

Worship August 18, 2019 at Kamloops United Church

Today folk from the KUC Affirming ministry group are sharing worship leadership.

Marnie Strong, Cheryl Lyall, Chris Dolson, Barb Hollingshead, Patricia McColl, Chris Dolson and Cathie Yingling.

Whose Rainbow Is It? Spectrums, Covenants, Hope and Promise.

The Rainbow calls us to a Promise. We are in it for a purpose. It cannot be owned; it must be lived.

Gathering Music – *Cindy Darwin is the musician today*

*****Welcome and Acknowledgments – Chris**

Good morning! Welcome to Kamloops United Church, a Centre for Community and Spiritual Discovery. And a very special welcome to those who are visiting with us today. For those who are not here frequently with us at KUC, I want to let you know that these past three months we have had the opportunity to enjoy many diverse worship experiences as our former minister retired in June, and our new minister, Rev. Dr Michael Caveney, starts in September. Today, people from the KUC Affirming ministry will be leading: including myself, Chris Dolson, along with Marnie Strong, Barb Hollingshead, Cathie Yingling, Patricia McColl, and Cheryl Lyall.

And now, there may be more introductions. Is there anyone here who would like to introduce themselves or be introduced? (___to you we say welcome).

Every time we gather in this place we acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Tk'emlups te Sewepemc. Unceded means this territory was never relinquished and this acknowledgement reminds us all of our role in Reconciliation. Kamloops United Church is also proud to be an LGBTQ2S+ Affirming congregation of faith, where all are welcomed as members and leaders regardless of sexual

orientation and gender identity. On our wall here is a permanent symbol of this commitment to justice and equity for all. This is the logo for Affirm United and KUC has been a member since 1996. Today is the beginning of Pride week in Kamloops, so what perfect timing for us to consider what it means to be Affirming!

I want to tell you about something lovely that happened here yesterday! The sanctuary looked beautiful with the chairs festooned with flowers and fuchsia ribbon. Pillars with pots of fuchsia flowers framed the front here and in this setting, a marriage ceremony took place. I was privileged to officiate at the wedding of Jody and Yvonne, and both women and their families were delighted with their KUC wedding experience here. Such joy! Marlene, Carole, Dirk, Sabrina and Arlene were here to help with hosting, music and sound...would you agree that it was a beautiful and moving occasion? And how perfect that such a union was blessed as Pride week kicks off locally.

We will now have the lighting of the Christ candle, and the bringing in of the Prayer box.

Lighting of the Christ candle

Call to Worship – **Marnie** (From the Affirm United website)

(Rise)

Forming the Rainbow

Let us celebrate who each of us is

Regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity

All are made in the image and likeness of the Divine

All of us may not be part of the rainbow community

But we are not apart from it either

Let us celebrate holy love

Opening Prayer

Holy One, who breathes life into each one of us, and all of Creation,
we give thanks for the wonderful diversity of your Creation.
Help us to hold one another closely, in love, compassion, and celebration,
that we may give thanks that we are all your children.
In the name of Jesus, we make this prayer. Amen

Singing together – I Am a Child of God MV 157

(Be seated)

Time for learning – **Chris** *Guide to Pride: Rainbows, spectrums, symbols, flags...*

This week in Kamloops, Rainbows will be evident everywhere. This is Pride week coming up in Kamloops, with events daily, peaking with the parade and festival next Sunday. Today in your bulletin you found a KUC Guide to Pride. On the screen right now you can see some times for us to note for next Sunday....(go over list) We need a count of how many we are before one person checks in at the Kamloops Pride booth and gets our colour assignment for mustering area.

The beginning of Pride week seemed like a perfect time to explore a theme of rainbows, and I have included in the guide images and descriptions of some of the many varied rainbows you might see this week. I thought it would be helpful too, if I included a glossary of some of the language used, especially around the spectrum of identities and orientations. I am using the word spectrum very intentionally. Just as the hues of the rainbow after the rain, fade from one colour to the next, without definition, so does the range of the spectrum of sexuality move from one identity to the next with blurred edges. Orientation and

identity can be fluid and shifting and intersectional... over a lifetime. The binary categories of boy and girl, man and woman, mother and father, just are not sufficient to describe the realities of how many people identify, or experience attraction. For example: Interesting fact: there are more babies born who are Intersex than there are redheads. Please take the guide home, maybe take a look at some of the websites...Qmunity for one, based in Vancouver has excellent resources, as does the Affirm United website.

I thought it would be interesting to look back at the history of how the Rainbow Pride Flag came to be. In 1977, Gilbert Baker, a veteran, who taught himself to sew, and was a flagmaker by trade, was challenged by San Francisco City Supervisor Harvey Milk to come up with a symbol of Pride for the gay community. Baker's response was the original Pride flag, inspired by Judy Garland's "Over the Rainbow", and it flew at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Parade in June 1978.

The original had eight colours, each celebrating an aspect of queer Pride. Hot pink=sex, Red=Life, Orange=healing, yellow=sunlight, green=nature, turquoise =Magic and Art, Indigo=serenity, violet=spirit.

