

Rector's Column

*These things have I spoken unto you,
that my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full.*
John 15:11

Dear Friends,

The decades leading up to the 1960's in America were intolerant of many types of people and communities considered racially or sexually inferior or deviant by the social standards established by a primarily white, cisgender, and patriarchal society that relied heavily on a version of Christian faith that had been carved into the image of that dominant culture that claimed civil and moral authority. The journey to the federal recognition of the month of June as Pride Month by President Bill Clinton in 1999 had stretched across generations and taken decades of grassroots activism and organizing.

The Society for Human Rights (SHR), was the first documented U.S gay rights organization, founded in 1924 by Henry Gerber, a German immigrant. The group was forced to disband after police raids the following year, but not before they had published several issues of their newsletter, "Friendship and Freedom," the country's first gay-interest newsletter. The Mattachine Society, an organization dedicated to gay rights, was founded in Los Angeles in 1950. The Society was, known for its focus on education, social action, and challenging discriminatory laws. The name "Mattachine" came from a French society of masked dancers and players who satirized social conventions. In 1966, the society staged a "sip-in" where they openly declared their sexuality at taverns, daring staff to turn them away and suing establishments who did. When The Commission on Human Rights ruled that gay individuals had the right to be served in bars. Though temporarily reduced, police raids continued on bars suspected as gay gathering places. In New York City, for example, public displays of same-gendered persons holding hands, kissing or dancing, were illegal.

However, the mafia in New York City saw profit in catering to gay clientele, and by the mid-1960s, the Genovese crime family controlled most Greenwich Village gay bars. In 1966, they purchased a property known as the Stonewall Inn; at the time it was a "straight" bar and restaurant. The crime syndicate cheaply renovated it and reopened it the following year as a gay bar. The Stonewall Inn was then registered as a type of private "bottle bar," which did not require a liquor license because patrons were supposed to bring their own liquor. In fact, the Genovese crime family bribed New York's Sixth Police Precinct to ignore the activities occurring within the club. The Stonewall Inn quickly became an important Greenwich Village institution. Being a large establishment and relatively cheap to enter, the Inn welcomed drag queens, a group not at all welcomed at other gay bars and clubs. Additionally, the Inn was a nightly home for many runaways and homeless gay youth, and it was one of the few—if not the only—gay bar remaining that allowed dancing. Police raids were still a fact of life, but usually corrupt cops would tip off Mafia-run bars before they occurred, allowing owners to stash the alcohol (sold without a liquor license) and hide other illegal activities.



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A surprise came in the early hours of June 28, 1969, when New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, without first tipping off the management. Armed with a warrant, police officers entered the club, roughed up patrons, and, finding bootlegged alcohol, arrested 13 people, including employees and people violating the state's gender-appropriate clothing statute; female officers took suspected cross-dressing patrons into the bathroom to check their gender. As Police roughly hauled out employees and patrons from the bar, patrons, employees and even those living in the neighborhood began to riot, leading to six days of protests and violent clashes with law enforcement outside the bar on Christopher Street, in neighboring streets and in nearby Christopher Park. At first hundreds of people and then thousands of people joined in the riots, protesting decades of discrimination, intimidation, abuse, and harassment.

Though the Stonewall uprising did not mark the beginning of the gay rights movement, it was a galvanizing moment for LGBTQ+ [Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, and Queer, plus other identifications] political activism, leading to numerous gay rights organizations. On the one-year anniversary of the riots on June 28, 1970, thousands of people marched in the streets of Manhattan from the Stonewall Inn to Central Park in what was then called "Christopher Street Liberation Day," America's first gay pride parade. The parade's official chant was: "Say it loud, gay is proud." Later, In 2016, President Barack Obama designated the site of the riots—Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park, and the surrounding streets and sidewalks—a national monument in recognition of the area's contribution to gay rights.

Next year, in 2026, the Episcopal Church will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our church affirming that LGBTQ+ people have a full and equal claim to the love, acceptance, and pastoral care of the church. The journey to make that promise a reality continues today, as we remember the struggles, celebrate the joy, and give thanks for the courageous history, the love and the lives that we refuse to erase. Today in The Episcopal Church, discernment for the ministries of bishop, priest, deacon, and lay leadership is open to all without discrimination.

Both Trinity Episcopal Church in Everett and St. John's Episcopal Church in Snohomish are registered to participate in the **2025 Snohomish Pride Parade** in downtown Snohomish, WA on Saturday, June 7th. If you would like to walk with Trinity in the parade, please plan to arrive early to find parking – **check in begins at 8:45am, and the parade will begin at 10:00am**. I will bring two Trinity banners for folks to help carry as well as some candy and giveaways for us to distribute to parade attendees.

The Episcopal Church celebrates and give thanks for the beauty, strength, and sacred worth of LGBTQ+ leaders across all contexts and callings.

We invite you to join us on the journey. You belong. No exceptions.

In Christ's Peace,
Pastor Rachel+



Inaugural Snohomish Pride Parade 2023