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No person shall be denied rights, status, or an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by Canon.

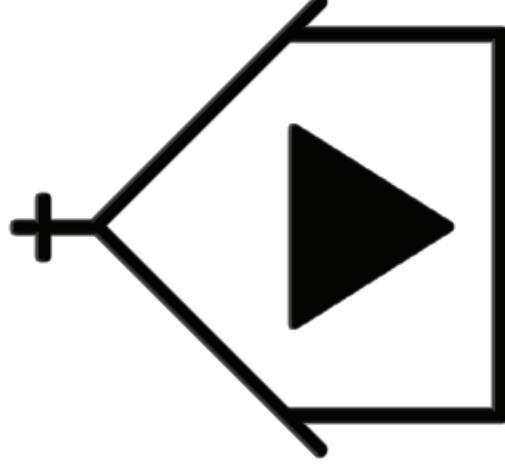
The Canons of the
General Convention
Title 1, Canon 17, Section 5

Discrimination Against LGBT Lay People in the Episcopal Church

Integrity is a nonprofit organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] Episcopalians and our straight friends. For over 30 years, Integrity has been the leading grassroots voice for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Episcopal Church and their equal access to its rites.

To join, visit or website above or send your check (\$75/household, \$45/individual) to the address above. Contributions to support our ministry are welcome and tax deductible.

Know your rights...
and defend them!



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Discrimination based on sexual orientation is against canon law

The Canons of the General Convention are the laws that govern how the Episcopal Church operates. The national canons are binding on all clergy and laity. Should there be a conflict between the national canons and diocesan canons or parish bylaws, the national canons prevail.

In 1994, General Convention passed a change to canon law prohibiting discrimination against lay people based on sexual orientation.

Discrimination still occurs

Unfortunately, many of the laity and clergy are not aware of this section of the canons. In some cases, clergy and laity knowingly violate this section to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] lay people. Some conservatives argue that this section only applies to celibate LGBT people—not those "living publicly in sin." However, the canons makes no such delineation, nor did General Convention intend such an interpretation.

A number of alleged discrimination cases have been reported to Integrity in the last few years. These include:

- Being prohibited from serving in congregational ministries or on vestries
- Being terminated from or denied parish employment
- Being verbally abused as a parish employee
- Treating same-sex couples in the congregation differently than married heterosexual couples

Unfortunately, in most cases, the victims did not seek justice—either because they were unaware of their rights or were afraid of retaliation.

Defend your rights!

If you experience discrimination in the church because of your sexual orientation, defend your rights! This is vital—not only for you, but to deter discrimination against other LGBT lay people. Here are some suggested actions:

1. Document the discrimination as soon as possible. Be sure to include all the facts: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Sign and date the document.
2. If possible, and you feel safe doing so, ask the perpetrator in writing to remedy their discriminatory

behavior. Document their response.

3. If the perpetrator does not remedy their discriminatory behavior, seek relief in writing from the next higher ecclesiastical authority. Depending on the situation, this may be the senior clergy person of the congregation or the bishop. Document their response.
4. If church officials do not intervene to remedy the discriminatory behavior, consider initiating a presentment against the clergy person(s) who perpetrated the discrimination or failed to remedy it. This is a very serious step to take and should be done only after prayerful consideration. The procedures for filing a presentment are detailed in Title 4, Canon 3, of the Canons of the General Convention. The canons can be downloaded at no charge from www.churchpublishing.org/general_convention/.

You can help Integrity monitor discrimination in the church by reporting incidents at www.integrityusa.org/discrimination/. All reports will be kept completely confidential.
