

Affirming Connections presents



Small Town, Big Impact

Stories and strategies from the Affirming journey

Small Town, Big Impact Video Series

Introduction

The journey of becoming and being an Affirming ministry does not have a cookie cutter approach. But we can learn from the wisdom and creativity of others who have traveled similar paths.

In this video series, we interviewed Affirming leaders (clergy and lay) from smaller or more rural communities, who have all personally journeyed along the Affirming path with their community of faith. We asked them what it is/was like, how the conversations developed, what roadblocks they faced and are facing, and how this work has impacted both their ministry and the wider community.

We're highlighting smaller cities because we know that often in less populated areas, there may be no other Affirming faith community close by, so you might be one of the few or the only religious space that takes 2SLGBTQ+ (Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer...) inclusion seriously. And being anonymous in a small town is not really an option, so if you're doing social justice work that is unpopular with some, the pushback may be more difficult.

It's no secret that Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ folks often face more discrimination in rural areas where there are fewer supports available. So Affirming faith communities are even more needed in these areas. Often they are a beacon of light and hope in an otherwise non-Affirming religious landscape, and can make a huge positive and public impact by embodying the unconditional love of God and countering the narrative that all religion is discriminatory.

We hold up these small town joys and challenges, but these videos are truly for anyone and any faith community who are interested in what it might mean to be faithful to God's call to celebrate, learn from, and embrace 2SLGBTQ+ people and families.

You can watch these on your own or show during a worship service, watch with your Board, Affirming Committee, Staff, Volunteers, or anyone you'd like to explore these topics with.

You're encouraged to watch with these discussion points in mind:

- How do we make our places of worship true places of belonging?**
- What are some "stuck" points that we can work on together?**
- How can we deepen our understanding of Affirming theology and how scripture celebrates 2SLGBTQ+ folks?**
- How can we move beyond "allowing" and "permission" to celebration and promotion?**
- Might we be able to see that 2SLGBTQ+ folks are not a topic for the church to discuss, but indeed are the church and are needed and wanted in every facet of church life?**

We are so grateful to the folks who shared their stories and learnings to make this series possible. We hope you find this a good jumping off point to begin or re-energize your Affirming efforts. May these videos invite you to have deep and meaningful conversations and serve to remind you that you are not alone!

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P.S. We offer these videos as helpful tools in your journey, but we are not an entity that has the desire or capacity to officially endorse your community as Affirming (or not). If you are a part of the United Church of Canada, you can contact the fine folks at [Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble](#) who do this critical work. Please [visit their website here](#) to learn more about the formal process.

If you are a part of a different denomination or faith background and are wondering if there is a similar process for your context, feel free to [contact us](#) and we will try to help you find the resources you need!