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We affirm: A statement on the Orlando hate crime
(use these words in whatever way you wish)

15 June 2016

We do not have words for the mass murder carried out against our community last Sunday June 12 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. We do not have words for the 49 lives taken, the injured, the grieving families and friends and communities.

Many of us across Canada were celebrating Pride that weekend, and we welcomed a new Affirming ministry on Sunday. We hold those victories and we feel the agony

experienced by the first responders.

In the face of this violence which robbed us of so many young, diverse, beautiful spirits and bodies:

We affirm that the God who created us loves us unconditionally. God loves us as we are, and nothing can separate us from that love. We affirm that our identities are gifts from God, and to be treasured, not erased.

We affirm that LGBTQAI and Two-Spirit communities are resilient and strong, and will not allow ourselves to be cowed by hatred. We are not going away. The closet is not an option.

We affirm the importance of Pride, which is and has always been so much more than a party and a parade. Pride is resistance. It takes up beautiful, creative, colourful space in a society that continues to erase, marginalize, and assault us.

We affirm the importance of the love and solidarity shown in public and private by our heterosexual and cisgendered allies, families, friends. You are members of this movement too. Please continue to offer solidarity. It is needed.

We affirm that all struggles for justice are one, and so **we reject Islamophobia completely.** We refuse the temptation of racist blaming and commit to doing our own anti-racist work. We thank Muslim leaders for their rejection of this mass murder, and note that many Christian groups have not done so.

We affirm that homophobia and transphobia are expressions of hate and fear, **not symptoms of “mental illness”** or other such ableist, discriminatory language.

We affirm that religious and non-religious people and groups alike share responsibility for the climate of hate and fear that continues to be directed at LGBTQ communities.

We affirm support for all who reject and work against male violence and toxic masculinity.

spaces are utterly essential. Recent human rights advances do not change this. We ask all ministries in the United Church of Canada and beyond to consider how you can become publicly, intentionally, and explicitly welcoming of all LGBTQ+ children of God. Saying you are “welcoming of all” is not sufficient.

We affirm the vital role of all Affirming ministries in offering pastoral care, safe space, liturgy, and public resistance to homophobia and transphobia. You offer life in the midst of death-dealing violence. We ask that you carefully and prayerfully consider what you can offer to your communities in this moment.

We thank all who are organizing vigils and protests, and giving us space to mourn, to be angry, and to express love. Thank you for your life-giving work.

And **we affirm the need to grieve** in our own ways, to sit with our fear and sadness, and to be gentle with one another.

We think of our family in the United States as they continue to struggle against not only hate, but against gun laws that enable horrific deaths and injuries. Please tell us how we can support you. **We ask Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble supporters to share [the statement](#) offered by our counterpart, the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ.**

Finally, Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble **thanks the United Church of Canada and the Moderator** for their thoughtful and challenging [response to this mass murder](#).

We too echo the words of Jeremiah:

*O that my head were a spring of water,
and my eyes a fountain of tears,
so that I might weep day and night
for the slain of my poor people!*

—Jeremiah 9:1

-- Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble, 14 June 2016.

orientations and gender identities in The United Church of Canada and in society. Our program helps ministries of every kind become publicly, intentionally, and explicitly welcoming of the LGBTQQIA+ and Two-Spirit communities. www.ause.ca



Taken at the Halifax vigil for Orlando.



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