The second version evolved after the assassination of Harvey Milk, and many wanted the Pride flag that he commissioned to commemorate his accomplishments for the community. However, the demand was greater than the available fabric...the hot pink was not available for mass production, so Gilbert Baker dropped it and for the 1979 celebrations, the flag had seven colours.

The third version of Baker's flag is the traditional six colour flag that is now so familiar. Turquoise was dropped for numerous reasons around the complications of having an odd number of colours. So the design of the Pride Rainbow flag that is now a global symbol, was shaped by the

circumstances of the gay rights movement, and also by the challenges of mass production.

But...the Rainbow flag is not the only flag associated with Pride. I have been shopping, online, at a couple of Vancouver retailers: The Flag Shop, and Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium.

Some of the flags here today are (*show and tell of flags on table*)

My current new favourite is the Pride Progress flag. The City of Philadelphia, added two colours, black and brown, to the Rainbow flag to make it more inclusive of people of colour. The Pride Progress Flag was designed by Daniel Quasar, who identifies as queer and non-binary. In 2018, Quasar said “When the Pride Flag was recreated last year to include both black and brown stripes as well as the Trans stripes included this year, I wanted to see if there could be more emphasis in the design of the flag to give it more meaning.”

The first time I saw the Progress flag was in news stories about Hillhurst United Church in Calgary. It hangs over the street above the front door there. I believe the symbolism really speaks to our commitment here at Kamloops United Church to be fully inclusive, to be in good relations with all people, to seek justice and love one another!

Flags and symbols are powerful. And empowering!

Singing together– Love Is the Touch MV 89

Scripture - Barb

Genesis 9:8-17

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹“I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with

you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

John 13:31-35 The New Commandment

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him,^[i] God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring,^[a] heirs according to the promise.

Reflection: Chris Rainbow's Promise

When Sandy Baird , on behalf of the worship committee, asked the Affirming Ministry group to lead worship today I said sure...but I wasn't quite certain where we would take the conversation. Not too long after that, I was part of more than one discussion, with various people, that got around to the Rainbow, and the use of the rainbow as a symbol of LGBTQ Pride. I came away with the sense that for some folks, the rainbow symbol being commonly recognized as being for Pride , caused some sadness...a sense that an important symbol of their faith had been appropriated. I wondered...how do people "see" the rainbow. What does it mean or signify for them?

So I am going to ask you, besides the association with LGBTQ Pride, what does the rainbow mean to you? What does it signify? What do you think or feel when you see the rainbow?

(Responses)

There's some important symbolism going on, yes? And, symbols have power.

Barb read from Genesis..."I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth...the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you, and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come".

The sign of the covenant.

When I was chatting with folks about the idea of our rainbow having been appropriated, someone, much wiser than me, said "the Rainbow calls us to a Promise. We are in it for a purpose. It cannot be owned; it must be lived."

It cannot be owned. It must be lived....this covenant is not a passive covenant. This demands action. There was a promise made, a covenant struck...and there is a part for all of us to play. The rainbow is not ours alone, we cannot own the rainbow. WE ARE the rainbow and we are the promise. A covenant is not passive. A covenant is active...it presumes engagement by all who are a part of that covenant. ...God made “a covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature”.

And there is something expected of us. Action.

Do you know how many times the phrase, love one another appears in scripture? I don't know for sure either... but it is at least 16 times.

Today Barb read John's recounting of Jesus' words again, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.”

There it is ...that's the active part. That's our part of the covenant.

Love is a noun, but it is also a verb and it has way more power as a verb, in action. And that's how everyone will know that we are disciples...if we have love for one another.

In Galatians, we are reminded that we are all one in Jesus Christ...”there is no Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female”...we are “all heirs according to the Promise”.

How do we achieve that? Love. Love one another. Love actively. Love publically. Love intentionally. Love explicitly.

I have a favourite cartoonist called the Naked Pastor. The Naked Pastor does a lot of cartoons with LGBTQ affirming messages, and messages about the hurt the church has caused for our LGBTQ siblings. He created a cartoon that portrays Jesus speaking to a group of grim-

looking bible-packing people. In the cartoon Jesus says..."The difference between me and you, is you use scripture to determine what love means, and I use love to determine what scripture means."

Use love. Choose love.

Singing together – There Is a Time MV 165

Reflection: Our Stories– Butterflies *Cathie Yingling, and Nancy*

Yingling This reflection by mother and daughter was about their family's journey, and the "butterfly effect" their journey had on another family's experience. Cathie is a member of Kamloops United and her daughter Nancy is a retired Vancouver Police officer.

Receiving the Offering with song: Cheryl Draw the Circle wide MV 145

Prayer of Dedication and Thanks - Cheryl (From the Affirm United website)

Holy One, in the diversity of these gifts is reflected the wondrous diversity of Creation.

As all of us are made in your image and likeness, we offer these gifts that all may be affirmed in their place in your Creation.

In the name of Jesus, who affirmed the marginalized, we make this prayer.

