



# Consensus

June - 2006

- CONNECTING AND INFORMING GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AND THEIR FRIENDS ACROSS THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA.
- WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND FULL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OF ALL SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND GENDER IDENTITIES IN THE UNITED CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

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UNITED ENSEMBLE

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## Speakers reflect North American diversity at ecumenical queer conference

Organizers of the first-ever ecumenical queer conference of its kind recently announced the event's keynote speakers. Irene Monroe, an African American lesbian minister and theologian from Harvard, and Martin Brokenleg, a gay Aboriginal professor at Vancouver School of Theology, will address attendees at the Together in Toronto: Claiming an Open Spirit conference this summer.

Monroe is a religious columnist and motivational speaker. Her articles have appeared in the *The Advocate*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Venus Magazine*. Brokenleg has co-authored several books and has extensive experience in teaching religious, gender, and Native youth studies. Monroe and Brokenleg will speak during the conference's opening and closing plenary sessions.

"I am extremely excited by the keynote speakers who will bring a truly North American theological and spiritual perspective to our conference," said conference co-chair Ralph Wushke.

Other plenary sessions will include a tri-perspective with Mennonite Anita Fast, United Church New Testament scholar Karen Williams, and Lutheran David Wiess, who will lead discussions on queer readings of scripture. Provocateurs Cheri DiNovo, the "radical reverend from Toronto," Katie Hochstedler, a Bretheren Mennonite Council youth from Minneapolis, and Maris

Sants, a Latvian Lutheran psychologist will invite conference attendees to "claim the future" as they discuss the future LGBT communities face in North America and beyond.

"The size of this conference, as well as the diversity and creativity of the planning group, offers everyone the chance to find connection, involvement, fun, and rejuvenation," noted co-chair Shannon Neufeldt. "It will all be held together with the spirit of mutuality and receptivity for which the event is named."

More than two dozen workshops on subjects ranging from spirituality to activism to the particular experiences of transgender persons, youth, and ex-gay survivors (people who were formerly members of "ex-gay" organizations) are included in the conference programming.

Together in Toronto: Claiming an Open Spirit takes place at the University of Toronto from Thursday, July 27 to Sunday, July 30, 2006. It is sponsored by three lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and allied organizations from Christian faith traditions: Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble (United Church of Canada), the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Interests (BMC), and Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA). Over 400 people spanning a variety of gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, and ethno-cultural diversities are expected to attend.

**Together in Toronto** 2006  
claiming an open spirit  
July 27-30, 2006  
Toronto, Ontario

◆ *Consensus* is the newsletter of Affirm United, an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their friends within The United Church of Canada.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Affirm United. Your news stories, articles, and letters are always welcome. *Consensus* reserves the right to edit for length, clarity or style.

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# Reflections at Eastertide

As we near the end of Eastertide, the liturgical time between Easter and Pentecost, it seems fitting to consider the tidal qualities of our resurrection faith. For resurrection faith brings surprises, laying them before us as though they were dropped by an outgoing tide. Its offerings connect us with people in far-off places; its gifts include living things, such as hope and love.

It breaks upon us as waters upon the shore, moulding and shaping. Sometimes it smoothes our rough and jagged edges and at other times it pulls at us to expose new sharpness. It uncovers what has previously been hidden. For faith reminds us of God's compassion; God's grace, both ever in motion as the sea, both ever present whether we are at high or low points in our lives. Faith constantly beckons. It seems to stretch toward us as the waters of a new-broken wave reach out

to the walker on the shore.

As we make plans to gather together in Toronto, may we prepare in this season of Eastertide, by continually opening ourselves to a God who changes us, surprises us, informs us, beckons and draws us. May it be so within us, among us and beyond us! Amen.

### On a personal note

Sally Harris and Wilson MacLennan, Affirm United / S'affirmer ensemble co-chairs, are pleased that Wilson has relocated from Winnipeg to Edmonton, which means he is closer to the west coast. This move also means that the National Council has a council member living in Alberta. Wilson looks forward to working closely with Affirm United members and with The United Church of Canada in Alberta and Northwest Conference.

