

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
July 17, 2022 – Pride Week Worship

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, July 17

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: MV 1 *Let Us Build a House*, vv. 1, 4, 5

1. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

Inviting Holy Light

We take a moment as we invite holy light to ground ourselves here, in the sacred space. Breathe. In... out... Our bodies are the ground of love, we God's beloved messengers. In balance with the quiet of night and sleep, we welcome the warmth and awakening of light. Christ light that shines, here. Shines in and through us. *[light Christ candle]*

Hymn: MV 154 *Deep in our Hearts*, vv. 1, 2

1. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

2. Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.

Nurturing Safe Space

We are all children of God. All are welcome in worship here – all backgrounds, all experiences of gender identity, whatever your experience, you are a child of our Creator God and you are welcome.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

Since time immemorial, the First Peoples have cared for this land we now call Canada. Europeans came to this land, and in 1850 the Robinson Huron Treaty was made, a Treaty that the Europeans, the immigrants, did not honour. Among us, those who are ancestors of those European settlers, immigrants, have still not made good on that Treaty. We also recognize a history of harm caused by our United Church of Canada and Canadian Government through a system of assimilation using residential schools, the sixties scoop, and many misguided practices using a skewed theology.

There is hope, though. I believe it. Hope in the work that lays ahead of us, followers of Jesus who together will open our hearts and minds and work earnestly and sincerely towards reconciliation. A first step is, every time we gather, acknowledging this land is sacred not just to us, but to the peoples who have for thousands of years called this land home – so we acknowledge gratefully the Atikemesheng Anishnawbek, and the Wahnapiatae First Nation on whose traditional territory we worship on today. We are thankful for all the generations of First Peoples who have been stewards of this land including the by the Métis people, may we worship and work towards God's vision of sharing and reconciliation.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome again to shared summer worship – shared by St. Mark's, St. Peter's and St. Andrew's United Churches. Today is the celebration of Pride Week, and here today, giving thanks for the diversity among us, a diversity that our church is only beginning to understand fully and gratefully. We are so blessed to have talents and dedication of so many who make it possible for us to be here today. Thank you, all participants today, from our three communities of faith.

Love Your Neighbour swag (buttons, bookmarks, and stickers) available until July 17. Community Family Faith Nights: Wednesday evenings during the summer. See the NEWS for details.

We also have a Virtual Fellowship time is tonight at 7:00 with hosts Bev and Diane. Diane's email is also in the credits so you can request your Zoom link to Zoom Social Hour. Please join us. We'd love to see you there.

Call to Worship

Creating God – Creator beyond Gender,
**who makes no mistakes, who surprises us always,
who molded the first person both male and female,
who molded the first non-gendered human
and who loves all creation.**

Help us love the diversity of your creation.

Help us accept all varieties of gender in ourselves and in others.

Help us celebrate those who are different from us
that we may learn to love each other as you love us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, both human and divine.

Opening Prayer

Creating God – God of Mercy,
as we have acknowledged the diversity in this amazing world,
created in atoms and molecules but with an underlying spirit of
mystery, we must also admit that, at times, we have forgotten of the
wonders of that diversity.

We have longed for things to be familiar, and as they have always been. We know that the great religious traditions have caused harm in the past and continue to cause harm and pain to those who express their being in ways different than the majority.

We know, too, that we individually, both intentionally and unintentionally, have rejected and shunned those who are not like us. For this we are truly sorry and ask your patience as we learn and strive for ways to be more inclusive and celebrate all in this wondrous world.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

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 echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth! 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, 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.

Hymn: MV 145 *Draw the Circle Wide*, vv. 1, 2

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

1. God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

2. Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders,
faithful to God's call.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Celebrating the Colours of God's Love

A little bit of context for worship today. In 1925, The United Church of Canada was born after much consultation, compromise, and listening for the Spirit. In 1988, The United Church of Canada decided that sexual orientation would no longer be a barrier to membership in the United Church and hence to candidacy for ministry.

