

A Timeline of LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit Justice in The United Church of Canada

1925	The United Church is inaugurated.
1970s	Lesbian and gay church members begin to form groups for mutual support.
1980	The United Church resource <i>In God's Image...Male and Female: A Study on Human Sexuality</i> provides education on human sexuality and sexual orientation, including the ordination and commissioning of declared homosexual people.
1981	Local lesbian and gay United Church of Canada groups now exist in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Vancouver.
1982	The Montreal group invites gay and lesbian people to gather prior to the General Council for mutual support and to discuss forming a national organization; <i>Friends of Affirm</i> is conceived here. <i>Affirm/Affirmer: Gays & Lesbians in the United Church</i> is independently formed to support lesbian and gay United Church members and advocate for their full inclusion.
1984	<i>Gift, Dilemma, and Promise: A Report and Affirmations of Human Sexuality</i> (search "gift dilemma promise" on United Church Commons) addresses sexuality and selfhood, marriage, intimacy, sexism, society, and sexual orientation. The United Church affirms its acceptance of all human beings as persons made in the image of God regardless of their sexual orientation and acknowledges that it has encouraged, condoned, and tolerated the rejection and persecution of homosexual persons in society and in the church. The church calls for repentance. United Church members form <i>Friends of Affirm</i> to support <i>Affirm</i> .
1988	General Council 32 declares that all people regardless of sexual orientation are welcome as full members of the United Church, and all members are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry. It also affirms that God's intention for all human relationships (<i>both heterosexual and homosexual couples</i>) is that they be faithful, responsible, just, loving, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self. See <i>Membership, Ministry, and Human Sexuality</i> on United Church Commons (search "membership ministry sexuality").
1990	<i>Affirm</i> is invited into official dialogue with the General Council Executive. The United Church reaffirms its decision to include gay and lesbian people in ministry.
1991	<i>Affirm</i> establishes the <i>Affirming Congregations Program</i> , a network of United Church congregations that publicly affirm and support people of all sexual orientations.
1992	The church calls on the federal government to guarantee access to basic social, health-care, and economic services regardless of gender, ability, race, age, sexual orientation, or place of residency. The church urges the government to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Tim Stevenson becomes the first openly gay minister to be ordained in the United Church. The General Council recommends that the church support the <i>Affirming Congregations Program</i> .
1994	The Division of Mission in Canada urges the federal government to ensure that female circumcision and sexual orientation be identified as a ground for gender persecution as outlined in the Immigration and Refugee Board guidelines. <i>Affirm</i> and <i>Friends of Affirm</i> merge to become Affirm United/S'afirmer Ensemble (name agreed upon 1995).
1995	The United Church publication <i>Together in Faith: Inclusive Resources about Sexual Diversity for Study, Dialogue, Celebration, and Action</i> provides liturgical and pastoral resources for same-sex covenants. Augustine United Church in Winnipeg becomes the first Affirming Congregation in the United Church. By the end of 1995, there are four more Affirming Congregations.
1997	The General Council encourages all Conferences to urge their provincial governments to promote tolerance by requiring that all teachers study issues regarding gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. encourages All Conferences are urged to call on all school boards in their respective provinces to adopt policies that include "sexual orientation" in their non-harassment policy. The church supports the amendment of the Income Tax Act to redefine the word "spouse" by deleting the phrase "of the opposite sex."

