



Affirm United/  
S'affirmer Ensemble  
Annual report 2016

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# Minutes: 2016 Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble Annual General Meeting

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July 24, 2016, at Glebe-St James United Church, Ottawa (Algonquin  
Unceded Territory)

Opening and Welcoming

a) Co-chair Collin Smith welcomed everyone.

1. Prayer

a) Warren MacDougall led us in prayer.

2. Holy Manners/Language Considerations

a) Collin Smith spoke to us about Holy Manners and Language  
Considerations.

3. Call to Order

a) Meeting called to order 1:10 PM

4. Enabling Motion

**MOTION:** All persons present be invited to participate in the discussions and all  
non-members be corresponding members of the meeting. RUTH BRAMHAM/  
JENNI LESLIE, PASSED

6. Approval of Agenda

**MOTION:** That the agenda be amended as circulated. JUDY AMSBURY/ LINDA  
HUTCHINSON, PASSED

7. Approval of Minutes from the 2015 AGM.

**MOTION:** the minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting held on Aug 2,  
2015 be approved as circulated. JENNI LESLIE / RUTH WOOD, PASSED

8. Reports – See Annual Report 2015

a) Co-Chairs' Report

- Julie is awsomeauce.



- b) Affirming Ministry Program Report.
- c) Membership Report
- d) Merchandise Report
- e) Nominations Committee Report & Elections:

- Executive:  
Collin Smith, President

Michiko Bown-Kai, Vice President

Cindy Bourgeois, Secretary

Judy Amsbury, Treasurer

**MOTION:** Jenni Leslie, Marco Ste. Marie, Rachel Clarke be nominated to a three-year term. WARREN MACDOUGALL/TONY BURNETT, PASSED.

**MOTION:** the Council be authorized to fill the position of member at large RUTH BRAMHAM/ JENNIFER Fjelko CARRIED

#### 9. 2015 Financial Statements

**MOTION:** the financial statements for 2015 be approved as circulated JUDY AMSBURY/LINDA HUTCHINSON

The question was raised as to why there was not separate envelope for AUSE.

The Planning Committee felt that since GSJ was hosting asking for a donation was over the top

Translation budget should be higher for indigenous languages and new Canadians.

#### **Budget**

Judy highlighted some points.

- See NOTES TO 2017 BUDGET PROJECTIONS DRAFT #1.pdf
  - PAR is down
- A suggestion was made to apply to Heritage Canada for grants for translation.





There is a desire to work with United Church of Christ learnings around philanthropy.

A document listing the importance of individual memberships is on the Website.

A question was raised about the designated gift.

- There is a letter about the parameters of the Designated Gift.
- It was given in support of equal marriage.
- We do have documentation about the gift.

f) A concern was raised about the deficit budget.

- Judy apologized for not providing a balance sheet.
- Judy pointed out that it against our bylaws to spend more than 50% of Unrestricted Net Assets. Our current deficit is 40% of Unrestricted Net Assets.

g) There is new information about giving on the website.

**MOTION: that Council be authorized to approve the final Budget for 2017  
JUDY AMSBURY/ROD DESJARDINS, PASSED**

#### 11. New Business

a) Approval of Reviewer of Financial Statements.

**MOTION: That the Council be authorized to approve the appointment of a  
Reviewer of the Financial Statements of AU/SE for the 2016 financial year.  
JUDY AMSBURY/RUTH WOOD.**

b) Living Apology Update.

- Approved at GC42.
- AUSE was asked to animate.
- AUSE is in partnership with national United Church (General Council Office-GCO)
- GCO is committed to funding the Living Apology.
- Concern was raised that this work gets dumped on AUSE and that the project gets stalled.
- More time be taken working on the nature of the partnership between AUSE and GCO.



- Concern was raised about the number of remits and all the work that they will take.
- It's a complex process.

## 12. News

### a) 2017 AUSE conference location

- Announced that we will be teaming with Spirit Pride in Vancouver to hold the 2017 AUSE Conference and AGM.

### b) 2018 call for locations

- Reminder that in 2018 GC43 will be held in Oshawa so Bay of Quinte might be a good location.

### c) Activities from across the country

There are many great stories.

In Peterborough George St UC & St Andrews UC amalgamated into Emmanuel United Church so that there is one less ministry in Peterborough.

Bay of Quinte Conference Affirming Group has established a Rainbow Sabbath in Kingston. A potluck is held inviting LGBT folk & Allies. It's developed into a ministry. Potluck worship.

Six Affirming congregations in Calgary hold the "Human Rites Conference."

The existence of the Affirming process with in AUSE helped a minister come out 15 years ago.

## 13. Recognition of 2015-2016 directors

## 14. Closing Prayer

Jenni Leslie led us in prayer.

## 15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 pm.



*Below: First United Church Wetaskiwin AB:  
group selfie at their Affirming celebration, March 2017; Kamloops United 's 20<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of being Affirming display.*



## AU/SE co-chair report for the 2016 AGM

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It is with sadness that I am stepping back from Affirm United/ S'affirmer ensemble this year. I have been involved with AUSE's council for the past 6 years, the last few as co-chair. I am honoured to have worked with the amazing people who have given of their time on this council and to have worked with the other volunteers across the country who do the day to day work of Affirm in all provinces and territories. I have personally seen the benefit to so many that the work of those volunteers has done and continues to do.

In the past few years AUSE has grown exponentially, especially with the addition of our communications coordinator whose contribution to the organization is incalculable. We've seen the number of Affirming congregations double since I started and we've seen camps, presbyteries, conferences, and other ministries chose the Affirming process. AUSE has grown to work closely with the United Church of Canada on a number of projects including IRIDESCE: The Living Apology Project, an upcoming gathering of

international partners, and other initiatives to further celebrate God's diverse creation, all while continuing to support our Affirming Ministries.

There is so much more to be done and so much more room for growth but I know I am leaving AUSE in great hands. My involvement with AUSE has been an incredible experience for me personally and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be involved. I encourage you to get involved if you are not already. There are so many opportunities to contribute in so many diverse ways. I will continue to be a part of Affirm United/ S'affirmer ensemble in some capacity well into the future.

To all those involved with AUSE I thank you for all that you do for the communities we serve, I thank you for teaching me so much, and I thank you for the chance to do my part. To the new council for 2017-2018 I know you will make us all proud.

-- Collin Smith, co-chair.



## 2016 Annual Reports from Affirming Ministries

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As of June 30, 2017, 92 out of a possible 163 Affirming Ministries submitted their reports for 2016. This is a 56% response rate.

### A Look Back at the Numbers

Response rates from previous years have been:

- 2012 78%
- 2013 42%
- 2014 71%
- 2015 63%

### Overview of Response Rates from 2012 to 2016 ~ based on the year they Became Affirming

Of those ministries who became Affirming between 1995 and 1999, there has been an overall response rate of 48%.

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| • 1995 57% | • 1998 80% |
| • 1996 53% | • 1999 50% |
| • 1997 50% |            |

Of those ministries who became Affirming between 2000 and 2009, there has been an overall response rate of 53%.

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| • 2002 50% | • 2007 60% |
| • 2004 50% | • 2008 29% |
| • 2005 60% | • 2009 46% |
| • 2006 80% |            |

Of those ministries who became Affirming between 2010 and 2016, there has been an overall response rate of 70%.

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| • 2010 68% | • 2014 78% |
| • 2011 87% | • 2015 73% |
| • 2012 60% | • 2016 74% |
| • 2013 58% |            |

Based on these numbers we can see that the overall response rate declines the longer a ministry has been affirming. Overall, response rates are higher among those ministries who became Affirming in the past five years, with ministries who became Affirming prior to 2010 tending to have a lower response rate. It appears that work is needed to re-engage with Affirming Ministries who have been affirming for more than five years.

The following is a list of all 92 Affirming Ministries who submitted a report for 2016.

