



AFFIRMING

FAITH



CHRISTIANITY

WORKBOOK

Egale

 Rainbow Faith
and Freedom

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous Peoples, who have stewarded these lands for millennia. These lands, now known as Canada, are home to a rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions.

We acknowledge the enduring presence and contributions of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to this land, and recognize their deep connection to the territories, waters, and resources.

We acknowledge the painful history of colonization, forced displacement, and cultural suppression that Indigenous Peoples have endured, and the ongoing impacts of these injustices.

We commit to honouring Indigenous rights, supporting reconciliation efforts, and fostering meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities based on mutual respect, understanding, and partnership.

May we all work together towards healing, justice, and a future where Indigenous Peoples are empowered to thrive and flourish across Turtle Island.



ABOUT

Egale Canada

Egale is Canada's national 2SLGBTQI organization working to improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI people in Canada and to enhance the global response to 2SLGBTQI issues. Egale achieves this by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education, awareness, and legal advocacy. Our vision is a Canada, and ultimately a world, without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and all forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.

Rainbow Faith and Freedom

Rainbow Faith and Freedom (RFF) is a global movement to confront religious-based LGBTI Discrimination and improve the human and equality rights of LGBTI people everywhere. Decreasing and lessening the effects of religious-based LGBTI discrimination can, and will, make changing punitive laws easier and improve the lives of LGBTI people so they can be who they are, love who they want, and find safe and accepting places to practice their faith (worship).

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1. CHRISTIANITY: OVERVIEW OF THE FAITH

Christianity is the world's largest and most practiced religion, with more than two billion estimated adherents. It has been around for 2,000 years and is rooted in Judaism, Hebrew, and Greek scriptures. The most common Christian groups are Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. This said, there are thousands of Christian sects, churches, and denominations around the world that are distinguished largely by their doctrinal beliefs in how scriptures are interpreted and practiced.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion. Its followers believe in one God who manifests as three persons: the Father (God), the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Collectively, these are referred to as the Holy Trinity.¹

Like in other faith traditions, there are Christians who are better understood as being culturally Christian. They may, in some instances, identify as Christian due to familial affiliation or ethnic heritage, but their present beliefs or practices may not align with all aspects of the faith as outlined by the dominant group of believers within the tradition.

¹ It is important to remark that some Christian denominations, like the Church of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostals, and Christadelphians reject the concept of Holy Trinity.



Christian faith is primarily established on the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God and the central figure of Christian belief. Jesus is said to have been born supernaturally through the Virgin Mary by way of God, which makes him both divine and human. Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, or chosen one,² sent to save the world from sin, and that to believe in Jesus as one's Lord and Saviour and to follow his teachings is the only way to salvation and redemption. The persecution and crucifixion of Jesus by non-believers is central to the teachings of the faith, which assert that after his physical death, Jesus was resurrected after three days. Christians also believe that Jesus will return to earth (referred to as the Second Coming), at which point those who have accepted him as their Lord and Saviour will live with God in Heaven, and those who did not will be condemned to Hell for all eternity.

It is important to understand that not all Christians have the same level of commitment to their faith. Some Christians are actively involved in practicing their religion by attending services, reading scriptures, praying, and adhering to moral teachings. They may participate in some Christian holidays or rituals, but they do not base their worldview or lifestyle on Christian doctrines or values.

2 The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word "Mashiach," which means "anointed one" or "chosen one." In Christianity, it stands as a synonym of the Greek word "Christ." The concept of the Messiah in Christianity is rooted in Old Testament prophecy, which predicted the coming of a deliverer who would save the Jewish people and mankind.