Pride is a positive stance against discrimination and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and gender-fluid people. Pride is also a chance to promote self-affirmation, dignity, equality, and fundamental human rights, and to celebrate in a safe environment.

Today we affirm the place of the rainbow in our world. As we worship, I invite each of us into the rainbow: to publicly declare inclusion of all, to be intentional in our inclusion, and to be explicit in our support of one another as we affirm that all belong under the rainbow.

The beautiful thing about the rainbow is that the colours of the rainbow have different meanings to different people.

RED: In the Pride rainbow flag, RED means life in all its richness. Come, let us worship, learn, and celebrate together, one family.

ORANGE: September 30 is Orange Shirt Day, a day recognizing that the self-esteem of all children matters. It is the day that we remember Phyllis Webstad at a residential school in her orange shirt that was immediately taken off her. Every child matters. All children should be able to wear whatever colour they choose. In the Pride flag, ORANGE means healing.

YELLOW: Truth and authenticity requires light shining, coming out of closets into the new living. In the Pride flag, YELLOW means not hiding in the shadows.

GREEN: Each of us is called to care for creation. Kermit the Frog tells us that it is not easy being green. Being green means that we get lost in a forest of trees, and yet we can also become part of the forest, a part of Creation. In the Pride flag, GREEN means nature for all communities. We are all a part of Creation, we are all children of God.

BLUE: In the Pride flag BLUE means serenity. It is the colour of imagination, open spaces, sea, and sky. What better way to celebrate imagination than with these images.

PURPLE: It is good to be together today, and to be able to celebrate who we are as a community. This is a special, sacred place because of each of you. In the Pride flag, PURPLE is the colour of reflection and spirituality. Each time we gather is a time of reflection and celebrating our spirituality. Let us remember to nurture our spirits so our hearts will sing!
We bring the vibrant colours of God's love into this space.

PINK & BLUE: The colours of the Trans flag; Pink and Blue represent the traditional colours representing the binary genders for babies – girls or boys.

WHITE: We celebrate newer understandings of how diverse and complex gender is. White represents the many aspects of Creation that don't fit within our humanly created labels – White for those who are transitioning, intersex, or who identify outside of the binary genders.

We bring the vibrant colours of God's love into this space.

Readings

1 John 3:18-20 (The Message translation)

My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves.

Living God's Abundant Colour: An Ally Story

I am not part of the 2SLGBTQ community. Rather, I identify as an "ally". What is an ally?

I did not put much thought into my role as an ally in educational years. In theological college, though, I began encountering a number of people who identified as lesbian or gay, or trans.

Honestly, I probably previously avoided interactions with people who identified as gay or lesbian previously, but then my education really began, as an ally.

Serving as a minister in United Churches, I began seeing the challenges faced by the 2SLGBTQ community in United Churches, sometimes profound conflicts – I resigned my position in one church because there was little openness to talking about an inclusive marriage policy there.

My theology has evolved, I think, over the years. I believe that God's power in love becomes experienced most fully when all voices, all life experiences are welcomed in decision-making and in community that we call church. I was born into church life, and I have to say that more often than not, churches I've been part of have not nurtured that full inclusion, we are works in progress.

So I came to meet this wonderful woman, I'll call her Sarah, wanting to join the church I served, and she share with me that she was lesbian. That was an important part of her spiritual story, a painful story that unfortunately included attending a church with her partner, yet in many ways feeling the pain of exclusion. Sitting with her partner was not seen as just as wonderful as seeing a man and woman holding hands. In listening to her story, I felt sick, imagining how many times in churches I attended, homophobia had suppressed the vibrant colours and very humanity of earnest Christians who courageously tried to share their colours and experiences. Even worse, I wondered how many times that had happened in churches I covenanted with to serve, called to nurture full inclusion, but how far short we fell. What a holy moment it was for me as I listened to Sarah's story, becoming powerfully conscious of my ally role, as a listener, and to somehow walk with her, and to walk with the congregation as we embrace her gifts, including the diversity that she brings.