**See you in Toronto!**

## Letters

*I have just finished reading...*

the November 2005 issue. I will be passing around the Eldon Hay article [Some congregations are raising fences against same-sex marriage, p. 10], as we too are in the process of "marriage policy." Thanks for a great issue. I know how hard it is to get material in and then to create such a masterpiece. Keep up the good work.

Edward Avey  
Dashwood, Ontario

### Interfaith Conference— Transforming Faith: A Transgender Witness

Oct. 21-22 First United Methodist Church, Corvallis, OR

Brought to you by  
The Community of Welcoming Congregations and  
the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies.

Featuring keynote speaker Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and plenary speakers Erin Swenson, Malcolm Himschoot, and Justin Tanis, and Saturday evening concert with gospel choir *Transcendence*.

Registration will open soon.  
Stay tuned for more details.

Contact Tara Wilkins, Executive Director of  
The Community of Welcoming Congregations  
(tara@welcomingcongregations.org)  
if you want to lead a workshop or volunteer.

# Together in Toronto sure to entertain



As anticipation builds, organizers say Together in Toronto: Claiming an Open Spirit promises to offer something for everyone through its tantalizing array of activities and options. The conference will be diverse and creative as participants claim an open Spirit as God's people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, allied or in any way queer. And it's not all work and no play. Beyond the daily plenary sessions and workshops, organizers have planned activities and events as diverse as the conference goes themselves.

Together in Toronto offers participants the opportunity to meet queer Christians and allies from other traditions. For Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble members and other Canadians, this will be a unique opportunity to gather with Lutherans Concerned/ North America, as well as Brethren and Mennonites from all over North America.

Participants can sign up for an Open Spirit Forum when they register. There are forums for many groups: ethno-culturally identified persons, queer seniors, families of LGBT persons, allies, queer families, transgender persons, bisexuals, young adults and queers on campus. Attendees can also create their own affinity group.

After the first day of conference activities, organizers have planned an evening of socializing and entertainment at the Together in Toronto Coffee House. This open-microphone event will be emceed by Jan Braun, a queer Mennonite author and spoken-word artist from Winnipeg. Jan will also perform some of her original work.

On the second night of the conference, two gifted – and spirited – queer performers will entertain. The incisively witty singer/songwriter Evalyn Parry will perform poetic commentaries and boldly satirical songs. Soul-stirring jazz singer/songwriter Kenny Kirkwood and his band will offer catchy rhythms and sultry sounds.

At the lunch Saturday, conference attendees can enjoy an open-air barbecue to the sounds of one of Toronto's many Caribbean steel bands. That evening boasts the conference's gala reception and dance party.

Each morning and evening organizers have scheduled intimate and facilitated worship opportunities and time to walk a labyrinth. Attendees can also take part in some of the organized sports activities. As the conference takes place at the University of Toronto,

participants can enjoy the university campus with its many Oxford-like colleges and quadrangles or visit Church Street, just a few blocks away, to experience Toronto's version of The Castro.

Running concurrently with the conference is the Together in Toronto: Film Festival presenting recent and historical documentaries and feature films, including the ground-breaking 1965 gay love classic, *Winter Kept Us Warm*, filmed on the University of Toronto campus. Childcare and youth programming will be provided during program

**Affirm United's  
Annual General Meeting  
will take place  
Friday July 28, 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
and Saturday July 29, 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

sessions.

Annual business sessions for Affirm United/S'affirmer ensemble, Lutherans Concerned/North America, and the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests will also be held during Together in Toronto. Affirm United's Annual General Meeting will take place in two sessions: Friday July 28, 1:00-3:00 p.m. and Saturday July 29, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

For more information and to register visit:  
<http://www.openspirit.ca>

## T-shirts with logo for sale

Affirm United T-shirts, featuring the group's new rainbow logo on a black background, are now for sale by mail. On the back of the t-shirt are the words "Affirming Ministries - Communautés Inclusives" (in a circle, with the middle filled with image of three stylized figures linking arms in front of a cross).