1.1 Important Symbols

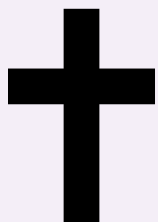


Figure 1:
Latin Cross

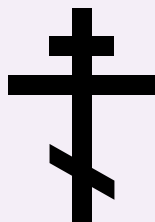


Figure 2:
Orthodox Cross

The **cross** on which Jesus was crucified represents one of the most well-known and important symbols of Christianity. For many Christians, the cross represents God’s love for humanity, since Jesus’ death on a cross is considered to be a sacrifice made so that humanity could be saved from sin and live with God forever. Many Christians wear jewelry bearing the cross as a symbol of devotion.



Figure 3:
Ichthys symbol

Another significant symbol attributed to the faith is that of the ichthys or **fish symbol**. There is a range of ideas about its origins and meaning, but many suggest it to be straightforward: when read as an acronym, the initials in ICHTHYS translate from the Greek as “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” Others relate the fish to early Christians who used the imagery as code and calling card for other believers when the faith was prone to persecution, as the image drew from older traditions and cosmologies.



1.2 Important Texts

The Bible is the holy book of Christianity and is believed to have been written by men under the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It contains the blueprint for Christian living and is the most-read book of all time. It is, in fact, an anthology of 66 texts in total, divided into the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). The Old Testament documents how God created the heavens, the earth, and the first generations of humans, as well as books containing poetry and religious rules. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, the disciples and major prophets, as well as the establishment of Christianity, the church, and the spread of the gospel, that is, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Bible outlines several instructions for Christians on how best to live, emphasizing values such as charity and kindness, among others. However, much of the directives for Christians can be best summarized in the Biblical verses Matthew 22:36–40. In this selected text, Jesus instructs his followers to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (NIV)



1.3 Important Holidays

Days of significance vary by denomination. However, there are two important holidays that span across all Christian faith groups: Christmas and Easter.

† **Christmas** represents the birth of Jesus, who is believed to have been born in a manger in Bethlehem. It always occurs on December 25 (Catholic, Protestant) or on January 6 (Orthodox).

† **Easter** represents the resurrection of Jesus, whom the Bible says was raised from the dead three days after being crucified and laid in a tomb. Dates vary based on the lunar calendar but will always fall on a Sunday between late March and early April. Palm Sunday (the Sunday prior to Easter), Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Ash Wednesday (mid-February) are all important traditions of the Easter celebration for Christians.

1.4 Important Rites and Rituals

Christianity acknowledges certain rites that mark significant stages in the life of a believer. Within the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Church, these rites fall under what is known as the seven sacraments, or those practices established by Jesus Christ and ensuring believers access to divine favour. Those rites include baptism, holy communion (or Eucharist), confirmation, confession, anointing of the sick, marriage, and ordination. However, baptisms, confirmation, communion, and regular worship are foundational rituals to the faith and are accepted across the most common Christian groups.



† **Baptisms** are a water-based ritual performed shortly after birth (also known as “Christenings”) or when the person publicly professes their faith as an adolescent or adult. In the latter case, the person is considered to be “born again” in the faith and their prior life and sins washed clean.

† **Confirmation** typically follows baptism for Catholics, Orthodox, and some Protestant Christians, though the timing of each differs between the traditions. This ritual involves anointing the head of the individual and confirms the individual’s inclusion into the body of faith.

† The rite of **communion** is the eating of bread (or wafers) and wine (or grape juice) in remembrance of the last meal Christ took with his disciples before his crucifixion. This ritual is most practiced among Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, though a version of it is taken up by some Protestant denominations and done in remembrance of Christ’s

material and spiritual sacrifice on behalf of humankind. Unlike baptism and confirmation, which are undertaken once in a person’s life, communion is performed ritually throughout the year.

† **Worship** practices among Christians vary widely depending on denominational affiliation or the ethnic and/or regional histories and cultures shared, though many have certain practices in common. In general, like many other traditions, Christians tend to congregate in groups, offer music, and recite scripture or prayers.

