



# Consensus

## Affirming Radical Hospitality

SECHELT – “Radical hospitality that renders no one anonymous is our vocation,” challenged Rev. Nancy Steeves (of Southminster-Steinhauer U.C., Edmonton) in 2010 to St. John’s congregation as we explored what it would mean to become an Affirming Ministry.

When we began the process in 2009, some felt we were already a welcoming church. And we were. “We knew this was going to be our church home the first Sunday we came, because Brian felt accepted and happy here,” Bob Ware says of his son who has developmental challenges and is highly attuned to the environment around him.

But too many who have been marginalized in the past question whether the “All are Welcome” sign on the door really means them.

Our intentional process to become a truly inclusive community has led us to the place of marking our church with the Affirm United rainbow swirl—a sign that the broken-hearted and down-trodden can trust. After a 16-month process, 94 per cent voted in favour of extending radical hospitality to all who enter the doors of this church on B.C.’s Sunshine Coast, culminating in a rainbow celebration on June 26, 2011.

But not everyone felt completely comfortable about naming ourselves an Affirming Ministry. On the day of the vote in January 2011, it was sad to overhear an elderly woman say to her friend, “Well, I can’t vote for this, but I can’t very well not

vote for it, so I’m not voting at all,” as she hurried out of church after Sunday service.

While some wondered why we just didn’t get on with it and hold the vote in the fall of 2010, rumblings were surfacing, and wisely, the Affirming Ministry Committee chose to slow things down to listen and respond to the concerns. Trying to craft an Affirming Statement of Faith posed more challenges than expected—not the least being where to place “sexual orientation” in the list of all whom we welcome. Some did not want “sexual orientation” at the beginning of the list, and of course, others could not accept alphabetizing the list so that “sexual orientation” came at the very end. Because our journey is about welcoming all of the disenfranchised—not polarizing one group from another—the gracious solution was to put “sexual orientation” in the middle of the pack—a solution that was acceptable to all factions.

What we realized was that the process of finding common ground was the important matter at hand. It takes time to till the common ground, to tend it and water it so that the edges can soften and become part of the whole.

And having celebrated becoming an Affirming Ministry, now we know that the work and play and learning continues as we live ourselves into offering radical hospitality to all who enter our doors. May it always be so.  
Bernadette Richards



Photo cutline: Members at St. John’s United Church in Sechelt, BC celebrated becoming an Affirming Ministry on June 26, 2011. For more information, see [www.stjohns-united.org](http://www.stjohns-united.org). Photo: Tella Sametz.



**Affirm/S'affirmer**  
UNITED/ENSEMBLE

P.O. Box 57057  
Ottawa, ON  
K1R 1A1  
[www.affirmunited.ca](http://www.affirmunited.ca)

*Consensus* is the newsletter of Affirm United/S'Affirmer ensemble, an organization of people in The United Church of Canada who work to promote greater awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble. Your news stories, articles, and letters are always welcome.

*Consensus* reserves the right to edit for length, clarity or house style.

**Contributors to this issue:** Brian Mitchell Walker, Annette Taylor, Bernadette Richards, Read Sherman, Roy Huntly, Daniel Bastion, Bruce Hutchinson

**Managing Editor:**

Jackie Harper

**Layout:** Glen Warren &

Brian Mitchell-Walker

**Design:** JAC Design



**Affirm/S'Affirmer**  
UNITED/ENSEMBLE

**Affirm United  
website**

**[www.affirmunited.ca](http://www.affirmunited.ca)**

There is more and more  
"information en  
français" on our  
web site.  
Have a look.

As we, Annette Taylor and Brian Mitchell-Walker, write our first co-chair report together – we are filled with gratitude. Thanks to all the individuals that made our Conference/AGM in Edmonton, *Making it Better*, a great success this last summer. The many presenters, the wonderful hospitality, the fantastic music, the deepening of connections would not have been possible without the hard-working planning team, the many volunteers and the eager participants.

At the Annual General Meeting, a few members changed positions and several new members were elected to our council. Our executive now includes, Brian Mitchell-Walker and Annette Taylor as co-chairs, Bruce Hutchinson as Secretary and new member, Judy Amsbury, as treasurer. Judy is well known across the country as an active member of the Affirm United group in Peterborough. She has attended many Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble conferences through the years and has taken a major role in the Bay of Quinte Conference 10 by 10 campaign.

Joining our members at large (Ruth Bramham, Tony Burnett, and John Calhoun) are Sally Harris from Vancouver, Jennifer Carter-Morgan from the Edmonton area, and Collin Smith from Calgary. Sally is a past co-chair, and dedicated to keeping us connected with Ecumenical partners and various faith groups throughout North America. Jennifer and Collin have worked together before as part of the committee that encouraged Wild Rose United Church in Calgary to become an Affirming Ministry.

At this time we would also like to thank the individuals who have finished their time on Council. Thanks to Nicole for her many years as our Francophone contact and her dedication as co-chair for the last three years. Nicole has helped our organization take steps towards being more bilingual as she has encouraged involvement from other French members, encouraged the council to have worship in both French and English, and helped make our resources (such as our

website, new pamphlet and membership form) available in both languages. Thanks to Liz Carter-Morgan for stepping into the secretary role this last year. Thanks to John Ross and Shelley Thiessen for their valuable support in the work of the council.

We continue to be blessed by our relationship with General Council staff. They help us reflect on our work and how it can be connected to and supportive of the many initiatives taken by General Council. A special thanks to Alcris Limongi who works in the areas of Gender Justice, Racial Justice and Sexual Minorities. We thank all who participated in the GLBTT Consultations across the country and on-line. Your participation will support the work initiated at the last General Council regarding homophobia and heterosexism within our church.

