

Apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ People and Communities



**The United Church
of Canada**



Visions and Dreams

**Dagu aîstimâmî
awîhâmnâbi gichi**

Visions et rêves

Words from the Task Group

As the authors who were tasked with writing this apology, we have held the deep challenges and complexities of speaking on behalf of the church. We know that each of you carry your own stories and experiences; you have come to understand the United Church through relationships with communities of faith, clergy, staff, and fellow United Church members.

We recognize that each person has their unique needs when it comes to healing and that for some, this apology arrives too late and for others, this apology arrives ahead of healing actions by the church that have been longed for.

We offer this apology not because we're convinced we have everything figured out but because we refuse to let fear keep us silent, nor do we wish for perfectionism to overtake the necessary task of publicly and explicitly addressing the legacy of 2S and LGBTQIA+ oppression and discrimination in The United Church of Canada.

We hope that where the apology feels inadequate, that these further resources may provide more depth, nuance, and healing as you process this apology.

Sincerely,

The Apology Task Group:

Rev. Michiko Bown-Kai (acting Chair), Rev. Aaron Miechkota, Christine Dolson, Frederick Monteith and Rev. Tricia Gerhard

February 2025



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Recognizing the need for apologies to be lived into with action, The United Church of Canada offers the following statement in response to the findings of Iridesce: The Living Apology Project and the 2011 National LGBT Consultation.

*God tends the universe,
mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.
God enlivens the universe,
guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.*

*The church has not always lived up to its vision.
It requires the Spirit to reorient it,
helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,
challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,
for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.*

— A Song of Faith



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Apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ People and Communities

To all 2S and LGBTQIA+ individuals who currently are, or have previously been connected with The United Church of Canada,

We, The United Church of Canada, express our deepest apologies to all those who have experienced homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia within The United Church of Canada. This has at times looked like overt actions such as: loss of income, harassment, being denied access to church leadership, and threats to personal safety. The church should be a place of sanctuary and belonging for all people. You deserve a church that reflects God's unconditional and abiding love.

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia have also been present in the times when we remained silent or ignorant instead of actively ensuring policies of inclusion and welcome were being lived out in communities of faith, conferences, presbyteries, regions, other forms of ministry, and at the national level of the church. We recognize that 2S and LGBTQIA+ members of The United Church of Canada have experienced feelings of abandonment when feeling unsafe or unable to access support and care, navigating homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic church environments.

We lament the ways in which the church has failed you, and that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia have hurt not only individuals but loved ones as well, including friends, families, and fellow siblings in Christ. The cost of 2S and LGBTQIA+ oppression in our churches is not just personal; having harmed, excluded, and denied 2S and LGBTQIA+ people, it has been to the detriment of the church. We acknowledge that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia continue to impact people in the United Church today and we offer this apology with an awareness of both past and present harms and failings.



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Moving forward, we recognize that change is required in the hearts and minds throughout The United Church of Canada and also through actions taken at an institutional level. We offer this apology with awareness of the many ways in which healing from homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia is needed within our church. We hope that you will receive this apology as only one part in a larger story of the work of the church and that you will turn to prayer, worship, and fellowship as you receive these words.

Accountability

In response to all that we have learned, and are continuing to learn, we humbly commit ourselves to upholding and fulfilling the recommendations of the “Living Apology into Action” statement issued by the Iridesce Working Group to the General Secretary of the UCC in February of 2023.



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Appendix

Over the past decade the Church has engaged in intentional listening processes to better understand the experiences of 2S and LGBTQIA+ people within The United Church of Canada. We have engaged in prayer, reflection, art, listening, community building, and more through a National GLBTT Consultation (2011) and Iridesce: The Living Apology Project (2017—2019) and the Living Apology into Action Working Group (2023). We are grateful for each story that has been shared and hold with sadness the large reality that there are still many stories of harm left untold. Please consult the following resources to learn more about the different projects and consultations which have helped shape the apology.

1. GLBTT Consultation Report
2. Iridesce: Living Apology Project
3. “Living Apology into Action,” Iridesce Working Group to the General Secretary of the UCC in February of 2023.
4. A Timeline of 2S & LGBTQIA+ history in The United Church of Canada

Animation Resources

This apology creates an opportunity to learn, remember, and uplift the stories of 2S and LGBTQIA+ justice work within the history of The United Church of Canada: the stories of challenges, heartbreak, and oppression and the stories of solidarity, healing, and celebration.



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