† Sundays are a particularly holy day for many Christians who consider it as the day that God himself rested after creation. Known as **Sabbath**, it is seen as a day that should be limited in activity and used to focus on the contemplation of the creator and come together with the faith community. Some Christian groups observe Saturday rather than Sunday as the Sabbath.



Several of these traditions are derived from the Biblical Old Testament, which is seen as the old Law and the mother tradition that Christianity grew from - Judaism.

1.5 Sources and Suggested Resources

Christian Denominations Family Tree, Episode 2: Roman Catholic & Eastern Orthodox Churches (UsefulCharts. Video, 28:25) [Christian Denominations Family Tree | Episode 2: Roman Catholic & Eastern Orthodox Churches](#)

Christianity (History.com)

<https://www.history.com/topics/religion/history-of-christianity>

Easter (History.com) <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/history-of-easter>

How Did the 'Jesus Fish' Become a Symbol of Christianity? (Christianity.com)

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/jesus-fish-symbol-christianity.html>

The Bible (History.com) <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/bible>

The essence and identity of Christianity: Historical views of the essence

(Britannica.com) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Historical-views-of-the-essence>



2. CHRISTIANITY: HISTORY AND STRUCTURE IN CANADA

According to the 2021 Census, 53% of Canadians identify as Christians, making Christianity the most practiced religion in Canada. Its major groups are Catholicism, the largest group in Canada, representing 29.9% of Christians, followed by Protestant groups, such as the United Church and the Anglican Church. Smaller groups, such as Baptists, Lutherans, Orthodox Christians, and Mennonites, are each concentrated in specific provinces. There is no one “Christian church” in Canada, and these major groups are all run independently from one another by local leaders, regional leaders, or international leaders. In this way, decisions and changes are made in various ways based on their leadership model.

2.1 Catholic Church Structure

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian church in Canada. In 2021, more than 10 million Canadians self-identified as Catholic.

Catholicism was the first of the five non-Indigenous major world religions to arrive in Canada and continues to influence many aspects of everyday life in Canada today. The Catholic Church worldwide is under the spiritual leadership of the Pope (currently Pope Francis I). In Canada, it is led by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, an assembly which facilitates pastoral matters and charitable initiatives, as well as communicating the teachings of the church. Quebec has the largest share of Catholics in Canada, with more than 50% of the population identifying as Catholic.



2.2 United Church Structure

The United Church is the largest Protestant Church in Canada, with more than one million adherents (representing 3.3% of the Canadian population). It is most dominant in the Atlantic provinces, with 12.1% in Newfoundland and Labrador and between 7.5% and 9.7% in each of the provinces of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan identifying as members of the United Church, according to the 2021 census.

The United Church includes a union of Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and other churches. The General Council makes decisions for the United Church and is in charge of developing church policies. Regional councils provide administrative leadership of communities of faith at the local level through 16 regional councils.

2.3 Anglican Church Structure

The Anglican Church is the third largest church in Canada, with more than one million adherents (3.1% of the Canadian population).

The history of the Anglican Church is rooted in its separation from The Catholic Church in the 16th century. The main text of the Anglican church is the Book of Common Prayers, which includes its doctrines. In Canada, the governing body is referred to as the General Synod, which is led by the Primate, the national pastoral leader. Churches are divided into dioceses, which are each led by a Bishop. Dioceses are grouped into ecclesiastical provinces led by archbishops. Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador reported the highest percentage of Anglicans according to the 2021 census.



2.4 Orthodox Church Structure

In 2021, more than 550,000 Canadians self-identified as Orthodox Christian (representing 1.7% of the Canadian population). Some branches of Orthodox Christianity have their own leadership and central organizing structure within Canada. Most prominent among these are the Greek Orthodox and the Russian Orthodox churches. The head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Canada is Archbishop Soterios. The head of the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese in Canada is Archbishop Irénée.