Youths: \$14. All others: \$22 (sm, med, lg, XL, 2XL, & 3XL). Postage cost is not included and will depend on the size of the package and the shipping address.

To order, send address, quantity and T-shirt size(s), and a cheque made out to Affirm United, to Ken DeLisle, 125 Furby St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 2A4.

An invoice for postage will be included with the shipment.

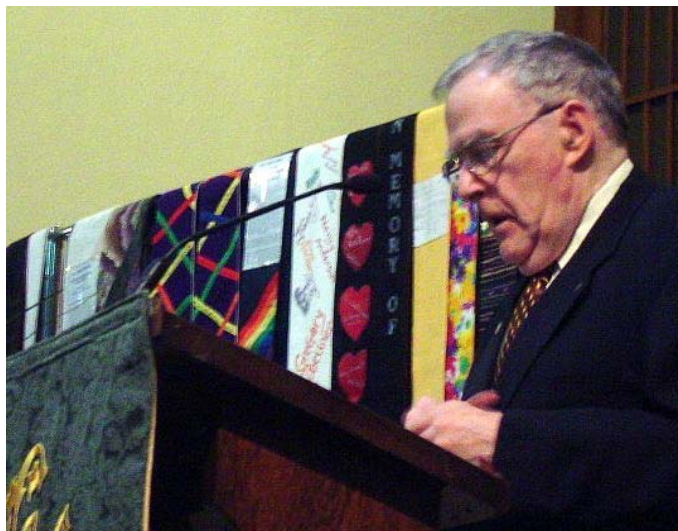
T-shirts will also be for sale at the Together in Toronto conference.



## Glen Rhodes celebrates 10 years as Affirming congregation

People from the Greater Toronto Area and beyond enjoyed a Feb. 18 concert kicking off the celebration of Glen Rhodes United Church's 10th anniversary as an Affirming congregation in Toronto.

Flowers, fruit, and candles bedecked the communion table, and The Shower of Stoles display featured at Affirm United's 2005 conference made for a visual feast. Broadway tunes, gospel, inspirational, and easy sounds led to the finale, Bette Midler's "From a



Eldon Hay speaks at Glen Rhodes United Church on its 10th anniversary as an Affirming

Distance," a joint number with Glen Rhodes' choir. A time for personal greetings followed, from folk present and absent. Written greetings were read and placed in an album to share during the reception.

The celebration's special guest was Eldon Hay of

New Brunswick, who shared emotional and encouraging stories of his life of leadership in PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Hay is a retired United Church minister, religion professor, and member of the Order of Canada.

Sunday morning's worship included greetings from United Church representatives. Eldon Hay preached and the congregation committed itself to another 10 years on the path to justice.



Rainbows and strawberries adorn the reception table at Glen Rhodes United Church.

## Metropolitan United enjoys 7 Affirming years



By GRAHAM DOWN

Metropolitan United Church in Toronto has been an Affirming congregation since 1999. This well-known, old downtown church is within walking distance of the gay village, and includes in its congregation many GLBTT worshippers.

Metropolitan's participation in Pride Parades makes it clear that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual people are welcome here. And they have come! We don't have an exact count of how many, but there has been a steady stream and many have become members. GLBTT folk participate in all aspects of Met's work, their many talents enriching the church.

Our straight minister has changed gradually over the years into an accepting, understanding pastor who loves and enjoys the diversity in his flock. Our gay minister, both caring and innovative, has captured the hearts of the congregation. He acts as resource to the outside GLBTT community, welcoming them in, and time and again setting them to work!

Both ministers perform same-sex marriages, and we now have a number of couples who were married here. In fact, one member of Metropolitan's ministry team recently officiated at the same-sex wedding of the other team member. It seemed the whole congregation joined in, attending both ceremony and reception. The diversity we have gained since becoming Affirming seven years ago is a joy to us all.

## Two more conference centres declared Affirming ministries

The Five Oaks Conference Centre officially became an Affirming ministry on April 2. Ron Coughlin and Edward Avey presented a certificate on behalf of Affirm United.