We also are aware of the many volunteers that work tirelessly through the year to support the work of Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble. So thank you once more to Edward Avey for his work with Archives, the great work of our new Consensus team, Jackie Harper, Glen Warren, and Marie-Andrée Babin (Marie-Andrée has recently had to resign and we are looking for someone willing to be our French editor) and to Anne Hebb who is communicating with over 40 ministries in discernment about officially becoming an Affirming Ministry. We also realize there are many individuals doing justice work for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in their local communities, within the work of Presbytery, Conference and General Council committees. So to all of you reading this issue of *Consensus* –  
THANK YOU

With gratitude,

Brian Mitchell-Walker

Annette Taylor



## 1984-1988: Looking Back: An Interview with George Hermanson By Read Sherman

Mention the year 1988, and to most United Church folk who were around at the time, you tend to think of only one thing: “the issue.” Such were the times in the late 1970s and early 1980s that sexuality, and especially minority sexual identity, were taboo subjects coming to knock on the door of the church, to many as an uninvited and unwelcome guest.

But such is the United Church that when a stranger knocks, the church does open a door at least a crack to peer into the shadows to see who might be there. The church began to respond to the shift in attitudes about sexuality as it commissioned groups to study the related issues and report back. An important study in this vein, “Gift, Dilemma, and Promise (GDP)” was received at the Morden General Council in 1984, and was itself a follow-up to earlier studies received at the 28th General Council in 1980. Although at Morden a number of the recommendations of GDP were adopted, the one that read “in and of itself, sexual orientation should not be a factor determining membership in the Order of Ministry of the United Church of Canada” was defeated. Looking back 27 years later, it seems clear *this* issue just wasn’t going to go away, like a persistent door knocker (in Luke 11, he’s a friend well known to the reluctant householder) who arrives late at night and has an urgent need that requires satisfaction.

In 1988 I was living in San Francisco and coming back to the church after the usual years away from it during university. In my home denomination, the United Church of Christ, the ordination of openly gay and lesbian people had begun as early as 1972, so I had the blessing of knowing that if and when God tapped me on the shoulder, I’d likely be able to answer that call within it. Little did I know what was transpiring north of the border that year, and at what cost, to move another denomination in the direction of a faithful and just response to the call to ministry of openly lesbian, gay and bisexual members (and much later, to gender-variant members) of the United Church of Canada.

Little did I know then, but when I came to Canada I learned. Alyson Huntly’s *Daring to Be United* was a must-read as I sought to know my new Canadian church home. Michael Riordan’s *The First Stone* was another eye-opener. I soon learned personally the lesson with which I began this article; ask a United Church person about 1988 and you’re bound to get a reaction, positive, negative, or somewhere in a murky middle. I heard stories of church conflict, of ministers and laypeople who were delegates to the 32nd General Council in Victoria coming home to hostile congregations, split congregations. I also heard about courageous leaders who felt the heat but chose to stay in the kitchen. The hearty folk who founded Affirm where there, and many other allies.

One such ally, the Rev. Dr. George Hermanson, is someone I’ve had the privilege to come to know recently. As I learned more about his history in the lead-up to 1988, I realized his is a story that is worth sharing with others – part of the no doubt many hidden or not-so-hidden stories of struggle and hope that seemed to characterize that heady era – that great

leap forward.

What follows are excerpts from an interview with George conducted at the home he shares with his spouse (the Rev.) Suzanne Sykes. To me this was a hidden history surrounding a report entitled, “Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientations Lifestyles and Ministry” (SOLM) which famously, if not infamously, was received by the church, but as an historical document, and not the living, approved, guide for the denomination it was written to be.

RS: George, you’ve mentioned to me you’re involvement with the committee that wrote SOLM, but it’s not a report that I’m familiar with – can you say more about it and that time?

GH: The question of whether to ordain openly gay or lesbian candidates had come up at the General Councils in 1980 and 1982 in response to some work done by the Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education. Then in 1984 the General Council Executive established the National Coordinating Group (NCG) for the Programme of Study and Dialogue on Sexual Orientations, Lifestyles and Ministry. The NCG met 13 times between March 1985 and January 1988. The first task we did almost immediately was to prepare a study guide. We then prepared a second study document after doing some workshops and consultations throughout the church. We had asked that local congregations study the document and submit responses to us by November 30, 1987. We received over 500 back, which we thought was a good response rate. Then, in February 1988, we sent our final report to the Division of Mission in Canada and the Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education for their review and action. It was also sent to every congregation as part of the lead-up to the 1988 General Council in Victoria.

RS: What was the reaction to it?

GH: Even among the liberals there was a lot of dissent! (laughs) Between February and August 1988, over 1800 petitions came via the different conferences to condemn the report.

RS: What was the liberal critique of it?

GH: Some didn’t like the theology expressed in it. Some felt we erred in arguing that there should only be one ethical standard to apply to all people – heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual. We applied this standard across the spectrum by affirming the God-given nature of sexual behaviour that is relational, just, loving, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community. We affirmed that sexual behaviour was acceptable “within a committed relationship with the intention of permanence that is morally responsible.” The same standard applied irrespective of orientation or marital status. There was also a group within the church that felt that orientation meant you could decide what ethical sexual values belonged to the orientation. Like “gay ethics”.