British Columbia Conference

- Alberni Valley UC
- Brechin UC
- Crossroads UC
- Comox UC
- Kamloops UC
- Knox UC
- Nelson UC
- Salt Spring Island UC
- St. Aidan's UC
- St. Andrew's-Wesley UC
- St. John's UC
- Trinity UC

Alberta Northwest Conference

- Camrose UC
- Deer Park UC
- Garneau UC
- Hillhurst UC
- Knox UC
- Living Spirit UC
- McDougall UC
- McDougall UC
- McKillop UC
- Mill Woods UC
- Parkdale UC
- Scarboro UC
- Southminster-Steinhauer UC
- St. Andrew's UC (St. Andrew's Centre)
- St. Andrew's UC
- St. Albert UC
- St. Paul's UC
- St. Stephen's College
- St. Thomas UC
- Wild Rose UC

Saskatchewan Conference

- Eastside UC
- Grosvenor Park UC
- Meewasin Valley UC
- St. Andrew's College
- St. James UC

Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario Conference

- Augustine UC

- Centre for Christian Studies
- Churchill Park UC
- Immanuel UC
- Knox UC
- Knox UC
- UC in Meadowood
- Mindosa UC
- Selkirk UC
- St. Andrew's River Heights UC
- St. Andrew's UC
- St. Mary's Road UC
- St. Paul's UC (Boissevain)
- St. Paul's UC (Thunder Bay)
- Winnipeg Beach UC
- Winnipeg Presbytery

Manitou Conference

- St. Andrew's UC

London Conference

- First-St. Andrew's UC
- Victoria Avenue UC

Hamilton Conference

- Applewood UC
- New Vision UC
- Harcourt Memorial UC
- Parkminster UC

Toronto Conference

- Bathurst UC
- The Donway Covenant UC
- Dunbarton-Fairport UC
- Eastminster UC
- Fairlawn Avenue UC
- Lansing UC
- Leaside UC
- Metropolitan UC
- Northwest Barrie UC

Bay of Quinte Conference

- Bay of Quinte Conference
- Bay of Quinte Conference UCW
- St. Andrew's UC (Castleton-Grafton PC)
- Castleton UC (Castleton-Grafton PC)
- Christ UC
- Emmanuel UC



- St. Mark's UC
- Trinity-St. Andrew's UC
- Trinity UC
- Trinity UC
- St. Paul's UC (Warkworth)
- Westminster UC

#### Montreal & Ottawa Conference

- Église unie Saint-Pierre
- First UC
- Glebe-St. James UC
- Union Church

#### Maritime Conference

- Bedford UC

- Central UC
- Chignecto Presbytery, Maritime Conference
- Torbrook Mines UC
- Maritime Conference
- Trinity-Clifton UC
- Wilmot UC



## Highlights from Reports

Many Affirming Ministries are engaging in education and awareness around trans and gender diverse issues, in addition to creating accessible washrooms for all people.

The breadth and depth of issues that Affirming Ministries address is wonderful to behold! From celebrating their anniversaries of becoming Affirming, supporting other United Church ministries who wish to become Affirming, building partnerships with local LGBTQ organizations, sponsoring LGBTQ refugees, supporting camps for LGBTQ children and youth, and hosting Trans Day of Remembrance services, to deepening their engagement in reconciliation with Indigenous people, hosting events related to mental health/illness, engaging in Black History Month, and participating in a local Black Lives Matter protest and vigil -- Affirming Ministries are living into their commitments to being affirming of LGBTQ+ people and promoting the inclusion of other marginalized groups.

### A few highlights:

- "It is a source of great pride for me that the Affirm team was instrumental in the creation of what is now Port Alberni Pride. When we began, Alberni Pride consisted of just three volunteers, Dana Walter and myself from the AVUC Affirm Team and one teacher, Tricia Hartman. Without the AVUC Affirm Team, Port Alberni Pride may not exist." - **Alberni Valley United Church, Port Alberni, BC**
- "Our designation as an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada became official in the fall of 2016 and in late September the team

Inclusion Cross,  
Westminster  
United Church,  
Whitby, ON

hosted a weekend event to celebrate. On Friday evening, we welcomed guest speaker Lukas Walther who helped us grow in our understanding of transgender experience through his talk "Compassion through Understanding," and the Aequis Choir offered music to feed our souls. The evening was well [covered by the local press](#). Then on Sunday morning, Rev. Nancy Talbot preached a [sermon of truth and love](#) as we received our official Affirm United certificate." - **Crossroads United Church, Delta, BC**

- "In the Spring of 2016, KUC was preparing for a big celebration which included our twentieth anniversary as an Affirming congregation and as a member of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble. Part of this preparation became about reminding ourselves what it means to be an Affirming congregation. Our history was revisited, and a call was made to move more vibrantly ahead in living out our responsibilities as an Affirming Ministry... The week of our Affirming service, Chris Dolson wrote a column for the Faith page in Kamloops This Week, expressing our KUC way of loving and being fully inclusive of everyone, and the importance of being allies with the LGBTQ2+ community. In November, over a meal in our hall, a group of thirty or so KUC folk, and a couple of other guests began to reflect on what being part of an Affirming Ministry has looked like in the past, and what we would love to see for our KUC Affirming Ministry moving forward! Since January, an Affirming Ministry group has begun to meet monthly, and bit by bit we are living into our privilege and responsibility of being an Affirming Ministry. The PIE principle...being Public, Intentional and Explicit about being Affirming ...is considered in many of our goals... We are looking forward to being involved with the first ever downtown Pride Parade." - **Kamloops United Church, Kamloops, BC**



- "Some of the recent work of the church with regard to gender discrimination has, in a sense, been preparatory in nature. Nearly twenty years ago, Garneau United Church gave up an ageing building and property to invest in an assisted living facility. The result was the establishment of the Ashbourne Assisted Living Place, which also involves worship space and other facilities for the church's needs. The Garneau United Assisted Living Place Corporation, manages the facility on behalf of Garneau United Church. The members of the Corporation have been working towards establishing the Ashbourne as a recognized facility that welcomes all people regardless of sexual orientation. That hope came to

fruition this month, but that, in detail, is a matter for next year's report!" -  
**Garneau United Church, Edmonton, AB**

- "This past year has been a busy one for the Affirming Committee at Grosvenor Park United Church in Saskatoon. Every second week we have an affirming minute in our service. The topics range from lgbtx2 issues and celebrations to issues with other marginalized groups. GPU entered a float in the pride parade last year and is doing over the rainbow theme for this year's float. The committee sponsored a dance in support of Sanctum. Sanctum is a hospice for the homeless with HIV. Along with TUF, we sponsored an Easter dinner for people in the lgbt community and youth that had no family to celebrate with. Our total attendance was 55 people. GPU sponsored the blanket exercise to help all understand colonialism. A dance will be held on May 26 at the church for all GSA's in the Saskatoon area. We held an affirming service in the beginning of May that is being shared with all united churches. In March of 2017 we showed the documentary Gender Revolution and Nobuko Iwai put together our affirming service to be shared. The committee worked a coat check to raise money for Camp Caterpillar. We are also sponsoring family events at pride this year." - **Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon, SK**
- "Our group's focus in 2016 was an all-day event hosted by Churchill Park United Church. We called the gathering *Spirt and Soul: Not Determined by Anatomy*, and the focus was stated: "Coming to know and affirm the transgender community through personal stories." Our interest group worked with representatives from other affirming United Churches in Winnipeg to organize this day of learning. Evaluations showed interest and support for the opportunities presented at this event and also reflected a need to continue with this approach". - **Churchill Park United Church, Winnipeg, MB**
- "*Yours, Mine, Ours – Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery*, was the resource used for a 4 week study... Discovery Past introduced the Doctrine of Discovery as the legal and theological basis for historical and ongoing acts of violence against Indigenous peoples and lands... Discovery Present reminded participants that the doctrine's legacy carries on today and we need to be humble and recognize the violence in which we are steeped..." - **Selkirk United Church, Selkirk, MB**
- "Last fall we invited Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Hamilton Conference's Minister for Social Justice, to join us at a meeting to help us find a way to connect with other Affirming Committees in our area. As a result of this meeting, there is now a group including members from Parkminster, Harcourt, Port Nelson, Applewood and possibly other churches who are

planning to represent Affirming Congregations at the Skylight Festival in Paris Ontario in July". - **Applewood United Church, Mississauga, ON**

- "Eastminster is sponsoring a refugee from Syria who is gay. The committee really wanted to provide refuge to a Gay Syrian citizen. Fadi just arrived and if he is willing once more settled; we'd love to have the opportunity to write an article about Fadi's journey and the team that supported his refugee sponsorship. El-Farouk Khaki is scheduled to speak in July, sharing his faith journey on being Muslim and Gay. Khaki is co-founder of Toronto's Unity Mosque. In June we are working on a special Pride centric service. We also plan to host coffee hour with an LGBT theme. Eastminster is doing various study group nights and we're hoping to have a study group night on being LGBT and having faith." - **Eastminster United Church, Toronto, ON**

- "The Affirming Committee has been privileged to provide some leadership around New Vision's Intercultural Ministry development.... learning more about racialization -- its history and ongoing impact -- in our community and our church. We have been actively building relationships with individuals and groups who represent communities of colour, while learning how we can be stronger allies... The Affirming Committee Intercultural sub-group has also begun to build a relationship with a Haudenosaunee Elder, holding a potluck and visiting with him and his spouse. We have been extremely privileged by the teachings that we received at these times, and will actively seek to build more relationships of learning with First Nations as we grow to understand what it means to be settler allies." - **New Vision United Church, Hamilton, ON**



St. Mary's Road United Church, Winnipeg, MB

- "As part of the Action Plan, the team decided to work on Truth and Reconciliation in 2017. The team has grown to nine members and started on an education and discernment process for the Action Plan. On Sunday May, 2017 our Affirm Team organized a presentation of a Blanket Exercise following Sunday service, and lunch. Fifty folks participated in the exercise and the following discussion. Each of four Sundays before the event, the Affirm Team concentrated on information and education for the congregation. The actual Sunday's service was dedicated to the Truth and Reconciliation process." - **Northwest Barrie United Church, ON**

- “We received our official designation as an Affirming ministry of the United Church on October 2 in a joyous celebration, with our special guest, the Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell, Moderator of the United Church... We believe that our public celebration spoke to people outside our congregation, as we received a congratulatory letter the following week from the Mayor of Fredericton, Mike O’Brien. Looking to the future we have been investigating other dimensions of inclusiveness and outreach. We expect that our 2017 report will provide more information on these item: plans for participation in the Fredericton Pride Parade; exploration of avenues around the themes of safer spaces and mental health (including committee participation in a meeting on Generous Spaces with Wendy Vanderwal-Gritter).” - **Wilmot United Church, Fredericton, NB**

## Template & Formatting of Reports

It has been suggested that a template of what an Affirming Ministry Report looks like, would help ministries as they respond to the request to submit annual reports.