2.5 Residential Schools and the Role of Christian Organizations in Canada

One of the darkest chapters in the history of Christianity in Canada involves the significant role of Christian organizations, particularly the Catholic, Anglican, and United churches, in the government's colonial agenda and the administration of residential schools for Indigenous children. These schools, active from 1831 to 1996, aimed to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture (including conversion to Christianity), disrupting lives and causing irreparable damage to communities by erasing identity, culture, and language. There were over 130

schools across Canada, which were attended by an estimated 150,000 First Nation, Inuit, and Métis children about 6,000 of whom died there. The schools, notorious for harsh discipline and abuse, have left a painful legacy, documented by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which issued 94 calls to action to redress the harm and promote reconciliation.

The Anglican Church of Canada has taken steps to acknowledge and apologize for its involvement in the residential schools' system. On August 6, 1993, Archbishop Michael Peers expressed regret to



the Sacred Circle, previously known as the National Native Convocation, in Minaki, Ontario. This commitment to reconciliation was further emphasized in 2019 when Archbishop Fred Hiltz presented “An Apology for Spiritual Harm” at the Church’s General Synod. Moreover, in 2022, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, extended an apology addressing the Church of England’s colonial legacy and its impact on Indigenous communities.

Various Protestant churches have also recognized and formally apologized for their involvement and the subsequent harm caused. Specifically, the Presbyterian Church acknowledged its role and expressed regret on June 5, 1994. Following suit, the United Church of Canada issued its own apology on October 27, 1998. These apologies not only addressed the underlying presumption of cultural superiority that drove the establishment and operation of these schools but also confronted the grave instances of sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological abuse that occurred under their supervision.

For many years, numerous Indigenous individuals and organizations have vocalized the demand for an apology from the Catholic Church, which operated around 60% of these schools, recognizing the church’s pivotal role in this devastating system of cultural genocide. As a response to these demands, on July 30, 2022, the Catholic Church formally apologized for its role in the residential schools and the harm inflicted on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. During his visit to Canada, Pope Francis described the residential school system and its forced assimilation of Indigenous children as genocide. He expressed sorrow for the harm suffered at the church-run schools and asked for forgiveness **“for the wrong done by so many Christians to the Indigenous peoples.”**



2.6 Sources and Further Reading

'...and yet there's still no peace': Catholic Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada (Springer)

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40839-022-00182-w>

Anglican Church of Canada (Britannica)

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglican-Church-of-Canada>

Anglican Church of Canada (Official Website)

<https://www.anglican.ca/about/organization/>

Archdiocese of Canada, [Russian] Orthodox Church in America

<https://www.archdiocese.ca/>

Canadian Census 2021, Census Profile Table (Statistics Canada)

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&DGUIDList=2021A000011124&GENDERList=1,2,3&STAT-ISTICList=1&HEADERList=0&SearchText=Canada>

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (Official Website)

<https://www.cccb.ca/about/overview/>

Christianity in Canada (Wikipedia)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Canada#cite_note-1

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Canada (Official Website)

<https://goarchdiocese.ca/>

Pope Says Genocide Took Place at Canada's Residential Schools (CBC)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/pope-francis-residential-schools-genocide-1.6537203>



The Anglican Church of Canada and the Indian Residential Schools (The London School of Economics and Social Sciences)

<https://etheses.lse.ac.uk/340/>

The Anglican Church of Canada's apology for residential schools (Anglican.ca)

<https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/>

The Canadian census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity (Statistics Canada)

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>

The Roman Catholic Church and its Involvement

United Church of Canada (Official Website)

<https://united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada>



3. CHRISTIANITY: HISTORIC AND CURRENT STANCES ON 2SLGBTQI IDENTITIES

Given the variance within Christianity in terms of interpretation of the scripture, denominational affiliation, and ethno-cultural diversity, there is a widely varied understanding of 2SLGBTQI issues and of stances on 2SLGBTQI rights across churches and among 2SLGBTQI Christians in Canada.