## 1984-1988: Looking Back: An Interview with George Hermanson

- RS: Oh yes, I remember those days, when many gay people wanted not to be judged by heterosexual standards of sexual behaviour, ideas about fidelity, etc., preferring to allow a new standard to arise out of our own hard-won sexual freedom that was just then coming into its own.
- GH: Right! The majority on the NCG felt there were sexual ethics that transcended both orientations – we didn't want to impose traditional heterosexual values. This was one of the criticisms of the report – that we didn't do enough to defend traditional marriage or family values. And I'm not talking about the conservatives; this was the critique coming from the liberals of the day. (laughs) Others felt it should be a straight (pardon the pun!) social justice issue, and less theologically dependent.
- RS: Hmm. That's a trap the church can so often get into; anyone can go gung-ho into social justice work, but for the church to do so, it seems very reasonable that such action would be deeply rooted in our theology.
- GH: Yes, social justice is a necessary, but not sufficient, argument.
- RS: And I take it, the report recommended applying the same standards to all in terms of fitness for ordination?
- GH: Exactly, and it's this part that was picked up in *Membership Ministry and Human Sexuality*, although they took a safer route, basing it on membership being open to all regardless of sexual orientation, and that all members were eligible to be considered for Ordered Ministry.
- RS: Tell me more about the make-up of the NCG. I assume it was a diverse group?
- GH: Twelve of us were chosen to serve from across the country, including several folks who were or would become long time Affirm supporters, such as Charles Bidwell, Daphne Craig and Malcolm Spencer. We had two dissenters. One dissent was based on the notion that homosexual acts are sinful. The other dissent was that the church was not yet ready to make the leap.
- RS: So the remaining majority of the committee felt the church *was* ready to accept the idea that there should be one ethical standard for everybody.
- GH: Right.
- RS: Funny, it seems like a no-brainer today, but obviously it was hugely controversial then!
- GH: And the theological influence on our thinking, quite frankly, was process theology. That I think was the dominant articulated theological perspective because three of us were strongly influenced by it in our training. The majority of the lay members became convinced themselves about it through the theological arguments we made.
- RS: I'm sure that must have been an eye-opener to them!
- GH: Yes, and this was happenstance. It wasn't by the church's design that this process orientation came to the fore. And this was one of the criticisms by some people, although it was never stated as such, that the report's perspective was too theological, and not biblical enough.
- RS: Would you say the SOLM report was the first major introduction of process thought in the United Church?
- GH: No. Ernie Best, who taught ethics at the U of T, had written something on ecology for the church, I think around 1980, and it too didn't go anywhere. So as you know, the SOLM report got shelved as an historic document and sent to the archives.
- RS: So that was better than it being rejected outright?
- GH: Yes, that was a compromise with those who wanted it rejected. However, I believe it set up the possibility for the General Council to make the statement they did make (Membership Ministry and Human Sexuality). The SOLM report also became the focal point of negativity, anger and rejection. I don't think that without the report they would have gone where they did in Victoria.
- RS: I see. So it provided the context within which the decision could be made, and it did so too by becoming the lightning rod of much of the negativity.
- GH: (laughs, but sadly)
- RS: Is there anything about this experience that you'd want to reflect back to the church?
- GH: Yes. First, is that we got left out of Alyson's book *Daring to Be United*, which focused on the experiences of delegates to the 1988 General Council, but not on the stories of those who worked on the lead-up to it.
- RS: So your story, and the stories of the others who participated in the lead-up, are still largely untold.
- GH: Right. And the other interesting thing is that we never got an official thank you from the United Church for our work.
- RS: Wow!
- GH: Sometime later, maybe around 1990, when Dave Iverson was Executive Minister for the Division of Mission in Canada and Steve Chambers was Executive Minister for Ministry Personnel and Education, we were sitting around having a beer one time, and I mentioned this. So they sent out an official letter to everybody.
- RS: Those two?
- GH: Yeah! (laughs)
- RS: So, essentially, you were never officially thanked at the time for how many years of work that went into that report?
- GH: Four. And the thing that bothers me is that the only official look at that history, *Daring to Be United*, tells the story well about the Victoria General Council, but does not include the historical context.
- RS: I see.
- GH: So you weren't here yet in 1988, is that right?
- RS: Yes.
- GH: So after the Division meetings on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, the issue hit the front pages in newspapers across Canada.
- RS: What was that like?
- GH: Well, Community of Concern organized in response to it.



## Beaconsfield United Church Creates Youth Centre

The Consensus team received a letter telling of the creation of a LGBTQ youth centre at Beaconsfield United Church. Let us welcome them and remember to give them a visit when you're in Quebec. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

Since May 2011, the LGBTQ Youth Centre has provided a safe space where queer-identified and questioning teens in the West Island of Montreal can meet, talk, develop relationships and understand themselves better as queer-identified people. We offer a drop-in service where area teens may easily and safely seek guidance, care and support individually or in a group setting. Inquiries are confidential, and the Centre follows safe space guidelines which strive to respect each participant's background and circumstances. The West Island community has demonstrated interest and support for our initiative, and is coming together to help create an authentic, genuine program for this "at risk" group of youth in our midst.

Our work is deeply necessary for a society where homophobia and transphobia are still widespread, and represent major obstacles for young people who are just beginning to question their gender and/or sexual orientation. We opened the Centre on the day Beaconsfield United Church officially became an Affirming Ministry. In establishing this Centre, Beaconsfield United Church is actively working to make a tangible difference in the lives of this historically maligned community's youngest members. It is important to note that the Centre has no particular religious affiliation and it celebrates the diversity of spirituality expressed in and throughout the LGBTQ community. This congregation is proclaiming that LGBT people, like everyone else, deserve God's love. This is a tremendously powerful message in light of the religions across the world which continue to spread hate-filled, homophobic intolerance.

The long-term goal of our ministry is to empower queer youth to take control, develop leadership skills and get involved, to become informed and to inform others about the issues and concerns faced by LGBT people everywhere. By instigating dialogue within the wider community, we seek to educate individuals, organizations and community leaders such as clergy and teachers about queer-identified people. We recognize that homophobia is best confronted through understanding. By providing information and support to parents, families and friends of LGBTQ teens and young adults, we help the community better understand the issues and challenges these young people face, and thereby cultivate acceptance and loving support.

Daniel Bastian  
Director, LGBTQ  
Youth Center





# Transformation

## LET'S TRANSFORM THIS

WELCOME ABOARD,  
BUT PLEASE DON'T STAND UP IN OUR CANOE

You really are most welcome and we hope you've come to stay,  
You say you are a couple and we hope you don't mean Gay,  
We always welcome strangers but we find it hard to see  
Why some people dress so oddly - so differently from me.  
To see two women holding hands, or men exchange a kiss  
Upsets some older members whose offerings we'd miss.  
You really are so welcome and as far as I'm concerned  
When your relationships' kept secret, your presence isn't spurned,  
But it's the other members, who prize their moral stance  
And they can see you're different without a second glance.  
You really are so welcome and your presence we embrace  
We need you younger members or our closure we will face  
So we will turn a blind eye to the way that you behave.  
To be like you, in a place like this, must mean you're very brave.  
You say you have two children - I don't dare ask 'How come?'  
How quaint that they both should call you Mum and Mum\*  
You really are most welcome and we will work with zeal.  
To tolerate your strangeness and make your welcome real.

