Affirm Admin
Inclusivity Committee
Welcome

Bedford United Church
is an Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Canada.
We make a public welcome to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people as well as other marginalized groups. To learn more about Affirming Congregations, visit http://www.affirmunited.ca/

To learn more how we became Affirming at Bedford United,
please start reading from the last paragraph on this page and continue up.
You can contact our committee chair at
affirmingcongregation@bedfordunited.com

If you wish to know when our next Inclusivity Committee meeting is, go to
http://www.bedfordunited.com/calendar/
and check out the BUC calendar. Send us a note at the e-mail address above to let us know you're coming, if possible, so that we may include you in our agenda.

Latest News

July 26/08 Gay Pride Parade day

Chair Anne Hebb, Rev. David Hart, Carolyn Crowell and Anne's daughter drove a car in the parade. The United Church contingent was led by St. John's United Halifax members and their minister Rev. Linda Yates. Rev. Leslie Robinson of Beacon United Church, Yarmouth also participated.
A wonderful time was had by all!

In early June 2008, Anne Hebb began a volunteer
job-sharing position with Brian Mitchell-Walker as Affirm United's Affirming Ministries Program Coordinator. Anne will also be attending this year's National Affirm United Conference in Saskatoon, SK in early August.

Two of our committee members attended the November 19, 2007

Transgender Day of Remembrance at Safe Harbour MCC.

This event is held every year to remember the transgender men
and women who died the hands of others who feared or hated them.

(Baptist, Anglican, Metropolitan Community Church) as well as Unitarian Universalist, Jewish, and Hindu faiths.

After the Gay Pride Parade, two committee members staffed a table on the Commons with Alan Stewart from St. John's United. We were visited by many folks who were on the Commons for the concert and received many positive comments on our becoming Affirming.
Thanks to Alice and Roy for assisting Anne.

July 1, 2006

Bedford United Church was host to its
first same-gender wedding with Rev. Hart officiating.
It was a lovely event and especially nice as it was held on Canada Day. Members of our committee were kindly invited to the ceremony as a thank you for our efforts.

New Committee Name

On May 28, 2006
we presented a motion to Church Council
that a new committee be created to replace the
Affirming Congregaton Committee
as that committee's mandate had been completed with
the May 7, 2006 Affirm Dedication Service.
We will now be a committee reporting directly to Council as the
The Inclusivity Committee
with the following purpose and responsibilities:

The Inclusivity Committee
A Stand Alone Committee

Purpose

To support the congregation in carrying out the Bedford United Church's Mission Statement of accepting all people in an intentional way.

Responsibilities

To maintain and develop a library of background material on Affirm United's program, educational videos, and publications to groups and individuals within the church.

To engage in advocacy and awareness raising within the congregation regarding issues relative to being an Affirming Congregation.

Establish support groups and networks within the congregation for gay and lesbians.

It is important to note that this statement is not a replacement of our existing Mission Statement, but is rather an additional statement that we can use as a more defined articulation of the mission statement.

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.

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September 23, 24, 25, 2005 - Support was shown by members of our committee to Safe Harbour Church and its congregation. Safe Harbour is a member of the international Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). MCC churches are inclusive ministries that serve members of the "Rainbow Community". Safe Harbour is celebrating 14 years in Halifax with Rev. Darlene Young as their pastor for 13 years.

On the evening of Friday Sept. 23, members of the Safe Harbour Congregation, as well as members from our committee, were invited to attend a private reception where we were able to meet Rev. Elder Dr.Troy Perry who was in Halifax from Los Angeles to celebrate with the Safe Harbour congregation. Rev. Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Churches 37 years ago.

On Saturday, Sept. 24, the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project held The Big Gay Anniversary Dinner in the Halifax Ballroom of the Casino Nova Scotia Hotel. With over 160 people attending the gala to celebrate the one year anniversary of the legalization of same-sex marriage in Nova Scotia, we were once again treated to hearing Rev. Perry that night as well as the Guest MC Bette MacDonald.

On Sunday, Sept. 25, a celebration Safe Harbour service was held in the afternoon at St. John's United Church (Windsor & Willow Strs). This venue was needed to accommodate the number of people attending. Rev. Perry gave a wonderful, passionate sermon in his southern cadence that left everyone singing his praises.
Committee members in attendence were grateful to have had the opportunity to meet him and hear him speak just prior to his retirement in Los Angeles on October 8, 2005.

On July 25, 2005, our chairperson, Anne Hebb, attended a Gay Pride Week Sunday Service at St. John's United Church (Windsor & Willow St. in Halifax). The guest

person in the body of Christ. It requires an appreciation that teaching and learning are a two-way process of mutual listening and understanding." (Affirm United Information Brochure 04/97)

Various people of the Bedford United congregation have questioned why the church council took this step to establish the Affirming Congregation Committee. They note correctly that Bedford United Church already is a highly affirming congregation. The question has been asked, "Why are we making such a big deal about this?" Although our Mission statement clearly includes the word "all" (accepting all people), it is clear from conversations with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, that we talk the talk but don't walk the walk. Marginalized people, whether sexuality, economics, race, or ability is at question, need to know by a public declaration that they are accepted for their "whole" selves and that they do not have to pretend to be something they are not. By becoming an Affirming Congregation, we can let gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people know that they have a place to worship God, to proclaim their love for Jesus, to participate in Christian education in a place that is safe—where they can truly belong and be accepted as whole persons. We expect that our process will lead us to examine other marginalized groups to determine ways to enable them to feel welcomed and affirmed too.

Any congregation considering becoming an Affirming Congregation must prepare itself. It must become educated on the various aspects of sexuality. It must talk openly about its concerns, and it must examine how it might function differently if it chose to become an Affirming Congregation. It is with these things in mind, that the BUC Church Council established the Affirming Congregation Committee.

Same Sex Marriage

Although the issue of same-sex marriage has been at the forefront of public debate in the last year, it originally was the intention of the committee to separate the issue of becoming an Affirming Congregation from the issue of same sex marriage. Given recent events, that has turned out to be impossible.

In August 2003 General Council of the United Church of Canada met in Wolfville, Nova Scotia and approved petitioning the Government of Canada to legalize same-sex marriage. General Council also established policy for any United Church of Canada congregation to proceed with marrying same-sex couples if requested. As a result, General Council's decision has led to the broadening of this committee's mandate to include the development of an educational process leading to an informed congregational decision regarding conducting same sex marriages as well, should it become legal to do so in this province.

In addition to determining what is our group's mandate, we have accomplished a great deal in a short time. Since our beginning, The Affirming Congregation Committee:

Increased its membership (doubled!)