

Affirming Committee Recommendations: Vision Statement, Action Plan, and Enabling Motion

The final steps of the Affirming Ministry process include adopting two documents: a) an Affirming Vision Statement and b) an Affirming Action Plan. You are invited to provide feedback on these documents.

The vision statement and action plan were developed from input received at the May 6, 2018 congregational consultation event. Input from the consultation was studied by the Planning Committee, and the Affirming Committee endorsed the final language.

Affirm United is the accrediting organization that designates congregations and ministries as affirming. Affirm United has reviewed and approved our vision statement and action plan. The next step is congregational approval of these documents and a 75% majority congregational vote in favour of Grace United Church becoming an Affirming Ministry.

Feedback Process

Please review the following recommendations and provide your feedback to the Affirming Committee, by Sunday, November 4th. Feedback can be submitted in the boxes in the Narthex or outside the main office, or emailed to office@graceucsarnia.com

Recommendation #1:

The Affirming Committee recommends the following motion to the Grace United Church congregation:

That Grace United Church authorize the following “Affirming Vision Statement” alongside our current Statement of Purpose, Congregational Vision, and Strategic Objectives:

Affirming Vision Statement

Grace United Church

We are called to be the Church:

*People of all sexual orientations and gender identities
In full participation in the life and work of our ministry.*

To celebrate God’s presence:

Gathered around a safe and open table and font.

To live with respect in Creation:

Committed to inclusion and celebrating diversity.

To love and serve others:

Respecting and celebrating differences.

To seek justice and resist evil:

Challenging the power of class, race, sex, age, and ability.

To proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope:

Confident that God will guide us.

Rationale

The above affirming vision statement, which echoes Grace’s historic vision statement, is a hybrid of (i) the section of *A New Creed* that describes the shape and mission of the church and (ii) explicit affirming language from the Affirm United’s “Open Hearts” (p.17). Also, the italicized lines stand on their own:

Grace United Church

*People of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
Gathered around a safe and open table and font,
Committed to inclusion and celebrating diversity,
Respecting and celebrating differences,
Challenging the power of class, race, sex, age, and ability.
Confident that God will guide us.*

Recommendation #2:

The Affirming Committee recommends the following motion to the Grace United Church congregation:

That Grace United Church endorse the following “Affirming Action Plan” for 2019, to be reviewed and developed by the Affirming Committee annually:

Affirming Action Plan

Grace United Church

1. Education for Affirming Ministry

- *What do we need to learn to realize our affirming vision?*

2. Diversity as Congregation

- *Who do we need to become to realize our affirming vision?*

3. Partnerships with LGBTQI Communities

- *How do we need to partner to realize our affirming vision?*

4. Intercultural Development

- *Where do we need to grow to realize our affirming vision?*

Rationale

The above affirming action plan reflects the four priorities identified at the May 6, 2018 congregational consultation. Each priority is expressed as a question to prompt the congregation, committees, and individuals to set goals and take action.

The Affirming Committee, which is responsible to Grace Council through the Congregational Care and Growth Committee, is responsible for:

- encouraging and organizing activities that animate this aspirational action plan

- assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of these activities
- revising the action plan annually according to congregational progress and need

Feedback:

You are invited to provide feedback on these three recommendations. Feedback is welcome from members, adherents, and interested community partners.

Please keep in mind that the Affirming Vision Statement has progressed beyond the wordsmithing stage and has received approval from Affirm United in its current form. Changes to that vision statement would require another cycle of approval by Affirm United.

Feedback Questions:

1. Would you recite the Affirming Vision Statement as part of the congregation during Sunday worship? What would help you?
2. Would you set personal or congregational goals in response to the Affirming Action Plan? What would motivate you?
3. Are you ready to vote in favour of Grace United Church being recognized publicly as an affirming congregation? What do you need to be ready?

(please attach pages as needed)