## TO THIS!!

### WE ARE MAKING THE CIRCLE WIDER.

Can you really feel our welcome? It is genuine and true  
We celebrate your presence and we value you for You.  
We are different from each other throughout the human race  
And diversity is precious, you're uniqueness we embrace. As  
pilgrims on a journey we're at stages on the path  
Some are more enlightened, others working on first draft,  
But our hearts and minds are open, old prejudice we own, As  
we try to build a haven in this place we call our home.  
You are welcome at the table where the bread of life is shared  
And we want to be inclusive, as ones who really cared.

*By Rev. Roy Huntly – 10 x '10 Action Group Nov 2009*

6 Consensus Winter 2012

## Consensus is Transitioning

Consensus is changing form. This will be the last Consensus in this format. In the next few months we will be transitioning to a Consensus blog. It is our hope that this will provide a venue to share information in a more timely fashion. Updates will also be posted on our website [www.affirmunited.ca](http://www.affirmunited.ca)

We still want and need your articles for sharing with the network.

Please submit articles to the Consensus Editor:

by email: [jackie.harper@bell.net](mailto:jackie.harper@bell.net)

or by mail: Jackie Harper,

21 Alnet Dr., Belleville, ON K8P 4V7

### **la journée internationale contre l'homophobie (17 mai)**

L'année 2012 sera l'occasion de souligner le 10<sup>e</sup> anniversaire des campagnes annuelles de la journée internationale contre l'homophobie (17 mai). Comme je l'ai fait l'année passée, je vous invite à vous joindre aux autres paroisses inclusives de l'Église unie du Canada dans un culte spécial soulignant cet événement important (nous suggérons le dimanche 20 mai).

C'est une opportunité de réaffirmer notre engagement en tant que paroisse inclusive et de faire rayonner cet accueil au-delà de nos murs.

L'Homophobie est encore bien présente dans notre société et les gains faits sont encore fragiles. C'est pour cette raison que je fais appel à votre coopération et votre implication dans cette cause.

Passer le mot dans votre paroisse, vos groupes LGBT locaux et autres confessions chrétiennes de votre ville. Je vous enverrais des ressources spéciales pour célébrer ce culte.

Marco Ste-Marie, Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble

<http://www.affirmunited.ca/englishindex.htm>  
<http://egliseunielapasserelle.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/%C3%89glise-Unie-La-Passerelle/121529374597231>



# Annual Events

## International Day Against Homophobia

Hi, my name is Marco Ste-Marie, I communicated with you last spring, asking you to join Affirm United in the special worship regarding the International Day Against Homophobia in the month of May 2011. That event was successful and many congregations celebrated either on that day or on the pride day in their respective towns.

This year will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Day Against Homophobia. We are asking all Affirming Ministries to do a special worship this coming May 20<sup>th</sup> 2012. We hope that more congregations will follow and other denominations will be encouraged to participate as well.

Start getting the word out in your congregation, church board, local LGBT groups, and other Christian denominations (even other faith groups).

It is a great opportunity to reaffirm your engagement in the LGBT cause and spread the word that God welcomes all. Homophobia is still present and the progress we have made is still fragile. Many teen suicides have been caused by bullying.

Let's celebrate inclusivity together.

In Christ,  
Marco Ste-Marie Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble  
<http://www.affirmunited.ca/englishindex.htm>  
<http://egliseunielapasserelle.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/%C3%89glise-Unie-La-Passerelle/121529374597231>

## *Making It Better* 2011 AU/SE Annual Conference

Western hospitality along with an excellent program of speakers and workshops provided attendees at the Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble Annual National Conference with an outstanding experience this past August 4-6. The title of the conference was "Making it Better" and participants came away from the conference not only feeling better, but with many ideas about how we could make it better for others.

The program was kicked off by a poignant talk by Francine Proulx-Kenzle, a Director on the Board of PFLAG Canada. Francine gave a moving account in English and French of her son's life, suicide and the impact on her extended family. She urged AU/SE to continue in their work

On Friday morning Dr Andre Grace, Director and principal investigator for the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta, spoke on Bullying, Youth and Resilience. Andre described the work of the

7 Consensus Winter 2012

Institute and how they are working with school boards to address issues for sexual minorities. The Institute has played a key role in the establishment of a leadership retreat called Camp Firefly for sexual minority and gender variant youth and their allies. Currently, the camp is held in Alberta and in Saskatchewan and is oversubscribed each year. Youth learn leadership and resiliency skills.



The third speaker, Dr. Lorne Warneke, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Alberta, talked about transgenderism. Dr. Warneke presented information on prevalence rates, up to date information on causation, and services provided by the medical community. In almost all case studies, transgendered people report having felt "different" from an early age. Since 1966, Dr. Warneke has provided support to about 850 people from all walks of life.



The fourth speaker, D. Bruce Miller, spoke about "legal issues from a church perspective". His talk focused on equality rights and its history over time. He spoke of the prophetic voice of the church and the need for the social gospel to influence political affairs. While the state sees the public sphere as secular, the church's role is to be prophetic in advocating for equal rights for sexual minorities. He noted that transgender is not named in the Alberta human rights law and an Alberta case has gone to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Workshops included: United in Relationship – a workshop on relationships led by Brian Mitchell-Walker; Building Bridges Among Peoples: Courageous Conversations on Differences led by Alcris Limongi; Empowerment led by Karen Morton; Affirming Ministries – how to become, led by Anne Hebb; S'affimez ensemble en Francais led by Nicole Hamel; Affirm United and the United Church of Canada led by Brian Mitchell-Walker and Nicole Hamel; Camp Firefly led by camp staff; Senior Abuse led by Pat Power; and White Privilege led by Annette Taylor.

