

Below is a copy of a Declaration and Motion, developed and passed by my parish. I was part of the Rainbow Committee that wrote these. I fully support the philosophy, wisdom and words of this document.

Robert Douglas Loree of St. Christopher's Parish, Burlington, Ontario, Diocese of Niagara

**A Declaration to Welcome and Affirm
All Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer and Their Families
at St Christopher's Anglican Church in Burlington, Ontario**

We have learned that

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (hereafter LGBTQ) people have experienced discrimination, prejudice, exclusion and even violence for loving who they love and being honest about who they are.
- sexuality and gender identity are not choices but a matter of inherent identity.
- the process of 'coming out' and living honestly in society is one fraught with fear and stress.
- LGBTQ children and teens, and the children of LGBTQ parents are especially vulnerable and at risk.
- our Holy Scriptures have been and continue to be misused, misunderstood and misrepresented as words that judge, hurt and condemn.

We acknowledge that

- we are part of a Church that has failed to support and protect its LGBTQ members and the Queer community who are our neighbours.
- we have allowed hatred, violence and injustice to go unchallenged.
- historically the Church has shared a message of hatred, exclusion and condemnation for LGBTQ people.
- fear, prejudice, oppression and persecution have been generated by the Church in the past and continues to be promoted by most Churches today.
- many have left our Church and others see us as irrelevant and hateful.

We celebrate that

- The Diocese of Niagara has already authorized a rite for the blessing of same sex couples.
- We have been able to meet our LGBTQ local community through our presence at Burlington Pride.
- We are blessed with the presence of LGBTQ people involved in our ministry and life together here at St. Christopher's.
- We have added LGBTQ resources to our library and run an educational program here at St Christopher's.
- LGBTQ people have come to St Christopher's because we fly the Pride flag.

We affirm that

- God loves everything God has created.
- our diversity, sexuality and gender identification are gifts from God, and in living and worshipping together, we encounter the fullness of life promised by Jesus of Nazareth to all people.
- our diversity, our sexuality and our gender identification are gifts by which God's image is more fully revealed in us and in our community.
- all LGBTQ people are welcomed and affirmed as full members of our Church, in community life, in leadership and in our ministry.
- regardless of sexuality and gender identity, all faithful and loving relationships are blessed by God and are blessings from God.

We condemn

- all acts of hatred, bullying, intimidation, discrimination, inequality and violence against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

We intend to continue to be a welcoming, affirming, accepting, understanding and loving faith community where LGBTQ people and their families feel safe, and participate fully. We will do this by:

- educating ourselves about the issues facing the LGBTQ community.
- learning by practice how to become a welcoming, positive and affirming faith community.
- building bridges to our local LGBTQ community and promote healing for past wrongs.
- speaking out against all hatred directed towards the LGBTQ community and all forms of discrimination
- working prophetically for justice and equality for the LGBTQ community.
- requiring groups and agencies who use this facility to sign a statement that they will not discriminate against participation in events and meetings in our building on the basis of sexuality and gender identity.

MOTION: THAT THIS VESTRY adopt the "Declaration to Welcome and Affirm All Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer and Their Families at St Christopher's Anglican Church in Burlington, Ontario" as proposed by the Rainbow Committee and distributed at this meeting. (Adopted by Vestry on February 12, 2012.)