



The Maritime Conference
The United Church of Canada
L'Eglise Unie du Canada

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“You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”
Mark 12: 31.

Dear Friends,

As I have paused to pray about the horrific events in Orlando, these words from Mark's Gospel came into my heart. Because of these words, acts of hatred toward a specific group of people cause fear, doubt, and leave us with a sense of wondering when hatred and violence will ever come to an end. When so many lives are senselessly and so violently taken, it shakes us to our core because we wonder if love will ever fully be understood.

Times like these cause us to ask who is our neighbor, and respond with even more conviction that Jesus calls us to love everyone, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, or sexual identity. All over the world, tributes of bright and beautiful colours seek to honour those affected and remind us that love is stronger than hate. And so, we are left to ask, how do we continue to embrace inclusivity and work for justice so that our communities are safe places for all?

I believe that one of the ways we can not only show solidarity, but be active in the pursuit of love and justice is through Affirm United—ensuring that our churches, presbyteries and conference are safe places where dialogue can happen and networking can continue to bring people together. Prayer has a very important role in our lives, but sometimes, action is the best prayer we can utter. And so, yes, continue to pray for the people and communities affected. Continue to pray for the murderer and all those who resort to violence. But also act...my friends, now more than ever, is the time for us to be courageous and remind people that our faith is based in love, not hate, in harmony, not dissidence, in believing that we work better together, rather than apart. Yes, each of us knows that we are different, but let us continue to believe that it is in our differences that we find solidarity, and in faith in God that we find we are each made in God's image.

Blessings as we continue to work for love and justice,

Rev. Catherine Stuart
President
Maritime Conference