A dark comedy called Heterophobia written by Pam Rocker and directed by Ayla Stephen was a highlight on Friday night. In it, a young woman,

raised by a lesbian couple, has fallen in love with a young man to the consternation of the young woman's parents and the young man's same sex parents. In other words, being gay is the norm. The play tells an honest story about real people, mothers, daughters, lovers and friends all just struggling to love each other and be true to themselves. You can learn more about the play at <http://www.heterophobia.ca/>.

Many thanks to the Southminster-Steinhauer United Church for providing the facility at no cost and to the multitude of volunteers from the church and from other Affirming Ministries in Edmonton for providing the food and hospitality.

Report submitted by Bruce Hutchinson



North America and the Caribbean. His books include *Sanctity and Male Desire: A gay Reading of Saints* and *Out on Holy Ground*.

**Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega.** Dr. Ortega is one of the eight presidents of the World Council of Churches. She is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and was the first Presbyterian woman to be ordained in Cuba. She was the rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas for eight years, leading it to a multi-faceted ministry of social service and community involvement.

(Link to info about Dr. Ortega <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/news-media/news/english-news/article/469/assembly-elects-new-presi.html> and <file:///downloads/ecumenical-conversation-m-2.html> Link to info about Dr. Boisvert: <http://religion.concordia.ca/BoisvertD.html>)

## **Plan to Attend Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble Conference and Annual General Meeting August 3-6, 2012 in Montreal, Quebec.**

### **The Theme**

The conference theme, **Coming Out of Exile**, recalls the experience GLBTQ Christians and allies have had of being "strangers in a strange land," exiled from family or friends, faith, community, even from ourselves. But exile has also been a time rich with creativity, faith, and community. We have learned resilience. We have created new forms of worship and spirituality. As we come out of exile, we celebrate God who calls us home, not to a homeland that was but to a radically new place. Biblical stories from the period after exile, such as Ruth, Ezra, and Nehemiah, remind us that those who return from exile must always be vigilant about not ourselves creating places of exclusion and injustice for others. And we continue to seek justice for brothers and sisters everywhere who still live in exile.

**Conference:** Friday August 3 to Sunday August 5 at Beaconsfield United Church, Montreal. Registration begins at 3 p.m. Friday, with supper at 5:30 p.m. followed by opening session at 6:30 p.m.

**Annual General Meeting:** Monday August 6 at Beaconsfield United Church

**Cost:** Registration fee is \$175, which includes coffee breaks and snacks, supper on Friday, lunch and supper on Saturday, and lunches on Sunday and Monday.

### **Theme speakers**

**Dr. Donald Boisvert.** A professor in the Department of Religion at Concordia University in Montreal, Dr. Boisvert's teaching and research focuses on religion and same-sex relations, gender, sexuality, and GLBT spirituality. An acclaimed guest speaker, Boisvert has given lectures across

### **Highlights of the Conference**

Friday and Saturday sessions of the conference will take place at Beaconsfield United Church, an Affirming congregation in the west island of Montreal:

- presentations by the theme speakers and plenary discussion
- a visit to Beaconsfield United Church's recently formed GLBT youth centre
- workshops in English and French
- workshops on a variety of topics including GLBTQ spirituality, how to become an Affirming Ministry, GLBTQ and human rights issues internationally, sexuality and aging, and GLBTQ issues in the church
- community building, music, and worship
- book sales and marketplace

**Sunday** morning worship and brunch will be hosted by Église St. Jean, a francophone Affirming congregation in downtown Montreal. This will be followed by a closing plenary. Sunday afternoon is free for participants to experience the spectacular events of *Divers/cite – la fête gai* (gay festival) of Montréal, (<http://www.diverscite.org>) and to explore Montreal in all its diversity, including the old city and port, Montreal's gay Village, China town, and other cultural attractions of this four-centuries-old city.

**The Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday August 6** at Beaconsfield United Church, 9 a.m. to noon, followed by lunch.





# MEMBERSHIP FORM - FORMULAIRE D'ADHÉSION

Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble, PO Box / CP 57057, Ottawa ON K1R 1A1

Name/Nom \_\_\_\_\_

- Individual/household membership *Adhésion comme individu ou famille*  
 Institution membership *Adhésion institutionnelle*



Address/Adresse \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Téléphone \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Courriel \_\_\_\_\_

- I do not want to be on your email news list.  Retirez mon nom de votre liste de diffusion.)

Congregation/Paroisse \_\_\_\_\_

- This is a new membership.  This is a renewal. Membership year \_\_\_\_\_  
*Nouvel abonnement Réabonnement Année d'adhésion \_\_\_\_\_*
- Enclosed is my **tax-deductible** individual/household membership fee of \$40 (and a \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation).  
*Ci-joint ma cotisation annuelle de 40 \$ **déductible d'impôt** pour mon adhésion (et un don de \_\_\_\_\_ \$).*
- Enclosed is our \$100 fee for an institutional membership (e.g., congregation, presbytery, school).  
*Ci-joint notre contribution annuelle de 100 \$ adhésion institutionnelle pour (par exemple: paroisse, consistoire, école).*
- I cannot afford the membership fee right now, but please enrol me for this year.  
*Je ne peux verser ma cotisation à l'heure actuelle, mais je souhaite être membre. S'il vous plaît m'inscrire sur votre liste pour l'année.*
- I do not want to join just now. Enclosed is my **tax-deductible** donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Je ne suis pas prêt-e à devenir membre. Voici un don **déductible d'impôt** de \_\_\_\_\_ \$.*
- Please contact me. I wish to donate to Affirm United via the United Church's PAR program of preauthorized monthly remittances.  
*Veuillez communiquer avec moi. Je souhaite acheminer mes dons à S'affirmer Ensemble par l'entremise du programme des contributions pré-autorisées de l'Église Unie.*
- I would like information about the Affirming Ministries Program and Affirming ministries in my area.  
*J'aimerais recevoir des renseignements sur le réseau "Communautés inclusives" et la liste des communautés de ma région.*

**Note:** Affirm United's membership information is kept strictly confidential. It will not be shared with any other organizations or individuals. *Les renseignements personnels sur les membres de S'affirmer Ensemble sont strictement confidentiels. Ils ne seront divulgués à aucune autre personne ou organisation.*

*Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble is a federally registered charity. Business number: 87449 1772 RR0001  
Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble est un organisme de charité enregistré au fédéral.  
Notre numéro d'entreprise est 87449 1772 RR0001.*



# The Affirm United leadership team

## Executive

### Co-Chairs

#### Annette Taylor

Box 2006,  
Fort Qu'Appelle, SK S0G 1S0  
annette.taylor@sasktel.net

#### Brian Mitchell-Walker

2 O'Brien Bay  
Regina, SK S4S 6K8  
brimitch@sasktel.net

### Secretary

Bruce Hutchinson  
204 Churchhill Cres  
Kingston ON K7L 4N2  
hutchinb@queensu.ca

### Treasurer

Judy Amsbury  
566 Sherbrooke St  
Peterborough, ON  
K9J2P5  
705-741-4271  
judya@nexicom.net

## Affirm United Council Members

### Members at Large

Ruth Bramham  
ruth.bramham@rogers.com

### Communications

Tony Burnett  
affirmunited@affirmunited.ca

### Membership Coordinator

John Calhoun  
affirmationok@aol.com

Jennifer Carter- Morgan  
jencartermorgan@shaw.ca

Sally Harris  
docks@shaw.ca

Collin Smith  
collin\_smith@hotmail.com

Marco Ste-Marie  
egliseunielapasserelle@gmail.com

### Consensus Editor

Jackie Harper  
jackie.harper@bell.net

### Affirming Ministry Program Coordinators

Anne Hebb/Linda Hutchinson  
ahebb@eastlink.ca  
hutchinl@kingston.net

### Contact francophone

Marco Ste-Marie  
egliseunielapasserelle@gmail.com

## Affirming Ministries / Communautés Inclusives

### Congregations

**Augustine United Church, Winnipeg**  
444 River Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3L 0C7  
(204) 284-2250  
[www.augustineunitedchurch.org](http://www.augustineunitedchurch.org)

**Bathurst United Church, Toronto**  
427 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M5S 1X7  
(416) 921-4967  
[www.bathurstunited.ca](http://www.bathurstunited.ca)

**Beaconsfield United Church, NEW!  
Beaconsfield**  
202 Woodside Road  
Beaconsfield, QC H9W 2P1  
(514) 695-0600  
[www.beaconsfieldunitedchurch.com](http://www.beaconsfieldunitedchurch.com)

**Bedford United Church, Bedford**  
1200 Bedford Hwy, Bedford, NS B4A 1C3  
(902) 835-8497  
[www.bedfordunited.com](http://www.bedfordunited.com)

**Bloor Street United Church, Toronto**  
300 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M5S 1W3  
(416) 924-7439  
[www.bloorstreetunited.org](http://www.bloorstreetunited.org)

**Carol United Church, Labrador City**  
PO Box 309  
Labrador City, NL A2V 2K6  
(709) 944-2057  
[www.wondercafe.ca/churches/carol-united-church](http://www.wondercafe.ca/churches/carol-united-church)

**Cedar Park United Church, Pointe Claire,**  
204 Lakeview Avenue  
Pointe-Claire, QC H9S 4C5  
(514) 695-3337  
[www.cedarparkunited.org](http://www.cedarparkunited.org)

**Centenary United Church, Hamilton**  
24 Main St. W.,  
Hamilton, ON L8P 1H2  
(905) 522-6843  
[www.centenaryunited.com](http://www.centenaryunited.com)

**Centenary-Queen Square United Church, Saint John**  
215 Wentworth St.,  
Saint John, NB E2L 2T4  
(506) 634-8288  
[www.comoxunited.ca](http://www.comoxunited.ca)

**Comox United Church, Comox NEW!**  
250 Beach Drive, Comox, BC V9M 1P9  
(250) 339-3966  
[www.comoxunitedchurch.com](http://www.comoxunitedchurch.com)

**Deer Park United Church and Wholeness Centre, Calgary**  
77 Deer Point Rd. SE  
Calgary, AB, T2J 6W5  
(403) 278-8263  
[www.dpuc.ca](http://www.dpuc.ca)

**Eastminster United Church, Toronto NEW!**  
310 Danforth Avenue,  
Toronto, ON M4K 1N6  
(416) 463-2179  
[www.eastminsteruc.org](http://www.eastminsteruc.org)

**Eastside United Church**  
3018 Doan Drive  
Regina, SK S4V1M1  
(306) 761-0556  
[www.livingspiritcentre.org](http://www.livingspiritcentre.org)

**Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church, Toronto**  
214 Wright Ave., Toronto, ON M6R 1L3  
(416) 536-1755  
[www.ehpchurch.org](http://www.ehpchurch.org)

**First United Church, Ottawa**  
(Sharing space with All Saints Anglican Church)  
347 Richmond Road,  
Ottawa, ON K2A 0E7  
(613) 232-1016  
[www.firstunitedchurchottawa.org](http://www.firstunitedchurchottawa.org)

**First United Church, Salmon Arm**  
PO Box 940, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4P1  
(250) 832-3860  
[firstunitedsalmonarm.ca](http://firstunitedsalmonarm.ca)

**Garneau United Church**  
#123, 11148-84 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T6G 0V8  
(780) 439-2501  
[www.uccedm.org/NewPossibilities/1-profiles/garneau.htm](http://www.uccedm.org/NewPossibilities/1-profiles/garneau.htm)

**Glen Rhodes United Church, Toronto**  
1470 Gerrard St. E,  
Toronto, ON M4L 2A3  
(416) 465-3755  
[www.glenrhodesunitedchurch.ca](http://www.glenrhodesunitedchurch.ca)

**Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon**  
407 Cumberland Avenue  
Saskatoon, SK  
(306) 374-7766  
[www.gpuc.ca](http://www.gpuc.ca)

**Harcourt Memorial United Church, Guelph**  
87 Dean Ave., Guelph, ON N1G 1L3  
(519) 824-4177  
[www.harcourtuc.ca](http://www.harcourtuc.ca)

