



**HORSESHOE FALLS REGIONAL COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**

Supports, Connects, Empowers Communities of Faith

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May 4, 2021

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Our Christian faith is commonly led by two commandments, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,’ and ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:37,39) These were named as the greatest of commandments by our saviour and redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The executive of Horseshoe Falls Regional Council, one of sixteen regions of the United Church of Canada, which encompasses Halton Region, sees these commandments as a guide for us as we attempt to live out our faith in this world and in our communities, especially the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community have struggled for many years to be accepted, especially by people of faith. Over the years, Christianity has treated the Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community, their relationships, and identities as sinful, even to the point of using conversion therapies to modify behavior and thoughts that have been perceived as wrong and against God’s will. In effect, the church’s actions not only caused harm and trauma towards individuals but broke the second greatest commandment, by showing a lack of love for our neighbour, but also in causing this community to feel shame and a lack of love for themselves.

It is now time for Christian communities to assess the damage they have done and listen to the pain and trauma they have caused. It is time to honestly confront and confess our wrongs so that together we can fully seek forgiveness, of God and Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ individuals who have been excluded, rejected, ridiculed, harassed, and abused. It is time to truly love ALL our neighbours, without judgement and without conditions, which begins to fulfill our second greatest commandment.

The executive of Horseshoe Falls stands with the students of the Halton Catholic Schools in raising a pride flag during the month of June for Pride month. We believe schools need to be safe spaces for young people to learn, grow and explore the world around them. They need to be safe places where young people can become self-aware and learn about their own physical, emotional, mental, and sexual selves. They need to be brave spaces where young people can be themselves without fear of abuse.

We join with other organizations like Pflag and Halton Positive Space Network and many others in the region of Halton, and across the country, in supporting the students and staff of the Halton Catholic Schools in boldly waving a rainbow flag. Raising a rainbow flag is one significant way to support all students and staff who don’t feel safe within the walls of their schools, and a step towards full inclusion and acceptance.

We ask for God’s patience and understanding as we learn together what it means to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and what it means to love our neighbour in the same way.

Deborah Laforet, Minister at St. Paul’s United Church in Oakville, ON
Thea Sheridan-Jonah, Chair of the Affirming Team at St. Paul’s United Church in Oakville, ON
On behalf of the Executive of Horseshoe Falls Regional Council, United Church of Canada