

LIVING APOLOGY INTO ACTION

Origin: The Iridesce Working Group to the General Secretary of The United Church of Canada

PREAMBLE

We, the Iridesce Working Group, offer the following recommendations to the General Secretary for action in response to the Final Report of Iridesce: The Living Apology Project. These recommendations are the product of a year-long process of deliberation and reflect a breadth of individual and community experiences across The United Church of Canada. They express our conviction that God continues to call us to reconciliation around issues of sexuality and gender, and our longing for a Church that fully embraces 2S-LGBTQIA+ people.

How do we feel/know that God is calling us to reconciliation? Reconciliation with who? With God? With the Church?

Our working group has a shared understanding that 2S-LGBTQIA+ experiences are always emerging. Our process has tried to account for this quality of 2S-LGBTQIA+ emergence by assuming the incompleteness of our work: we expect, in due time, that understandings of sexuality and gender will change and broaden the scope of Iridesce and its implications for the church. The United Church of Canada is encouraged to receive these recommendations in a spirit of openness to the emergence of new 2S-LGBTQIA+ realities.

We affirm and celebrate the work of the United Church over the last forty years—from the 1988 decision (of the United Church's General Council to affirm that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, that all persons are made in the image of God, and to welcome into full membership and ministry people of all sexual orientations and gender identities), to ordination, to affirming same-gender marriages, recognizing that inclusion goes beyond orientation to include gender identity, and the work of Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble (AU/SE). Our working group has challenged itself, and invites the wider Church to expand its vision of justice around issues of sexuality and gender. We have struggled to balance our hopes for what the Church could be with the realities of where the Church currently is in its path of reconciliation with 2S-LGBTQIA+ people. These recommendations are not the end point of the transformation to which God is calling our United Church, but are merely one part of the ongoing journey.

Throughout its process, our working group has been grounded in faith in the God who creates us each in our singular goodness and in our individual diversities, and who calls us collectively to reconciliation in a wounded and wounding world. We abide in the hope that such reconciliation is possible in the Church: that this chosen family of faith can heal from past harms and allow us to express our sexualities and genders in their God-given fullness. Above all, we are driven by love, for our Church and for our world.

May these recommendations be received in the spirit in which they are offered.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, the 40th General Council, in response to a perceived lack of movement on the 1999 consultation with LGBTQ+ ministry personnel and the continued emergence of challenges related to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit members, mandated a National Consultation on Homophobia and Heterosexism in the United Church. The final report from this consultation was presented to the General Council Executive (GCE) in January 2012, from which [Iridesce: The Living Apology Project](#) was launched in 2017. This project was a collaboration between the General Council Office (GCO) and Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (AU/SE). Its goal was to invite the United Church "into a journey of dialogue and reconciliation with LGBTQ2S+ persons" through story-sharing, conversation, worship, and education.

Over the course of three years, the project gathered stories from across the United Church, and submitted its final report to the General Secretary in July 2020. In January 2021, the General Council Executive (GCE) reviewed this final report, and directed staff in the General Council Office (GCO) to form a working group to recommend follow-up actions to the General Council Executive.

In midsummer 2021, it was proposed that GCO and AU/SE would once again partner to oversee the Iridesce Working Group, concluding with formal recommendations for follow-up on the Iridesce Project to the GCE. The proposal was approved at the September 2021 AU/SE Council meeting.

When inviting individuals to the Iridesce Working Group, efforts were made to ensure it reflected the diversity of the United Church's membership. This includes different experiences of sexuality, gender, and race, as well as generational and regional differences. In January 2022, nine committed individuals became the working group, carrying out its mandate of submitting recommendations to the GCE by the fall of 2022.

We recognise that rigid structures and processes tend to disadvantage those who are already marginalised. The working group made space for both the complexity of its subject matter and the humanity of its members. As a result, the group decided not to bind itself to external timelines or expectations, but carried out its work out in a way that honoured its members' voices and gave them the time they needed to work through difficult conversations. As a result of this approach, and the mandated scope, the working group worked through to the end of 2022, with this report submitted to General Secretary in January 2023.

This is our work.

It is time for an apology from The United Church of Canada as a whole to the 2S-LGBTQIA+ community, but without action, words are hollow. The following recommendations are the working group's invitation for the United Church to Live an Apology into Action.

Section 1 is advice on apology and prioritized recommendations. Section 2 is further recommendations informed by the 2020 Iridesce Report that bear consideration. The *italicized* points indicate a priority action within the recommendation.

Section 1

Recommendation 1 – The General Council to provide support to AU/SE and its Affirming Ministry Program in order to more fully live into the 1988 decision.

The Affirming Ministries Program of AU/SE provides the process, resources, and assistance to all ministries that seek “to be fully inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.” This critical work is currently carried out on a volunteer basis by 2S-LGBTQIA+ people and their allies in AU/SE.