Five Oaks is a United Church educational and retreat centre that offers programs, provides for personal and congregational retreats, and hosts a variety of church and community groups. Five Oaks is situated on 116 acres of Carolinian forest near Paris, Ontario.



From left: Mardi Tindal (Five Oaks staff), Bob LePage (chair of the Five Oaks Board), Edward Avey (Affirm United Council member), and Ron Coughlin (Affirm United

facilitates and supports learning, growth and transformation. Calling Lakes Centre intentionally welcomes all people regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, differing abilities, ethnic background or economic circumstance."

## Bedford United becomes Affirming congregation

Bedford United Church in Bedford, Nova Scotia, became an Affirming congregation at a May 7 service attended by between 300 and 400 community members and guests from the Halifax regional municipality and beyond.

Ann Hebb, chair of Bedford United's Affirming Congregation Committee, reports the congregation received best wishes from other United Churches as well as from MP Geoff Regan (Halifax West), "who has been supportive of our congregation and same-gender marriages."



Alan Stewart, a member of St. John's United Church in Halifax, presented a certificate from Affirm United.

### The Bedford United Church mission statement reads in part:

*We the people of Bedford United Church declare publicly our commitment to creating a community where all people are welcome regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, differing abilities, ethnic background or economic circumstance.*

*All persons are welcome to take part in every aspect of church life including membership, leadership, celebrating life passages and marriage.*

*We celebrate the richness that diversity brings to our church, even as it challenges us. We pray for God's spirit to guide us as we work for reconciliation and justice for all persons in both church and society.*



**PCTC - Calling Lake Centre** (formerly the Prairie Christian Training Centre) was also recently declared an Affirming ministry. Calling Lake is a fully accredited United Church centre. It nurtures growth in individuals, congregations, and communities through programs,

retreats and hospitality. Located on the north shore of Echo Lake in Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle Valley, the Centre provides a peaceful yet accessible "getaway" for retreats, workshops and conferences.

The Centre's web site states that it "stands with those who seek justice and resist evil. It encourages,

## Second United Church theological college becomes an Affirming ministry

The Centre for Christian Studies is the second theological school to join the Affirming ministries program. The Centre is a joint United Church and Anglican college based in Winnipeg, which trains students for diaconal and educational ministries. In December 2004, the Central Council of the Centre for Christian Studies accepted the recommendation of a task group that had worked for several months reviewing the history of the college's actions in relation to sexual orientation. A decision was made to become an Affirming ministry of The United Church of Canada and the United Church's Affirm United and a Proud Anglican Institution, becoming a member of Integrity, an organization related to the Anglican Church of Canada. A celebration of the new memberships coincided with the annual service of celebration in May 2006.

The task group continues to meet to identify what further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that CCS continues to strive for sexual and gender justice.

People applying for staff positions and for admission as students are informed about the CCS policy statements regarding sexual orientation. Curriculum requirements include sexuality, sexual orientation, pastoral care in the context of diverse family and partnership models, the social construction of gender and sexual identity, sexual abuse, boundaries, and professional ethics.

The United Theological College in Montreal is the only other one of the 13 United Church theological colleges to be an Affirming ministry.

## U.S. denomination is 10% Affirming

Some 10 per cent of the congregations in the United Church of Christ are officially Open and Affirming, according to staff of the United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Coalition.

While the official number of churches in this U.S.

denomination varies slightly in different counts, there are between 5,700 and 5,800 full-standing churches, of which 585 are listed as Open and Affirming

This result has been some time in coming. The 1985 General Synod of UCC adopted an Open and Affirming resolution, which began this denomination-wide witness to inclusion, affirmation, and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/same-gender-loving (lgbt/sgl) persons. Coalition staff have "high hopes that it won't be another 20 years before we can say 20 per cent of our churches are listed as Open and Affirming."

In contrast, of the 2,299 local pastoral charges in The United Church of Canada, 29 have officially been declared Affirming congregations, a figure that translates into barely more than one per cent. Affirm United's Affirming Congregation Program was launched 14 years ago, in the summer of 1992.