Amen

(Be seated)

**** Prayers of the People, and the Lord's Prayer – Patricia** see attached file below. **

Singing together – Deep In Our Hearts MV 154

Announcements and Celebrations – Chris

Blessing and Going Out – Chris

(Adapted from a Prayer for Wanderers posted by Brian Murphy on *Queer Theology*)

God of the seekers and dreamers, the disaffected and disillusioned, the loved, the lovers and the loveless

We ask for blessings as we travel, as we doubt, as we meander.

We ask for the grace to leave when necessary, to come home when we can, to create safe spaces for ourselves and, for others, when we need to.

We ask that we may understand, and...for the protection of our souls from those who don't understand, who judge, who mock.

We ask for the fortitude to undertake the journey even when it's scary (or, maybe, especially when it's scary).

We know that as we wander we are not alone and that "Not all who wander are lost". We know that sometimes we have to leave the confines of what we knew to see the truth, to hear Your voice, to find out what to do next.

We pray you lead us where we need to go, by whatever route it takes. We pray for new ways to see You, to understand new ways of being in the world. We pray for healing and for redemption, and, where possible, reconciliation.

We pray for all of this so we can know wholeness, know our bodies,
know each other, know You.

Know love.

Singing together - When You Walk From Here VU 298

****(Prayers of the people)**

Creator of vast and diverse creation,
Author of life and love,
You reveal yourself to us in every colour of the rainbow,
and show yourself to us in love.

Forgive us, God, for trying to put your Love in a box.

In the beginning you made birds to fill the sky and fish to fill the sea,
You made plants and animals as diverse as flowers and frogs.
In your creativity, you made plants that could reproduce asexually,
Fish whose sex changes over the span of their lives,
and birds with an array of social genders.

In Your Great wisdom, You have made us the same,
creating peoples and cultures with genders as diverse as Your rainbow.

In the person and life of Jesus, You came to us and did not discriminate.
You came for the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned,
those beaten and left to die on the side of a road
You came for the sick, the needy, those rejected by society,
You came for the poor and the rich and for the marginalized.
You came for all whose allies betrayed them with a kiss.

Give us the strength to follow that example.
Help us to leave our safe places in pursuit of justice and a more colourful world.
Give us the compassion to help and hold others,
Regardless of their names, faces, gender identity, sexuality, or social class.
Give us Your passion, and do not let us stand aside when our friends and family misspeak, from hardened hearts or by omission.

Your Spirit calls us to new lives in faith.
For some, this has also meant a calling to new names, new identities, new loves.
May Your Spirit sustain and inspire all of us on journeys to more authentic selves.

Today, on Pride Sunday, we remember all of our LGBTQ+ siblings.
We pray for all people who are lesbian and gay.
We pray for those who are bisexual, or pansexual.
We pray for those who are asexual.
We pray for those whose sexuality cannot be so crudely defined.

We pray for all of our transgender siblings, binary and non-binary.
We pray for intersex people.
We pray for those in social transition, and for those who do not need to transition.
We pray for those who suffer from anxiety, depression, dysphoria, and especially for those who want to change, or are changing their bodies.

We pray for the two-spirited, for our indigenous siblings,
and we acknowledge our role in the subjugation of these, our family.
We pray for reconciliation. We pray for truth.

We pray for the queer, the questioning, the quiet and the quelled.
For all those who have ever been on the outside looking in.

Empowering God, may your Spirit guide us in our personal celebrations and concerns. As a body of faith-filled people, may we also be guided in the celebrations and concerns of this gathered body.
We celebrate the Pride stories we heard today and are grateful for the movement of your Spirit of love and inclusion both within the United Church and in society.

Gracious and loving God, holy mystery, wholly love, we gather our personal reflections and community yearnings in these our silent prayers.
(silence)

We also offer You shared prayers, expressed through out Prayer Box

(share the prayers from the Prayer Box)

We give thanks for *(the names of the gay couple married yesterday, here in sanctuary)*: for their love and courage. We give thanks for this congregation, this community of faith, who creates safe and affirming space to celebrate all couples' love. We give thanks for Chris, our "Marriage Minister" for responding to this call to be affirming and celebrate love within KUC and in the wider community.

We give thanks for this amazing world in all its beauty, simplicity and complexity. We pray for our leaders, and for each of us, that we may all use our gifts of curiosity, intellect, courage, creativity, passion and compassion, and will to care for the world and all that is of it.

As we live through the seasons of life, may we know Your presence, Your comfort, Your strength, Your creativity, Your passion for life and for love.

Hold and sustain us in the sunshine and the rain.
May we always remember You in rainbows.

We offer these prayers in the name of the one who called us to "love one another" as we say together a paraphrase ...another creative expression of the prayer he taught his followers.....

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be. Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In the times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever. Amen.

Prayers created and offered by Patricia McColl during Kamloops United Church's "Affirm Sunday" in August 2019with appreciation for words and inspiration from resources on the websites of both the United Church of Canada and Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, and for the prayers shared by Eliot, who wrote prayers for their congregation in Pride week of 2016 and offered appreciation to someone else whose [prayers for Pride](#) that same year were inspirational to Eliot's prayers.

This paraphrase of the Prayer of Jesus can be found on page 916 of the United Church of Canada hymnbook "Voices United"(copyright 1988 Jim Cotter).