Support could include:

- set an example for courts and ministries of the United Church by exploring the possibility of the General Council Office becoming an Affirming Ministry;
- support General Council to work with AU/SE Affirming Ministry Coordinators to encourage all regional councils to become Affirming Ministries;
- provide funds to AU/SE to staff the Affirming Ministry Coordinator position, and offering staff support for this work from the GCO;
- support Regional Councils to work with the AU/SE Affirming Ministry Coordinators to encourage all United Church ministries to become Affirming;
- *implement a system to track and clearly indicate (especially to potential members or attendees) the Affirming status of every ministry in the Church annually/biannually (Affirming, in the Affirming process, or Not Affirming). Every Community of Faith is expected to make a conscious decision annually/biannually to become Affirming, stay Affirming or explicitly not be Affirming; and*
- conduct research on why ministries—including those that members describe as “affirming”—stop short of going through the Affirming Ministries Program.

Recommendation 2 – The General Council to name and intentionally affirm bisexual and other less-recognised members of 2S-LGBTQIA+ communities.

Many experiences of gender and sexuality have been marginalised within the broader 2S-LGBTQIA+ umbrella. For example, in the leadup to and aftermath of 1988, bisexual people were often sidelined or rejected by those who felt that bisexuals' attraction to their own and other genders undermined struggles for gay and lesbian justice.

Learning from this painful past, and recognising that 2S-LGBTQIA+ experience is always emerging, the United Church must continue to broaden its understanding and welcome of marginalised members of 2S-LGBTQIA+ communities, including (but not limited to) those who

are Two-Spirit, transgender, intersex, asexual, demisexual, aromantic, and pan-romantic. This growth was exemplified by the Transgender Working Group in 2012. The intersectionality of race, ability, gender identity, sexual identity, and more leads to further marginalization.

Support could include:

- *openly affirm, bisexual and diverse people (see glossary) who have not yet been intentionally affirmed within the United Church. Build into General Council meetings a regular process of affirming gender and sexual identities as they evolve, including bisexual, trans, non-binary, etc.;*
- **observe “theme years” or other sustained periods of collective movement across the United Church that focus liturgy, education, and action on specific marginalised experiences of gender or sexuality; and**
- *learn with and from partners, especially AU/SE, about experiences of sexuality and gender that are marginalised within and beyond the United Church.*

Recommendation 3 – The General Council to celebrate with gratitude those who have done the hard, faithful work to carry us to today, through public witness and story-telling culminating at the 45th General Council in 2025. And, the General Council to provide opportunity and resources that honour and share the historic and emerging stories of diverse experiences within the 2S-LGBTQIA+ community.

While the work of justice for 2S-LGBTQIA+ people in the United Church is ongoing, it is imperative that the General Council recognize all those in The United Church of Canada who offered support, who were open to the Spirit in 1988, and who continue to be engaged in the United Church even when challenged by the vote in 1988 and its aftermath.

Recognizing that change toward an affirming position is often spurred by engagement with 2S-LGBTQIA+ people and their stories, therefore we recommend that GCE encourage engagement from all expressions of The United Church of Canada with the stories currently posted on the Iridesce website, as well as collecting and sharing new stories with a broader scope beyond the original Iridesce mandate.

Support could include:

- *create a public list of individual contributors, with a promise to add to the list biannually as long as names continue to be submitted. This promise could be held and enacted by GCO with AU/SE. Acknowledging that it is impossible to name all contributors, also use categories as noted below, that include people’s actions and affirms all identities and expressions of 2S-LGBTQIA+ experience; **
- **curate, collate and tag the collected stories of The Iridesce Project. Tags should include individual apologies offered through Iridesce; calls for an apology; clergy experiences; etc. This story collection is a living document that can be a source of creative inspiration for future awareness and education efforts;**

- *support, in perpetuity, accessible platforms (currently online) to host the Iridesce project and its gathered stories;*
- commission a stole that incorporates names/communities/events that are part of this history and that could be worn at different events moving forward;
- create a liturgical prayer and/or actions that lift up names and/or categories of people;
- create a Speaker's Bureau of storytellers embedded in their communities in all regions across Canada. The speakers will know how to do this work and be able to tell their own stories and the stories of others with integrity;
- engage with the stories collected by the denomination through Iridesce and curated in a story database on commemorative days. These dates include the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (May 17), [United Church Pride Sunday \(1st Sunday of June\)](#), the [Trans Day of Remembrance](#) (Nov 20), and Pride Weeks (which differ geographically); and
- collaborate with and support AU/SE to carry out programmatic work in relation to the ongoing collection and sharing of stories, including productions of the Iridesce play, trauma-informed digital content creation, etc.

*The following groups of people should be included in such a recognition:

- those in the United Church and beyond who paved the way in the decades leading toward the 1988 vote;
- people who were open to the Spirit at the GC in 1988;
- the youth who made such an impact on the 1988 vote;
- people who stayed in the United Church, despite differences;
- people who found commonalities, despite differences;
- people who have advocated for justice for gay and lesbian and, later, trans and bisexual people—families, friends, allies, and communities;
- cis/heterosexual allies of 2S-LGBTQIA+ people;
- all ministers, but particularly 2S-LGBTQIA+ ministers, who so faithfully served their congregations with deep pastoral care, making space for people to grapple with the issues, to dialogue, and to dissent;
- 2S-LGBTQIA+ members, who stayed with the United Church before, during, and after the process leading up to 1988, often at great cost to their own emotional and spiritual well-being; and
- people who continue to take clear, just actions to make the United Church a more welcoming and inclusive space for people of emerging gender expressions and romantic and sexual identities.

