

Gathering Voices conference 17/10/20

Worship led by Kieran Bohan and Jane Whitney-Cooper with additional voices as indicated

KIERAN: *Intro to 'Coming Out' theme*

'Will you love the "you" you hide, Will you quell that fear inside?' [Lines from our first song]

Our closing worship today is on the theme of 'coming out', as this week began on 11th October, which is marked around the world as 'Coming Out Day'.

Why do we 'come out', and why have a day to celebrate it?

For too long, members of our communities have had to hide in fear for their well-being, their livelihood and their lives. A constant fear of being rejected by friends, loved ones, and community, has led to many of us remaining in the proverbial closet, hiding who we are from those who should be our nearest and dearest.

Coming Out Day challenges this injustice and encourages those of us who live with gender and sexuality that is beyond the false binaries of our culture to be proud and reclaim who we are.

Coming Out Day is not just designed to help people feel comfortable about coming out about their gender identity or sexuality. It also applauds people for their bravery, and helps create awareness of the struggles and difficulties we experience.

Coming Out Day was created by psychologist Rob Eichberg and activist Jean O'Leary after they marched with around 500,000 others to the capital of the USA, Washington DC, in support of rights for our communities, on 11th October 1987. The first Coming Out Day took place a year later.

Coming Out Day is based on the belief that prejudice against LGBTQIA+ people thrives in an atmosphere of silence and ignorance, and that once people know that they have loved ones who are LGBTQIA+, they are far less likely to maintain prejudiced or oppressive views.

Throughout the world, LGBTQIA+ people are coming out of the closet, proudly proclaiming who they are and standing side by side with their allies for a more equal and accepting tomorrow.

Music: *The Summons by John Bell, recorded by Alex Clare-Young*

Call to Worship – United Church of Canada

Jane: Gathered together, we proclaim the good news of God publicly, intentionally, and explicitly:

All: **This community joyfully affirms God's love for LGBTQIA+ people.**

Jane: The presence of God welcomes the fullness of who we are.

All: **We are people who desire. Who long. Who practice love in many ways.**

Jane: We celebrate love in all its forms:

Love for God, neighbour, kin, beloved and self,
Love that is sexual and asexual,
Love that is spiritual, erotic, emotional and intellectual,

All: **Love that is queer and love that is collective.**

Jane: We are people who want to know and be known—
for who we've been, who we are, and who we are becoming.

All: **We honour identities in transition.**
We delight in authentic self-expression.
Whether trans or intersex or cis, God moves in our becoming.

Jane: How wonderful are the many works of God's creative hand!

All: **May all who long for Love's embrace feel their holy worth.**

Litany of Coming Out, adapted from [The Courage to Love: Liturgies for the LGBT Community](#) by Geoffrey Duncan

Lu: As Eve and Adam came out of the earth,
as the people of Israel came out of slavery into freedom,

All: **We come out!**

Jide: As the exiled Israelites came out of Babylon back to their home,
as the prophets came out of the ordinary to point to the extraordinary,

All: **We come out!**

Tina: As Lazarus came out of the tomb to continue his life,
as Jesus came out of death into new life,

All: **We come out!**

Chris D: We come out of our deserts into the garden,
out of the darkness of closets of all sorts
into the light of new life,

All: **We come out!**

Jane Out of exile into our homes,
out of lies into truth,
out of denial into affirmation,

All: **We come out!**

Kieran: We name ourselves as God's beloved
transgender, non-binary, cisgender,
bisexual, gay, lesbian and heterosexual children!
Each of brought out of ourselves to reveal God's love to the world
as saints of the Church.

All: **Blessed be the God who has made us!**
Blessed be the God who continues to call us further and further out!

Jane: *Reading: Romans 8:38-39*

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Kieran: *Questions for reflection*

Nothing, Paul tells us in his letter to the early Christian community in Rome, ‘can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus’.

Do you believe this?

Have you ever been told that your gender identity or sexual orientation, or anything else, comes between you and the love of God in Christ Jesus?

If so, did you believe it?

Paul makes a list of things that cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. He includes: trouble, hardship, persecution, danger...

