



In 1974, a young Georgian man named Louie Crew who was on a teaching fellowship in San Francisco telephoned the reportedly progressive Grace Cathedral in that city, asking if they could help him and his partner meet other gay Episcopalians. The derisive laughter he heard in response prompted him to start a newsletter that November to help gay and lesbian members of the church support one another in what was then a fairly hostile environment.

A gifted writer, Dr. Crew penned the lead editorial himself:

"Integrity derives from integer, Latin for 'entire.' All Christian wholeness demands affirmation of God ordained sexuality; and gays and straights alike are Charged with the responsibility of using their sexuality in healthy human sharing rather than perversely trying to change or exchange the Gift of God."

Across the country, men and women saw the newsletter advertised in both church and gay publications. They organized into a handful of chapters and gathered, 200 strong, the following year for a national convention. The newsletter grew into a magazine, and was published until 2007, by which time the Internet was providing more immediate, interactive and cost-effective means of communication with Integrity's members. Many editions of the newsletter are available on-line in the archives.

On the national level, Integrity has had official representation at every triennial General Convention of the Episcopal Church since 1977. The organization's members have helped draft and gather support for the legislative resolutions by which the church's official stance has evolved from denial to tolerance to welcome. A timeline of the LGBT-related resolutions and actions of the church are (here). The Integrity Eucharist at General Convention, once held on the margins, now is an official event that draws nearly 2,000 worshippers, many of them straight allies for whom the celebration has become a highlight of their Convention experience.

As Integrity approaches its 40th anniversary, the organization has some 60 (chapters) and membership numbers in the thousands. Integrity is grateful for the support of [Proud Parish Partners](#), (congregations which support its mission) as well as diocesan and other organization who share in the work of fostering inclusion.

Integrity has a particularly strong partnership with TransEpiscopal, the organization of transgender Episcopalians. In 2012 the two groups collaborated on a video, [Voices of Witness: Out of the Box](#), featuring transgender people of faith telling their own stories.

Since 2010 Integrity has been the principal voice within the Episcopal Church of the ecumenical [Believe Out Loud](#) welcoming church movement. Episcopal parishes which have taken visible

steps to be LGBT-inclusive are known as Believe Out Loud Episcopal Congregations. Integrity provides workshops and other learning opportunities for people and parishes to take this step.

At the 2012 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Indianapolis, nearly every resolution which Integrity supported was affirmed by the church leadership:

- A provisional rite for the blessing of same-sex relationships, developed over the prior triennium as an act of the last Convention, was adopted for use beginning on the first Sunday in Advent of that year. At press time, nearly half the church's 90 domestic dioceses have begun using it in their churches.
- Gender identity is no longer a barrier to fulfilling a call to ministry, either ordained or in the laity.
- A churchwide study of the nature and theology of marriage will be undertaken
- The church will be called to speak out against bullying
- The church will be called to speak out on behalf of same-sex couples mired in the immigration process
- The church will be called to speak out for the end of the Defense of Marriage Act which prohibits federal recognition of same-sex married couples.

Having accomplished this, Integrity's leadership saw itself at a pivotal point. No longer outsiders, we have seen the church turn significantly towards a more welcoming and inclusive stance towards LGBT persons. As such, we sense our role is changing, and adopted a new mission and vision for the organization:

Our Mission

Integrity USA's **mission** is to inspire and equip the Episcopal Church, its dioceses, congregations, and members to proclaim and embody God's all-inclusive love for LGBTQ persons and those who love them.

Our Vision

Integrity's **vision** of its success is that The Episcopal Church thrives as a beacon of love, justice, and compassion, where ALL PEOPLE are equally embraced and empowered.

Through Integrity's evangelism, thousands of LGBT people, estranged from the Episcopal Church and other denominations, have returned to parish life.

Although the Episcopal Church has made tremendous strides toward inclusiveness, it still has a long way to go. Unfortunately, in too many parishes and dioceses, prejudice and oppression are still the norm. Whatever your sexual orientation or gender identity, Integrity needs your support and membership. [Join today!](#)