

Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
Hybrid Worship for June 25, 2023
Pride Sunday

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Open Our Hearts" MV 21

Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.
Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: Today we celebrate God's image -

**All: found in the faces of our elders,
in the smiles of our youth.**

One: We recognize God's loving likeness

**All: in the bodies of 2S LGBTQ individuals,
in the love shared between committed individuals.**

One: We see God's image reflected back to us

**All: when we walk with others,
when we seek justice for the marginalized,
when we practice radical hospitality.**

One: Today we celebrate God's image -

**All: found in every human, in every expression of love,
in every place where God's inclusive love is known.**

One: Let's pray together:

**All: God of all Creation, you have made us in your image,
a rainbow of every color, culture, gender expression,
language, orientation, and nation;
grant that, when we look at one another, we may see You,
expressed in yet another language of love;
and grant that we may honor your holy presence in every life.**

We pray because of Jesus, who shows us the way. Amen. *Prayer only, Rev. Kay Sylvester*

Opening Hymn: "Let Us Build A House"MV 1 verses 1, 2, 4, 5

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace;
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: A Prayer for Pride Month *by Jordan Sullivan*

Oh, Love that will not let us go...

Our hearts are filled and overflowing with joy, deep love, and gratitude.

We are thankful, for the gifts of all Affirming Ministries and communities of faith who open their churches, their homes and their hearts to Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ people and all their intersecting identities. for music, friendship, and for family.

We are thankful for the Love that will not let us go.

We are thankful, for Pride Marches and Pride Month, for all those who publicly, intentionally, and explicitly affirm that 2S-LGBTQ+ people are children of God.

We are thankful most of all, for the blessing of a Love that is and always has been there for us.

The truth at the heart of our faith – that you are Love - echoes today in words and in music, in friendships and family, in our hearts and minds, and continues to challenge us to Love.

We pray for our hearts and minds to be open to our own homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia, to be open to our own racism, sexism, ableism, sizeism, and all the ways we fear those who are different from us.

We pray to learn how to recognize the kinship between our souls and the souls of those who, to us, are strangers.

We pray that we will never cease in our journey to learn how to Love more radically.

We pray in the name of the Love that flips tables and cracks whips, the Love that heals those judged by religious leaders and powers, the Love who lives and loves among the marginalized and outcast.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Sung Response: "O Ancient Love" VU 17 Verse 1

O ancient love, processing through the ages,

O hidden love, revealed in human form;

O promised love, the dream of seers and sages:

O living Love, within our hearts be born,

O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17 *The Inclusive Bible*

Open your ears, YHWH, and answer me,
for I am weak and helpless.
Save me from death, for I am loyal to you;
protect your faithful one,
for you are my God and I trust in you.
Have mercy on me, YHWH,
for I pray to you all day long.
Make your faithful one glad,
for I lift my soul to you, YHWH.

You are good and forgiving, YHWH,
full of constant love for all who call on you.
Listen to my prayer, YHWH,
hear my cries for help.
I call to you in times of trouble
because you answer my prayer.
There is no other god like you, YHWH,
not one who can do what you can do.
When you act, all the nations will come
and bow down before you, YHWH,
and will pay honour to your Name.
How great are you, Worker of Marvels;
you alone are God!

Turn to me and have mercy on me;
grant me strength, for I am faithful to you
just as my parents were.
Give me a sign of your favour,
then those who hate me will be frustrated
when they see that you, YHWH,
have given me comfort and help.

Matthew 10:26–31 *the Inclusive Bible*

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Don’t let people intimidate you. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed,
and nothing is hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in darkness,
speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.
Don’t fear those who can deprive the body of life but can’t destroy the soul.
Are not the sparrows sold for pennies? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground
without your Abba God’s knowledge. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted.

So don't be afraid of anything – you are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows.”

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Musical Offering: "The Gift of Love" English Folk Tune Arr. Hal H. Hopson

Reflection: What have we got to be Proud of?

Hymn: “Sing a New World Into Being” tune VU 460

Sing a new world into being.

Sound a bold and hopeful theme.

Find a tune for hopeful yearnings.

Lend your voice and dare to dream:

dream a church where all who worship

find their lives and loves belong.

Sing a new world into being.

Sing as Christ inspires your song!

Sing a new world into being

where each gender, class and race

brings its rainbow gifts and colours

to God's limitless embrace;

where the lines that once divided

form instead the ties that bind.

Sing a new world into being:

risk transforming heart and mind!

Sing a new world into being

where the homeless find a home,

where no children ever hunger

but are filled with God's shalom;

where all people work for justice,

where all hate and justice cease.

Sing a new world into being:

raise the harmonies of peace.

Sing a new world into being.

Join the ancient prophets cry

for a time of health and plenty

where all tears have been wiped dry;

where compassion flows like waters,

pouring balm on all who grieve.

Sing a new world into being:

live the promise you believe!

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Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music: "My Soul Is Thirsting For You"

Hymn of Dedication: "Know that God is Good" MV 104

Know that God is good, know that God is good,
know that God is good, God is good, God is good.

Offering Prayer:

**All: We are all one human family.
In your love you created us.
Through your grace you reach out to us.
You are great enough to hold us all in your arms at the same time.
Help us to open our hearts to the world that you love.
Teach us to weave our lives together.
We yield to Spirit, offering what we have to the greater good.
In this way, each day, we begin again in love.**

Rev. Mak Kneebone, United Church of Christ

Prayers of the People *adapted from a prayer by M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed.com*

In the midst of all that keeps our spirits frantic, overwhelmed, or troubled, we pause.