The ongoing histories of individual and institutionalized anti-2SLGBTQI violence in the name of Christianity are undeniable and must be acknowledged. This said, it would be inaccurate and unfair to suggest that all Christian communities remain hostile or intolerant toward 2SLGBTQI people and issues today.

3.1 Catholic and Evangelical Stances

Influential parts of the clergy of the Catholic Church and more conservative Evangelical Protestant churches tend to hold traditionalist and hardline views on issues of doctrine and 2SLGBTQI communities. This is important to note given the large number of identified Catholics and a growing number of Evangelicals in Canada, particularly youth and those of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds.

Author John C. Green sums up **Evangelical Protestants** as adhering to four distinguishing beliefs from modern Mainline Protestant churches. These are: belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God; belief that Jesus Christ is the sole way to God; the necessity of accepting Jesus Christ for salvation through



being “born again”; and finally, the need to spread (or evangelize) this belief to others.

The first belief brought about a revival of literalist understandings of the scripture, which has, in part, contributed to overall attitudes within Evangelical church communities towards 2SLGBTQI communities. These tend to draw on a number of scriptures to support holding negative sentiments while simultaneously rejecting sections of the Bible that call for empathy, tolerance, and solidarity among human beings. These church communities tend to be less tolerant of open participation, ordination, or marriage solemnization. For instance, many Evangelical leaders champion “conversion therapy,” the discredited and abusive practice of attempting to change or repress an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, Evangelical advocacy against equal rights legislation, such as opposition to marriage equality and transgender rights, has tangible negative impacts. Their influence extends beyond North America; in countries like Uganda and Nigeria, American Evangelical missionaries have played a part in fostering hostile environments for the LGBTQI community by supporting draconian anti-LGBTQI laws.

Similar can be said for various segments of the **Catholic Church**, from those residing on the periphery of the clergy (such as the Society of Saint Pius X)³

³ The Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) is a canonically irregular international fraternity of traditionalist Catholic priests founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. The society is named after Pope Pius X, whose anti-modernist stance the society stresses, retaining the Tridentine Mass and pre-Vatican II liturgical books in Latin for the other sacraments. The organization has been accused of holding racist and antisemitic views, and is famous for being the only religious congregation to agree to celebrate the funeral of Nazi war criminal Erich Priebke (1913 – 2013).



to those embedded within its influential institutions (such as the Opus Dei).⁴ However, it is crucial to recognize that the Catholic Church, in its complexity and multifaceted nature, has experienced and continues to navigate moments of openness towards the 2SLGBTQI community. A notable instance is Pope Francis' letter dated October 2, 2023 regarding the recognition of same-sex marriages. Although the letter stops short of endorsing the blessing of same-sex marriages, it elucidates the Church's willingness to consider other blessings for same-sex unions on an individual basis. Furthermore, it advocates for church leaders to embody "pastoral charity," urging an inclusive approach that refrains from denying, repelling, or excluding individuals from the Church. Notwithstanding Pope Francis' latest letter and the hopes that sparked in the hearts of many 2SLGBTQI members of the Church, it is essential to acknowledge the historical and ongoing harm to the community perpetrated by the Catholic Church globally. Despite the Pope's progressive remarks, the Church continues to uphold doctrines that fundamentally denigrate and invalidate the identities and relationships of 2SLGBTQI individuals. For instance, the Church's current opposition to same-sex marriage inherently marginalizes gay and lesbian couples, and the condemnation and misgendering of transgender and nonbinary individuals further perpetuate a culture of discrimination and hostility. In various regions of the world, this doctrinal bias emboldens societal prejudices and can even shape hostile legal frameworks.

⁴ Opus Dei is a Roman Catholic lay and clerical organization whose members seek personal Christian perfection and strive to implement Christian ideals and values in their occupations and in society as a whole. The organization is a strong advocate of traditional Catholic values, has been criticized from many quarters. The criticisms directed towards Opus Dei have mainly focused on allegations of esoteric cult-like secrecy, aggressive and controversial methods of recruitment, strict rules that govern members, elitism, misogyny, and support for or participation in authoritarian or right-wing governments. This support includes the fascist Franco regime that governed Spain from 1939 to 1975.