As has been in the case in previous years, a number of ministries reported happenings from June to December of 2016, and January to June of 2017 – rather than the single annual report for 2016 (Jan–Dec). It might something to consider for future requests for reports – to ask for reports to cover July to June, rather than January to December.

## Conclusion

Selecting highlights is a glorious and agonizing process, because there are always so many wonderful things to report – but I can’t include them all! I need to work with Affirm United and staff in the General Council Offices, to find more ways to share these wonderful stories with the wider church.

As always, it continues to be an honour and a blessing to collect the reports from Affirming Ministries throughout The United Church of Canada, and to support the work of Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble.

Respectfully submitted,

Jordan Sullivan  
LGBTQ+ Justice  
Church in Mission/L’Église en Mission, The United Church of Canada/L’Église  
Unie du Canada



**Vision Statement adopted May 24, 2016  
by Trinity-Clifton Pastoral Charge, PEI**

We, the Trinity-Clifton Christian family, believe that God has blessed us with diversity, including diversity in sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, age, ability and faith. We believe that Jesus challenged boundaries by reaching out to all people, welcoming and honouring all in their uniqueness.

We publicly declare our commitment to openness, growth, action, and education, honouring diversity and challenging injustice in solidarity with those who experience discrimination.

We offer our resources and talents with open hands and hearts in love and service to all as we work for reconciliation and justice locally, regionally, and globally.





## 2016 Affirming Ministry Program Report

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We present a report of an expanding program with a total of 25 ministries, listed below, having become Affirming between January 1 and December 31, 2016.

A complete list of Affirming Ministries can be found on the Affirm

United/S'affirmer Ensemble website: <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/find-a-ministry>

### Congregations of The United Church of Canada – 22 new in 2016

Name/Location	Date of Celebration
Barton Stone UC in Hamilton ON	Sun. June 12, 2016
Birchcliff Bluffs UC in Toronto ON	Sun. Nov. 13, 2016
Camrose UC in Camrose AB	Sun. Mar. 6, 2016
Central UC in Moncton NB	Thur. Apr. 28, 2016
Crossroads UC in Delta BC	Sun. Sept. 25, 2016
George Street UC in Peterborough ON	Sun. Apr. 3, 2016
Lansing UC in Toronto ON	Sun. June 5, 2016
Leaside UC in Toronto ON	Sun. Apr. 24, 2016
McClure UC in Saskatoon SK	Sun. Feb. 28, 2016
McDougall UC in Edmonton AB	Sun. Dec. 11, 2016
Meewasin Valley UC in Saskatoon SK	Sun. Apr. 24, 2016
New Vision United Church in Hamilton ON	Sun. Jan. 31, 2016
Northwest Barrie UC in Barrie ON	Sun. June 5, 2016
St. Andrew's Wesley UC in Vancouver BC	Sun. Sept. 18, 2016
St. David's UC in Calgary AB	Sun. Sept. 25, 2016
St. Paul's UC in Boissevain MB	Sun. Apr. 10, 2016
St. Paul's UC in Bowmanville ON	Sun. Sept. 18, 2016
Trinity UC in Ottawa ON	Sun. June 5, 2016
Trinity UC in Peterborough ON	Sun. Apr. 10, 2016
Trinity-Clifton Pastoral Charge in Charlottetown, PE	Sun. Feb. 14, 2016
Westminster UC in Whitby ON	Sun. May 15, 2016
Wilmot UC in Fredericton NB	Sun. Oct. 2, 2016

### Re-issued Affirming Ministry Certificate for -

Emmanuel UC in Peterborough ON

July 1, 2016

(Amalgamation of George St. & St. Andrew's UC – both Affirming Ministries)

### Other Courts of The United Church of Canada – 3 new in 2016

Bay of Quinte Conference UCW in ON

Wed. Apr. 13, 2016

Chignecto Presbtery, NS & NB

Wed. Sept 21, 2016

Northland Presbytery, MNWO

Sun. Sept. 18, 2016

The number of 25 new Affirming Ministries in 2016 is an increase of 5 from 20 for the year 2015. The geographic breakdown for new ministries is:

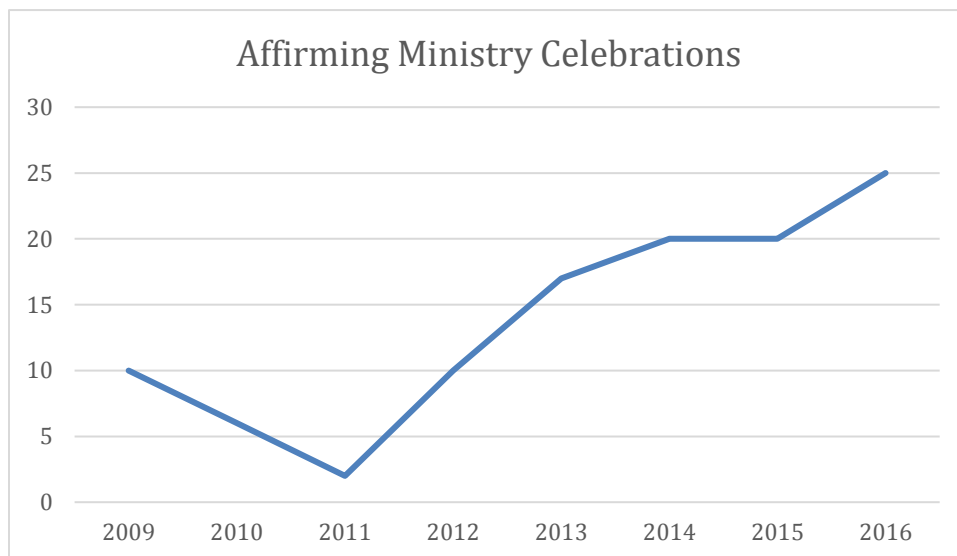
BC – 2; AB – 3; SK – 2; MB – 2; ON – 12; NB – 3; PE - 1.

The total number of Affirming Ministries as of December 31, 2016 was 159, including congregations, presbyteries, conferences, learning centres.

The number of ministries in the Affirming Ministry process was 110 at the end of December 2016. Ministries proceed at different rates through their process for various reasons – change in pastoral relations in a congregation, need to take more time due to the culture/experience of the ministry, and hesitancy/need encouragement to proceed, etc.

A summary of the numbers for the past 7 years:

Year	# in process	# of celebrations
2010	36 (first time named)	6
2011	50	2
2012	68	10
2013	80	17
2014	91	20
2015	90	20
2016	110	25



### **Coordinators for the Affirming Ministry Program:**

Following Council's approval in March 2016, Liz Carter-Morgan of Camrose AB and Shaun Fryday of Beaconsfield QC joined the Coordinators' Team – Liz looking after Western Canada and Shaun looking after Quebec and the Atlantic Region. Linda Hutchinson continued to look after Ontario and oversee the program - keeping lists up to date, attending Council meetings and writing reports.

Due to ministry commitments, Shaun stepped down from the Coordinator's position in November 2016 but remains a very valuable consultant in the QC-Atlantic Region. Thank you, Shaun.

Following Liz's taking responsibility for Western Canada from Brian Mitchell-Walker, Brian remained as a mentor.

### **Tribute to Brian Mitchell-Walker:**

Brian was honoured for his dedicated and extensive work with Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble at the Annual Meeting in Ottawa, ON, in July 2016 by being named recipient of the "Volunteer of the Year 2016 Award". Brian has played many roles in the organization and continues to bring depth of history, knowledge and wisdom as a consultant . . . . and as our web master. Thank you, Brian!

