

July 14, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

In 2009, General Council 40 passed the following motion:

That the 40th General Council 2009 direct the General Secretary, General Council,

- 1. to host a national consultation within the next three years, with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited members of the United Church to discuss homophobia and heterosexism in the church, and that Affirm United be invited to name at least three people to be on the planning committee.*
- 2. to meet and discuss following the consultation, with Affirm United representatives and national staff representatives, the time line and responsibility for any and all recommendations that come from the consultation.*

(GC 40 2009 – 083-085)

Over the past year representatives from across the country, including Affirm United and the General Council Office, have been planning and preparing for a series of consultations to be held across the country this summer and fall.

Participants may be GLBTT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or two spirited) persons associated with the United Church, or GLBTT allies. Opportunities will be provided at the gatherings for all participants to share their stories and respond to four main questions:

1. In the context of the United Church of Canada, what does “welcoming” mean?
2. Who might be missing in the church because of transphobia, homophobia, heterosexism, or other forms of oppression that impact welcoming in your community?
3. What in your church ministry would you need to authentically be your full self?
4. What role would you like others to play in supporting the ongoing transformation of the United Church of Canada?

Regional Facilitators are looking forward to meeting with GLBTT folks in their regions. Gatherings are being planned in each of the following locations:

- Vancouver (October 1)
- Edmonton (August 7)
- Saskatoon (October 29)
- Winnipeg (October 22)
- Rendezvous 2011 Pre-Event, Toronto (August 10 or 11)
- Toronto (Date to be announced)
- Ottawa (September 24)
- Quebec (Date and Location to be announced)
- Maritimes (Date and Location to be announced)

We need *your* help to promote the regional gatherings.

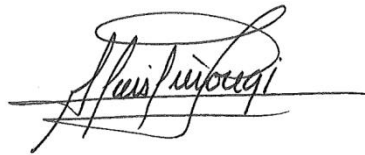
- Please share the attached flyer with your wider church networks. Send emails to as many presbyteries, congregations, and individual contacts as you can.
- Ask your webmaster to post information on your regional gathering, on the conference website.
- If time allows, and if your Conference has an insert in *The Observer*, include an announcement on the regional gathering.
- Reach out to Affirming Ministries in your Conference, to assist with getting the word out to as many people as possible.

For answers to questions related to a specific regional gathering, please contact one of the facilitators listed on the attached flyer.

In addition to the regional gatherings, we will be coordinating an online gathering, to allow those who are unable to attend a regional gathering to share their stories and thoughts. More information on this will be announced later this summer (or early fall).

Data collected from the consultations will be analyzed and reviewed by the planning team. A final report with recommendations will be submitted to the Permanent Committee: Programs for Mission & Ministry, the General Council Executive, and finally General Council 41 (2012).

Warm Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alcris Limongi', written over a horizontal line.

Alcris Limongi
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