We pause to remember each other as those whose precious and precarious lives
are inherently bound together.

We pause to remember the basic gifts of water, of trees, of beauty, of the land we gather upon.

We pause to remember our neighbors – distant and near.

And so to the One who is Love, we bring the prayers of our communities.

We pray...

for all the queer, trans, and intersex children and youth across the globe. For the ones who are
struggling with feelings of isolation and shame. For those who have no safe place or people to retreat to.
For those who must be teachers to the adults in their lives. For those who are unsafe in their
communities.

We pray for our elders whose labor we are indebted to. For the ones in marginalized communities who
never tasted the freedom they fought for. Few pray for those who teach and lead us, while still being
open to learning themselves.

We pray for allies who step up and step out, casting their lot with others in true solidarity.

We pray for the ones forgotten and betrayed.

We pray for all those who hunger for justice and liberation today. For the ones who lay down their lives for their friends. For the ones who tell the truth, whatever the cost. For the ones who take risks, who dream, who feed and pray, who fight for bread and roses, both.

We pray for all who are suffering in the church and the world at the hands of white privilege and colonialism. We pray for those imprisoned unfairly and unjustly. For those whose land has been taken. For the earth that groans beneath us. For those without food or housing. For those who have yet to repent.

We pray in gratitude for all that nourishes and sustains us. For the gifts of beauty and friendship, shared meals, and art, and love. For laughter. For pleasure. For the friends, lovers, and comrades who lift our spirits, always by our side when the days are heavy. For the freedom we have in Christ.

For your presence within and around us, in our highs and lows, our hope and our despair, God, we give you thanks. Hear our prayers and deepen our willingness to show up with and for one another, sharing in each other's burdens and working for one another's protection and care. Amen.

Prayer of Jesus (*paraphrase*) VU 916

**All: 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 the 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 times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial 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 forever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "Who is my Mother?" MV 178

Who is my mother, who is my brother?
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel

Sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.

Differently abled, differently labeled.

Widen the circle round Jesus Christ:

Crutches and stigmas, cultures' enigmas,

All come together round Jesus Christ.

Love will relate us color or status

Can't segregate us round Jesus Christ:

Family failings, human derailings

All are accepted round Jesus Christ.

Bound by one vision, met for one mission

We claim each other round Jesus Christ.

Here is my mother, here is my brother,

Kindred in Spirit through Jesus Christ.

Amen!

Commissioning /Blessing

Sung Blessing: "May the Road" Traditional, Arr. Bev Foster

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

Happy Pride Sunday!

All month, cities, towns and villages across the country are celebrating the talents and contributions of those who identify as part 2S LGBTQ + community, as well as recognizing the resilience of those whose very lives had for many years basically been criminalized.

From the Government of Canada website: *Historically, Pride gatherings emerged from the first large-scale protests for 2SLGBTQI+ rights. In Canada, the first demonstrations took place in Ottawa and Vancouver in 1971. By 1973, Pride events were held in several Canadian cities, including Montréal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Toronto's Pride weekend in June is now among the largest Pride events in North America.*

The United Church of Canada made a bold but controversial decision in 1988, with the result that the General Council declared that "all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, who profess their faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to be or become members of The United Church of Canada" and that "all members of the United Church are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry." It was another twenty years before the church affirmed the participation and ministry of transgender people, and it was not until 2010 that Rev. Cindy Bourgeois, is the first openly transgender person to be ordained in the United Church.

As a denomination, these are all milestones of which we can be proud – a reason to bring that rainbow sign of hope into our churches and sanctuaries, a reason to wear or wave a Pride flag or symbol. In

1982, the organization now known as Affirm United began, originally as support for individual gay and lesbian members of the church, and it continues today, largely seen through the Affirming Ministries program, of which this congregation became a part in 2014.

We declare, in our decision to become an Affirming congregation, that we stand with the United Church in the belief that “gender and sexuality are gifts of God, and that all persons are made in the image of God. We welcome into full membership and ministry people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The United Church is opposed to discrimination against any person on any basis by which a person is devalued.” When we fly our progress Pride flag we say welcome, when we paint a rainbow on our driveway, we say “you belong”, when we choose inclusive language in our worship services, we say “you are included”, when we change the signage on our washrooms, we say “all are valued.”

It has been a long road to this place of celebrating Pride, a long road that still continues, because there are many in our community who are still vulnerable, still do not feel safe to live their authentic lives openly. Not all of those individuals will come to our church, not all would even identify as Christian, but our flags, our presence at community events as an Affirming church, our rainbows, can be a sign of hope, a sign that despite a rise in hate-motivated crime against the 2sLGBTQ+ community and people, there is a space in which they are named as God’s beloved, as important and valuable and precious just as they are.

It has been a long road since Jesus declared to his disciples that what had been hidden will be revealed, that what had been kept in secret – like sexual orientation, gender identity, and God’s acceptance and love for all – should now be shouted from the rooftops. As allies, as the friends and supporters we declare ourselves to be, we need to keep shouting, keep reminding ourselves and others of the worth of ALL people, the need for justice for ALL God’s beloved children.

So this Pride Sunday, lets wear or wave our flags – not just here, but as we walk through the grocery store, or gather to clean up a section of Cawthra Road, or visit a friend. Show our Pride in the hopes that even one person feels a little less afraid, a little more accepted, a little more able to live as God intended them to live.

That would surely be something to be proud of – our actions making a difference for others in the world.

Amen