



# Bethany United Church

**Minister:** Rev. Kevin Little

**Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Vincent Ihasz

**Music Director:** Shawn Whynot

**Community Engagement Ministry:** Ann Bradley

**Children and Family Care Ministry:** Louisa Duck

**Finance Officer:** Tina Gascon

**Ministry Resource Support:** Dana Mills

**Caretaker:** James Sweet

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Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Dear Bethany Community of Faith

On behalf of the Bethany United Church Executive Board, we wish to bring to your attention the plan of the Affirming Working Group to explore the possibility of Bethany becoming an Affirming Ministry. This initiative was given full support at the Executive Board Meeting held February 13, 2023. The following outlines the steps so far undertaken.

On Pentecost Sunday, June 5, 2022, Kevin asked those attending our worship service to write a “vision statement,” providing each of us an opportunity to discern a path forward for our faith community. Our anonymous statements were collected by the Ushers. Kevin later shared our comments in one of his daily emails. The desire to explore becoming an Affirming Church came out of this visioning exercise. It was forwarded to the Community Connections Working Group for further follow-up.

At the Community Connections Working Group meeting on October 5, 2022, a sub-committee was formed to further research this concept, guided by the United Church of Canada’s Affirm United mandate. Following the protocol of Bethany’s governance structure, the sub-committee wrote a proposal, and presented it to Session on November 28, 2022. Session unanimously approved moving forward with this process. The Executive Board co-chairs concurred with this decision. An update on the Affirming Working Group was presented to the Executive Board on February 13, 2023.

The Affirming Working Group was formed in response to Session’s decision to explore the possibility of Bethany becoming an Affirming Ministry, as defined by the United Church of Canada. As a faith community we seek to understand and celebrate the diversity of humanity as God created us; to find ways to be open, respectful and to feel safe, to welcome people who experience life in different ways from our own, learn from them, and explore positive ways to interact.

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**“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7**

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The Affirming Working Group invites our congregation to embark on an education, discernment, and decision-making process to help us determine if we will become an Affirming Ministry. Step-by-step, we want to learn and grow together to enrich our community, both within Bethany and throughout HRM.

- Promoting greater awareness of discrimination due to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity issues.
- Working to end discrimination against people in the Church, society, and our own faith community.
- Supporting and welcoming all people to share our Bethany United faith community.

The Affirming Working Group will be offering an evening information session in the near future. We want to start a conversation, so we all understand what it means to be an Affirming Church. We value your input. Honest, and respectful discussion will enrich our experience as believers. Join us in our journey.


Sincerely,



Glen Knapp  
Co-Chair Executive Board



Chuck Maxner  
Co-Chair Executive Board



Ann Bradley (Staff Liaison)  
Affirming Working Group

PS On Sunday February 26<sup>th</sup> during coffee hour, the Affirming Working Group will have an information table with resources available for the congregation. We invite you to explore the **Affirm United** website: <https://affirmunited.ause.ca/>

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