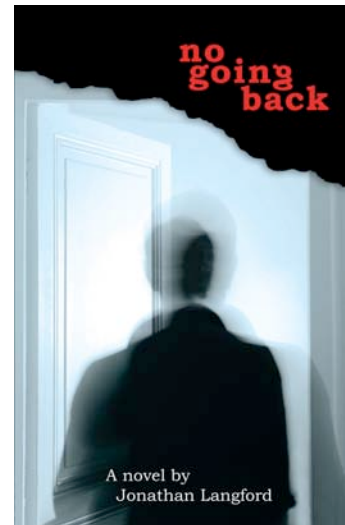




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## **A Coming-of-Age Story About What It Means to Be Teenage, Mormon—and Gay**

*Zarahemla Books publishes a groundbreaking novel that focuses on the tension between faith and feelings for a gay Mormon teenager, his best friend, and their circle of friends and family members.*



PROVO, UT, September 22, 2009—A gay teenage Mormon growing up in western Oregon in 2003. His straight best friend. Their parents. A typical LDS ward, a high school club about tolerance for gays, and a proposed anti-gay-marriage amendment to the state constitution. In *No Going Back*, these elements combine in a coming-of-age story about faithfulness and friendship, temptation and redemption, tough choices and conflicting loyalties.

“Jonathan Langford’s *No Going Back* is a heartfelt, heart-breaking, and ultimately enriching tale of what it means to be a fifteen-year-old Mormon boy who truly wants only to do what is right but is faced with the terrifying fact that he is gay,” according to Gerald Argetsinger, associate professor of performing arts at the Rochester Institute of Technology and former artistic director of the LDS Church’s *Hill Cumorah Pageant*.

“Abiding by Mormonism’s high standards challenges all its faithful adherents,” writes Thomas F. Rogers, Mormon playwright and BYU professor of Russian emeritus. “Coping with one’s besieged status as a young gay is no less difficult. What if you are both at the same time? Like no other work I know, Langford’s frank and poignant novel brings this real-life impasse into bold relief.”

### Telling a Human Story

“I wanted to write a story that reflected the dilemma of someone whose emotions pull him in one direction, but whose religious commitment pulls in a different direction,” explains Langford. “It’s a novel about being Mormon and same-sex attracted, but also about the universal adolescent—and human—experience of coming to know oneself and choosing one’s loyalties.”

The result is a complex novel written in a deceptively simple style, extending over a year and a half with multiple characters, plot lines, and points of view—reflecting the experiences of the teenage protagonist and his best friend, but also of their parents, one of whom is also the boys’ bishop.

For most readers, this approach succeeds. “These teenagers act like teenagers, even though they are basically good kids,” claims William Morris, founder of the Mormon arts and culture blog *A Motley Vision*. “Any discussion of same-sex attraction makes a lot of Mormons uncomfortable. But the novel is thoroughly orthodox. Its characters are orthodox Mormons. Its tensions and

ultimate solutions and resolutions are firmly rooted in active LDS life—prayer, scripture study, repentance, the priesthood, love, charity, hope, the family.”

Ty Mansfield, coauthor of *In Quiet Desperation: Understanding the Challenge of Same-Sex Attraction* (Deseret Book, 2004), praises the novel in similar terms. “Parents, friends, priesthood leaders, and peers are all a critical part of how we negotiate our sense of self-identity and life choices, and this story is masterful in how it brings to life all the tensions associated with that process. I found myself forgetting this was fiction and wanting to contact the main character to assure him he’s not alone.”

### Contributing to the Conversation

While reactions to *No Going Back* have been largely positive so far, Langford and Zarahemla Books are both bracing themselves for inevitable controversy. “This is an area where passions run high,” Langford acknowledges. “This story isn’t one that will please partisans on any side of the issue.”

Langford’s nuanced, even-handed, yet honest approach is a big part of the appeal for many readers. “It’s high time we came to terms with same-sex issues, the more so where we are most reluctant to do so,” insists BYU English professor Steven C. Walker. “I welcome both this broaching of the issue from a Latter-day Saint perspective and its frankly positive dealing with an issue this touchy.”

“Langford has touched very sensitively, compassionately, and thoughtfully on a very important topic about which Mormons are almost completely silent,” writes Clark Draney, associate professor of English at the College of Southern Idaho. “I see this book as an essential step in opening a viable dialogue about a struggle that is very real for many members of the church. In truth, I believe this book will save someone’s life.”

### About the Author

A long-time reader and critic in the Mormon literary community, for several years Jonathan Langford moderated AML-List, an e-mail discussion group sponsored by the Association for Mormon Letters. This is his first published novel. He is married with three children and currently serves as membership clerk in his LDS ward.

**Author Jonathan Langford is available for interviews, and complimentary review copies of the book are available upon request.**

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