



Celebration Minutes - April 28, 2019

Marylil Megginson

In 1999 Sydenham Street voted to become an Affirming Congregation. We are celebrating our 20th birthday this year and we are inviting all our friends at Chalmers to our yearlong birthday party.

I would like to take you on part of the journey we took to become Affirming so that you know what we are celebrating.

I am going back to the mid eighties when the Metropolitan Community Church approached Sydenham Street to ask if they could worship in our Chapel on Sunday nights. This is a Church which has a specific outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families and communities. The property committee thought that this decision should be made by the congregation as a whole and they brought it to a Congregational meeting in the upstairs hall. There was a lot of debate until one senior member of the congregation got up, looked around and said, "I taught many of you at KCVI and I taught you better than this. These people want to come here and worship God. Of course we should welcome them." We had the vote and it passed.

1988 came when the United Church was discussing new "Membership, Ministry and Human Sexuality" statement. In the end General Council decided that 'all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, who profess their faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to be or become members of the United Church of Canada' and 'that all members of the United Church are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry.' Many Pastoral Charges were confused and angry. Some withdrew their support of Mission and Service. Some met in their parking lot rather than in their sanctuary. Most Gay and Lesbian ministers stayed in the closet.

At Sydenham Street, it was no big deal. We had a Sunday night congregation of Gay and Lesbian Christians meeting in our space and we had been embraced by them and welcomed to attend their services. When I attended a service, Communion was part of

it. At that time we were used to being served in the pews but here we went up and received the cup and the bread person to person. The person who served me was Barb Landon. She looked into my eyes as she said the words for the bread and wine. I had never felt such an intimate connection with what was happening before.

Time passed and then one Sunday morning, as Staff Associate at the time, I was approached by a Lesbian couple who said they understood we welcomed Gay and Lesbian people and they wondered if we would baptize their daughter. They were active members of a rural congregation and their gifts had been appreciated over the years but the congregation said no to baptizing their baby. We baptized that baby on Children's Sunday of the same year. She and her Moms and I are still friends on Facebook.

Shortly after, one of her Moms asked if we had ever considered becoming Affirming. If we took that step and became public about being welcoming to people of all sexual orientations, then families like themselves wouldn't have to ask. She brought us some information and after a bit we started the process to learn more and move toward a decision.

I will leave our journey there today - to be continued.