

Immanuel United Church
Pride Sunday
June 5th, 2022

Welcome



Call to Worship:

All you who delight in the Sacred Strange, come and worship the queer Creator.
Thanks be to God who blesses the peculiar and rejoices in the uniqueness of every body and being.

The Holy takes on flesh in every gender and sexual orientation, every race and ability, every body size and body type.
Each embodied difference is a unique glimpse of Holy Wonder.

Blessed are those who search for God among the lives of the oppressed, the betrayed, the turned-away, and the condemned.
Blessed are those who receive with joy the gifts of God enfleshed among us.

The Sacred is with us. Let us worship and be transformed.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Prayer:

God, when you called each of us into being, you delighted in your works. You gifted us with differences that illuminate the breadth of beauty, wisdom, and

practices of love in your creation. In whatever ways we still struggle to accept and celebrate our own unique offerings, free us from narrow thinking that confines, constrains, or condemns your good work in us. Amen.

Hymn: VU 460 *All Who Hunger*

Scripture: Mark 9:38-41

John said to Jesus, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.'

Reflection:

In today's Gospel, the disciples were concerned with whether someone was like them, preserved their group dynamic, and otherwise fit a mold they had in mind, confining how God's work is done in the world. This was more important to them, in the moment, than the fact that someone's suffering had been relieved. That God's work had been done. That a life had been changed. This is not so different from how the church has approached LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people's gifts in the world. But Jesus offers a correction.

The Word Became Flesh (John 1)

God's revelation is a disruption of all our assumptions—of what God looks like, how God acts, and how power works. God continues to take on flesh in ways and through people that the world assumes cannot be sites of revelation, should be condemned, or are otherwise "illegitimate." God takes on flesh in the strange—the queer. Or, God transitions by revealing God's authentic self in new flesh. When the world did not recognize who God was, God transitioned. God revealed something new through the body of Jesus about who God has always been.

Trans people are a holy witness to God's constant transitioning and authentic self-revealing. Trans people illuminate important aspects of not only God's being but also how and where we should be expecting to see God in the world. We must be aware, too, of how similarly Jesus and trans people are treated in the world. Criminalized.

Attacked. Executed. Shunned. How long will we perpetuate the same patterns of violence against God's self-revealing in the world through the people (and creatures/creations) around us?

John 15:12–14, 17–19

The world, or “kosmos,” is the order of dominance, social hierarchy, and all the forms of control that live in and through systemic, institutional, and ideological powers. To be strange (definition of queer) is to be out of alignment with the world's order of things. And it means being hated, because it threatens the order. Strangeness breaks open possibilities for the world of living and loving differently. LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people have long modeled this in the world—especially for each other. However, everyone is called to be strange in some form—to deviate from complicity with the world's order and break open new possibilities for love and life. We are all called to be strange like Jesus was strange. Likewise, we are called to be in solidarity with the strange of the world, abandoning no one to the hatred that comes with refusing to “belong” to the hierarchy or comply with its temptations or threats.

Hymn: MV 120 *My Soul Cries Out (Canticle of the Turning)*

Offering

Since its beginning, the church was meant to be a place of chosen family—a community of outcasts and outlaws, dreamers, prophets, and humble disciples of Love. In the company of Divine Presence, we create belonging and nurture justice. With gratitude for the sacred labours of love in this place, let us bring our offerings to God and one another.

Prayer:

Beloved One, we offer our thanks for the holy witness in the lives of LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people. In queer love and in trans and intersex bodies, we experience Christ enfleshed.

In the faith of those who have been persecuted by the church, Christ is revealed. In the queer practices of community, of love that takes risks, and of telling the truth—even when it's costly—Christ lives on.

In gratitude for these and all the sacred gifts of the LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit community, we give our thanks and offer these gifts. Amen.

Communion

The Holy One be with you.

And also with you.

Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

We open our hearts to you, O God.

Let us give thanks to God, our Creator.

For the courage of the Holy that lives in us, we give thanks.

Bold and Beloved One, throughout history you have revealed yourself to us in ways that surprise and disrupt.

You shocked the world when you came to be with us as a vulnerable baby born into a family fleeing political persecution.

Though the scandal of your embodiment in Jesus led to crucifixion, still your Spirit of New Life is birthed anew among the marginalized.

You live among us today:

In the lives of black trans women whose experiences of violence are dismissed and ignored.

Among bisexual people living with HIV / AIDS.

As babies born into the care of lesbian women.

You wander school halls as trans children and navigate the streets as queer couples walking hand-in-hand.

You come to us as LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit youth with no home.

You are embodied by Two-Spirit people, still fighting against the impacts of colonization, erasure, and stolen land.

At times, we are offended by your self-expression. You take on flesh in people, places, and ideas we have been taught to fear or despise. And so we struggle. Our hearts harden. Our hospitality recoils.

But still, your love persists. Through beauty, compassion, and truth, you lure us into laying down our need to control. You move us. Free us. Embrace us.

By your grace, we are brought into the sacred labours of justice and transformation. We become free in Christ to reject all evil and oppression.

Like those who gathered with Jesus on the night of his arrest, we come in need of grace. After feasting with his companions, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to all of them and said:

“This is my body which is given for you.
Take, eat, and remember me.”

After the supper, he did the same with the cup, saying:
“This is a symbol of the new covenant. Drink in remembrance of me.”

In remembering the life of Jesus, we remember what he showed us:

The love of God is public.

The love of God is intentional.

The love of God is explicit.

P.I.E.

And so we pray, pour out your Spirit on this bread and this cup, O God. Through these gifts, open our hearts to encounters with Christ in the strange and the ordinary. May the bread of life and the cup of blessing strengthen us in our courage to live as Jesus lived. Amen.

Prayer after Communion

**Nourishing One,
your gifts renew us in body, spirit, and mind.
Through this taste of love,
may the Spirit send us with a faith that is brave.
Let no institution or narrow thinking hold us back;
make us people who boldly pursue collective justice
and tend gently to the world's pain. Amen.**

Hymn: MV 138 *My Love Colours Outside the Lines*

Commissioning and Benediction:

Let us go from here to proclaim the good news:
God takes on flesh in the strange and surprising.
Love liberates from the margins.
Together, we have what we need to resist evil and oppression.

With a renewed commitment to solidarity with God and all LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people,
may the Spirit lead us from this place with peace.

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