

## **Report for Affirm United – May 2019**

Last July our Minister, Rev. Joanne Hedge, along with some members of our Affirming Committee, attended Affirm United's Annual Meeting at Royal York United Church where we attended a variety of workshops and continued to make connections with other congregations in our area.

Rev. Joanne also attended the Skylight Festival in Paris Ontario and represented both Applewood United and other Affirming Congregations of the Hamilton Conference.

We have continued our connection with our local PFlag organization. Committee members are on their contact list and attend workshops when offered. We were in discussion with them prior to a workshop they provided entitled 'My LGBTQ Child and My Faith: Do I Have to Choose Between Them?' Rev. Joanne was invited to be one of the speakers at this workshop. It was very interesting and well received by the attendees.

Rev. Joanne continues her involvement with several Interfaith Groups. She is on the Steering Committee of the Interfaith Council of Peel. She is part of the Etobicoke Faith Leaders Community which organized another Interfaith Festival in April. She is also a part of the Mississauga Faith Leaders Community. Applewood had a display table at the Interfaith Festival in Etobicoke in April where we had many visitors and answered questions about our faith community.

In January, we invited Ryan Slobojan to come and speak about his initiative "Pushing Back the Darkness", which was in response to the killings at the mosque in Quebec in 2017. He asked us to do something in the community and so we purchased candles, lit all our church windows on January 29<sup>th</sup>, and took the remainder to a vigil at Mississauga City Hall where we handed them out to those present.

On the weekend of March 29-30, two of our committee members attended a workshop at Port Nelson United Church where they heard speakers from The Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic, viewed the movie Indian Horse and attended a KAIROS Blanket Exercise workshop.

Our focus was on mental health this year and we provided workshops, showing an NFB documentary titled 'OCD: The War Inside' at our church, attended a PFlag event on Mental Health led by Will Rowe of the East Mississauga Community Health Centre, and invited Rev. Shawn Lucas, Manager of Spiritual Care Services for CAMH, as our guest speaker when we celebrated our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of becoming an Affirming Congregation.

Rev. Joanne is on the Advisory Board of the East Mississauga Community Health Centre and she reported that, as the result of a cut in grants, they would not be able to provide a camp for members of their LGBTQ community this year. The committee

worked on fundraising and were able to provide the Centre with donations to cover the cost.

We are continuing our connection with the Planning Team for the United Church presence in the Toronto Pride Parade. Two of our committee members attend planning meetings regularly and are working to encourage others to march in the parade on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We continue to advertise in the 'Pink Pages'. We have updated our committee information on our church website, attaching the Territorial Acknowledgement and previous yearly reports to Affirm United.

Our 'Mindful Steps' subgroup continues to bring environmental issues to the attention of the congregation. We have regular clean-ups of our section of Cawthra Road. This year we held an Electronics Recycling Event which was well received by the local community. Along with another local church we presented a Green Movie Night around the topic of food waste. We also have made greater efforts to recycle, especially after large group gatherings.

Our library has a dedicated location easily accessible at all times where we display our collection of books which include children's and adults books about LGBTQ and Indigenous topics.

One of the initiatives we looked at for this year was to put Inclusive Signage on some of our washroom doors. We completed this in January 2019.

As the new Regions have begun their work, an Affirming Group comprised of congregations from Horseshoe Falls, Western Ontario Waterways, and Antler River Regions has begun meeting via Zoom. Members of our committee have become involved. The group has been working on the process of the Regions becoming Affirming at the meeting in May. The group is also discussing how best to support each other and encourage other congregations as they consider becoming Affirming.

It has been a busy year and our committee continues to actively promote justice education in many different areas under the 'Affirming' umbrella.

Respectfully submitted

Anne Moore and Marilyn Hayden for the Applewood Affirming Committee