3.2 Mainline Protestant Stances

Many mainline Protestant denominations, such as the Anglican Church, the United Church, and the Presbyterian Church, tend to be generally progressive in their stances on 2SLGBTQI people and issues today, as compared to previous generations, moving away from literalist interpretations of scripture and towards more contextual and moral allegorical understandings of Biblical text. All three church communities in Canada have spoken out against active discrimination of 2SLGBTQI congregants and have allowed for active participation within their church communities, with a number of openly gay and lesbian ministers being ordained within all three churches. However, there are ongoing discussions about 2SLGBTQI-specific issues that continue to divide the churches.

The **Anglican Church** has a documented 40-year history of evolving positions on the subject, coming to a common understanding that 2SLGBTQI people are born as they are, are present and contributing members of the church, are children of God and should be treated with dignity. There have been continuing tensions within the Anglican Church with regards to marriage, with different churches holding differing views on the subject and no one stance being taken by the larger church. In 2019 The Anglican Church adopted a series of affirmations to the General Synod (its governing body), which acknowledged the presence of a diversity of understandings of the Marriage Canon that Anglicans currently follow and leaving it to individual dioceses and their bishops to determine authorization of same-sex marriages, while allowing others who hold opposing views the space to do so in good faith. In a progressive stride within the Anglican communion, certain churches have taken proactive measures regarding their acceptance of 2SLGBTQI rights.

The General Assembly for the **Presbyterian Church** in Canada moved to accept a similar stance to that of the Anglican Church in 2021, leaving the decision to churches locally to determine how best to move forward on issues such as



same-sex marriage. The church now operates with two definitions of marriage, one which now includes marriage being between two consenting adults in addition to the traditionally gendered definition.

The **United Church** has been by far the most public in its affirming attitude towards the 2SLGBTQI community, with statements of inclusion and affirmation about sex and sexuality, the ordination and inclusion of 2SLGBTQ clergy, and the church being involved in a number of advocacy initiatives on behalf of 2SLGBTQI communities. This has been in line with the social justice focus of the church in recent decades.

Mainline churches are increasingly adopting a “big tent” approach to their Christian faith, which allows room for scriptural interpretation, acknowledgment of other paths to God, and an emphasis on social justice. The latter has come to include a commitment to 2SLGBTQI issues, with varying degrees of success.

Case: Metropolitan Community Church

A number of smaller Christian denominations and groups have been founded in response to the historical and present-day exclusion of 2SLGBTQI people from many Christian church communities. These affirming ministries have served as a counterforce to traditionalist views and hostile spaces for 2SLGBTQI people of faith. One of the more visible of these churches has been the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). The MCC is a queer-led and affirming denomination formed approximately 50 years ago in the United States, which boasts a number of churches globally, including within Canada. One of its largest and most influential congregations is in Toronto. MCC is known both globally and nationally for its 2SLGBTQI advocacy work, commitment to advancing human rights (for all groups, but especially those impacted by homophobia and transphobia), and for creating safer spaces for 2SLGBTQI people of faith to find community and connection.



MCC Toronto was responsible for significant advocacy work that led to the recognition of same-sex marriage in Canada. In 2001, under the leadership of its founder and former Senior Minister, Rev. Brent Hawkes, MCC Toronto was the first Christian church to solemnize a gay marriage. This event was significant to set the tone for the response to 2SLGBTQI issues in the government and secular spheres in Canada as well as among other progressive Canadian communities of faith.

