

# Affirm Vote

Emmanuel United Church

2017



# Background

Emmanuel United Church began the Affirming process in Sept, 2014, in response to several members who thought it time to join others in the Ottawa Presbytery (an Affirming Presbytery), who had declared themselves as Affirming congregations.

Affirm Task Group reports have been included at all Council meetings since.



# What we have done

- Adopted Same-Sex Marriage policy
- Responsive reading of the weekly Welcoming statement which includes a welcome to “people of all gender identities and sexual orientations”
- Affirming Worship service, January 2017, followed by a lunch with questions, surveys and discussions in small groups
- Discussions at EUC Committees and group generated questions
- Safe Spaces workshop, attended by 35 people, sponsored by the EUC Council
- Sunday School rainbow painted banners to welcome Safe Spaces presenters



# What we have done

- Information and updates in all monthly Life and Work packets & the newsletter
- Bulletin board displays
- EUC website posts and LGBTQ+ information
- Sermons regarding inclusivity, with express response following the 2016 Orlando killings
- Library books purchased on the recommendation of the Task Group
- Topical storybooks read for Children's Time during Worship services



# What we have done



TGIW guest Rev. Jenni Leslie presented about discrimination as an ordained lesbian minister

Attendance at a workshop in Peterborough by two of the EUC Affirm Task Group

Attendance at the Ottawa Gay Pride Parade in 2015 and 2016

Attendance at Affirm United's 2016 Conference & AGM



# What becoming an Affirming congregation means

- Affirming congregations gather to pray, serve, support, celebrate, learn, work and grow.
- Affirming congregations are explicit and proactive in the statements of welcome, inclusion and justice-seeking for all people, especially for those who have historically been marginalized and excluded within church and society.
- Affirming congregations are supportive, non-judgemental and safe places for all adults, youth and children.

# What it doesn't mean

- Becoming an Affirming Congregation does not mean that the church becomes a “gay church” or a “single issue community”. Many heterosexual people choose Affirming Congregations since they are places where children, youth and adults can grow in faith in an atmosphere of respect and justice for people from all walks of life. Affirming Congregations work on a variety of justice issues.
- Becoming an Affirming Congregation does not mean that the number of people who attend Sunday morning services will increase rapidly. The aim of an Affirming Congregation is to affirm who we are and what we stand for: to provide a safe space for all people. Whether or not others join this congregation is up to them.
- Becoming an Affirming Congregation is not just for those on the “outside”. It helps all members and adherents of the congregation to bring their whole and authentic selves to the community.

# What is Affirm United?

- Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (AU/SE) is a justice-oriented organization of people in The United Church of Canada.
- It works for the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in The United Church of Canada and in society.

The program was launched in 1992.

The United Church officially endorsed the program in 2000 and encouraged its ministries to participate.



# Welcoming & Affirming

- Most congregations do their best to be welcoming, but being affirming goes deeper and is public, intentional, and explicit, in their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

**Think “PIE”: Public, Intentional, and Explicit.**

# Welcoming & Affirming

## Public:

An Affirming Ministry uses symbols and signs which are echoed outside and inside the church building, in worship, and in all other facets of church life.

The broader community should also know what it stands for; a witness to the wider community that God's love extends to everyone equally and without reserve. This is still a radical message!

# Welcoming & Affirming

## Intentional:

An Affirming Ministry is deliberate in their process of study, education and dialogue with members of their faith community (both during the Affirming process and as a piece of their ongoing work), to ensure that the history of oppression and discrimination by the Church is both understood and acknowledged, and that continued growth, education, and celebration are part of its ministry.

# Welcoming & Affirming

## Explicit:

Affirming Ministries should explicitly indicate in their Mission and Vision statement – and everywhere else! – that the LGBTQ+ community is a part of and embraced in all facets of church life.

# Our action plan

## Communicate

- After suitable discussion, acquire appropriate visual symbols to publically communicate our Affirming commitment
- Include the Affirm logo on all signage inside and outside the building, on letterhead, the website, and other publications
- update existing materials, such as the vision statement, welcome statement, and marriage policy to include some more inclusive language such as gender identity
- Maintain sensitivity to inclusivity in all publications

# Our Action Plan

## Educate

- Be open to supporting other congregations wishing to take the journey to becoming an Affirming Congregation
- Maintain and grow our educational resources (library, movie nights, etc.)
- Send delegates to Affirm conferences and workshops

# Our Action Plan

## Act

- Maintain an Affirming Task Group to continue to plan activities and outreach
- Reach out to groups outside of the congregation (school groups, Pink Triangle groups, etc.)
- Support LGBTQ+ events in the broader community (Ottawa Pride Parade, etc.)
- Continue to explore other justice issues such as Right Relations, racism, ageism, etc.
- Continue to pursue upgrades in support of those with various needs (hearing, mobility, vision, young families, etc.)

# The Motion

- **It is moved by Anne Squire**
- **and seconded by Margaret Armstrong**
  
- **that Emmanuel United Church become an Affirming Ministry with an ongoing commitment to being a safe space, and that we declare our identity as an open, welcoming, inclusive congregation, affirming the dignity and worth of people of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities.**



GOD'S

DOORS

ARE

OPEN

TO

ALL

# Voting Results

- Yes – 130
- No – 14
- Abstain - 4