

# Living Lament Apology Reconciliation

*Worship prepared by the Manitou Conference  
Affirming Ministry Discernment Team,  
and generously shared with  
Iridesce: The Living Apology Project, 2017*



We recall the commitment of The United Church of Canada...

The 42nd General Council (2015) committed to adopting “the process of a Living Apology as a vehicle for dialogue, story-telling, education and reconciliation” with people who identify as sexual or gender diverse, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, two-spirited, and queer (LGBT2Q) people.

Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble was invited to partner on a Living Apology art installation project, and the church was invited “into a 3-year journey of dialogue and reconciliation” that would involve “creative opportunities for conversation, worship and education [and] opportunities to explore concepts such as lament, reconciliation and justice.”

(for the resolution passed by General Council,  
see GC42 2015 ROP, pp. 193-4, 471)

### **About Iridesce: The Living Apology Project**

The word *iridesce* expresses a vision of infusing the colours of the rainbow flag with the love and light of God ... into iridescent colours that seem to transform when seen from different perspectives.

Iridesce is a project of Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble in partnership with The United Church of Canada, and is funded by Mission & Service. We seek to illuminate the diversity of experiences of people of diverse gender and sexual identities and expressions within The United Church of Canada.

To learn more and to share your experiences, visit [iridesce.ca](http://iridesce.ca).

### **Centring in Worship & Lighting of Christ Candle**

We are all beloved children of the light. The spectrum of light reflected in the prism of God's love dances as a rainbow of promise and diversity. Those who love, live as children of the light—to these beloved children belongs the loving work of reconciliation and transformation.

### **Call to Worship**

Voice 1: We are the body of Christ!

Voice 2: The hand clapping, toe tapping, heart pumping, mouth tasting, arms embracing,

Voice 3: Justice seeking, hymn singing, love making, bread breaking, risk taking...

**All: Body of Christ!**

Voice 1: Baptized in one Spirit, we are members of one body.

**All: Many and varied in gender, colour, sexuality, age, class, and ability, we are members of Christ's beautiful body.**

Voice 2: None of us can say to another,  
"I have no need of you".

**All: For only together can we find wholeness.**

Voice 3: None of us can say to another:  
"I will not care for you".

**All: For we are all connected like muscle and bone. If one suffers, we all suffer. If one rejoices, we all rejoice!**

Voice 1: Thanks be to God who, in Christ,  
has made us one.

**All: Let us worship God!**

(by Rev. Ann B. Day,  
from *A Place in God's Heart*, David Loman, editor, 2007.  
Used by permission of the Institute for Welcoming Resources, National LGBTQ Task Force.)

### **Gathering Prayer**

Holy One, who calls us into life-giving relationship, gather us in oneness of spirit and purpose. We pray that your reconciling presence may heal past hurts and move us to new ways of being together. This is prayed through Christ, the one through whom all is made new and whole. Amen.

**Hymn: “There Is Room for All” (MV 62)**

### **Act of Confession**

#### **Invitation to Confession**

We have denied the presence of God in ourselves and others; we have abused God’s good creation. Let us confess our sin.

(by Rev. Wes Jamison, Chair of the Open and Affirming Ministries program of the GLAD (Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples) Alliance, for a National Coming Out Day service, 2011. Used with permission.)

### **Prayer of Confession**

Holy One, you have created all things through the power of your steadfast love, proclaiming all that you have made good, indeed, very good.

As human beings, we bear your divine image,  
the reflection of your creativity and diversity.

Sadly, we have denied the goodness of your creation,  
and our own goodness as persons made in your image.

We have abused your good creation,  
wounded and rejected each other,  
and mistreated ourselves.

Forgive us, merciful God.

Give us the courage to embrace ourselves,  
each other, and all that you have made.

Teach us to be better stewards of your good creation  
following the example of Jesus Christ  
through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Silence... for Reflection**

“How can I honour God’s image in my neighbour more completely and with less judgement?”

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Though we have sinned, there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from God.

The steadfast love of God endures forever.

Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven of all our sins  
and through the Holy Spirit we are reborn  
and given the courage to accept ourselves and each other.

Let us live in peace as we strive to follow faithfully in the way of Jesus. Amen.

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 (RSV)  
Joel 1:13-14 (The Message)

**Call to Lament**

**Voice 1:**

The road to reconciliation begins with the honesty of lament. Reconciliation requires lamentation. An expression of sorrow at the ways we allow oppression to persist is an important step before true reconciliation can take place.