**Hillhurst United Church, Calgary**  
227 Kensington Close, N.W.,  
Calgary, AB T2N 3J6  
(403) 283-1539  
[www.hillhurstunited.com](http://www.hillhurstunited.com)

**Immanuel United Church, Winnipeg**  
755 Golspie St., Winnipeg, MB R2K 2V4  
(204) 669-0220  
[www.immanuelunitedchurch.net](http://www.immanuelunitedchurch.net)

**Kamloops United Church, Kamloops**  
421 St. Paul St., Kamloops, BC V2C 2J7  
(250) 372-3020  
[www.kamloopsunited.ca](http://www.kamloopsunited.ca)

**Kingston Road United Church, Toronto**  
975 Kingston Rd, Toronto, ON M4E 1T1  
(416) 699-6091  
[www.kruc.ca](http://www.kruc.ca)

**Knox United Church, Brandon**  
451 - 18th Street  
Brandon, MB R7A 5A9  
(204) 727-6975  
[www.knoxbrandon.org](http://www.knoxbrandon.org)

**Knox United Church, Calgary**  
506 Fourth Street SW,  
Calgary, AB T2P 1S7  
(403) 269-8382  
[www.knoxunited.ab.ca](http://www.knoxunited.ab.ca)

**McKillop United Church, Lethbridge**  
2329 - 15th Avenue South  
Lethbridge, AB T1K 0X5  
(403) 328-2703  
[www.mckillopunited.ca](http://www.mckillopunited.ca)



# Affirming Ministries / Communautés Inclusives

**Metropolitan United Church, Toronto**  
56 Queen St. E., Toronto, ON M5C 2Z3  
(416) 363-0331  
[www.metunited.org](http://www.metunited.org)

**Mill Woods United Church, Edmonton**  
15 Grand Meadow Cres.,  
Edmonton, Alberta T6L 1A3  
(780) 463-2202  
(780) 490-0149 (f)  
[www.millwoodsunited.org](http://www.millwoodsunited.org)

**Mount Dennis United Church**  
71 Guestville Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M6N 4N4  
(416) 763-2893  
[www.wondercafe.ca/churches/mount-dennis-united-church](http://www.wondercafe.ca/churches/mount-dennis-united-church)

**Parkdale United Church, Calgary** **NEW!**  
2919 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW,  
Calgary AB T2N 1C8  
(403) 283-3301  
[www.parkdaleunitedcalgary.net](http://www.parkdaleunitedcalgary.net)

**Parkminster United Church, Waterloo**  
275 Erb Street East, Waterloo, Ontario  
N2J 1N6  
(519) 885-0935  
[www.parkkuc.ca](http://www.parkkuc.ca)

**Robertson Wesley United Church, Edmonton**  
10209 123 Street,  
Edmonton AB T5N 1N3  
(780) 482-1587  
[www.rwuc.org](http://www.rwuc.org)

**St. Aidan's United Church, Victoria**  
3703 St. Aidan's Street, **NEW!**  
Victoria, BC V8P 2V7  
(250) 477-2089  
[www.staidansunited.com](http://www.staidansunited.com)

**St. Andrew's United Church, Sioux Lookout**  
PO Box 219  
Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1A3  
(807) 737-3131

**St. Andrew's United Church, Truro**  
55 King Street, P.O. Box 844  
Truro, NS B2N 5G6  
(902) 893-8396  
[www.standrewstruro.ca](http://www.standrewstruro.ca)

**St. James United Church, Regina**  
4506 Sherwood Dr., Regina, SK S4R 4B4  
(306) 543-2626  
[www.stjamesunitedregina.com](http://www.stjamesunitedregina.com)

**Église unie Saint-Jean, Montréal**  
110, Rue Ste-Catherine est,  
Montréal, QC H2X 1K7  
(514) 866-0641  
[www.egliseuniesaintjean.org](http://www.egliseuniesaintjean.org)

**St. John's United Church, Halifax**  
6225 Willow St., Halifax, NS B3L 1P1  
(902) 423-8498  
[www.stjohnsunited.com](http://www.stjohnsunited.com)

**St. John's United Church, Marathon**  
PO Box 698, Birch St.,  
Marathon, ON P0T 2E0  
(807) 229-1031

**St. John's United Church, Sechelt**  
5085 Davis Bay Road, **NEW!**  
Sechelt, BC V0N 3A2  
(604) 885-9822  
[www.stjohns-united.org](http://www.stjohns-united.org)

**St. Mark's United Church, Toronto**  
115 Orton Park Road  
Toronto, ON M1G 3G9  
(416) 439-8623  
[www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca)

**St. Matthew's United Church, Halifax**  
1479 Barrington Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1Z2  
(902) 423-9209  
[www.stmatts.ns.ca](http://www.stmatts.ns.ca)

**St. Paul's United Church, Edmonton**  
11526 - 76th Ave.  
Edmonton, AB T6G 0K7  
(780) 436-1555  
[www.stpaulsunited.org](http://www.stpaulsunited.org)

**Église unie Saint-Pierre, Québec**  
78, Rue Sainte-Ursule,  
Québec, QC G1R 4E8  
(418) 692-3422  
[www.egliseunie.org/paroisses/st-pierre](http://www.egliseunie.org/paroisses/st-pierre)

**St. Thomas United Church, Calgary** **NEW!**  
100 Hawkwood Boulevard NW  
Calgary, AB T3G 2S9  
(403) 241-0366  
[stthomasunited.ca](http://stthomasunited.ca)

**St. Thomas-Wesley United Church, Saskatoon**  
808-20th St. W.,  
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0Y3  
(306) 244-7676

**Salt Spring Island United Church**  
111 Hereford Avenue  
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2T3  
(250) 537-5812  
[www.saltspringunitedchurch.org](http://www.saltspringunitedchurch.org)

**Scarboro United Church, Calgary**  
134 Scarboro Ave. S. W.  
Calgary, AB T3C 2H1  
(403) 244-1161  
[www.scarborounited.org](http://www.scarborounited.org)