1998	<i>Daring to Be United: Including Lesbians and Gays in The United Church of Canada</i> , by Alyson Huntly is published by United Church Publishing House (UCPH).
1999	The church appears before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in support of Bill C-23, <i>Modernization of Benefits and Obligations</i> , as a tangible expression of the United Church's commitment to the equality of heterosexual and same-sex relationships.
2000	The resource <i>Celebrate God's Presence</i> , which offers resources to celebrate marriage and life-long partnerships, is published.
	The church adopts the policy to affirm and work toward the civil recognition of same-sex partnerships.
	The church affirms that all sexual orientations are a gift from God and renounces its 1960 statement that homosexuality is a sin.
	The church officially endorses the <i>Affirming Congregations Program</i> and encourages its ministries to participate.
2001	After spending a year studying issues concerning transgender and transsexual people, <i>Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble</i> agrees to add transgender people to their name and constitution.
	United Church minister the Rev. Cheri DiNovo performs the first registered same-sex marriage in Ontario (and all of Canada).
2003	<i>Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Issues in Canada: Action Resources for United Church Congregations</i> is published.
	<i>Of Love and Justice: Toward the Civil Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage</i> (a congregational guide) is published affirming lesbian and gay partnerships and recognizing them in church documentation and services of blessing. Search "love justice civil recognition marriage" on United Church Commons .
	The church calls on the federal government to recognize same-sex marriage in the Civil Marriages Act.
	The <i>Affirming Congregations Program</i> is renamed the Affirming Ministries Program .
2005	The church endorses the legalization of same-sex marriage in <i>Marriage, A United Church of Canada Understanding</i> (search "marriage United Church understanding" on United Church Commons).
2006	<i>Resources and Strategies to Challenge Homophobia in the Church</i> , a social policy instructing the United Church's General Council to create resources for the purpose of recognizing homophobia, changing our behaviour, and establishing just relationships, is published. Search "resources strategies homophobia" on United Church Commons .
	The church encourages the ongoing study of same-sex marriage, the development of congregational marriage policies, and ministry personnel and sessions to strengthen their covenantal relationships as they struggle together where there is disagreement around marriage policy. Where there is difference of opinion between the session and the minister around performing same-sex marriages, the church encourages both parties to make every effort for to find alternative, mutually agreeable arrangements. The church also encourages congregations and presbyteries to share stories and resources related to the development of marriage policies. A motion directing the General Secretary to determine ways in which same-sex marriage could be provided in all United Church Conferences, in order to ensure accessibility to marriage to all members and adherents, is passed.
2009	The church approves its <i>Commitment to Inclusion</i> (search "commitment to inclusion" on United Church Commons), which states that, in matters respecting worship, doctrine, membership, and governance, the United Church is opposed to discrimination against any person on any basis (race, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, socioeconomic status, age, language, or any other basis on which a person is devalued). The church further commits to becoming an anti-discriminatory and welcoming denomination.
	The church affirms the participation and ministry of transgender people (search "affirming ministry transgender" on United Church Commons), and encourages all congregations to welcome transgender people into membership, ministry, and full participation.
2010	A survey on being transgender in the United Church, completed by 193 trans people and 138 allies, informs the work of the Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group.
	A tool for dialogue with global partners, <i>Moving Toward Full Inclusion: Sexual Orientation in The United Church of Canada</i> presents how the church has journeyed toward full inclusion of sexual minorities. This resource is available on the United Church's Gender, Sexuality, and Orientation webpage under "Downloads."
	The Rev. Cindy Bourgeois is the first openly transgender person ordained in the United Church.
	A survey on being transgender in the United Church, completed by 193 trans people and 138 allies, informs the work of the Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group.

