

The Riverside Church



*Interracial • International • Interdenominational
Open • Affirming • Welcoming*

The Riverside Church Statement of Openness, Inclusion, and Affirmation of Gay or Lesbian Persons

We are called upon to love one another. When we do so, we are being faithful to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, who personifies the new humanity. Knowing and acknowledging who we are is basic to the faith encounter with Jesus Christ, who sees, calls, and loves us as we are. It is as we struggle to recognize our identity that we begin to grow into the persons we will become in Christ. Made in God's image, as persons, loved by God, we are called to fully accept ourselves and our sexuality.

Recognizing that our Christian faith is the foundation of our values in human relationships, we envision a community in which each person will grow up knowing, enjoying, and having confidence in her/himself as a sexual being. Our sexuality is a gift from God, which enriches our lives and deeply touches the reality of our own and others' humanity; it is a channel through which we experience the abundant life.

We seek to work together in light of the gospel to define principles of human relationships and behavior that are based on relating to each other as whole persons, with love, responsibility, accountability, trust, and mutual nurture. We reaffirm the traditional family and further recognize and embrace single persons, Lesbian/Gay relationships, extended families—all families of support that are founded on the principles of love and justice.

Because Lesbian/Gay persons are often scorned by society and alienated from the church, we wish to reaffirm that Lesbian/Gay persons are embraced within the membership of The Riverside Church upon making the same affirmation of faith that all other persons make; and that as members of the Body of Christ and The Riverside Church, Lesbian/Gay people are expected and encouraged to share in liturgy, general life, employment, and leadership of our congregation.

All people have a right to respect and justice. Living in Christ requires that we act so that Lesbian/Gay persons should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. Hatred, ignorance, and fear breed homophobic violence, and such violence is not qualitatively different from crimes against any other group. Therefore, The Riverside Church must stand against the violence and injustice perpetrated against Lesbian/Gay people in our city and society.

Also, The Riverside Church must educate its own members about the evil of such violence, both physical and psychological.

Further, The Riverside Church will:

- Condemn the widespread acts of harassment, intimidation, and violence against Lesbian/Gay people which violates Judeo-Christian principles;
- Call on all officials and agencies concerned with crime and its victims to research, document, and combat violence against Lesbian/Gay people, and urge the specific inclusion of Lesbian/Gay people in laws aimed at deterring crimes motivated by bigotry;
- Support guaranteed civil protection for Lesbian/ Gay people in employment, housing, and child custody, enabling more of them to report homophobic crimes and to seek legal redress;
- Develop and implement strategies to address homophobia and sexism in its programs;
- Develop and implement programs in church and community to further understanding and respect for Lesbian/Gay people;
- Implement programs that will involve members of the congregation in a serious study of their own sexuality.

Voted affirmatively at a meeting of the Religious Society of the Church on June 2, 1985.