### **Resources used in the Affirming Ministry Program:**

- *Open Hearts* found at <http://ause.ca/wp-content/pdf/OpenHearts.pdf> is our main resource in which the Requirements for Becoming an Affirming Ministry are found on pages 8-9
- *Celebrating Gender Diversity – Trans and Gender Identity Kit* is a second excellent resource found at <http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/trans-kit.pdf>
- Other very good resources for study and education, exercises, etc. are found on the AU/SE website <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>

### **New Initiative: Outdoor Ministries**

As a result of interest in the Affirming Ministry Program by some United Church Camps, an "Outdoor/Camping Ministry Working Group" was established in late 2016 to work with outdoor ministries in developing an Affirming process which would be suitable for use with these specific ministries. The group is comprised of Linda Hutchinson, Affirming Ministry Coordinator and Chair; Julie Graham, AUSE Communications Coordinator; Jordan Sullivan, General Council Office staff support for AUSE and Outdoor/Camping Ministries; Lauren King, Maritime Conference Youth and Young Adult Minister; Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Hamilton Conference Social Justice and Youth Minister; Anna White, Director, CampOUT! in BC; Hannah Dabrowski, Cave Springs Camp ON Director; Jen Fletcher-Power, Camp Kidston NS Board Co-Chair.

Other people with experience in camping with LGBTQ youth and adults are available as consultants. (Right: Forest Hill UC Fredericton Affirming celebration-April 2017. By Brian Cassidy and Robert Christie.)

### Gratitude:

We are very grateful for:

- the support given to this program by Julie Graham, Communications and Marketing Coordinator . . . wonderful publicity for the Affirming Ministry Program, great follow-up with pictures/news of celebrations and exciting ideas to further our work with United Church Ministries. Thank you, Julie!
- the support given to this program by Jordan Sullivan of the General Council Office in collecting annual reports from Affirming Ministries, sending on this information to our Communications and Marketing Coordinator and the Affirming Ministry Coordinators, and for his general knowledge and wisdom which is immeasurable. Thank you, Jordan!
- the support to this program of the General Council Office of the Moderator and the Moderator, Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, who this year initiated the action of sending a letter and certificate of congratulations from The United Church of Canada (with whom we are in partnership) to each new Affirming Ministry, to be presented at their Service of Celebration.
- the action groups and Affirming Ministries in various regions of the country who promote our program, offer workshops, speak and coach local ministries through the process.
- all those ministries in The United Church of Canada who are willing to take on the challenge of offering radical hospitality for all of God's people and to do so publically.



We end with a word from a new Affirming Ministry in 2016 – Westminster United Church in Whitby ON . . . .

***“This has been an amazing journey.”***

Report respectfully submitted by Linda Hutchinson and Liz Carter-Morgan on behalf of the Affirming ministry Program.

June 27, 2017

## Interim Report from Affirming Ministry Program: January to June 2017

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Interim Report (Jan 1 to Jun 27, 2017) from Affirming Ministry Program

To: AU/SE Council and Annual Meeting

From: Affirming Ministry Program Coordinators – Liz Carter-Morgan, Linda Hutchinson (Written by Linda Hutchinson)

Date: June 27, 2017

### *New Affirming Ministries (January 1 to June 27, 2017)*

	<i>Date of Celebration</i>
Trinity UC Community Centre in London ON	Sun. Jan. 15, 2017
Agassiz Presbytery (Manitoba Northwest Ontario Conf)	Sat. Feb 11, 2017
First UC in Wetaskiwin AB	Sun. Mar 19, 2017
St. Andrew's UC in Moose Jaw, SK	Sun. Mar. 26, 2017
Forest Hill UC in Fredericton, NB	Sun. April 23, 2017
Roxboro UC in Roxboro, QC	Sun. May 7, 2017
St. Andrew's UC, Westwood ON	Sun. May 7, 2017
Ashbourne, Garneau Assisted Living Place AB	Wed. May 24, 2017
Toronto Conference ON	Sat. May 27, 2017
Emmanuel UC in Ottawa ON	Sun. May 28, 2017
Knox UC in Kenora, ON	Sun. June 4, 2017
Port Nelson UC in Burlington, ON	Sun. June 4, 2017
Grace UC in Dartmouth, NS	Sun. June 4, 2017
Oak Bay UC in Victoria BC	Sun. June 4, 2017
Castlegar UC in Castlegar BC	Sun. June 4, 2017
Hills and Shores Presbytery, Bay of Quinte Conf. ON	Wed. June 7, 2017
Rosedale UC in Toronto ON	Sun. June 11, 2017
Living Waters Presbytery	Tues. June 13, 2017
Two Rivers Pastoral Charge – 3 congregations (Bayswater-Summerville UC; Long Reach UC; Westfield UC)	Sun. June 18, 2017
Calgary Presbytery, Alberta and Northwest Conference	Tues. June 20, 2017
Riverside UC in London ON	Sun. June 25, 2017

Total number of new Affirming Ministries in 2017 (Jan 1 to June 27) is 23;  
compare with 25 new Affirming Ministries in all of 2016.

Total number of Affirming Ministries, as of June 27, 2017 is 184, as follows:  
NL 1; PE 1; NB 8; NS 13; PQ 8; ON 75; MB 20; SK 12; AB 26; BC 18;  
NWT 1; National 1 (Diakonia of UCC)

***Celebrations Pending: (10)  
Celebration***

Huron Shores in Grand Bend ON  
St. James UC in Peterborough ON  
Four Rivers UCW Presbyterial  
Fort Garry UC in Winnipeg, MB  
Roblin Pastoral Charge  
Robert McClure UC in Calgary AB  
Mount Royal UC in Mount Royal QC  
Emmanuel UC in Odessa ON  
Manitou Conference  
Hamilton Conference

***Date of***

Sept. 24, 2017  
Oct. 29, 2017  
Fall 2017  
tba  
Aug. 6, 2017  
tba  
tba  
tba  
tba  
May 2018

Total number of ministries in the *Affirming Process* as of June 27, 2017 is 113.

**Coordinators of the Affirming Ministry Program:**

Liz Carter-Morgan works with ministries in the Affirming Process in Western Canada. Thanks so much, Liz, for your commitment to this program! Linda Hutchinson works with ministries in Eastern Canada and oversees the program.

**New Initiative by Affirming United Working Group with Outdoor/Camping Ministries:** (formed in Fall of 2016 and noted in 2016 annual report)

Work in this area continues well. A new document "Broad Steps for the Affirming Process in an Outdoor/Camping Ministry – A neat and tidy list for a messy and beautiful spiritual journey" has been created and is being tested in a Pilot Project with three Outdoor Ministries this summer – 2017 – Camp Kidston in Nova Scotia, Sherbrooke Lake Camp in Nova Scotia, and Cave Springs Camp in Ontario. Other resources for education/training of Boards, Staff and campers have been put together from various sources which have experience with LGBTQ campers. Other camps will be brought into the program once the Pilot Project has been completed and assessed. Thanks to the Working Group for their commitment and passion for this evolving program.

**First Assisted Living Facility declared an Affirming Ministry:**

Ashbourne – Garneau United Assisted Living Place in Edmonton AB celebrated becoming an Affirming Ministry on Wednesday May 24, 2017 – our first such facility to be declared Affirming. The Executive Director at Ashbourne has agreed to talk with others who are interested in the Affirming process in such residential facilities. She could address the regulations involved in such a process. We have the process in a story format which we have permission to share with others also.





### Significant Stories and Activities:

It is significant to note that already in the period January to June 27, 2017 we have 23 new Affirming Ministries and 10 Celebrations pending for a total of 33 compared to 25 new Affirming Ministries in the whole of 2016.

Surely, part of this increased interest in our program can be attributed to the great work of our Communications Coordinator, as well as the modeling by the conferences and presbyteries which are choosing to engage in being Affirming. Watch for amazing stories and great pictures of Affirming Celebrations and other activities in Affirming Ministries on Facebook and in our Affirming Ministries Newsletters . . . . THANKS TO JULIE – our Marketing Coordinator!

### Conclusion:

It is a pleasure for us to have the opportunity to work with so many enthusiastic, committed people in the Affirming Ministry Program. We are grateful and our hearts are warmed when we hear the many stories of amazing Affirming journeys.

*(Above: Two Rivers Pastoral Charge in rural NB holds their Affirming celebration, June 2017, including Olivia Jayne and her moms! Used with kind permission.)*

## General Council Office Annual Report 2016

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To: Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble Annual General Meeting 2016  
From: Jordan Sullivan, LGBTQ+ Justice, Church in Mission (CIM), General Council Office  
Date: June 30, 2017

### 1. Affirming Ministries:

Over the past 18 months I have continued to ensure that all new Affirming Ministries are added to the Affirming Ministries list in the GCO's database, which ensures they are included in the [Find A Location option for Affirming Ministries](#) on the website. I also continue to collect annual reports from all Affirming Ministries - see this year's report: *Affirming Ministries 2016 Reports*

### 2. Affirm United's 2016 Annual Conference:

I was pleased to be able to attend AU/SE's 2016 Council meeting, Annual Conference and AGM, in Ottawa. The GCO financially supported the attendance of representatives from the World Student Christian Federation and New Direction Ministries.

