

The statement below was given unanimous support by the Church Meeting of St Columba's United Reformed Church on Sunday 10 February 2019. The statement was drafted in early February 2019 by those attending the First Sunday ministry of St Columba's United Reformed Church in the context of the October 2018 ["Clothe yourselves with love" letter](#) from the four Bishops of the Oxford Diocese.

We are LGBT Christians, from a range of denominations and churches across Oxfordshire. We meet regularly on the first Sunday of each month as part of St. Columba's United Reformed Church, Oxford to share fellowship, food, discussion, worship and Holy Communion. First Sunday was founded over fourteen years ago because LGBT Christians were seeking a safe space to worship, where LGBT identity was not seen as a problem, but as a God-made part of the spiritual whole. Over the years, First Sunday has encouraged people to wrestle with their faith, to seek God and to display God's love to all people.

As LGBT Christians, we thank the Bishops of the Oxford Diocese for their "ad clerum" letter ["Clothe yourselves with love"](#) published in October 2018. We are heartened that the Bishops have acknowledged our pain and the debates that appear to be endless around LGBT Christians. We are thankful that the Bishops want to include LGBT Christians and have asked that all clergy respect LGBT Christians as we have been by our ministers at St Columba's.

For over fourteen years, First Sunday has enabled LGBT Christians to tell their stories. To be listened to and accepted is a blessing, especially after some horrendous experiences in churches where a different understanding of God's love is practised and preached.

We have been bewildered by various groups claiming to have monopoly of biblical understanding. We take our faith seriously and have wrestled with Scripture with integrity; because of this we bring unique insights into the nature of God and relationships. We assert that our biblical knowledge and understandings all have true validity.

We believe that

- we are all made in the image of God
- wholeness is found in becoming the people who God created us to be
- God gave us bodies to enjoy
- there is neither male nor female in Christ
- we are here to proclaim Christ to all, no matter what their background or identity
- Jesus is here for all & we are Christ's representatives here on earth, so we must be here for all
- God is love, God loves all, and accepts all that come to know God

Through these we have come to believe that

- no one should ever be marginalized
- we should all be free to rejoice in our emotions, feelings, and attractions
- acts of love are inspired by the Holy Spirit, no matter the gender or sex of ourselves or the recipients of our love
- same sex relationships are compatible with a Holy life

We have come to believe these things as committed Christians, both queer and straight. We have come to believe them through study of scripture, through lives lived in the pursuit of Christ, and through many varied lived experiences. We have asked questions and received wonderful answers.

We know, affirm, and proclaim that in Christ, love is never wasted.