

Background

The Affirming Working Group of Chinook Winds Regional Council has been working since 2020 to lead the Regional Affirming Process, discerning with leadership in our region on what it means to be Public, Intentional and Explicit in our declaration of solidarity with the 2S LGBTQAIP+ community and our Affirmation that all people will be included in our ministries, and in all aspects of the Region's life and leadership without limitations based on identity, expression or orientation.

The Affirming Working Group has engaged Communities of Faith and their leadership in Chinook Winds Regional Council, offering learning opportunities like the Queer Virtue study, regional town hall Q&As and presentations, as well as listening campaigns and advocacy. We're looking forward to presenting a motion to regional council 2022, and in solidarity, moving together on a continuing journey of Public, Intentional and Explicit Affirmation as people of faith.

Affirming ministries are at the heart of the Affirming movement. There are over 200 Affirming ministries, and ministries in the process, across Canada. Ministries include communities of faith, community ministries, chaplaincies of all kinds, care homes and supported living, outdoor ministries/ camps, Regional Councils, and more. The Affirming ministries program was launched in 1992. The United Church officially endorsed the program in 2000 and encouraged its ministries to participate.

The Affirming program encourages all United Church bodies, and other Christian traditions, to study and discern what it means to be publicly welcoming and inclusive in their context. The program also encourages the study of other United Church resources that promote the inclusion of other marginalized groups.

The Affirming Working Group has led the discernment of our region's journey to becoming an Affirming Ministry of The United Church of Canada, which is the first step in Affirm United process. The Affirming Working Group would like to express its gratitude for the leadership of members and Communities of Faith in Chinook Winds, and presents the following Affirming Ministry Statement and Motion for decision at the 2022 Chinook Winds Regional Council gathering, having completed our work of faithful discernment.

Presented to Chinook Winds Regional Council, UCC, on May 6, 2022

Affirming Statement

The Chinook Winds Regional Council (CWRC) of The United Church of Canada (UCC) is committed to being an expression of God's radical welcome, generosity and inclusion of all people.

We acknowledge and lament that the Church, its traditions and teachings have caused great harm to members of the 2S LGBTQAIP+ communities.

By contrast, we believe that Chinook Winds Region is called to follow Jesus' wisdom in the way of a radically inclusive love. We do this as evidence of our belief that all people are unconditionally loved by Creator whose divine image we reflect.

Chinook Winds Region will live out its ministry by intentionally creating safer spaces of belonging with members of the 2S LGBTQAIP+ communities and their families in all Regional Ministries.

We affirm that someone's gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation is sacred, will be celebrated, and will not be a barrier towards full participation in the life and work of the Church.

We affirm that people will be fully included in all aspects of The Region's life, leadership, and ministry without limitation based on identity, expression or orientation.

We commit ourselves to the intersectionality that living into becoming an Affirming Ministry will require.

Together we will use tangible resources to embody a ministry that is Public, Intentional and Explicit of our call to live out these values, and that, even as we make mistakes, we commit to continually learning and evolving.

The continuing work of Chinook Winds Regional Council as an Affirming Region is to develop a plan to integrate the Affirmation Decision into all aspects of the Regional Council's work; including the Executive Council, Working Groups, Pastoral Relations, First Third Ministry (regional children, youth, young adult, camps and campus ministry) and Regional Programs.

"2S LGBTQAIP+" stands for: Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Asexual / Androgenous, Intersex, Pansexual, and the + is for all ways of gender, identity and sexuality beyond the limitations of the acronym "2S LGBTQAIP+".

We place 2S, for Two Spirit, at the front of the character string. This is to acknowledge that Two Spiritness is older than any Christian belief system, and was celebrated in Indigenous cultures before the shaming and attempted erasure by colonizing Christians. Its prominent placement signifies a commitment to honouring Indigenous Two Spirit people and gifts.

Motion

Affirming Motion, CWRC-RG 2022

1) It is moved that the Chinook Winds Regional Council affirms the priority of continuing to become an Affirming Regional Council, endorse the Regional Affirming Statement, direct the Executive Council of Chinook Winds and Regional Executive Minister to complete the process of accreditation with Affirm United, and plan a Public, Intentional and Explicit celebration at the 2023 General Meeting of CWRC. *Having set a threshold for the Affirm vote at seventy-five percent (75%).*

2) It is moved that, The Chinook Winds Regional Council disbands the Affirming Working Group, having successfully undertaken a period of faithful discernment and learning, leading to the approval of the Regional Affirming Statement.

3) It is moved that The Chinook Winds Regional Council establishes a Regional Affirming Ministry Council to support the ongoing work of being an Affirming Regional Council.