### 3. Webinar: Celebrating Gender Diversity

On April 7 a webinar was held, facilitated by Michiko Bown-Kai, called "Celebrating Gender Diversity: Practical Tools on Gender Identity and Trans Experience for Communities of Faith." This webinar, which had 24 participants, looked at how the United Church tool kit [Celebrating Gender Diversity](#) can strengthen and inform church ministries (congregation, youth group, camp, UCW, presbytery, etc.). Michiko offered some general learning about gender identity, and used some of the kit's practical tools to show how it can be used to help make ministries more welcoming, and support personal advocacy efforts. The webinar was recorded and is available online at <https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/celebrating-gender-diversity>.

### 4. Support Living Apology Project

In 2016 I worked with Michiko on the development of the application for funding for this project, and was able to assist the Affirm United Council in writing the job description at their February 2017 meeting.

Michael Blair and myself, spoke with Michiko and Aaron via conference call, on April 20, 2017. At that time Michael clarified that if any policy proposals come out of the project, they would need to be submitted to the Permanent Committee on Program, Mission and Ministry (PC-PMM) in January 2018, and then on to the General Council Executive in March 2018. The Art Exhibition sharing of stories will need to continue to be worked out with the

GC43 Agenda & Planning committee as part of the Celebration of 1988 and Festival of Faith. As a result of the meeting, I created a communications chart listing all the communication tools available to the project through the General Council Office.

We were pleased to share the [announcement](#) about Aaron being hired as the Project Coordinator, linking to the fuller description on Affirm United's website. The announcement was shared with all Conference Executive Secretaries and the GCO Staff Management Table.

#### **5. Dignity Initiative Roundtable**

In 2016 the United Church was invited to send representatives to the Dignity Initiative Roundtable in Ottawa June 1-2, 2016. About 70 people from 30 organizations attended, to address ways we might act in solidarity with LGBTI people around the world who live under more repressive regimes. Jim Hodgson, a GCO staff who has experience with the church's international LGBTQI solidarity work, along with two members of Affirm United, Collin Smith and Jenni Leslie, attended the Roundtable. See first blog link in #13 below.

#### **6. Outdoor/Camping Ministry Becoming Affirming**

In my role of liaison with Affirm United, as the LGBTQ+ Justice staff, and as Ministry Partnership Animator (supporting the work of the church's outdoor/camping ministries) I have been pleased to support the work of Linda Hutchinson and Affirm United's Working Group "Camps Becoming Affirming." At Connections 2016, the United Church of Canada's National Conference for the United Church Camping Community, Linda facilitated a discussion on this.

The GCO hosted the face-to-face gathering of the group the day prior to Affirm United Council's February meeting. This group has created a process for outdoor/camping ministries to become Affirming Ministries – to be tested at pilot sites the summer of 2017. I look forward to animating the process (once tested and finalized) during the spring of 2018 – inviting all United Church Outdoor/Camping Ministries to consider becoming an Affirming Ministry.

I will also be animating IRIDESCE: The Living Apology Project among the camping community, inviting them to make their staff and campers aware of the project, so they too can participate in the project and share their stories.

#### **7. Bill C-16 Take Action**

After Bill C-16 passed its third reading in the House of Commons in November 2016, a new Take Action [Support Rights and Protections for Transgender Canadians](#) was posted and animated throughout 2017. A thank

you to all who tirelessly advocated for this bill, and to those Senators who voted to pass the bill on June 15, was posted on the Take Action page, and will remain until the early fall.

#### **8. Special Sundays:**

A worship service for the [International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia](#) (May 17) was posted in 2016 and 2017. In 2017 Affirm United and The United Church were honoured to have Ruth Woods write the service.

A service to honour the [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#) (Nov 20) was posted in 2016. I will be looking for someone to write a service for this fall, as well as someone in the Toronto area willing to lead the chapel service at the GCO.

#### **9. Black Queer Spirituality**

I have written letters of support for Basil Coward, as he works on research and the creation of resources to support black queer people. The projects include:

- Writing project – children’s short storybook “An Interrupted/Disrupted Narrative: One Black man’s refusal to transmit homophobia/transphobia to the next generation.”
- “Wouldn’t it be Nice to Take My Whole Body to Church: The Embodied Struggle for Spiritual Wholeness of Black LGBTTQQIA2S in Toronto,” Louisville Institute Pastoral Study Project grant <https://louisville-institute.org/awards/pastoral-study-project/13177/>

#### **10. Generous Space Ministries**

In 2016 Michael Blair and I were keynote speakers at the annual retreat for New Direction Ministries called (now called [Generous Space Ministries](#)). I have introduced Affirm United to Generous Space Ministries at their February 2016 Council meeting; a representative of GSM attended AU/SE’s 2016 Conference in Ottawa; and Wendy Vanderwal-Gritter, Executive Director of GSM, met with the Council at the February 2017 meeting in Toronto. GSM brings the gift of engaging in how to respectfully and graciously dialogue across differences within more conservative and/or evangelical religious communities. I will continue to work in consultation with AU/SE and GCO colleagues, to find ways to partner with and/or animate the work of GSM among the wider United Church.

#### **11. LGBTQ Refugee Sponsorship**

Helped promote among Affirming Ministries the need for sponsorships for LGBTQ Refugees – sharing communications from Khwaka Kukubo. It is hoped to create a more effective and efficient communication/animation process for this crucially important work

## 12. Statement in Solidarity with LGBTQ+ People in Chechnya and Around the World

As a result of the ongoing violence towards LGBTQ people in Chechnya [a statement was issued](#) from the GCO in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people who suffer from violence and oppression. It acknowledged and lamented the role of religious-based homophobia, and called for United Church members are called to take action to ensure that all people—regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity—enjoy their full civil and human rights in society, to work to end all forms of discrimination against them, and to support the victims of such discrimination.

## 13. Global Partners

In the summer of 2016 I met with the Global Partner Council at the GCO, learning and sharing with partners from the Middle East, Philippines, Argentina, a rep from the World Student Christian Federation, and KAIROS Canada. See their July 2016 message in Appendix I.

In June of 2017 I have met with Global Partners from the Philippines and Columbia, to share the history of LGBTQ+ Justice in The United Church of Canada, and the history and work of Affirm United and Affirming Ministries.

## 14. At the Heart of Justice blog

[Moving with Dignity toward Full Inclusion](#) - February 16, 2017 - Canadians have made huge progress in advancing LGBTI rights here. But what about the rest of the world? Is there something in our experience from which others could draw? How might we act in solidarity with people who live under more repressive regimes?

[These Are my Blessings](#) - November 2, 2016 - These are my blessings: seven adopted First Nations children that have chosen me as their mom. Our family has included many children, including White, Asian, transgender, Two Spirit, and more. As a family we choose to celebrate our differences and learn from each other. Sadly, we have seen many who do not share our beliefs that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

- [Gender Identity in the Church](#) - September 16, 2016 - Many church ministries are going through a process to declare that they are [Affirming](#)—enabling the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Despite these efforts, stories of heartache and healing continue to unfold.



## 15 General Council 43 2018:

The GC43 contact people (for either the Agenda & Planning or the Festival Planning) are below. When contacting them, always clarify if your email is in regards to Agenda & Planning or the Festival:

- Larry Doyle, Planning Committee Chair [larry@faithunited.ca](mailto:larry@faithunited.ca)
- Bev Oag, Primary Staff for GC43 Planning [boag@united-church.ca](mailto:boag@united-church.ca)

## 16. Plans for 2017-2018:

Ongoing work will include: supporting the work of IRIDESCE: The Living Apology Project, working with our Global Partners, Camps becoming affirming, and promoting the need for LGBTQ Refugee Sponsorships, I will work with AU on:

- Attend Rendezvous 2017 to facilitate and assist with the facilitation of two workshops on trans/gender diversity issues.
- Support the creation and animation of webinars on becoming affirming
- Engage in and encourage United Church involvement with the Canadian Camping Association as they begin this fall to formerly address the issue of religious-based camps who do not welcome LGBTQ camp staff or campers.
- Support the work of a new GOC staff working group who will be reviewing the 2011 Trans and Gender Diverse Task Group's recommendations – focusing on how we might better support trans and gender diverse people who are ministry personnel, and/or moving through the candidacy pathways.



*(Photo: Display at Manitou Conference about their Affirming process, which received a positive vote in June 2017.)*



## Appendix I: Partner Council message

The United Church of Canada  
*"The Journey is Our Home"*  
Partner Council Message  
July 2016

*"For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth." (Isaiah 65:17)*

Since 2011, the Partner Council of The United Church of Canada has met annually. Each gathering has provided new ways for us to meet and engage with members of the church,



encounter their ministries, and deepen our understanding of the history and context of the United Church of Canada.

*(Left: L-r: Jim Hodgson, pastor Elaine Saralegui (Cuba), and Bishop Reuel Marigza (Philippines) in conversation with participants at the AUSE 2016 annual conference.)*

On this occasion, through a series of workshops at the General Council Office and then a weekend spent with participants in the annual

conference of Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble (held in Ottawa July 22-24), we explored the experience of the United Church in responding to the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. During our time together, we did not neglect other urgent issues of our time—the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq and consequent refugee flows; the peace processes in Philippines and Colombia; eruptions of civil conflict in South Sudan and Turkey (among others)—but we affirm that the issues facing LGBTQ people around the world are also urgent.