What a learning experience for me, to listen, as a privileged white, straight male. She was so articulate as she shared the pain of exclusion, the pain and grief of loss in her life, and feeling alone, but then the surprising grace of finding people in a small-town church who welcomed her, all of her, into community. Considerations that I once considered part of an abstract "issue" as I engaged debates in past churches, Sarah enlivened the realities, engaging a community that had not had much experience talking about gays, or lesbians, or two spiritedness. Let me say, the congregation was not at all unanimous in their comfort level, hearing the experiences of Sarah who had no trouble sharing that she was a lesbian.

Sarah opted to share her story publicly on the Sunday that she was baptized and joined the church. It was powerful for me, a person who does not have that experience of exclusion, as an ally I listened. I must confess, I observed the very few non-verbal signs of discomfort in the congregation as Sarah spoke; one who shifted in their seat, an oh-so-subtle cringe; I have learned as an ally that these are among so many micro aggressions, many that I have probably exhibited too many times in my life. I saw a wee bit of discomfort, but much more prevalent were tears on faces of congregants as Sarah, tearfully, joyfully, gave her testimony of a journey of death and resurrection. Where church had previously forced Sarah to put a bushel basket over her light, suppressing her God-colours, this community celebrated the beacon of wisdom and faith that Sarah was.

I have come a long way, personally, emotionally, theologically, thanks to Sarah and so many people who have reminded me that Christian Community cannot truly be community unless truly everyone, no exceptions, everyone, is welcomed in and encouraged to share their gifts.

Hymn: MV 145 *Draw the Circle Wide, vs. 3*

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

3. Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide. *(repeat refrain)*

Readings

1 John 4, various verses (Common English Bible)

Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God ... This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent God's Beloved Son into the world so that we can live through him...

Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us.

Living God's Abundant Colour: A Story

Text not available at time of printing.

Matthew 5:14-16 (The Message translation)

Hear these words of Jesus in the story according to Matthew, encouragement to shine with God's love...

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

"If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Creator in heaven..."

Let us pray: As we celebrate, and hear your Word, Love's Source, give us courage to live with the vibrant colours as you created us to, building bridges of love and hope where harmful divisions have been made. May we make equity and equality for all people our goal so that everyone can live fully in your love. Amen.

Pride Affirmation

I believe that we are more than children of the Holy.

I believe that we are more than clay.

I believe that we are more than flesh:

Flesh that is warm and sweaty, soft and hard.

In us is embodied the soul of the Divine,

Calling us to love, embrace, and share the kiss of peace:

Statements of love.

Jesus was flesh but more than flesh:

He was the universal word incarnate,

Animated by the Holy and responding to the needs around him.

We are animated by the Holy,

We are animated by desire and attraction,

We are animated by Holy love.

When we touch it is more than desire:

It is the longing for affirming the other,

**Affirming one another,
Affirming ourselves.**

**We are more than Pride:
We are called to be our authentic selves,
Flesh that is warm and sweaty, soft and hard,
For we are animated by Holy desire.**

Anthem: *The Heart Will Choose the One It Loves*

(Jacqueline and Alison Warner-Smith singing, and Ralph McIntosh on piano)

Offering Moment

On its own, our individual offering can seem so small – insignificant even. It is easy to lose sight of the abundant work God empowers when we gather our giving together, our different church communities but all working not to pay for buildings or staff, but God's work in our communities of faith and in our larger world.

Dedication Hymn: VU 540 *Grant us God the Grace*

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.

Dedication Prayer

We offer you, O God, our whole selves: our flawed and quirky, incomplete but striving selves. Awaken us to discover the unique service you've placed into our lives. Encourage us to accept the opportunities for helping and healing that lie before us. Thank you for accepting us, just as we are, and using us to do your will in the world. Amen.

Prayers of Community

Let us pray: Gracious and loving God, holy mystery, wholly love, we gather our personal reflections and corporate yearnings in these our silent prayers.

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 the 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 Canadian society. We pray that all people who feel excluded by families, faith communities, and society because of who they are may experience your love in their lives. We pray for peace and respect for all in this community, this country, and this world.

