

What is Integrity?

Integrity is an international organization of gay lesbian and bisexual Anglicans and their friends. Our primary goals are:

- to encourage Christian gay men and lesbians in their spiritual lives,
- to support the Church in its commitment to seek and serve Christ in all people, and
- to reach out to the lesbian and gay communities in Christian love and service.

Integrity is a network of local chapters and individuals offering ministry within parish, diocesan, and national Church bodies. We are part of the Alliance of Lesbian and Gay Anglicans, working with other organizations around the world to encourage the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the life and ministry of the Church. Membership in Integrity is open to all Christian people who support Integrity's goals.

Canada's first chapter was organized at Integrity's first international conference in 1975. We have had a presence at General Synod since 1983 and opened our first Synod display in 1989. Integrity has chapters in several cities across Canada, and maintains an active presence on the internet to broaden our ministry of support and encouragement to people in smaller towns and rural areas.

Integrity and the local parish

Although gay and lesbian Anglicans are active in all levels of church life, some gay people have been badly hurt by negative attitudes and ignorance in the Church and find participating in regular parish activities difficult. Many gay people who grew up in the Church or have looked to the Anglican Church for spiritual nurture as youths or adults have been turned away by anti-gay prejudice and rhetoric. They

have been discouraged from integrating their Christian faith and sexuality, often being forced to choose one at the expense of the other.

Integrity invites our hurting brothers and sisters back to the Church by demonstrating Christian care and faithfulness. For a time the fellowship they find in Integrity may be their only Church contact. We support all people in their spiritual growth and wholeness, and we encourage them to seek parishes where they can participate without pretense about their sexuality or experience of grace as gay Christians.

The Church's attitude toward lesbians and gay men

On the parish level the Church's acceptance of lesbian and gay people varies widely, from enthusiastic welcome to outright rejection. While our bishops affirm that gay and lesbian Anglicans are full members of the Body of Christ, the Church still does not accept us as whole people, integrated in faith and sexuality. It mandates life-long celibacy only of its gay and lesbian priests, and it refuses to acknowledge God's grace in our committed relationships. In many parishes we are taught that our desire to love and be loved by another person is sinful; we are led to believe that we are inferior in God's eyes; we are forced to hide the truth about ourselves from our families and closest friends, to pretend to be heterosexual, and frequently to marry.

Attitudes are changing in society, but gay people still meet open hostility or grudging tolerance in the Church. Some Church leaders actively oppose human rights for lesbian and gay people. They use phrases like "family values" and "healing" as code words for exclusionary and even hateful attitudes. In some places gay and lesbian Anglicans are even refused the Eucharist. This reflects neither Gospel values nor Anglican piety.

In this context Integrity is a corrective force that strengthens gay and lesbian Anglicans to be open, honest, practicing Christians — to share our love, gifts and ministry with the Church. Likewise, we encourage the Anglican Church to become the redeemed family of God, respecting each person in all our diversity.

Those who disagree with us

Of course there are some within the Church who disagree with Integrity's ideals, and where these differences are respectful we gladly engage on-going discussion in hope that the mind of the Church may be improved in careful consideration of true Christian values. We are less inclined to dialogue where there is disdain or willful ignorance for our views and experience, and in these cases we exercise patience, hoping for the day when a mutually respectful dialogue is possible.

Flaunting it!

Heterosexuals make more of an issue of their sexuality than they are aware of. Heterosexuals make a point of introducing their husbands or wives, girlfriends or boyfriends, even in social situations where these relationships are irrelevant. They hold hands in public and show off pictures of their children. They wear rings on their fingers or parade in T-shirts that proudly convey information about their mates and sexual lifestyles. Public kissing of mates meeting or parting at subway stations, airports and the like is actually promoted! Most of us think that such displays are perfectly agreeable — but it hurts and angers lesbians and gays when we are accused of "flaunting" our sexuality when we do the same.

The Bible

Some proof-texts are used to assault us and to deny that gays or lesbians belong in the

Church. A careful reading of the Scriptures does not bear out this opinion. For a fuller examination of biblical texts, see Integrity's pamphlets *What the Bible really says about lesbians and gay men*, and *Does the Bible actually say Anything about homosexuality?*

Integrity and the Gay and Lesbian Community

Many Integrity members take an active part in the life of our larger community, from marching in Pride parades to serving in and leading many organisations. After all, our political aims are the same as most other Canadian homosexuals. We proudly show off our Anglican connections at major celebrations like Lesbian/Gay Pride, and affirm our Christian identity even in the face of hostility and rejection.

Instruction of Young Persons

The Church's teaching of its youth needs to cover several facets:

- Young people should be supported with prayer and guidance, as they discover their sexuality and sexual orientation, free from external pressure to be homosexual, heterosexual, or even to declare themselves at all.
- Young persons need a wide variety of role models with healthy sexual attitudes, including parents, teachers and clergy.
- Most especially, young persons need to see healthy, successful, integrated gay and lesbian adults in the world around them.
- Both homosexual and heterosexual young people, as well as those who are unsure of their sexuality, must develop moral courage and receive adult support to deal with inappropriate sexual advances. To advise "Just say no" is not sufficient. The church must help young people to gain a moral and

ethical background to come to their own decisions about sexuality.

What Integrity asks of the Church

General Synod in 1995 said: "*[we] affirm the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the church, and condemn bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation.*"

And in 2004, General Synod "*affirm[ed] the integrity and sanctity of adult, committed same-sex relationships.*"

Integrity calls on the whole church to live up to these commitments.

The Church must repent of all activity which serves to diminish or hurt lesbian and gay people. It must establish a community which is fully life-affirming. We call upon all our brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of sexual orientation, to work with us to build a Church and society of justice and of right-relations.

Published by Integrity, which has several chapters across the country.

Visit Integrity Canada on the web:
www.integritycanada.org

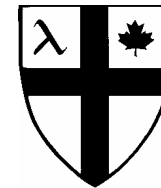
which has contact information for all chapters, including links to chapter websites.

This pamphlet and other Integrity print resources are available online at:
www.publications.integritycanada.org

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Integrity



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