

You
are
not
being asked to determine the legitimacy of the gay or transgender experience;

You are not being asked whether you "agree" with same-sex relationships;

Or whether you'd ever consider kissing a man/woman/genderqueer/transgender/genderfluid/ agender/kinky person (whichever scares you the most);

You are not being asked to understand that gender and sexuality are spectrums;

You are not being asked to debate whether gender dysphoria should be considered a mental health disorder;

You are not being asked to be fluent in the latest lingo (boi, transmasculine, poly, queer AF, etc.);

You are not being asked whether your parents or the 'church forefathers' would approve of same-sex marriage;

You are not being asked to decipher the "right answer" to whether The Bible approves of gay or transgender people.

Because this is not about judging people.

It's not.

You're not being asked to affirm our existence.

Instead, you are being asked – right now, today – whether YOU personally believe that ours is a God of love and acceptance;

Whether your version of Christian hospitality means welcoming everyone.

Everyone_

And really meaning it.

It's about taking into your heart Jesus' command to unconditionally love your neighbour as yourself.

It really is that simple.

The Affirming process helps a congregation to truly see how wide is their circle of love and inclusion.

And my prayer for all of us is this:
*Spirit, draw the circle wider still and lead
us to a place where our love is without borders.
Amen.*

Bio

Joy Cowan is a queer UCC Candidate for Ordained Ministry and is a student of Emmanuel College who is currently engaged in a shared ministry internship with St. Paul’s UC (Sussex), Hampton UC, and Andrew Donald Pastoral Charge (Salina Kirk and Southfield UC) in New Brunswick.

This poem was written to help churches who are struggling with the Affirming process or who are reluctant to even begin it due to fear of conflict and division. I believe that the issue at hand is about more than just equality for the UCC’s LGBTQ+ members, it’s really about responding to God’s call to keep stretching our hearts so that we can love one another more fully. This is the task set before each of us (including those of us within the queer community) and it’s important that we not get sidetracked by fear, ignorance, or feeling overwhelmed by the Affirming process.

Love one another as I have loved you. (John 13:34)