The Partner Council is made up of a diverse group of ecumenical, inter-faith and social movement partners. The organizations we represent are not of one mind about how to include people whose sexual orientation or gender identity differ from the majority of the surrounding societies. Together with friends whose different identities tend to be grouped under the acronym LGBTQ, we explored the ways that the United Church began to defend the human rights of sexual

minorities in the 1970s; then pressed in the 1980s to end barriers to membership and ministry of lesbians and gay men; and then for equal marriage in the early 2000s. We learned of the work in the past decade to embrace and learn from people who are trans.<sup>1</sup> The work undertaken by Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble to create its "Affirming Ministries Program"<sup>2</sup> extends the opportunity for learning widely and deeply across the whole church. We respect the journey toward full inclusion that The United Church of Canada has undertaken, and believe that those of us who are undertaking our own journeys in different settings can learn from that experience.<sup>3</sup>

We found ourselves reflecting on the significance of these journeys toward greater inclusion, undertaken as they are today by many churches and other communities in societies with different legal codes and traditions, in the light of the promise of new heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1). We are promised movement toward a new way of being together, but one which is "not yet." ("For I am *about* to create....") Some of us come from contexts of struggle for justice, and we develop theologies of struggle. We live a long time in the desert, and learn that the journey is important in itself. When we are in the struggle and asking the right questions, we find what hope looks like. The journey is our home.

We acknowledge that there are many categories of potential exclusion such as race, class, ability, age, indigeneity, as well as orientation and gender. For example, we also heard from Indigenous people and racialized minorities of the struggle for equity in church and community. We are not just one identity; we hold multiple identities. The debate initiated by LGBTQ people within the #BlackLivesMatter movement is one place where this challenge comes into focus. The United Church of Canada is very strong in exposing and transforming some areas of exclusion as are our communities, but none of us are strong in our solidarity in all areas. The goal should be to understand and address *intersectionality*—the overlapping and interconnected nature of our identities—as we journey towards full justice and equity. This is a challenge for all of us, and we are partners in that journey.

We began to see colonization as a way to understand an intersecting legacy of exclusion from which we must turn away. The subjugation of one people by another can be political, economic, cultural, and can extend to colonized lives and bodies, as well as a subjugated earth. Instead of embracing difference, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Celebrating Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith*: <http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/trans-kit.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/affirming-ministries-program/>

<sup>3</sup> *Moving Toward Full Inclusion: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in The United Church of Canada* is a booklet that describes the church's journey and provides resources for individual or group study. Available for download at: <https://goo.gl/v0vvQ9>

goal is to assimilate or disappear diverse expressions of humanity. Colonization is not only a legacy, but in some places, and some respects, a present reality.

The call is to enter into a journey of decolonization on a path to genuine reconciliation—such as with Indigenous peoples, migrant communities, LGBTQ communities, and all God’s creation. We cannot stop short of God’s promise of abundant life for all, including creation itself. What we seek is not equality—everyone with the same resources and opportunities—but equity—everyone with what they need to live into the fullness and diversity of what God intends.

Out of these reflections, we lift up some **words of encouragement** to the United Church (through its Permanent Committee on Mission and Ministry and General Council Executive), Affirm United/S’Affirmer Ensemble, and to other global, ecumenical and interfaith partners. We are guided here by the Principles of Partnership adopted by The United Church in 2008. “God’s mission is meant to be undertaken in partnership,” and so our voices join with others as we journey together.

#### **To The United Church of Canada**

- We celebrate news of the events this year that mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first apology to Indigenous Peoples, and of the “Living Apology” process being initiated with the church’s LGBTQ communities, and encourage the church to ensure resources are available to make the apologies significant to the people for whom they are intended.
- We affirm strategies to address diversity and inclusion in an intersecting way through the work of becoming an Intercultural Church. Discussion of identity and intersectionality is not only a task for minority groups, but must also be undertaken by dominant groups. They too must explore identity, and commit to “interrogating privilege” and promoting equity as a step beyond equality. We support efforts by leaders to bring these perspectives into conversations until communities can fully hold the multiple intersections of identities.
- We were reminded of the United Church’s previous work of “living faithfully in the midst of Empire,” and suggest further exploration of this theme in commitment to a process of decolonization.
- The United Church and the Partner Council should consider holding a series of regional workshops with partners, or sponsoring some inter-partner dialogues, with the goal of expanding understanding of the issues and the people they affect.
- The United Church’s experiences of dialogue with partners on LGBTQ issues should be recorded and shared more broadly.
- Authentic processes of reconciliation need to shift power and resources to those previously excluded. Follow-up to Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its recommendations will test everyone’s

will for change. New structures will be an opportunity to fully live out apologies to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, LGBTQ communities, and to address inequities that flow from the continued impact of racism.

#### To Affirm United/S’Affirmer Ensemble

- We congratulate the people of Affirm United/ S’Affirmer Ensemble for the work to build awareness and inclusion within the United Church. The process to create Affirming Ministries is one that can be emulated in different contexts. At the same time, we would encourage Affirm United/ S’Affirmer Ensemble and the existing Affirming Ministries to join with General Council Office staff to find ways to increase engagement in support of LGBTQ organizations in different global contexts, and to continue to join others in support of LGBTQ refugees.
- We encourage work that deepens understanding of intersectionality, and engages the Affirm United/ S’Affirmer Ensemble community in solidarity with linked struggles.

#### To Global, Ecumenical and Interfaith Partners of The United Church of Canada

- We give thanks to The United Church of Canada for creating a space for partners to dialogue and share in the life of the church through the work of the Partners Council, embodying its commitment to the Principles of Partnership in a truly respectful, open and empowering way. We encourage global partners to develop similar principles and approach by involving partners in their organizational lives, walking together in solidarity, challenging and learning from one another, affirming our diversity and witness in different contexts.
- We offer you a word of encouragement in your journeys. We understand that the United Church has not intended to impose upon or to convert partners to its position on the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the church. But the church, like some members of the Partner Council, finds it useful to distinguish between those who say “No” as a matter of principle, and those who say “No; we don’t know how to proceed.” With the former group, we may still learn from each other. With the latter group, we can all bring knowledge and experience with regard to various efforts to include diverse communities in the church. In the global ecumenical context, the two-year-old World Council of Churches Reference Group on Human Sexuality<sup>4</sup> may be able to build more

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<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/engaging-in-interfaith-dialogue-on-human-dignity-and-human-sexuality>. The group will meet next in Lebanon in December 2016.

common understanding. This statement of the Partners Council should be shared with the WCC reference group.

- Just as The United Church of Canada began its work on LGBTQ rights in the 1970s from a concern for human rights of sexual minorities, some other global partners have found a human rights framework to be a useful starting point. Are there laws (such as those that criminalize private homosexual activity or that allow discrimination in housing or social services) that should be challenged?
- We both welcome and are challenged by the United Church's embrace of the diversity of Trans people and non-binary understandings of gender. At the same time, gender, in the way we have usually understood it, is still an important lens for us: the liberation of women is still vitally important. As we journey together, we need to be comfortable with a certain ambiguity—the promise of what is not-yet.

*Respectfully submitted by the participants in the Partner Council\* - July 24, 2016*

Middle East Council of Churches: Fr. Jimmy Danho

KAIROS: Jennifer Henry

United Church of Christ in the Philippines: Bishop Reuel Marigza

Regional Ecumenical Centre for Advice and Service: Horacio Mesones

World Student Christian Federation: Necta Montes

\* In our closing reflection, as well as for some other moments during our visit, we were accompanied by Elaine Saralegui, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church in Matanzas, Cuba.



*Members of the LGBTQ-welcoming Sumdol Hyangrin Church, PROK, and Moderator Jordan Cantwell, speaking with members of Toronto Conference at a public event, June 2017.*



## Communications report

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This report covers July 2016- June 2017.

The communications and marketing position includes ten hours work per week. This work would be impossible without major support from our Council and from General Council staff at the United Church of Canada—and without you, Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble's members and supporters.

### **By the numbers, 2016:**

**26 new Affirming ministries in 2016**, tying a record.

**25 Affirming ministry celebrations** between January and June 2017.

As of the end of June 2017: **167 Affirming ministries. 110 ministries in the Affirming process.**

That's impressive and deeply encouraging. However: There are roughly 3,000 individual ministries and structures within The United Church of Canada. Too many are convinced they are "already Affirming".

Annual conference 2016: **100 registrations**. 40% of registrations were new contacts for AUSE. That's a high percentage of new people. How can we improve our annual conference and meeting formats to ensure we fully welcome new people?

### **2016-17 firsts:**

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First ever United Church Women unit became Affirming: Bay of Quinte Conference UCW!

