

AFFIRMING COMMITTEE

The Affirming Committee of Region 15 began meeting in 2020, with the task of mapping out how the Region will once again make its way through the process of becoming an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada—a process called for by Affirm United in light of the restructuring of Conferences into Regions.

This process will be an educational one, and will help us to discern what it will mean for us to become an Affirming Ministry in our new context. The committee has met a number of times in 2021, relying upon the Zoom platform to bring us together for lively discussions related to our mandate, and for planning purposes as well. We have also sought the advice of the Affirming Committee of Region 14 (Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters), in an effort to glean wisdom from the process that they have undergone to become an Affirming Ministry.

Over the next year or so, we hope to offer and facilitated a number of opportunities for education around topics related to Affirming (both in person and via webinar) that will guide us through the Affirming process. This process will lead us to a vote on whether we wish to identify ourselves with the designation of becoming an Affirming Ministry, and whether we are prepared at that time to live out our vision statement and action plan moving forward into the future.

The vision statement and action plan are also something that we have been working on as a committee in 2021. Here is our most recent draft:

AFFIRMING VISION STATEMENT FOR REGIONAL COUNCIL 15

Inspired by the transformative movement of the Spirit, Region 15 commits itself to becoming an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada, one that welcomes all people, including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to fully participate in all aspects of the life and work of its ministry.

As an Affirming Ministry, we acknowledge the harm caused by exclusionary views about sexuality, love and gender identity. We acknowledge that these views did not and do not reflect the abundant love of God. We acknowledge the Churches' part in the trauma caused to those who have been marginalized.

Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Regional Council 15 (RC15) commits itself and its members:

- to remove barriers to full participation of all people in the life and work of RC15;
- to co-create a RC15 and society that embodies the love of God where individuals can live free from harmful ideologies rooted in fear and hatred;
- to be an inclusive and affirming sign of the incarnation of the living Christ.

ACTION PLAN:

As members of RC15, we:

- commit that the work of the church will be reflective of our affirming vision by encouraging appointment of an equity support person(s) for any meetings or gatherings,
- commit to identifying ourselves as an Affirming Ministry through the use of the Affirm United logo on our website and letterhead,
- commit ourselves to prioritizing that all future meeting spaces for RC15 meetings/gatherings are barrier free and utilize signage (including the presence of ramps/chair lifts, baby change station, hearing loops, gender neutral washrooms, etc),
- commit to paying our annual membership to Affirm United and recognize our yearly anniversary of become an Affirming Ministry,
- encourage communities of faith (COF) within RC15 to become Affirming Ministries,
- with the support of our Affirming committee offer educational opportunities and nurture the creation of networks/clusters of discerning and established Affirming Ministries,
- commit to directing the Pastoral Relations Committee and ask the Atlantic Candidacy Board to inform Inquirers, Candidates and Applicants for ministry within the RC15 that we are an Affirming Region as they actively pursue their call to ministry,
- commit ourselves, personally and regionally, to learn and use language that is just, as it relates to definitions, terminologies, and understandings in reference to skin colour, creed, age, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender expression, economic status, language, ability or any other difference that has led to marginalization and exclusion,
- commit ourselves to amplify diverse voices that belong to communities that have traditionally been marginalized through respectfully employing resources, leadership and wisdom originating from these communities,
- commit ourselves to participate fully, faithfully and with humility in ongoing efforts to reach reconciliation with those we have harmed. (For example, participating in local Pride events, fulfilling the calls to the church originating from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, intentional learning about the history of marginalized groups, unlearning ableist language, etc.).

We welcome feedback on this document between now and the next time we meet as a Region. We would also warmly welcome new members to join us in our efforts.

Respectfully submitted
Affirming Committee of Region 15