philippines, is the first ordained lesbian minister in all of Asia. She is a published poet and [writer](#) on spiritual matters.