First ever United Church camp voted to begin the Affirming process: Camp Kidston, Nova Scotia. This sparked the first ever Camping Task Group.

First care home in the United Church (or any church) to become Affirming: Ashbourne in Edmonton.

First formal letter from the United Church (Moderator) welcoming all new Affirming ministries and making the UCC-AUSE relationship clearer. Thank you, Jordan Sullivan, Sue Fortner, and Rt Rev Jordan Cantwell for making this happen.

First ever **national online mapping of all Affirming ministries**, thanks to Bill Gillard and team at the General Council office. See <http://www.united-church.ca/search/locator>

First-ever **Gifts with Vision** catalogue presence (\$3,000 in donations, plus country wide print and online promotion of AUSE).

## *Affirming ministries*

### **New Affirming ministries**

As with 2015, the number of new ministries is a real highlight; please see the 2016 and interim 2017 reports from Affirming ministry coordinators for details. We will again break our annual record for new Affirming ministries this year.

The album on our Facebook page shows just a few of the excellent photos we received from new ministries and celebrations. Further in this report you'll see the excellent media work that resulted from these celebrations and from work offered by existing ministries. It's been a pleasure to be in contact with the many people who took leadership roles in accompanying their ministries through the Affirming process.

Thanks to support from Jordan Sullivan and Susan Fortner, in June 2016 all new Affirming ministries began receiving a letter from the Moderator for inclusion in their celebration.

### **Existing Affirming ministries**

The work carried out by Affirming ministries is diverse, creative, and an essential part of respect for the dignity and rights of gender and sexual minorities. If you want an excellent overview, see the report compiled by Jordan Sullivan, included in this annual report. Please share it widely.



Last year, we added a new site section featuring Affirming ministries in action. These peer-to-peer stories are designed to highlight the creative work of Affirming ministries and inspire others. Please take a moment to enjoy them.

<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/category/affirming-ministries-in-action/>

## Social media

Our Facebook group has grown by 50% to 770 members in 2016, and as of June 2017 had 850 members. Our Facebook page has grown to over 600 people since it began in May 2015. The group in particular is seeing much more engagement, and has hosted some excellent conversations.

## Videos

More and more Affirming ministries are creating short videos to tell their story, or to show why they became Affirming. These are just the ones we know about; please send your links to [communications@ause.ca](mailto:communications@ause.ca)!

Brechin United Church: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTB\\_rKEJIZc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTB_rKEJIZc)

Hillhurst United: Affirming Church, Affirming Ministry  
<https://vimeo.com/138491906>

McKillop United, Lethbridge, AB:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4yi95qaAvE>

Riverside United Church, London: Being an Affirming church  
<https://youtu.be/lcx6clmMlhY>

AUSE member Ruth Wood's story: <https://youtu.be/FD4X1TKjtL4>

## Affirming celebrations

Trinity PEI's Affirming service, January 2016  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96hIfSbAGkw>

Forest Hill United Church (Fredericton): Receiving Affirming certificate, May 2017  
<https://vimeo.com/214913945> and sermon <https://vimeo.com/214888184>



**Website:** [www.ause.ca](http://www.ause.ca)

Priority: an events calendar, as well as an improved resources page and work on a refreshed visual template.

The site is now up to date in both languages. We now have a full suite of bilingual online forms for the newsletter, membership renewal, registration, and whatever else we need. All annual conference registration and payment can be done online via our own site.

Complete updating of all English and French website navigation is underway. This includes a totally revised website resources section. This is preparation for a new website template, with priority on: looks; public event calendar; better ability to group posts by category on dedicated pages; better capacity for responding to new needs and opportunities going forward. Our existing template is five years old and is now out of date.

## Media

Please see below for links to known media coverage. Some TV coverage is not reflected here.

## Newsletter

The regular *Consensus* newsletter is sent out bimonthly, with special notices sent in between. These have included callouts for the annual conference; celebrating the number of new Affirming ministries; and features on LGBTQ refugees and global partners and human rights struggles. Whenever possible we feature French articles and links; thanks to Jim Hodgson at the General Council office, we are also featuring more global partners. All articles are posted to [www.ause.ca](http://www.ause.ca)

New subscribers are low in number, which also reflects the reality that most newsletter subscribers are representing groups or communities, not individuals. Nonetheless, a jump in subscribers would be very helpful. **I welcome any efforts to encourage people and ministries to sign up for our free, no-membership-required newsletter.**

**Gifts with Vision funding.** Thanks to the United Church's Gifts with Vision program, AUSE has received over \$3,000 in donations to assist with promoting and expanding the Affirming ministries program through workshops, event promotion, an improved website, and more.



## Other priorities for communications work

A *Welcome to AUSE* bulletin insert, to send in advance to new Affirming ministries.

Infographic of the Affirming process, as a birds-eye intro to the overall process.

*Why Become Affirming?* PowerPoint to help group discussions and discernment.

At least one national webinar on becoming Affirming

At least one workshop on Why Become Affirming

Supporting the [Iridesce](#)/ Living Apology project

## Thank you

Everyone who sends in photos, stories, ideas, and questions contributes to Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble's capacity to tell its story. I want to offer particular thanks to Jordan Sullivan; Jordan has a job description that spans the waterfront and the globe, yet he always finds time for AU/SE and my many questions. I also thank Michiko Bown-Kai and Collin Smith for their work as co-chairs.

I am deeply grateful for the web of committed and gifted people and communities who hold our movement together. Thank you for this opportunity to work with you all! Respectfully submitted, Julie Graham



## Known Affirming media coverage July 2016-June 2017

['I don't think God makes mistakes': Durham LGBTQ community worships at Pride service](#)

[Castlegar United Church to celebrate affirming motion](#)

[Affirmation status for Westwood church \(Norwood, ON\)](#)

[Castlegar United Church votes unanimously to affirm all people](#)

['We told him we loved him and would support him.'](#) (Fairlawn United, Toronto)

[Making Hillhurst United Church a sanctuary for LGBTQ worshippers](#)

[Open arms at St. Andrew's Church](#) (Moose Jaw, SK)

[Gaetz Memorial United Church starts affirming process to become officially inclusive](#) (Red Deer, AB)

[Local church embraces LGBTQ community](#); Gaetz Memorial United Church exploring becoming an official Affirming Congregation.

[Faith: This kind of Christian knows love is love is love](#) (Kamloops United Church, BC)

[Fredericton church affirms acceptance of LGBT community](#); church voted to become affirming ministry in the United Church

**Northland Presbytery becomes Affirming** (The Review, September 2016. No link available).

[Gay refugee sponsored by local United Church group](#) (Okanagan, BC)

[North Delta's Crossroads United Church officially recognized as an 'affirming' ministry](#)



Left: Ashbourne assisted and independent staff and supporters at the celebration, complete with media presence. Photo: Admire Studio





## . Membership Statistics as of June 30, 2017

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Last Membership	Individuals	Affirming Ministries	Other Org's
2017	111	161	11
2016	66	16	2
Total of above	177	177	13
<i>Year ago total</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>16</i>
2015	24	0	1
2014	19	0	5
Complimentary	1	2	16
Conference & merchandise	131	0	0
Other contacts	0	0	23
Total this group	175	2	45
Total of all above	352	179	58
<i>Year ago total</i>	<i>306</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>75</i>
2013 & before	122	0	3
<i>Year ago</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>
Grand total	474	179	61
<i>Year ago total</i>	<i>397</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>79</i>

### Notes:

- "Last membership" is the most recent year paid or a waiver of membership granted.
- Individuals have been sent tax receipts since charitable status was achieved.
- In December 2016, individuals and non-Affirming organizations that did not have 2016 memberships were asked for renewals; those who did so were given 2017 memberships.
- Affirming Ministries were sent invoices for their memberships in April 2017.
- Many "Other Organizations" with paid memberships are ministries on the journey to Affirming; they are not invoiced but are asked for membership renewals.
- "Complimentary": Individuals are Council members (current and past) or other volunteers with no record of paid or fee-waived membership. The Other Organizations are conferences and General Council (7), educational institutions and retreat centres (6),



church-related press (2) and local church LGBT group (1); they are not considered members. One Affirming Ministry is the Peterborough Area group, which is a member.

- Other Contacts are mostly of email addresses, many prospective AMs.
- Conference attendees and merchandise buyers are not considered members. This number includes 65 names from the Ottawa gathering in 2016.
- "Year ago" numbers reflect the same number of years as the current. For example, the first "total of above" for "year ago" is for 2016 and 2015.
- The 2013 and before listings remain on the database but will rarely be used for mailing.
- Receipts, invoices and most other membership correspondence were bilingual.

John R. Calhoun,

Membership Coordinator.



*Affirming churches and friends march at the 2016 Toronto Pride parade*



## Financial statements

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A time-honoured fundraiser: River Bend Presbytery at Saskatoon Pride, 2017.



