

Rev. John Heidel, Priest in Charge, Church of Epiphany-Vacaville

As a new Priest in Charge at Church of Epiphany, Rev. John spoke before the City Council in support of the local LGBTQIA+ community, referencing the diocesan statement on Commitment to Diversity. Here is his story.



One week after the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California’s Board of Trustees adopted a Commitment to Diversity, the statement publicly debuted at a City Council meeting in Vacaville.

Church of the Epiphany’s new priest-in-charge, The Rev. John Heidel, included the diversity statement in remarks he made Aug. 8 supporting the city’s issuing a Pride Month proclamation and flying the Rainbow Flag.

“We believe that all people are created in God’s image, and that we are created to be in community with one another,” Rev. Heidel told the council, quoting directly from the statement. “Therefore, we know we are most fully the Church God desires us to be when we actively work to include all.”

Rev. Heidel and several members of Epiphany spoke or wrote to the council in response to an effort by self-identified conservative Christians to persuade the city to stop issuing Pride proclamations and flying the Rainbow Flag.

He said he did so for three reasons. “One is that it’s important to be in front advocating for social issues that The Episcopal Church has a stance on,” he said. “If not us, then who?”

The second is that he felt it was his duty as a “shepherd,” since some of Epiphany’s members are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. “People I care about who go to my church care about this,” he said. “It’s relevant to us.”

The third reason is that when he contacted the Bishop’s Office, “The diocese said they would give me a written statement to deliver – and they sent me the link to the diversity statement.”

The Rev. Heidel acknowledges being nervous about speaking in front of the council, adding that was one focus of his prayers. Before getting out of his vehicle in the parking lot, he recognized that he needed “a little bit of courage, a little bit of prayer, and for the

Lord to guide me.” Later he shared, “Prayer and centering on God. ... Yes, I get that I possibly will be persecuted (for speaking up), but it's the right thing to do. Prayer gave me strength. After a good 10 minutes (of prayer) the fear was removed. That's what gave me strength.” (Karen Nolan, author)