

“Steps to Becoming an Affirming Ministry”

Canadian Shield & Shining Waters

Regional Councils

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Affirming Ministry Program Coordinator



This Space



- Thank you for your interest in our program
- We are Affirming of all
- We speak truth and ask questions in respectful ways
- If anyone is uncomfortable and/or needs support please indicate this in the chat column (private) and our host will assist you

This section will include:



- *What* is an Affirming Ministry?
- *Why* would a ministry become an Affirming Ministry?
- *How* would a ministry become an Affirming Ministry?
- Questions

Questions?

- Please ask your questions in the chat column and our host will bring them forward.

What is an Affirming Ministry?



- Been through an **educational and discernment process** about human diversity
- Made a **commitment publicly, intentionally & explicitly (P.I.E.)** to be inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in all aspects of its life and work.
- **Broadens commitment** of inclusivity to include all people who are marginalized.

Affirming Ministry Program



- Started in 1992
 - signature program of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble
 - to assist ministries within The United Church of Canada to be more equitable and affirming in the life and work of their ministries
- Currently 326 Affirming Ministries in the United Church – communities of faith, chaplaincy, regional councils, educational institutions, etc
- Over 170 in the Affirming Process

Who is Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble?



- Merging of Affirm (1982) and Friends of Affirm (1984) in 1994
- **Goals: Educate, Advocate, Support**
- Volunteer organization primarily
 - supported by membership fees & some grants
 - endorsed by & in partnership with The United Church of Canada

Why Become Affirming?

We are already welcoming!

- **Educate**
 - to learn about and from people who are marginalized
 - to address unintentional/unrecognized bias – micro-aggressions
 - to learn appropriate/current language
 - to practice articulating questions/ comments respectfully





Why Become Affirming?

We are already welcoming! (cont)

- **Advocate – Take Action**
 - by being a role model for people in faith communities and in society
 - by advocating for people caught in systemic marginalization – loss of jobs, barriers to participation, etc.
 - by advocating for societal change – laws, conversion therapy, school education; etc
 - by using gender neutral language in conversation, meetings, worship, etc.



Why Become Affirming?

We are already welcoming! (cont)

- **Support –**
 - by providing space, as safe as possible, for people who are marginalized to speak and be heard, to participate fully in all aspects of the life of the ministry
 - by providing knowledgeable pastoral care for all people both in ministry and in society

How would a community of faith become Affirming?

- **Educate –**

Who:

- Group or team to lead process
- Governance structure
- Small Groups – how Affirming would affect group's work
- Community of Faith as a whole – worship, workshops

How:

- hear personal stories
- explore theological understanding
- hear from others of the impact on ministry
- address the justice aspects of being Affirming



How would a community of faith become Affirming? (cont.)



- **Document –**

Vision Statement – with language re “inclusion of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations in all aspects of the life and work of the ministry”

Action Plan – outlining specific actions/plans for the future as an Affirming Ministry . . . implementation; signage; accessibility of meetings (hearing, mobility, etc.); annual education for committees/teams; annual membership in Affirm United; annual anniversary celebrations; connecting with wider community; addressing needs of people who are marginalized in other ways, etc.

Equal Marriage Policy – Marriage for couples of all gender combinations.

How would a community of faith become Affirming (cont.)



- **Vote** of participants of the community of faith with 75% positive outcome
- **Make a commitment** by becoming a member of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble for an annual membership fee
- **Celebrate!** – Hold a special worship service at which the community of faith will be declared an Affirming Ministry and receive a certificate.

How would a community of faith become Affirming (cont.)

Summary:



1. Educate
2. Document – Vision Statement, Action Plan, Equal Marriage Policy
3. Vote – minimum 75% approval
4. Make commitment by joining Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble for annual fee
5. Celebrate & be declared Affirming Ministry

Links: Resources for use in the Affirming Process



- ***Open Hearts*** – our main resource and wealth of information – found at http://affirmunited.ause.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/Open-Hearts-AUSE_Final_May192020.pdf
- ***Celebrating Gender Diversity – Trans and Gender Identity Kit*** – another important resource with more info about trans – found at https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/trans-kit_2019.pdf

Links for Resources (cont)



- **AUSE Website** – check out the numerous exercises, stories, etc. available – found at <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/> under Resources, Affirming Ministries in Action, and more.
- **Join Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble** –
Membership form to send with cheque available at:
<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>
Option to join on-line available at:
<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/institutionalaffirming-ministry-membership-one-year-payment>

Links to Resources (cont)



- **Mandate Magazine – The Affirming Journey**
Volume 49, No. 2 Spring 2018
Available to purchase from UCRD at
www.ucrdstore.ca/magazines/mandate
- **Affirming P.I.E. Video 2019** - found at
<https://vimeo.com/320966739> + other P.I.E.
resources
- **Gathering – Resources for Worship Planners**
The United Church of Canada
Advent-Christmas-Epiphany 2017-18 focus on
inclusive worship including LGBTQ

Links to Resources (cont)



- **Affirming Connections –**

<https://affirmingconnections.com>

Questions?



***Thank you for your interest in this
very important work and for
inviting me to talk about the
Affirming Ministry Program
“Gospel work” - a spiritual and
justice journey.
“If you choose to engage -
May it be so for you!”***

