



Pop singer David Archuleta, is seen in the reflection on a framed poster of Archuleta in her home in South Jordan on April 20.

BETHANY BAKER | The Salt Lake Tribune



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Courtesy of Lisa Diamond



Courtesy of Ben Schilaty



Courtesy of Allison Dayton



Courtesy of Darice Austin

with the loving God we have come to know on this journey."

### CHOOSING TO STAY — FOR NOW

Jen and Josh Rollins live in Riverton and are the parents of five children, ranging from ages 13 to 24. Of those, three are part of the LGBTQ community.

"Prior to having queer kids, I would've thought, 'Oh, they'll just go to a lower kingdom, a form of heaven, and we'll just come and visit them,'" Jen said. "Once I had queer kids, I couldn't wrap my mind and my heart around that even being a possibility."

She read books on the subject (particularly influential was Tom Christofferson's "That We May Be One: A Gay Mormon's Perspective on Faith and Family") and attended an Encircle conference with her gay son.

And she and her husband prayed — a lot.

Josh, who was serving as a bishop when all three of their children came out, said prayer has been his lifeline as he and his wife have sought to chart a course they never anticipated for their family.

"I described it as receiving an answer one time that, 'They were my kids before they were yours,'" he said. "And so I just trust that they're in his hands and our family will be together in some way, some form. It's just different than what we knew before."

In the meantime, the couple and their children are taking it one Sunday

and one conversation at a time.

At one point, Josh thought he was "headed out" the door of the faith he loved — a feeling he never thought he'd have.

"But the more that I really search and seek to be in tune," he said, "I feel the Spirit prompting me to stay and to share the love that I'm learning, which is much deeper and broader than I've ever known."

### 'I CLAIM YOU'

That decision to remain in the fold isn't easy, the couple agreed. Most days, Josh said, it feels a lot like having each foot in a different canoe, both moving at different speeds.

Schilaty has seen this struggle repeated in other Latter-day Saint families and believes there are steps the church could take — short of changing the doctrine on eternal marriage — to ease that tension and make staying a more sustainable option for more parents.

The biggest one is no longer framing LGBTQ children as a burden to their believing parents.

He cited a 2006 interview with senior apostle Dallin H. Oaks and now-emeritus general authority Seventy Lance B. Wickman.

In it, Wickman said "it's hard to imagine a more difficult circumstance for a parent to face than" that of LGBTQ children asking if they can bring their partner home for the holidays.

"Can you imagine being a kid reading that and being like, 'I am such a burden?' Schilaty asked. "What the message that kid needs from their parents — again and again — is that you belong and I claim you. And you are not a burden; you are a gift."

Doing so, Schilaty added, will "not only save lives, but increase mental health and also strengthen family relationships."

Groups like Lift + Love strive to offer the on-the-ground support to families trying to figure out what being a supportive parent and a faithful Latter-day Saint looks like.

"Really the work has become helping families stay connected to the church and to God," Dayton said. "That's where parents really need help because most times they don't want to have to give up either (their child or the church)."

### 'HELL TOGETHER'

These days, Bartholomew said she and her family are thriving, unburdened by the pressures to conform to a mold they could no longer fit.

Recently, Archuleta released a new song dedicated to his mother. The title: "Hell Together."

In it, the once poster boy of a faithful Latter-day Saint sings: "If I have to live without you, I don't want to live forever."

The first time Bartholomew listened to it with the lyrics written out ("My English is not very good," the native Honduran explained), she wept.

Only this time, they were tears of joy.

**Editor's note** » If you or people you know are at risk of self-harm, call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, or chat at 988lifeline.org.