

History and Facts About MCC Toronto



A Brief History of MCCT

During the spring of 1973, a group of individuals wrote to the head office of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in Los Angeles requesting that they send a pastor to Toronto to start a new church. In July of 1973, Reverend Bob Wolfe arrived in the city and the first worship service was held with 12 people on July 17, 1973. In 1977 Rev. Brent Hawkes became Pastor.

Over the years, our congregation has gathered in a variety of different buildings. We met in offices, backyards, church halls and church chapels. In 1985 we bought our first church building at 2029 Gerrard Street East and moved into it on December 8. We were the very first lesbian and gay organization in Canada to own our own property!

In 1991 we moved into our present church home at 115 Simpson Avenue. In response to our growing numbers we added the 9 a.m. service in the spring of 1994. So many people want to be part of our Christmas Eve and Pride Day services that we must move off site to Roy Thomson Hall and to Church Street for these special services.

Community Outreach

Responding to the AIDS crisis, we hired a full-time person to co-ordinate our **AIDSCARE** program in 1990. Since then our dedicated volunteers have provided home hospice care for hundreds of individuals. We have facilitated many support groups for HIV, AIDS and other health issues. In 1997 we expanded the **AIDSCARE** program to CommunityCARE and now provide support for clients with a range of illnesses and requirements.

MCC Toronto is proud that we have assisted many other gay and lesbian groups in getting started. We helped organize the first PFLAG meeting and we paid for the telephone line in their first year of operation. We have provided office space for the Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays, for Lesbian & Gay Youth Toronto, Collation for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario to name a few. We continue to host the Toronto District School Board's Triangle Program for Gay and Lesbian Youth.

Social Justice

Our congregation has been at the centre of many key struggles for equality. In 1986 we supported Bill 7, adding sexual orientation to the Ontario Human Rights Code. In 1994 we supported Bill 167 in favour of equal rights. In 1996 we went to the Supreme Court of Canada as interveners in support of Egan and Nesbit in the constitutional question of same sex spousal recognition under the Old Age Security Act. As a result of this case, the rights of gay and lesbian couples was recognized and sexual orientation

was read into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 1999 Rev. Hawkes testified in the M vs. H case on spousal support provisions in family law. The ruling in this case was the first to hold that same sex couples receive equitable treatment under the constitution.

Same Sex Marriage Rights

In the fall of 2000, we made a decision that the time was right for our church to take the next step in our pursuit of equal marriage rights in Canada. Our lawyers developed a strategy that was built on a combination of The Ontario Marriage Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In January of 2001 we legally married two same-sex couples but the Registrar General of Ontario refused to register the marriage documents. We took the provincial government to court and our case was heard in November of 2001. The decision handed down in July 2002, declared the law unconstitutional and but provides the federal government two years to make the necessary changes. The federal government has decided to appeal this decision and a similar one made in Quebec.



Facts About MCCT

- Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCC Toronto) was established on July 17, 1973
- Reverend Brent Hawkes became the pastor of MCC Toronto in 1977
- MCC Toronto has an average of 580 people attending our two worship services every Sunday
- MCC Toronto has the largest Christmas Eve service in Ontario, if not Canada, attracting almost 5,000 people to Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall for Christmas Eve each year
- MCC Toronto members volunteer over 47,000 hours of work each year for our programs and services and tens of thousand more hours for over 50 other community agencies and groups
- Each year, MCC Toronto's CommunityCARE home hospice program supports more than 90 clients and provides over 14000 hours of home hospice care to people with life threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, Multiple Sclerosis and ALS
- For people facing life's challenges, MCC Toronto offers a wide range of programs and support groups such as Bereavement Support, Caring for Aging Parents, Relationship Break Up Support, Blue Christmas, Home & Hospital Visitation, Telephone Support and the Intercessory Prayer Group
- MCC Toronto offers seminars and workshops on spiritual and personal growth including Men's Coming Out, Women's Coming Out, Self Esteem, Men & Women's Boundaries, Estate Planning, Legal Issues for Lesbian and Gay people, Health Issues, and Leadership Development

Diversity

MCC Toronto is also a very diverse congregation. A recent survey revealed that:

- Over 30 ethnic backgrounds are represented
- Over 20 countries were reported as a place of birth
- Our members represent more than 20 different languages

Our Values

Advocacy, Caring, Celebration, Compassion, Courage, Diversity, Faith, Joy, Leadership, and Spirituality

Our Bedrock Beliefs

At MCC Toronto, we believe:

- In a loving and good God, known by many names
- God's love is offered to everyone unconditionally
- There are many paths to God, and one of them is Christianity
- God is everywhere, with us always, gives us strength, and works through us
- Every person is created in the image of god, and is inherently good
- All life is a gift, and each life has a purpose
- Jesus is our teacher, example, saviour and friend
- In the power and effectiveness of prayer
- And we believe In eternal life

Enquiries and Information

TELEPHONE: (416) 406-6228

FAX: (416) 466-5207

MAILING ADDRESS:
115 Simpson Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4K 1A1

E-MAIL: info@mcctoronto.com

WEBSITE: www.mcctoronto.com