### Affirming congregations are a witness to justice and inclusion

Affirming Congregations are local churches, organizations or ministries within the United Church of Canada that:

- Welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people and their families in all aspects of church or group life
- Promote reconciliation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people in church and society
- Minister to and with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people.
- Make a public statement of welcome and inclusion.

Is your congregation welcoming of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity? If so, it is important to make a public statement of inclusion, to counteract the negative messages about homosexuality that GLBT people receive from so many religious groups. Your witness to justice and inclusion serves as a model and inspiration for other churches. Contact the Affirming ministry program co-chairs (see page 11) for more information.

#### Share your stories

*Consensus* is always looking for stories about things that congregations are doing to promote justice and inclusion for GLBT people. Send your stories to *Consensus* at 1120 Moselle Cres., Ottawa, K1C 2T2, or by e-mail to [ahuntly@magma.ca](mailto:ahuntly@magma.ca).

# Here's how my minister friend Mac reacted to his first same-sex wedding encounter

By ELDON HAY

*Beatrice Breau and Suzanna Norman became life partners on Oct. 8, 2005, at a wedding at which I officiated in New Maryland, New Brunswick, Rev. Malcolm (Mac) Campbell was delighted to accept my invitation to assist, since his own Marysville and Penniac congregations were in the preliminary stages of considering whether to approve same-sex marriage ceremonies. The following article is an edited excerpt from a sermon Mac preached in his own congregations eight days after the wedding.*

## **"God was there"**

**Reflections on a lesbian wedding in New Brunswick**  
By Malcolm Campbell

Quite often, we see God's back. We see where God has just been. And that's really our encounter with God. Sometimes we're aware of it at the time. Most often it's just after it happens, or sometimes quite a while after it happens. It is on reflection that we realize God was there. So that's why it happened the way it did.

The reason this passage speaks to me so strongly



Suzanne Norman and Eldon Hay

right now comes from an event that I took part in a week ago last night. On that occasion I was invited by a colleague, Eldon Hay (who some of you may know is a retired United Church minister in the Sackville area) to assist him in officiating at a wedding between two women. It was held in the Oakland Park Lodge in New Maryland.

Let me tell you just a little bit about what that Saturday evening was like.

In some ways, it was no different from dozens of weddings I've done over the years. It had the crowd of people, maybe 30 or 40 people in this case, who sort of trickled in about half an hour before the wedding. The reception was a pot luck supper held in the same building, so the guests brought food and set up the

tables. There was that nervous, kind of excited chatter that goes on, in anticipation of the wedding.

One of the brides got there about 30 or 40 minutes before the ceremony started. And she walked around and paced and she made a lot of nervous and not very funny little jokes. She was out the back door for a cigarette about every five minutes; and she was into the washroom 15 times in 10 minutes. She acted for all the world like almost every groom I ever saw waiting for his wedding.

The other bride came in, and the ceremony began. The liturgy was quite familiar; it had some lovely language in it, but quite familiar. Indeed, it was clear that these two people were deeply committed to sharing their lives with each other. Both in their mid- to late forties, the brides had been around enough to get their feet well anchored on the ground. They knew why they were there, they knew what they were there for, and nothing else really mattered to them at that point.

They wanted to make a public commitment of themselves to each other and to have God be a part of that covenant. They were very serious and very clear about that, and the rest of the stuff, like room decorations, didn't matter. In fact, the only decoration obviously came with the venue; it was a massive moose head hanging on the wall

It was quite delightful to see the guests focus so intently on what was happening. Members of the brides' community

had gathered there because they cared about these two people, and by their presence were



Suzanna Norman, Eldon Hay, Beatrice Breau, Mac

committing themselves to honour and support the covenant that these two were entering into, with God. It was everything that you hope a wedding will be.

I realized both at the time and in reflection afterward "God was there" almost visibly. God was there. And I felt how we encounter God or we see God's back, if you will, among the people who are outside the mainstream. How often that happens.