**Shelburne Pastoral Charge which includes:**  
**Trinity United Church**  
36 John St.,  
Shelburne, NS B0T 1W0  
(902) 875-3541  
and  
**Lower Ohio Union Church**

**Shiloh Sixth Avenue United Church, New Westminster**  
1111 Sixth Avenue  
New Westminster, BC V3M 2B7  
604-522-3443  
[www.shiloh-6ave.net](http://www.shiloh-6ave.net)

**Southminster-Steinhauer United Church, Edmonton**  
10740-19 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6J 6W9  
(780) 435-2028  
[www.smsuc.com](http://www.smsuc.com)

**Summerlea United Church, Lachine**  
225 50E Avenue Lachine, QC H8T 2T7  
(514) 634-2651  
[www.summerlea.ca](http://www.summerlea.ca)

**Sunset United Church, Regina**  
177 Sunset Dr. Regina, SK S4S 6Y7  
(306) 586-3613  
[www.sunsetunited.ca](http://www.sunsetunited.ca)

**Sydenham Street United Church, Kingston**  
82 Sydenham St., Kingston, ON K7L 3H4  
(613) 542-9616  
[www.ssuc.org](http://www.ssuc.org)

**Symons Valley United Church, Calgary**  
38 Kincora Rise NW,  
Calgary, AB T3R 0A3  
(403) 274-2361  
[www.symonsvalleyuc.com/index.htm](http://www.symonsvalleyuc.com/index.htm)

**Trinity United Church, Vancouver**  
1805 Larch St., Vancouver, BC V6K 3N9  
(778) 889-7324  
[www.trinityunitedchurch.ca/](http://www.trinityunitedchurch.ca/)

**Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, Toronto**  
427 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M5S 1X9  
(416) 922-8435  
[www.trinitystpauls.ca](http://www.trinitystpauls.ca)

**Union Church, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue**  
24 Maple Ave.,  
Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC H9X 2E6  
(514) 457-5819  
[www.unionchurch.ca/drupal/](http://www.unionchurch.ca/drupal/)

**Victoria Avenue United Church, Chatham**  
91 Grand Avenue East,  
Chatham, ON, N7L 1V8  
519-354-7540  
[vauc.net](http://vauc.net)

**Wesley United Church, Cambridge**  
6 Cambridge St.,  
Cambridge, ON N1R 3R6  
(519) 621-6060  
[www.wesleyunited.ca/](http://www.wesleyunited.ca/)

**West Hill United Church, Toronto**  
62 Orchard Park Drive  
Toronto ON, M1E 3T7  
(416) 282-8566  
[www.westhill.net](http://www.westhill.net)

**Westminster United Church, Thunder Bay**  
650 River Street, Thunder Bay,  
ON P7A 3S6  
(807) 767-2781

**Westminster United Church, Waterloo**  
543 Beechwood Dr.,  
Waterloo, ON N2T 2G7  
(519) 746-6080  
[www.westminsterunited.ca](http://www.westminsterunited.ca)

**Wild Rose United Church, Calgary**  
1317 - 1st Street N.W.,  
Calgary, AB, T2M 2S5  
(403) 277-5576  
[www.wildroseunited.ca](http://www.wildroseunited.ca)

**Young United Church, Winnipeg**  
222 Furby St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 2A7  
(204) 783-0128  
[www.mts.net/~yuc1/](http://www.mts.net/~yuc1/)

**Educational Institutions**  
**Centre for Christian Studies, Winnipeg**  
Woodsworth House, 60  
Maryland St. Winnipeg, MB R3G 1K7  
(204) 783-4490  
[www.ccsonline.ca](http://www.ccsonline.ca)

**St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon**  
1121 College Dr.  
Saskatoon SK S7N W3  
(306) 966-8970  
[www.usask.ca/stu/standrews/](http://www.usask.ca/stu/standrews/)

**St. Stephen's College, Edmonton**  
University of Alberta Campus  
8810-112 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T6G 1J6  
(780) 439-7311  
[www.ualberta.ca/ST.STEPHENS/](http://www.ualberta.ca/ST.STEPHENS/)

**United Theological College / Le Séminaire Uni, Montreal**  
3521 University Ave.,  
Montreal, QC H3A 2A9  
(514) 849-2042  
[www.utc.ca](http://www.utc.ca)

**Education and Retreat Centres**  
**Five Oaks United Church Education and Retreat Centre,**  
R.R. 3, Paris, ON N3L 3E3  
(519) 442-3212  
[www.fiveoaks.on.ca](http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca)

**Calling Lakes Centre**  
Box 159, Fort Qu'Appelle, SK S0G 1S0  
(306) 332-5691  
[www.callinglakes.ca](http://www.callinglakes.ca)

**Tatamagouche Centre**  
RR 3, Tatamagouche, NS BOK 1V0  
(902) 657-2231  
[www.tatacentre.ca](http://www.tatacentre.ca)

**Other Church Courts**  
**Cambrian Presbytery, Northwestern Ontario**  
310 Park Ave.,  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6C8  
(807) 345-3916

**The Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario**  
1470 Willson Place  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 3N9  
(204) 233-8911  
[www.w.m.n.wo.unit.ed-church.ca/](http://www.w.m.n.wo.unit.ed-church.ca/)

**Other Supportive Groups**  
**Peterborough and Area Affirm United**  
clo St. Andrew's United Church  
441 Rubidge St.,  
Peterborough, ON K9H 4E4  
(705) 745-2722 (0)  
(705) 741-4271 (h)  
[www.standrewspeterborough.ca/outreach.htm](http://www.standrewspeterborough.ca/outreach.htm)

**Rainbow Ministry, Winnipeg Presbytery**  
1470 Willson Place Unit C  
Winnipeg, MB R3R 3N9  
(204) 954-2904

**Saskatchewan Conference Affirming Ministry Committee**  
418A McDonald St., Regina,  
SK S4N 6E1  
(306) 721-3311  
[www.sk.united-church.ca](http://www.sk.united-church.ca)