Lament is the hard work of learning to see and name the brokenness of the world. To the extent we have not learned to lament, we deal superficially with the world’s brokenness, offering quick and easy fixes that do not require our conversion. The discipline of lament not only allows us to see the depth of the world’s brokenness (including our own and the church’s complicity in it); it also shapes reconciliation as a journey that involves truth, conversion, and forgiveness.

**Voice 2:**

God hear the cries of your people,  
we come in our brokenness,  
we weep for the pain that some carry,  
we weep for the indifference some live,  
we weep for the injustice from which both spring.

**Voice 3:**

Before you, God of grace and compassion,  
we lay the burden of our complicity  
for all the ways the Church, our Church,  
marginalizes, oppresses and silences  
the stories and truth of the LGBTQ2S community.

**Voice 4:**

How long, O God, how long  
before we together as a diverse community,  
move beyond the hurt we inflict upon each other?

How long, before we own that we keep silent  
while others suffer alone in their isolation?

How long, before we confess that while we speak of acceptance and welcome,  
we often live denial, segregation and pretense?

**Unison:**

**Healing, reconciling God,  
lead us into a place of truthful lament,  
that we might acknowledge the pain,  
own the brokenness, and our part in creating it,  
and find the grace that brings the hope of restored relationship.**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:1-29a (RSV)

**The Work of Reconciliation**

There is no reconciliation without conversion, the constant journey with God into a future of new people and new loyalties. Broken by sin, we do not long for what God wants. The world and its dividing lines such as nation, ethnicity, race, sex, power, and caste resist the new creation of God's beloved community where there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Self-interest easily becomes the goal of relationships, and loyalty to one's own group easily becomes the aim of politics. Reconciliation thus requires a transformation of desire, habits, and loyalties. This is a long and costly journey which is impossible without God's forgiveness and grace. But there is reason to hope: God has promised to give us everything we need for this transformation.

(from [Reconciling All Things](#) by Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice.  
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Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com))

**Silence...** for prayer to receive the openness and will to be transformed, to be prepared to listen, weep, and reconcile.

**Affirmation**

**We affirm** our acceptance of all human beings  
as persons made in the image of God  
regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**We affirm** salvation for all people  
is by grace through faith  
and that all believers in Christ  
are accepted as full members of the Christian church  
regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

**We affirm** that the church is called to initiate and encourage  
communication and discussion  
with brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ2S community about sexuality  
in order that fellowship may be increased  
and misunderstanding, fears and hostilities lessened.

**We affirm** that members of the church,  
individually and corporately,  
are responsible for becoming more aware of discrimination  
against the LGBTQ2S community,  
taking action to ensure that they enjoy  
their full civil and human right in society,  
working to end all form of discrimination against them,  
and for personally supporting the victims of such discrimination.

**We affirm** the need, as the church engages members of the LGBTQ2S  
community in dialogue,  
to recognize the personal and professional risks  
to which people open themselves  
as they respond to this invitation.

**We affirm** the need for all church members,  
of all orientations and gender identities,  
to study and understand sexuality  
and lifestyles in the light of the gospel.

**We affirm** the call to apology  
that issues through dialogue, story-telling, education, and reconciliation  
with people who identify as sexual or gender diverse,  
including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transsexual, transgender,  
two-spirited, and queer persons.

(From *Gift, Dilemma, and Promise: A Report and Affirmations on Human Sexuality*, United Church of Canada, 1984.  
Adapted to include gender diversity and with addition of statement from the Living Apology GC42 2015.)

**Hymn: “I Am a Child of God” (MV 157)**

**Commissioning & Blessing**

**Voice 1:** We are like branches bent with ripening fruit,  
golden grain in wind swaying,

**All: We go forth and rejoice in God’s Creation.**

**Voice 2:** Discerning, praying, enjoying companionship,

**All: God is with us as we dance in the Garden of Creation.**

**Voice 3:** So go, knowing that you are Blessed, and be the Blessing that you seek.

**All: Amen!**

(adapted from “Branches Bent With Ripening Fruit”, by Rev. Rebecca Voelkel.  
Published in *A Place in God’s Heart A Place at Christ’s Table: Worship Resources for the Welcoming Church Movement*, David Lohman, editor, Institute for Welcoming Resources. Used with Permission)