

# Becoming Affirming



Affirm | Saffirmer  
UNITED | ENSEMBLE

**Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble** is The United Church of Canada's partner in support of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

At the heart of our work is our growing cross-country network of over 130 Affirming ministries, hundreds of individual members, and around 80 ministries in the Affirming process. We

welcome everyone, regardless of identity. Join us, and make your welcome public!

## Why become an Affirming Ministry when we're already welcoming to everyone?

**Because:** Jesus' ministry included all who were excluded for any reason. The Gospel calls us to do the same!

**Because:** The LGBTQ+ community faces specific and deliberate rejection and shaming in places of worship—The United Church of Canada included. (*LGBTQ+ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, asexual, intersex, and more.*)

**Because:** We need to be out, public, and proud to be fully present to our communities in all their diversity and struggles.

*"Welcoming is a hollow word to many of us. We expect religion to reject us, and so often, across denominations and churches, this is*

*the case. It is hard for us to even fathom the possibility that we could actually be welcome."*—Transgender member of the United Church

**Who?** The Affirming Ministries Program is a network of United Church ministries that publicly declare themselves to be fully inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Congregations, presbyteries, conferences, educational centres, chaplaincies, women's and men's groups, camps, and seminaries... every expression of ministry in the United Church can become Affirming. The United Church of Canada endorsed the program in 2000 and encourages its ministries to participate.

*"Affirming Ministries acknowledge that God's love is wider and more inclusive than they can imagine...and they commit themselves to sharing that news with others who may have heard a quite different message about what it means to be church. Because voices of condemnation, exclusion, and hatred are loud and persistent within the church and in society, Affirming Ministries make a public statement about who they are and what they believe. They understand that while it may be risky and challenging to "come out" as an Affirming Ministry, it is often far less dangerous than it is for LGBT people themselves."*

—Excerpt from *Open Hearts: Resources for Affirming Ministries in The United Church of Canada*

**How?** All ministries work through a reflection/ education process on what it means to be fully inclusive of others, including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, of all ages, genders, races, abilities, classes, economic status, and other diversities. The process generally takes eighteen months, though it should take as long as you need. We have lots of workshops and materials to help the process. The process is free; membership is \$100 per year (as of 2015) once your ministry becomes Affirming.

**How do we start?** Contact an Affirming Ministry Coordinator through our website; look under “Contact.” They’ll walk you through the first steps in this collective journey. And have a look at [www.ause.ca](http://www.ause.ca) under “Affirming Ministries” for resources and ideas.

*“Since the first day I walked in here, I have been included...this church tells me I am valued. And to be valued is to belong!”*

—A member of Trinity United, an Affirming Ministry in Vancouver

### **We’re already Affirming. Now what?**

Great! Through our network, social media, and annual conference, you can both give

and receive creative ideas and stories. And you can help other ministries begin or continue the journey to becoming Affirming. We need your participation.

**How do individuals get involved?** Your individual membership is also important to our continuing work for inclusion across the country. Whether you can afford a personal membership or a donation or not, you’re welcome to join us and to join the conversation. Sign up for our newsletter, participate on Facebook, come to events, volunteer, and more.



Emmanuel United Church, an Affirming Ministry in Waterloo, ON.  
Photo: Arthur Hills.

## **Who are we? Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble is all about:**

*Education* – We promote greater awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

*Action* – We work to end discrimination against people in church, society, and our own organization.

*Support* – We help people of all sexual orientations and gender identities find support and community within the United Church.

### **Look us up:**

[www.ause.ca](http://www.ause.ca)

[www.facebook.com/affirmunited](https://www.facebook.com/affirmunited)  
[communications@ause.ca](mailto:communications@ause.ca)



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