Help us all across the gender spectrum to uniquely reflect your glory and express your love. but anti-gay violence, homophobia, and transphobia have blocked many from recognizing your beauty in all people. All of creation suffers from the effects of such hate, fear, and violence.

We pray for political leaders at all levels as they struggle to make the world a better place. We pray that the teachings of Jesus and those of other world faiths will work together to meet the challenges of our world today.

And in our own administrative and policy work in our communities of faith, St. Peter's, St. Mark's, and St. Andrew's, we pray for wisdom and careful consideration of the topics as we discuss them together in the days and months ahead.

For those amongst us who have personal challenges, have family members who need support, or anyone who is under stress, we pray, Creator, that your gentle Spirit will bring peace, spiritual and

physical healing. We offer to you in the quiet now of our hearts our individual prayers for people of concern to us. [silence]

In all of these celebrations and concerns, we are grateful that we can turn to the one who guides us in our lives, saying together. Thank you, Merci, Miigwetch Creator. Amen.

Closing Hymn: MV 138 *My Love Colours Outside the Lines*

1. My love colours outside the lines,
exploring paths that few could ever find;
and takes me into places where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

2. My Lord colours outside the lines,
turns to wounds to blessings, water into wine;
and takes me into places where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.
And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

3. My soul longs to colour outside the lines,
tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
throw open door to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.
And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

4. My soul longs to colour outside the lines,
tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.

Blessing

This morning we celebrated God's abundant colours:

Red for life in all its forms,

Orange for healing,

Yellow for sunlight and all kinds of light,

Green for nature in all her diversity,

Blue for harmony,

Purple for the Spirit which guides us all.

Pink and Baby Blue for the gift of our traditional binary understandings of baby girls and boys,

and White to remind us that our Creator colours outside the lines we create.

We are called to practice this rainbow of colours in our lives—in the conversations and interactions in our lives at home, at work, and at play:

as we go out into our community and the world to share the message that God's love is for everyone! Amen.

Blessing Hymn: MV 62 *There Is Room for All*

There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;
there is room for all, sheltered in God's love.
And I rejoice and sing, "My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."
There is room for all, there is room for all!

Postlude: *The Dove Will Fly on Mended Wing*

(Jacqueline and Alison, and Ralph on piano)

You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.
Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine!
[Matthew 5]

Much of the material for this worship comes from two main sources: 1. "Stories from the Heart Worship Service for Pride Sunday" by Linda Hutchinson, June 10, 2018 © 2019 The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada; and 2. Celebrating the first ever "P.I.E. Day" by Rev. Ruth Noble, March 14, 2019.

Call to Worship used by permission of Rev. Cindy Bourgeois, Wesley United Church, Regina, Sask. For more information, see the devotional [The First Gender Reassignment Surgery](#) from the United Church of Christ.

The Prayer Jesus Taught written by Jim Cotter, in *A New Zealand Prayer Book - He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*. © 1989 W. Collins.

1 John 3:18-20 and **Matthew 5:14-16** from *The Message* (MSG) translation of the Bible. © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson.

1 John 4 from *Common English Bible* (CEB). © 2011 by Common English Bible.

Prayer After Scriptures: "A prayer for Pride month" by Alydia Smith.

Pride Affirmation written by Rev. Don Uhryniw, Emmanuel United Church, Peterborough, Ont.

Thank you to: Charles Bolduc, Claire de Vos, Rev. Gerry Copeman, and Suzanne Nykilchyk for their assistance in leading worship; Ralph McIntosh, and Jacqueline and Alison Warner-Smith for their musical leadership; Suzanne Nykilchyk and Claire de Vos for their assistance with liturgy preparation; Myfawny McIntosh for arranging the Sunday readers; Jen Bruneau for assisting with graphics for the PowerPoint presentation; Claire de Vos, Jen Bruneau, and Maureen McGuinness for the sanctuary décor; and Mallon Appianing and Eric Maag in the audiovisual booth.