## Sex and sexuality— nature or nurture?

By RUTH BRAMHAM

Last year my boss's daughter asked me to review her term paper for a course on human sexuality from a feminist viewpoint. I was pretty well on board with her until the last sentence, "We all have to realize that gender is made not born."

I thought my response would interest the readers of *Consensus*.

Genetic research over the past 20 years has pretty well laid to rest the idea that our minds and thought processes are all the same as we come out of our mother's womb. During the three trimesters of foetal development, just as the body is developing, so is the brain. Hormones—and when they are released by the mother's endocrine system—have a significant effect on how both body and brain develop.

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### *What is in question is the behaviour and how well the male has learned to control himself.*

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Science has shown that male and female brains are very different in some ways, affecting how we learn, react, and define ourselves as male or female, masculine or feminine. The very young child does this by instinct, as a result of brain signals responding to internal programming, not environmental stimuli.

By age three, a child has a sense of both gender and gender identity, even though the child doesn't understand the differences. As vocabulary and ability to absorb information increases, the child becomes more self-aware. Actually understanding the differences between the sexes doesn't kick in until around age five, beginning with the physical.

Children struggle with emotional and psychological differences well into their teens, particularly if there is a conflict between sex, sexual orientation, and perceived gender identity. Finally, in their immediate pre-teen years, children become aware of their own sexuality. Hormones begin to work their magic as the body develops. The brain's semi-dormant receptors are jolted

awake as the endocrine system begins producing the estrogens and androgens required in the maturation process.

Thus the brain is 95 per cent hard-wired as to sex, gender, and gender identity by the time the baby is born. A child's brain can be nurtured in the way it learns and absorbs knowledge, but identity is fixed. Yet society still has its mind set on a strict binary gender construct: You are one or the other.

Unfortunately, in one of about 4,000 births, the genitals give false or inconclusive information about gender, just as you cannot tell the baby's sexual orientation at birth. We do not choose our sexual orientation. We are who we are in all senses right from the first trimester of foetal development: Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual. And it cannot be changed, only suppressed—at great emotional expense.

Sexuality is not clear cut, nor is it a continuum—male to female, masculine to feminine, heterosexual to homosexual. For example (using the male): At one extreme is the Alpha male, excess testosterone, aggressive, arrogant, God's gift to women—he thinks. At the other end, the timid male, short on the "T," afraid of his own shadow, blushes in the presence of women. Is he homosexual? Possibly, but probably not. The Alpha male could be homosexual—God's gift to fellow man. You cannot tell a person's sexuality at a glance; just as you cannot tell who is likely to beat up women. The timid man with all his insecurities is just as likely a suspect as the Alpha male.

In both cases their gender is indisputable—male. What's in question is the behaviour and how well the male has learned to control himself. The only component of the gender equation that is on the nurture side is self control, one nine attributes (fruits of the spirit) for a good Christian. (Galatians 5:16-26.)

*Ruth Bramham is Affirm United's transgender contact. See the Affirm United Leadership Team page for her coordinates.*

See **Page 2** for information on the upcoming Transgender Conference in Oregon:

### **Interfaith Conference— Transforming Faith: A Transgender Witness**

**October 21-22, 2006,  
First United Methodist Church,  
Corvallis, Oregon**





## Those hearts that we have

## treasured

At the beginning of the Easter season this year, we sang one of Sylvia Dunstan's hymns in church. Though I love many of Sylvia's hymns, I had not sung this one before. It seemed somehow ironic to be singing this hymn of memorial, *her* hymn of memorial, in an Affirming congregation. I wonder how many people even know she was gay, was one of the pioneers.

Sylvia left a treasured legacy of hymns behind, 13 of them in *Voices United*, but she left more than that. Sylvia was one of the forerunners in the struggle for GLBT rights in the United Church. As such, all the changes that have taken place in church and society are part of her legacy.

