

Report for Affirm United – May 2020

Our chair has continued to attend the Affirming Network meetings of Horseshoe Falls, Western Ontario Waterways and Antler River Watershed Regions via Zoom. The focus this year has been to prepare the Covenant Agreement and Action Plan to be presented to our Regional Council Meetings to complete the process of becoming Affirming Regions. The group is also discussing how best to support each other and encourage other congregations as they consider becoming Affirming.

Our chair has also become part of a support group with three West end GTA Affirming congregations. We are sharing information and resources as well as acting as a sounding board for ideas and issues which we might encounter.

Rev. Joanne and some committee members were planning on attending Affirm United AGM in London this year but due to its cancellation will look forward to another time.

Rev. Joanne continues her involvement with Interfaith Groups. She is on the Steering Committee of the Interfaith Council of Peel and is also a part of the Mississauga Faith Leaders Community. Along with her, several members of our congregation attended the Interfaith Prayer Breakfast in Mississauga in February.

We have continued our connection with our local PFlag organization although they have not been meeting as regularly this year.

Our focus was on social isolation this year. Our first event on this topic was a 'Lunch and Learn' session when we had a guest speaker, Chris Hayden, a social worker with Bridgepoint Active Healthcare. Our second event was the showing of a CBC documentary, *Breaking Loneliness*, followed by a Q&A session. Both events were well attended and received, including people from the community as well as the congregation. In December the committee hosted an afternoon tea to provide an opportunity for people to socialize who otherwise may not have that opportunity. We plan to continue this theme for another year.

A member of our committee researches significant dates and events each month and that information is published in our weekly announcements, on our bulletin boards and our 'Welcome Mat', a TV at our main entrance with rolling pictures and information.

During Pride month in Peel Region, members of our committee attended two BBQs where they were able to connect with people and let them know about our church community.

A letter is to be sent to local funeral homes to let them know that Applewood United Church is an Affirming congregation and a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community. This will allow them to pass along Rev. Joanne's name to families who are struggling to find a minister who they can call on to conduct a service.

Rev. Joanne is on the Advisory Board of the East Mississauga Community Health Centre. Through that connection we were able to host a Christmas dinner for their LBTTIQQ2S drop-in group, where they prepared a dinner followed by entertainment.

We are continuing our connection with the Planning Team for the United Church presence in the Toronto Pride Parade. This year it will be a virtual presence and the Chair of our committee is continuing to meet via Zoom as we make plans.

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. 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. This group is also looking at providing education on Urban Bee Keeping with the hope that we will be able to have some hives on our property.

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.

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 for the Applewood Affirming Committee