2011	383 people participate in a series of GLBTT national consultations, which provide opportunities for trans people, LGLBTQ people, and allies to help shape an open, welcoming, and affirming United Church. A report is offered to inform the directions of General Council 41 (GC41).
2012	The work of the Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group comes to an end, having created a variety of resources. A final report with recommendations is received by the Executive of the General Council and sent to appropriate staff or committees for follow-up.
	The church acknowledges the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, affirms that gender identity is not a barrier to membership and ministry, and requests the General Secretary to update all existing policy statements that refer only to “sexual orientation” to include “gender identities.”
	The registration form for GC41 includes, for the first time, the option for participants to self-identify their gender. This is acknowledged at GC41 as a way the church is working to more fully welcome trans people.
	At GC41, Ruth Woods, a transgender woman and United Church ordained minister, shares her story in a video entitled Ruth’s Story .
	The Rt. Rev. Gary Paterson is elected Moderator at GC41. He is the first openly gay leader of a mainline Christian denomination.
	The Rev. Cheri DiNovo, then a Member of Provincial Parliament for Ontario, succeeds in getting Toby’s Act passed. This amendment to the Ontario Humans Rights Code to include gender identity and gender expression is the first of its kind in North America.
	GC41 directs the General Secretary to lead the GC Executive and the GC Office in engaging in the Affirming Ministries Program .
	United Church decides to sponsor refugees of all sexual orientations and gender identities, in partnership with Rainbow Refugee Canada .
2013	For the first time, a United Church ministry supports an LGBTQ refugee’s resettlement in Canada.
	Only 101 church ministries have gone through the Affirming Ministries Program .
2014	The second edition of <i>Moving Toward Full Inclusion: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in The United Church of Canada</i> is published, containing additional information on gender identity. This resource is available on the United Church’s Gender, Sexuality, and Orientation webpage under “Downloads.”
	The national church, Toronto Conference, and Affirm United coordinate a United Church presence at <i>WorldPride</i> , being held in Toronto in 2014. A United Church group walks in the <i>WorldPride</i> parade, including Moderator Gary Paterson and his partner, Tim Stevenson.
2015	The Rt. Rev. Jordan Cantwell is elected Moderator at General Council 42 (GC42). She is the first openly lesbian moderator of the United Church and the second openly gay person to lead a mainline Christian denomination.
	GC42 approves the Living Apology to Members of LGBTTQ Communities (as a travelling, interactive art installation project—see also 2016, 2017, 2018).
	The Rev. Cheri DiNovo, then a Member of Provincial Parliament for Ontario, successfully passed the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act. The Act, which prohibits “conversion therapy” for those under 18 years of age, is the first of its kind in Canada
	The first edition of <i>Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith</i> is published.
	The United Church begins offering extended health benefits for trans employees (and their dependents) who are transitioning. (For more information, see “ Benefits for Active Members .”)
	The webinar “Celebrating Gender Diversity: Five Stories,” which shares stories of five trans and gender queer people in the United Church, takes place. A recording is made available .

2016	The webinar Celebrating Gender Diversity: Gender Identity & Communities of Faith looks at how the <i>Celebrating Gender Diversity</i> toolkit (2015) may be used.
	Affirm United forms a working group to create a process for camping and outdoor ministries to become Affirming Ministries .
	United Church people are encouraged to take action to support Bill C-16, a bill which would add gender identity and gender expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. The bill becomes law in 2017.
	Affirm United takes leadership of the first phase of Iridesce: The Living Apology Project .
2017	Iridesce: The Living Apology Project is launched as an invitation for story-sharing to all affected by the church's 1988 decision. Stories are welcomed from before, during, and after the 1988 decision—to help the church discern if and how it might live into a possible apology to the church's LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people.
	A Global LGBTQTwo-Spirit Consultation is jointly presented by The United Church of Canada and Affirm United in order to host a dialogue on LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit rights, with a focus on the church's role in understanding and supporting those rights. Included are eight global partners, the United Church's Partner Council, as well as ecumenical and civil society organizations.
	The Rev. Cheri DiNovo, then a Member of Provincial Parliament for Ontario, successfully passes the Trans Day of Remembrance Act that marks November 20 as the official day. Ontario becomes the first and (to date) only government in Canada to legislate recognition of the day.
2018	The Iridesce installation is shared at General Council 43 (see this interview), and the Iridesce Theatre Presentation is performed . At General Council 43, the church approved the continuation of this project (relaunched in 2019).
2019	A "National Consultation of Affirming Ministries" hosted by Affirm United and Generous Space Ministries brings together 26 people who represent LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit affirming faith-based groups from 13 different faith traditions. A steering committee is formed to begin work on creating the "Canadian Coalition of Affirming Ministries."
	The first-ever National Affirming Day (PIE Day) is held on March 14.
	An updated edition of <i>Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith</i> is published. This resource is available on the United Church's Gender, Sexuality, and Orientation webpage under "Downloads."