3.3 Orthodox Stance

Eastern Orthodoxy believes that God created sexuality and the use of sexual organs for one purpose: the act of procreation by couples who are married. Any other form of sexual expression is therefore considered to be sinful, regardless of whether it is heterosexual or homosexual in nature. As such, Orthodox Christians globally tend not to support 2SLGBTQI issues. This said, a study by the Pew Research Center found that most Orthodox Christians living in Greece and in the US do not reject homosexuality out of hand: fully half of Orthodox Christians living in Greece say society should accept homosexuality, as do a clear majority (62%) of Orthodox Christians living in the US.

3.4 Sources and Suggested Resources

Gay and Christian Book List

<http://richerlifecounseling.com/gay-religious-books/>

Gender Essentialism and Orthodoxy: Beyond Male and Female (Book)

<https://www.fordhampress.com/9781531501532/gender-essentialism-and-orthodoxy/>

Gender, Sexuality, and Orientation (United Church of Canada Website)

<https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/being-community/gender-sexuality-and-orientation>



Metropolitan Community Churches (Official Website) <https://insidemcc.org/>

Orthodox and Gay (Community Website) <https://orthodoxandgay.com/>

Orthodox take socially conservative views on gender issues, homosexuality (Article - Pew Research Center)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/08/orthodox-take-socially-conservative-views-on-gender-issues-homosexuality/>

Orthodox Tradition and Human Sexuality (Book)

<https://www.fordhampress.com/9780823299676/orthodox-tradition-and-human-sexuality/>

Pastoral Guidelines for Same-Sex Marriage (Diocese of Ontario, Anglican Church of Canada Website)

<https://www.ontario.anglican.ca/clergy-parish-resources/pastoral-guidelines-for-same-sex-marriage--176>

Pope Francis Allowing Blessings for Gay Couples is Significant but not Seismic (Article - The Guardian)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/18/pope-francis-allowing-blessings-for-gay-couples-is-significant-but-not-seismic>

Sexuality (Presbyterian Church of Canada Website)

<https://presbyterian.ca/sexuality/>

Stances of Faiths on LGBTQ Issues: Presbyterian Church (USA) (Human Rights Campaign Website)

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-presbyterian-church-usa>



4. CHRISTIANITY: DOS AND DON'TS



Do



Do your research.

Despite being one of the largest faiths in the world, there is much to know and learn about the Christian faith that requires a concerted effort and willingness to seek. There are as many understandings of the faith as there are people who practice it.



Do extend.

Extend yourself in good faith to people of faith. Build bridges. Given the histories of friction and, at times, spiritual and physical harm between faith communities and 2SLGBTQI people, there can be some understandable hesitation to build bridges between members of these communities. However, this extension of understanding and friendship is necessary for meaningful repair and for the relationship to move forward. Relationship- and bridge-building go both ways.



Do be mindful.

There is a lot of valid public criticism of Christianity, its history, and the harms done. There are also many intelligent and caring people who continue to believe in, value, and gain meaningful identity from their Christian faith. These people are your neighbours, friends, colleagues, and community members. Many 2SLGBTQI people identify as Christians and consider this part of themselves to be important and integral. Be mindful how you talk about Christians and of the assumptions you may make that can create barriers rather than bridges to understanding and inclusion.



Don't

Don't generalize.

Not all Christians practice their faith in the same way or have the same views on 2SLGBTQI people and issues. While there are shared beliefs, Christianity is a highly diverse religion. There is no one way to practice Christianity, as evidenced by the many denominations and groups around the world.

Don't shame or shun.

Do not try to force, belittle, or use fear-based tactics to influence those who identify as Christian to accept or participate in your beliefs about social-cultural or political issues in the world or to justify your own. Like all people, Christians have a right to see the world in the way that makes sense for them.

Don't assume all Christians worship or practice Christianity the same way.

Not all Christians practice the same Sunday worship traditions, so some staff may ask for other days off. Some denominations hold services on Saturdays, other denominations hold services on multiple days of the week. Many Christians prefer to worship in private and do not belong to a particular church.

