

Saskatchewan Conference Affirming Ministry Sunday: May 1, 2016



Saskatchewan Conference is an Affirming ministry and regional body of The United Church of Canada. Please see www.ause.ca for more information on Affirming ministries.

Every year, Saskatchewan Conference offers an Affirming service of worship as an expression of its commitment to a full and equal welcome for all people, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation. Please use freely, but note all restrictions and credits related to reprint permissions.

The service was put together by the Affirming Ministry Committee of Eastside United Church, Regina.

Theme: Love Calls Us

Scripture

Acts 16: 9-15 (from Revised Common Lectionary)

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 (from Narrative Lectionary)

Service

Call to Worship *from Shaping Sanctuary, Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church, pg 264 edited by Kelly Turney, Copyright 2000 by Reconciling Congregation Program, Reprinted by permission. (this must be included when using this for your local worship)*

What's the "good word" we have for the world?

What do we say through worship and witness of our church?

We say, "We believe in God, known in Jesus Christ"

We say, "Let there be justice and pace!"

Let us worship God!

Prayer of Approach *(adapted from: Shaping Sanctuary, Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church, pg 264 edited by Kelly Turney, Copyright 2000 by Reconciling Congregation Program, Reprinted by permission. (this must be included when using this for your local worship)*

Blessing God,
whose caring hands cupped beneath the elements of the universe
and like a potter – fashioned the very vessels of our being
reach out your hand in blessing on us this morning.
As you drew the lines of our palms
And shaped the idiosyncrasies of our fingers
Teach us to reach out our hands to others in love
May we not raise the threatening fist
But warmly grasp the possibilities of new found reconciliations

Soften our touch , O God:
Encourage and strengthen us with your wisdom,
Until we become like You
 Fashioners of justice and love
Hands open for peace and blessing
Gathering blessing and flourishing life for all. Amen
Amen.

Hymn (see suggestions)

Children's time

Purpose is to invite the children into a conversation about gender diversity and God's love.
Questions for conversation opening up gender diversity
Ask the children and enter into the conversation as it emerges:
What do boys like – to play with, to wear, things they like to do...
What do girls like – to play with, to wear, things they like to do...
Can girls do boys things?
Can boys do girls things?

You will probably get both yes and no. For those who answer yes you might ask:
How do others respond when this happens?
What makes them girl or boy things?
Does doing these things make you a boy or girl?

How do you know you are a boy or girl? Be prepared for some blank looks as this may not be a question they have thought about. Go with it. You might say: Most of us don't think about how we know we are a boy or a girl, we just know. We know, from this conversation that what we do or how we look, doesn't make us a boy or girl. Everyone has a mix of boy and girl in us, we are usually stronger in one.

Is it OK if you like things that don't fit what others think you should do or be.

God creates us to be many different ways and like many different things. Sometimes how we are doesn't fit with how others think we should be but that is OK. God still loves us and celebrates who we are in all our difference. It is important to respect and love each other just as we are.

Children's hymn suggestions

All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir

Dance with the Spirit

One More Step

Scripture

Acts 16: 9-15 (from Revised Common Lectionary)

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 (from Narrative Lectionary)

Sermon

Sermon starter thoughts:

Acts 16: 9-15

Being open to a message that is different from your life experience

Open to the Holy Spirit and thinking of things in a different way – how we open ourselves to new understandings of welcoming and accepting LGBT. Share your own stories and experiences from your journey toward acceptance.

Lydia accepts a new message, turned around from apostles accepting those who were different.

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

Paul's sharing in this passage is more about love in community, move our traditional understanding for this scripture beyond the marriage understanding.

I used to think as a child – opening up to more mature complex thinking and opening up to seeing things differently. Also recognizing the depth and honesty that can be the gift of children.

Love does not insist on its own way – it is open and flexible, we can be open to new ways of being – love is not narrow.

Hymn (see suggestions below)

Litany of Love

Based on 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 *from Shaping Sanctuary, Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church, pg 264 edited by Kelly Turney, Copyright 2000 by Reconciling Congregation Program, Reprinted by permission. (this must be included when using this for your local worship)*

Voice 1: We say, "Come, accept the cost and joy of discipleship"

We say, "Our congregation is Affirming" (*or welcoming if you are not officially Affirming*)

All: **it is good to voice our beliefs and commitments.
But say what we will, even in angelic tones,
If we do not love each other, our talk is cheap.
We shall sound to the world like clanging symbols.**

Voice 2: We thank God for the joy of learning!
We are curious about the world within us,
The world around us and the worlds beyond us.
We wonder about the Creator of it all.
Exploring tradition, scripture and experience,
we pray and reason together.
Our faith seeks understanding.

All: **It is good to grow in knowledge and wisdom.
But even if we knew everything,
Even if we have mountain-moving faith,
If we do not love each other,
We have gained nothing.**

Voice 1: What does love ask of us?

All: **Love asks that we be patient and kind
As we build an inclusive faith community,
That we abandon arrogance,
That we risk new things,
That we not delight in the failings of others,
That we rejoice in discerning and living God's truth.**

Voice 2: Love is strong!
It believes and hopes and endures.
But sometimes even love falters.
Then we may forgive and accept forgiveness,
So that love may be renewed.

Voice 1: Sustained by God's Spirit,
Three things abide within and among us,
Faith, hope and love

All: **And the greatest of these is love.**

OR:

Affirmation litany

Leader

" I affirm that :

Create various answers and/or have congregation members offer/shout out responses:

eg

The young should be lovingly cared for,

The homeless will be housed

Sexuality is a precious gift from God

We are all children of God

Love calls us to celebrate and honour our diversity and difference.

Hymn (see suggestions below)

Commissioning

As we go may love call us to be curious about the realities of others' experiences

As we go may love call us to challenge our assumptions and receive the joy of new understandings

As we go may love call us to celebrate our differences

Hymn suggestions

More Voices = MV; Voices United = VU

All are Welcome MV#1

Come touch our Hearts MV#12

Dance with the Spirit MV #156

Deep in our Hearts MV#154

Draw the Circle Wide MV#145

Go Make a Difference MV#209

My Love Colours outside Lines MV#138

Now there is No Male or Female VU#627 (Tune is *From the Slave Pens*)

One More Step along the Road VU#639

Part of the Family (Come in, Come in and Sit Down) VU#395

Spirit Open my Heart MV#79

The Greatest of These (Linnea Good – The Good Book)

The House of Our God – All God's Children Sing, #72

There is Room for All MV#62

Though I May Speak VU#372

Walk with Me VU#649

Wall that Divide (Though Ancient Walls) VU#691

We are One VU#402

