

Karen Scott has been meeting with the volunteers on this task force to get us started on the process to becoming officially an Affirming Church within the United Church of Canada. There are many resources, articles, people to help and so we look forward to the many insights ahead as they educate themselves and us on the journey ahead. Thank you to the current members...my apologies if I have forgotten anyone..... Karen Scott, Jenny Nicholson, Naomi Isaac Wiebe, Mary Faith Blackburn, Rob Smith and Harold Imes.

There are seven major steps to the process...

Encountering the Need

A need, question or vision leads a ministry to ask how it can be publicly and explicitly welcoming.

Discerning

A group forms to start looking at how to become (more) radically and intentionally welcoming. They consider the Affirming process, and get in touch with the affirming ministry coordinators.

Embarking

The decision to formally enter the Affirming process is made by the ministry's governing body. A working group is set up. (Editor's Note...I think this is where we are)

Engaging

Educating. Storytelling. Praying. Hearing fears and hopes. Working with all in the ministry and wider community to discern what being Affirming could look like for your ministry.

Documenting

Before a final decision is made, an inclusive marriage policy, Vision Statement, Action Plan for the future, and more must be created.

Deciding Together

The community discerns how it's going to decide on whether to formally become Affirming. A positive decision needs to include a "yes" from at least three quarters of those involved in deciding.

Joining the Family

Holding a public celebration. Being welcomed formally to our Canada wide family. (and being allowed to display this logo)



Affirm/Saffirming
UNITED/ENSEMBLE

**COME INHERIT THE KINGDOM
YOU HAVE OUR BLESSING**

FOR I WAS CURIOUS & YOU ENCOURAGED MY QUESTIONING

FOR I WAS COMING OUT & YOU STILL LOVED ME

**FOR I WAS CALLED "BUTCH", "FAG", "HOMO" OR "TRANNY
& YOU CALLED ME BY MY CHOSEN NAME.**

FOR I WAS KICKED OUT & YOU INVITED ME IN

FOR I WAS ASSAULTED & TOGETHER WE DEMANDED JUSTICE

FOR I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE & YOU STOOD WITH ME

(WORDS FROM ART PIECE BY ANNEMARIE BENNETT)



WHY I JOINED THE AFFIRMING TASK GROUP.

I have been attending St. Paul's United for two years and as many of you know I am usually rather quiet. I knew St. Paul's was not an Affirming Church and wondered how to approach people to find out if that had ever been discussed and, if indeed there had been discussions, what happened? I was hesitant to approach people directly about what may be to some a sensitive topic without knowing if there was any background to consider.

I was thrilled to read in a recent newsletter that Karen was looking for people to join an Affirming Task Group, and I quickly signed up. My interest is two-fold.

Firstly, I believe that all people should be treated equally with respect, kindness, understanding and interest. No two people are the same – we are all different. We should welcome the differences and learn more about what makes each and every one of us unique. With knowledge comes understanding and with understanding discomfort and fear dissipate.

Secondly, one of my sons is gay, and is a transgender man. I am so proud of him for being who he needs to be and I have learned a great deal from him. In talking with some of his friends over the years I have listened to their stories and have heard how some of them had to leave their Churches because they came out as gay or were made to feel so uncomfortable that they had no choice but to leave. This happened to my son. Fortunately, he and they, found Affirming Churches to attend.

Church is where we should all feel safe, welcome and at peace with the world. By becoming an Affirming Church, St. Paul's would be declaring publicly, intentionally, and explicitly that ALL truly means All, and that ALL are welcome.

Jenny Nicholson

Resources for LGBTQ+ people and their allies:

Websites:

<https://www.qchristian.org/> "Q Christian Fellowship is cultivating radical belonging for LGBTQ+ Christians and allies." – website has a number of resources and informational and relational guides.

<https://affirmunited.ause.ca/> I'm sure you already have Affirm United's website, but just in case. Good resources.

<https://www.generousspace.ca/> Generous Space Ministries – "Generous Space works to dismantle religious-based harm, pursue intersectional justice, and celebrate LGBTQ2+ lives in both the church and our world." They have a number of resources as well.

Books

Countryman, L. W., & Ritley, M. R. (2001). *Gifted by otherness: gay and lesbian Christians in the church*. Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Publishing. – a lovely book which sees LGBTQ persons as a gift to the church.

Gushee, D. P. (2017). *Changing Our Mind: Definitive 3rd Edition of the Landmark Call for Inclusion of Lgbtq Christians with Response to Critics*. Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books. – I think this is a fantastic book, written by a respected evangelical ethicist, very scholarly yet accessible.

Resources for LGBTQ+ people and their allies:

Books (cont'd)

Hartke, A. (2018). *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*. – “will change the way readers think about transgender people, faith, and the future of Christianity.” I have not read this book, but it's on my reading list.

Keen, K. R. (2018). *Scripture, ethics, and the possibility of same-sex relationships*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. – Karen takes a slightly different approach than other books, well worth reading.

Khalaf, D., & Khalaf, C. (2019). *Modern kinship: a queer guide to Christian marriage*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. – written by a gay married couple, very personal yet also scholarly.

Myers, D. G., & Scanzoni, L. (2005). *What God has joined together?: a Christian case for gay marriage*. New York: Harper. – written from a more conservative viewpoint, and makes a conservative case for gay marriage, arguing that allowing gay marriage will actually strengthen the institution of marriage and family rather than crumble it, as is the common fear among conservatives.

Documentary (on Netflix)

A Secret Love – Amid shifting times, two women kept their decades-long love a secret. But coming out later in life comes with its own set of challenges.



Information from the Regional Council Affirming Initiatives....

Wednesday, June 24th – Breaking the Binary One Word at a Time - Webinar

At least three members of the St Paul's Affirming task group and Pastor Gord and I, Sharon Adams were in attendance at this webinar. Pastor Gord and I need to educate ourselves and prepare for the discussion and vote on Remit 1 that will be coming to our Regional Council meeting on October 14th and October 21st. Julie Graham, our Regional Minister of Justice and Communications for Living Skies, Prairie to Pine and Northern Spirit Regional Council sent out some follow-up information from our gathering and additional resources mentioned. So, I am passing that along for others to read. Feel free to ask if you have any questions about this.

Here are some notes, links to the presenters' bios, and links to the many resources we talked about:

<https://prairietopinerc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BreakingTheBinaryWebinar-ResourcesNotes-24June2020.pdf>



Edmonton-Area Affirming Ministries Pride 2020 Video

Hot off the computer, a shareable and downloadable Pride video from Edmonton and area Affirming ministries. [All links and info are here](#). Many thanks to all the ministries and to Shylo Rosborough for hours of work and witness as we come together throughout June and the summer to celebrate, and practice, LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit pride.



Belonging in the Body Video on Trans Christians: Free Access for our Regional Council

This video asks transgender Christians to talk about their faith journey, and they do so with insight, grace, and love. It's an excellent and important resource. Three Regional Councils have offered a fee to Generous Space Ministries, the producer, so that your community of faith can access this free of charge. This is part of the [Affirming](#) journey that Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils are currently on. [Please see full details here](#).