- What would be on your list of things that cannot separate you from the love of God?
- How would your relationships, with God, yourself, and others, change if you believed Paul’s words applied to you?
- What would be different in your daily life?

We can become stuck in despair about our lives as LGBTQIA+ people in inhospitable and prejudiced churches and communities.

OR we can ‘come out’ of our despair and live a new life.

Paul promises ‘in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us’.

As we move into our time of prayer now, let’s ask God to show us how we are

‘more than conquerors through him who loved us.’

Introduction to prayer by Richard Rohr

Jane: O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us.
May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings.
Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens
and the weight of glory.
Listen now to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world.

Intercessions written and recorded with music, by Alex Clare-Young

Alex: Let us pray:

- We pray for those who cannot or will not come out...
- We pray for those who have come out recently or have been forced back in...
- We pray for those who are filled with hate...
- We pray for those who are overwhelmed by fear...
- We pray for those who oppress...
- We pray for those who suffer under oppression...
- We pray for ourselves and those on our minds, for who we have been, who we are, and who we may become...
- We bring our prayers together in Jesus name,

All: **For we are convinced that neither closets or haters, neither fear nor phobics, neither who we have been, who we are or who we become, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God and God’s grace in Christ.**

Kieran: The word ‘Eucharist’ in Greek means thanksgiving -
it is one of the words Christians use to describe

the central act of hospitality of our faith
- our remembering of Jesus' last meal with his friends
before dying and rising to new life.
We also call it 'communion', which means 'sharing in common'.
As we cannot share bread and wine in common today,
as an act of spiritual communion with one another,
and those who have gone before us, we share this prayer of thanks:

Adapted from Thank You Prayer for National Coming Out Day - enfleshed.com

- Lu: Thank you to the queer and trans ancestors
who left us histories to hold on to.
Thank you to every child who is the first in their class
or their school or their town or their family,
who made it a little easier for the next one.
- Jide: Thank you to the elders who fought for yourselves and for us.
Thank you to the ones who let your freak flag fly.
Thank you to the ones who do 'queer' in your own way.
- Tina: Thank you to the ones who take each other in.
Thank you for kissing in public and holding hands in the street.
Thank you to the ones who share their scars.
Thank you to the ones who hold space - no pressure.
- Chris D: Thank you, loud ones. Thank you, quiet ones.
Thank you to the ones who helped us learn to love our desire.
No more shame.
- Lu: Thank you to the ones who help us love
our trans, non-binary and intersex bodies.
Thank you to you who are doing what you need to do to survive.
We need you.
Thank you for persisting. Thank you for proclaiming. Thank you for being.
- Jide: To you who have shouldered the losses,
and taken the hit,
and been fired, betrayed, beaten, bullied or isolated:
- Tina: Your pain is honoured.
Your contribution is not forgotten.
You deserve so much better.
Thank you.
- Chris D: Once upon a time,
They could say they didn't know us.
But not any more.
- Lu: Here we are,
bringing our sacred strange into their pews and pulpits,
to their dinner tables and computer screens,
and beside them in waiting rooms and check-out queues.

- Jide: No apologies.
They are so lucky to have us here.
- Tina: Thank you to you who are yet to come,
who will expand our understanding
and help us love more deeply
- ourselves and each other.
- Chris D: Thank you to every queer beloved and trans beloved
who keeps choosing to live.
And choosing to love.
And choosing to support each other.

All: **Amen**

Music: *We Shall Go Out* by June Boyce-Tillman, recorded by Alex Clare-Young

Chris W-C: *Summary & Thanks*

Dismissal: *Adapted from National Coming Out Day resources for the Human Rights Campaign, 2006.*

Chris W-C: Go out in truth and grace,
Go out as one who is known and loved by God,
Go out as you are, bravely and authentically.
And, as you speak truth and work for justice,
you can be sure that God goes with you,
ahead of you to clear the way,
beside you to sustain you when the road is rough,
and behind you to pick you up when you are weary!
You do not walk alone!
Go in peace with courage!
And let all God's people say:

All: **Amen!**