

Establishing an Affirm Standing Committee for FDEE
Origin: First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Executive

1. What is the issue?

We believe God/Jesus/Holy Spirit is calling us to:

Actively advocate for justice in issues of inclusive language, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity in particular, as well as life experience, different abilities, ethnicity, skin colour, culture, age, geographic location, economic circumstance, mental and physical health, and those we have yet to discern, both within the church and ministries of our Region and in the wider community. (Used with Permission Fundy St. Lawrence Regional Council Affirm Document)

2. Why is this issue important?

As the United Church of Canada we say:

We Believe:

- We believe that all human beings are made in the image of God, that Jesus calls us away from the center in order to be in solidarity with those on the margins, and that Jesus' ministry through us is to reconcile and heal. We are committed to social justice and human rights, working to ensure that all people—enjoy their full civil and human rights in society. We also strive to end all forms of discrimination and to support the victims of discrimination (The United Church of Canada).
- Although we believe that God is found in our common diversity, the sin of racism is present in our society and in our church. The United Church is committed to becoming an anti-racist church through a continuous struggle against racism. "Change is possible. We believe in forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation and the potential to learn from stories and experiences." (That All May Be One, 2000).
- God transforms and calls us to protect the vulnerable, to pray for deliverance from evil, to work with God for the healing of the world, that all might have abundant life. (Song of Faith, Basis of Union)
- Affirming Ministries are communities of faith, Regional Councils, educational institutions, outdoor ministries, chaplaincies, and other ministries within the United Church and among its partners that publicly declare their commitment to inclusion and justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Although Affirming Ministries make an explicit statement about issues of sexuality and gender, their commitment to justice is far broader. They continually grow and change

as they seek to live more fully into God's way of welcome, love, and justice for all creation. Just as God rejoices in the goodness and diversity of creation, so too Affirming Ministries honour and celebrate diversity. One justice issue is not seen as more important than another, for in our culture of prejudice and power, injustices are interwoven and often mutually reinforcing. Work for change happens in many ways and in many contexts. Affirming Ministries work in many different ways toward the healing and wholeness of creation—challenging bias and discrimination based on appearance, ability, culture, class, or age; working to end racism; promoting economic justice; increasing accessibility; or caring for the planet. Affirming Ministries seek to go beyond issues of gender identity and sexual orientation to work for justice and inclusion for all people. Affirming Ministries provide information, acceptance, support, and justice-making for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and for people exploring their place on the spectrum of human sexuality. These ministries declare, in words and actions, that God loves and celebrates all people. And they call upon the rest of the church and society to do the same. (Affirming Ministries webpage)

3. How might the Regional Council respond to the issue?

- The Regional Council Executive believes that history has shown us that it is not enough to say we believe all these things, we must live what we say we believe.
- The Regional Council Executive through this proposal wishes to establish an Affirm Standing Committee with the goal of working towards becoming an affirming region.
- This means that the standing committee will engage the region in an educational process in which we learn about what it means to be an affirming region.
- The proposal to becoming an affirming Region will not come before the Region until after we have engaged in the educational process.
- The Region's decision to enter into the affirming process does not automatically mean communities of faith are in the affirming process.
- While the Regional Executive would encourage communities of faith to enter their own educational process towards becoming an affirming

community of faith, if the region becomes an affirming Region it does not automatically give communities of faith that status.

Note: For more information go to Affirm United Website:
<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>