

RAINBOWS AND RIBBONS

Order of Service (bulletin)

<https://www.spiritofhope.ca/news-and-events>

Video (recorded live stream)

<https://www.youtube.com/@spiritofhopeunitedchurch791>

June 7, 2026

Pentecost 2

Genesis 9:13-17

God said, "I set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the promise between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth; my rainbow will appear in the clouds. Then I will remember the promise that is between me and you and every kind of living creature, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh. Whenever my rainbow appears in the clouds I will see it and remember forever the promise between God and every living creature on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the promise that I have established between me and all living things on the earth."

Matthew 19:13-14

Then small children were brought to Jesus so he could lay hands on them and pray for them. The disciples began to scold the parents, but Jesus said, "Leave the children alone – let them come to me. The realm of heaven belongs to such as these."



Offered by members of the Affirm Team

You may have noticed a few clues around the building and in the words and the music in the service indicating we have something important to celebrate today. And thank you for dressing up for the occasion. You may know that the first Sunday in June is the official United Church of Canada Pride Sunday when the lives and ministries of 2SLGBTQIA+ people are celebrated. And as Chris mentioned, we are also celebrating our 5th Affirmiversary at Spirit of Hope. So, it is a big day. And of course, it would not be a proper United Church celebration without food. So, please join us for refreshments and cake downstairs after the service.

I invite you to think back to your days as a pupil at school. Now, for some of us, that's harder - longer ago than others. Did you ever learn a mnemonic, a memory aid to help you recall specific information? For example, the acronym HOMES spells out the first letters of the five great lakes. The rhyme in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue: assists with remembering an important date in history. Mnemonics are used in a wide variety of subjects including music, astronomy, biology, healthcare, grammar and spelling and mathematics. And the acronym PIE >> public intentional explicit... helps to remind us of our ongoing commitment as an affirming community of faith. There is one more mnemonic I would like to mention today. One referencing the war of the roses in 15th century England. Does the phrase *Richard of York gave battle in vain* ring a bell for you? What do the first letters of each word represent? The colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Today's reading from Genesis features a rainbow as a sign of the promise or covenant that God established with all living things on the earth following the destruction of the great flood. No exceptions. all living things. Now, that is radical inclusivity. As theologian Wil Gafney describes it, and I quote, "The covenant between God and all flesh is between God and every girl, woman, boy, man, and intersex person, every lesbian, gay man, bisexual, and transgender person. every atheist, agnostic and religious person. Every Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, Wiccan and pagan person. Every person of ability and perceived limitations. every person of any nationality, ethnicity, or racial construction or category, and even includes those who defy and explode categories." This covenant is also between God and all creation. The welfare of the earth is as important as the welfare of all living things and both are our collective responsibility.

In today's gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus rebukes the disciples for trying to prevent children from coming to him to receive a blessing. In Jesus' time, children were often considered irrelevant and as a result could be largely invisible. Through his focus on those who are often excluded, the children in this case, Jesus' message is that all people are important, valued, and worthy of his time, attention, and blessing. We would now like to share with you some thoughts from a variety of life perspectives which help us understand more about the importance and effect of affirmation and inclusion.

I represent lesbians. Females who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other females. Here's what they would tell you. What affirms me as a lesbian is to be accepted for who I genuinely am. I am most productive in an environment where I do not have to disguise my true nature, where I can just be myself and freely offer the gifts I have been given. This is how I am able to contribute to shaping a welcoming and diverse community that also nurtures me.

I represent transgender people. Imagine whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For any individual, positive affirmation of one's presence and identity are a salvation of a soul. To be accepted as an equal and worthy person amongst any and every other person is a lifeline and an affirmation of one's self-worth. Being a member of the visible minority is a constant conscious reality from which there is no escape. We are who we are all the time. Rising to become just another individual is a continuous journey fraught with obstacles, several of which are daunting. Having to embark on any journey alone is a challenge. However, for trans folks, finding an affirming and accepting safe harbor is finding home. So for me affirm means acceptance, community, family, respect, purpose, safety and love for self.

I represent queer youth, which is an inclusive and evolving umbrella term encompassing various identities of young people. And these words are from one of the members of our Youth Empowerment Together group... Some things that affirm me and my queerness include correct pronouns and name being used, not having to explain my identity for it to be respected, and others not making assumptions about my pronouns or other people's pronouns. It's super important to hear allies not just asking for my pronouns, but also asking sis people for theirs. Growing up queer would have been better if I had been given judgement free and spaces to explore my identity and how I fit within it.

I represent allies who are heterosexual and or cisgender. people who support equal rights for everyone by identifying and naming discrimination and using their privilege to make the world a better place for 2S and LGBTQ IA+ community. When people really connect with the creative part of themselves, they tend to stop seeing others as different. There's less judgment, less arrogance, more curiosity, more wonder at what other people are capable of doing. Allies seek to build healthy and vibrant communities using inclusive language and standing in solidarity with the 2S and LGBTQIA+ community. Those are ways that allies can affirm all

I represent non-binary individuals, people who do not identify with a gender that is exclusively male or female. When friends and family really listen to how a non-binary person is feeling and seeing the world, they are affirmed. It is important to care for the person, not as female or male, but as a human being, and to support the choices they make. Part of that support is using the person's preferred name and pronouns, persevering even when we make mistakes. Asking the person what they would like to be called shows respect, as does the use of genderneutral language. makes it. I knew I forgot something.

I represent gay men. Males who are primarily attracted to other males sexually, emotionally, and romantically. Gay men often experience many griefs and challenges in learning to honor all that is authentic and important to them in their faith life, in their career, and in all their relationships. Being able to trust in the genuine welcome and affirmation of faith community is highly significant. It is the love with which the community surrounds gay men that enables and affirms them to be a whole person, a loving parent, and a leader in daily life. Do you see what we've done? We've created a circle, right? We've done a lot of labeling.

I represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and allies. Who do you represent? And you? Who do I represent? Me. me. Of course, we're all saying me. Me, whoever you are. That's all any of us want to be. We just want to be me. Recognized, loved, and accepted. We can't receive love without acceptance. Without love, acceptance is an empty word. I have two quotes both by Jewish men to share with you. First is Isadore Sharp: founder of the Four Seasons Hotel. I was listening to the RA radio and he says *we are only what we do not what we say*. We are only what we do, not what we say. We say a lot of things, but do we do those things? The second is from John 13 verse 34. Jesus said, *A new commandment I give you. Love one another as I love you, so you must love one another*. And we know Jesus's love was a sacrificial love. Is yours a sacrificial love? And finally, a quote that I got just yesterday. So, we added it on uh from Pam Rocker, founder and director of Affirming Connections. *Queer folks, celebrate however and whenever you can. Rest when you need to. You don't have to earn your place. You just being is valid*. And I hope that that is true in this church. You just being is valid.

Allies, stand up for an issue that matters to you. It's scary especially when it makes a huge difference especially to our community when we're trying to support people. The ribbon today I bet you're wondering why these people are still standing there holding ribbons. The ribbon today represents inclusion. Are you on the outside of that ribbon? outside of the affirmation circle or are you on the inside today? Are you on the outside of the affirmation circle or are you on the inside? Thank you.

#23TLUS For Everyone Born