## Finances as of 31 December 2016

2:41 PM  
2017-05-26  
Accrual Basis

**affirm united /s'affirmer ensemble**

### **Balance Sheet**

**As of 31 December 2016**

	<b>31 Dec 16</b>	<b>31 Dec 15</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
<b>Chequing/Savings</b>		
1150 · SAVINGS	5,000	5,000
1010 · Petty Cash	100	100
1100 · Chequing	72,407	56,648
<b>Total Chequing/Savings</b>	<b>77,507</b>	<b>61,748</b>
<b>Accounts Receivable</b>		
1200 · Accounts Receivable	540	1,170
<b>Total Accounts Receivable</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>1,170</b>
<b>Other Current Assets</b>		
12000 · Undeposited Funds	1,367	1,145
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<b>1,367</b>	<b>1,145</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>79,414</b>	<b>64,063</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>79,414</b>	<b>64,063</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Equity</b>		
3300 · Living Apology Fund	15,000	0
3200 · United In Marriage	18,753	18,753
3600 · Unrestricted Net Assets	45,310	43,417
Net Income	351	1,893
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>79,414</b>	<b>64,063</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>79,414</b>	<b>64,063</b>





## 2016 budget compared to 2015

3:42 PM  
2017-05-26  
Accrual Basis

### affirm united /s'affirmer ensemble Statement of Operations January through December 2016

	Jan - Dec 16	Jan - Dec 15
<b>Income</b>		
4000 · Memberships		
4010 · Affirming Ministries	15,776	13,100
4030 · Individual /Households	4,580	3,905
4050 · Institutional	700	500
<b>Total 4000 · Memberships</b>	<b>21,056</b>	<b>17,505</b>
4100 · Donations		
4160 · Other - non receiptable	185	682
4110 · Individual receiptable	8,020	8,725
4130 · PAR	3,210	2,465
4140 · Donations from other charities/	1,804	716
<b>Total 4100 · Donations</b>	<b>13,219</b>	<b>12,588</b>
4200 · UCC Grant	1,700	1,700
4500 · Annual Conference		
4510 · Annual Conference Surplus	5,230	2,075
<b>Total 4500 · Annual Conference</b>	<b>5,230</b>	<b>2,075</b>
4700 · Merchandise Sales	730	484
4800 · Other Income	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>41,935</b>	<b>34,352</b>
<b>Expense</b>		
VOID CHEQUE	0	0
6000 · Education/Research		
6020 · Gifts to Qualified Donees	3,614	1,038
6010 · Annual Conference Expense	1,000	1,000
6050 · Affirming Ministries - Expense	1,994	1,248
6080 · Other Educational Initiatives	0	50
<b>Total 6000 · Education/Research</b>	<b>6,608</b>	<b>3,336</b>
6200 · Communications/Promo/Networking		
6295 · MARKETING COORDINATOR- OTHER	1,519	1,818
6290 · MARKETING COORDINATOR SERVICES	13,910	6,080
6030 · Website	2,305	3,774
6230 · Observer/Classified Ads	740	814
6250 · Translation	1,277	853
6260 · Print Materials	210	958
6280 · Canadian & Intl Networking	50	0
<b>Total 6200 · Communications/Promo/Networking</b>	<b>20,011</b>	<b>14,297</b>
6300 · AU Council		
6310 · Winter Meeting- Other	881	363
6315 Winter Meeting Travel	6,904	4,540
6330 · Summer Meeting & AGM-Other	0	402
6345 Summer Mtg & AGM Travel	4,935	6,749
6350 · Teleconference Meetings	272	305
<b>Total 6300 · AU Council</b>	<b>12,992</b>	<b>12,359</b>
6400 · Merchandise Costs	(21)	148
6500 · Administration		
6537 · CANADA HELPS FEES	28	0

Page 1 of 2



2016 budget compared to 2015

3:42 PM  
2017-05-26  
Accrual Basis

**affirm united /s'affirmer ensemble**  
**Statement of Operations**  
January through December 2016

	Jan - Dec 16	Jan - Dec 15
6536 · PAYPAL FEES	90	0
6540 · Member/Donor Relations	405	602
6535 · PAR service fees /Bank charges	95	190
6520 · Postage	52	114
6515 · Post Box Rental	202	194
6610 · Accounting	300	299
6650 · Directors Liability Insurance	788	788
6510 · Office supplies	31	132
Total 6500 · Administration	1,991	2,319
Total Expense	41,581	32,459
Net Income	354	1,893





# Budget vs actuals 2016

3:49 PM  
2017-05-26  
Accrual Basis

## affirm united /s'affirmer ensemble Statement of Operations Budget vs. Actual January through December 2016

	Jan - Dec 16	Budget	\$ Over Budget
<b>Income</b>			
4000 · Memberships			
4010 · Affirming Ministries	15,776	15,200	576
4030 · Individual /Households	4,580	3,500	1,080
4050 · Institutional	700	500	200
Total 4000 · Memberships	21,056	19,200	1,856
4100 · Donations			
4160 · Other - non receiptable	185		
4110 · Individual receiptable	8,020	4,000	4,020
4130 · PAR	3,210	3,500	(290)
4140 · Donations from other charities/	1,804	500	1,304
Total 4100 · Donations	13,219	8,000	5,219
4200 · UCC Grant	1,700	1,700	0
4500 · Annual Conference			
4510 · Annual Conference Surplus	5,230	0	5,230
4500 · Annual Conference - Other	0	0	0
Total 4500 · Annual Conference	5,230	0	5,230
4700 · Merchandise Sales	730	500	230
Total Income	41,935	29,400	12,535
<b>Expense</b>			
VOID CHEQUE	0		
6000 · Education/Research			
6020 · Gifts to Qualified Donees	3,614		
6010 · Annual Conference Expense	1,000	1,000	0
6050 · Affirming Ministries - Expense	1,994	3,500	(1,506)
6080 · Other Educational Initiatives	0	2,000	(2,000)
Total 6000 · Education/Research	6,608	6,500	108
6200 · Communications/Promo/Networking			
6295 · MARKETING COORDINATOR- OTHER	1,519	3,000	(1,481)
6290 · MARKETING COORDINATOR SERVICES	13,910	11,000	2,910
6030 · Website	2,305	4,500	(2,195)
6210 · Consensus	0	100	(100)
6230 · Observer/Classified Ads	740	900	(160)
6240 · Aujourd'hui Credo	0	200	(200)
6250 · Translation	1,277	500	777
6260 · Print Materials	210	500	(290)
6280 · Canadian & Intl Networking	50	2,500	(2,450)
Total 6200 · Communications/Promo/Networking	20,011	23,200	(3,189)
6300 · AU Council			
6310 · Winter Meeting- Other	881		
6315 Winter Meeting Travel	6,904	6,000	904
6330 · Summer Meeting & AGM-Other	0	0	0
6345 Summer Mtg & AGM Travel	4,935	5,500	(565)
6350 · Teleconference Meetings	272	200	72
Total 6300 · AU Council	12,992	11,700	1,292
6400 · Merchandise Costs	(21)	1,000	(1,021)

Page 1 of 2



## Budget vs actuals 2016

3:49 PM  
2017-05-26  
Accrual Basis

### affirm united /s'affirmer ensemble Statement of Operations Budget vs. Actual January through December 2016

	Jan - Dec 16	Budget	\$ Over Budget
6500 · Administration			
6537 · CANADA HELPS FEES	28		
6536 · PAYPAL FEES	90		
6540 · Member/Donor Relations	405	500	(95)
6535 · PAR service fees /Bank charges	95	150	(55)
6520 · Postage	52	100	(48)
6515 · Post Box Rental	202	200	2
6610 · Accounting	300	350	(50)
6650 · Directors Liability Insurance	788	850	(62)
6510 · Office supplies	31	100	(69)
Total 6500 · Administration	1,991	2,250	(259)
Total Expense	41,581	44,650	(3,069)
Net Income	354	(15,250)	15,604



## Notice to reader

Charles Lyall  
92 Douro Street,  
Peterborough, ON K9H 1H4  
705-760-4155

### NOTICE TO READER

On the basis of information provided by management, I have compiled the balance sheet of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, as at December 31, 2016 and the statements of operations and equity for the year then ended.

I have not performed an audit or review engagement in respect of these financial statements and, accordingly, I express no assurance thereon.

Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.

Toronto, Ontario  
May 26, 2017

  
ACCOUNTANT





**Photos:** Front cover, clockwise from top left: Edmonton Affirming ministries' Pride display; Crossroads United Church (Delta BC) taking it to the streets; making diversity cupcakes at Port Nelson United's Affirming celebration in Burlington ON; Beaconsfield United Church's LGBT Youth Centre at Montreal Pride 2016.

**Back cover:** Left: Chignecto Presbytery Affirming celebration; Top to bottom: Oak Bay United's Pride bus rolling to Victoria Pride; Edmonton Affirming churches' display at Pride 2016; Agassiz Presbytery celebrates becoming Affirming; Sumdol Hyangrin church (PROK), Seoul, Republic of Korea, and its affirming public message.