Sylvia is the first gay minister I knew. I met her in 1981, when she was newly ordained and serving as minister in a congregation Maritime Conference. What can I say about her? She had presence; she was courageous, outspoken, and controversial even for those controversial times. She scared me a little, because her very presence foreboded change—in my life, in all our lives. I didn't always agree with her, but I knew and respected her passionate commitment to the United Church, to her faith, and to gay rights. She was one of

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***I had to rethink  
what I thought I knew.  
I had to learn tolerance.***

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those whose very presence in ministry jolted the church to new awareness. She was there, and, like it or not, the church had to deal with her.

Sylvia died on July 25, 1993, almost four months to the day of her being diagnosed with liver cancer. She was

38 years old. In her too-short life she had worked as a minister, prison chaplain, and editor of *Gathering* (a United Church worship resource). She had written many hymns and fought for human rights. Her blessing rests upon us; her life is memory.

There was a death in our own family this week—that of my sister-in-law, Marti. Like Sylvia's death, it was a tragic and too-early death. It was different though, because Marti's death was complicated by addiction and mental illness. Which makes it harder to discern the hope, the blessing. Memories are more muddled, emotions more complex. But writing this, re-reading Sylvia's hymn (which I had planned to use for this article even before Marti's sudden death) makes me wonder about Marti's legacy. Certainly, her suffering, which was intense, is now over. Certainly, she was much loved. But addiction distorted everything, making it hard to find the truth, the goodness, the blessing.

Hard, but not impossible. For in Marti's life, as with Sylvia's, her very presence brought injustice and prejudice into the spotlight. When I first met Sylvia, I had to confront the prejudices of my own internalized homophobia and my fears of having to look at my own sexual orientation. When I first met Marti, I had to confront my attitudes and prejudices about addiction. I had to rethink what I thought I knew. I had to learn tolerance. I began to pay attention to the injustices—attitudes that write off those who suffer from addiction, ridiculously long wait times for those seeking treatment, lack of social support, social stigma, shame and blame.

As I grew to know and to love Marti, I was forced to confront my own judgemental attitudes. Marti accepted me into her family without reservation; it took me much longer to accept her. There is pain in this acknowledgement, but also blessing. Perhaps it can help me better understand why some in our churches are so slow to let go of prejudices towards GLBTs. Probably Marti knew I was slow to learn compassion, but she was patient. And we had a little time. I am grateful for that, and for her blessing which does indeed rest upon us.

### Those Hearts that We Have Treasured

*Those hearts that we have treasured,  
Those lives that we have shared,  
Those loves that walked beside us,  
Those friends for whom we've cared,  
Their blessing rests upon us,  
Their life is memory,  
Their suffering is over,  
Their spirits are set free.*

# Affirm United Membership



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[ The membership period is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year. If the date at the lower right corner of the address label on the envelope that brought Consensus is blank or shows a year other than the current year, your membership has lapsed. ]

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- Here is my \$30 fee for an individual/household membership.
- Here is my \$100 fee for an institutional membership (e.g., congregation, presbytery, school).
- I am adding a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help with projects and expenses.
- I cannot afford the membership fee right now. Please accept my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and continue to send me your mailings.
- Please remove me from your mailing list.
- I wish to be contacted by a member of An Affirm United ministry or group near my home.

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# The Affirm United leadership team

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# Affirming Ministries

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1200 Bedford Hwy,  
Bedford, NS B4A 1C3  
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300 Bloor St. W, Toronto, ON M5S 1W3  
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**Centre for Christian Studies**  
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Winnipeg, MB R3G 1K7  
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**Centenary-Queen Square United Church, Saint John**  
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V1E 4P1  
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**First United Church, Vancouver**  
320 East Hastings St., Vancouver, BC  
V6A 1P4  
(604) 681-8365

**Five Oaks United Church Education and Retreat Centre, Paris**  
R.R. 3, Paris, ON N3L 3E3  
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**Glen Rhodes United Church, Toronto**

1470 Gerrard St. E, Toronto, ON  
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**Metropolitan United Church, Toronto**  
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K9H 4E4  
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**Église unie Saint-Jean, Montréal**  
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