Key individuals should be recognized within each group, and gratitude should be expressed to the group as a whole—all those not individually named who have come before us, who are now with us, and who are yet to come. (See pages 35-37 for a preliminary list of names in [Appendix IV: Iridesce Archival Research Report.](#))

Recommendation 4 – The General Council to implement additional supports for 2S-LGBTQIA+ clergy.

Ministry personnel face unique challenges with respect to issues of gender and sexuality in the Church. Those who serve the Church in its mission to live out God’s loving justice in the world must be adequately supported in their ministries and lives of faith.

Support could include:

- *institute formal supports, through policy, programs, and funding, for ministry personnel who experience stress and trauma in relation to marginalised experiences of gender and sexuality;*
- create and support spaces of community for 2S-LGBTQIA+ ministry personnel with an intentional focus on intergenerational spaces, in order to glean learnings from current and past/former ministry personnel who identify as 2S-LGBTQIA+;
- offer financial support for 2S-LGBTQIA+ ministry personnel to access safe community, learning opportunities, and other necessary supports outside of the Church.

Recommendation 5 – The General Council to offer an apology through intentional action.

While it is up to the denomination to craft and offer an apology, the working group recommends a process of reflection to ensure what is offered is not merely saying “I’m sorry”. We encourage the church to recognize that its earlier understanding, attitude and actions were “wrong.” Let the affected communities know where relationship has been broken, naming the harms explicitly, and where room can be made for healing. Relationships are expansive and messy. Only actions accompanying the words will bring this apology to life with meaning in the midst of the many, many relationships that are our church.

Advice on how to create and offer an apology can be found on pages 11 – 12 of [Iridesce: The Living Apology Project Final Report](#). In addition to this advice the working group saw some wisdom in the wording of the Canadian federal [government apology](#) (in November 2017). Members of the Working Group will make themselves available for conversation and consultation.

Section 2

Recommendation 6 – The General Council to lead ongoing conversations on sexuality.

Some people in the United Church are uncomfortable talking about sex and sexuality, which can be a major hindrance to the pursuit of justice for 2S-LGBTQIA+ people.

Support could include:

- promote open conversations around diverse experiences of sexuality that are as safe as possible—i.e. trauma-informed, non-judgmental, confidential, non-exploitative, etc.—for those engaged in them, and particularly for 2S-LGBTQIA+ people;
 - Engage with youth and young adults, many of whom are in the process of exploring and developing new understandings of sexuality, to initiate or lead these conversations.
 - Promote conversations on how to be safe and supportive family/community—being a supportive grandparent/parent/aunt/uncle/sibling/guardian/etc.
 - Ensure that such conversations explore connections between sexism, transmisogyny, and sexuality, as well as the prejudicial association of 2S-LGBTQIA+ communities with sexual violence and abuse. Such conversations could also consider intersections between 2S-LGBTQIA+ peoples and additional identities.
- integrate inclusive and holistic sex education (of which 2S-LGBTQIA+ experience is only one element) into its broader approaches to Christian education, promoting and supporting the use of existing educational resources in communities of faith and strategically creating new or supplementary resources. These resources must be age appropriate.

Recommendation 7 – The General Council to reach out to 2S-LGBTQIA+ communities beyond the church.

In a spirit of allyship, partnership, and proclaiming the good news of God’s love and liberation for all—and not, by contrast, with the aim of proselytizing or expanding membership—the General Council should support Affirming Ministries to reach out to wider 2S-LGBTQIA+ communities.

Support could include:

- create communal spaces for 2S-LGBTQIA+ people to be queer and Christian, both within the United Church and ecumenically;
- offer special worship services (that in that moment can be a safer space), in partnership with AU/SE, for those who do not feel safe in a Christian ministry context, regardless of its Affirming status (e.g., those who have been harmed by the church as a colonial institution); and
- recognize and respond to the different needs of communities for partnership and support. Authentic partnership and support require an awareness of the cultures,

histories, and needs of each community, and the way these interlock and intersect with other dynamics of injustice.

Recommendation 8 – The General Council to articulate how and why being Affirming is an option in The United Church of Canada and support communities of faith in identifying their policies on sexuality and gender.

The United Church of Canada is often publicly understood as the inclusive, “gay positive church” or affirming church. This, in fact, varies from place to place. 2S-LGBTQIA+ people, their families, friends, and allies within the United Church struggle with local communities of faith being able to “choose to discriminate.” By not declaring itself to be Affirming, and putting the responsibility on local communities of faith, the United Church perpetuates discrimination and harm on members of the 2S-LGBTQIA+ community. Clear community of faith policies will prevent harmful misperceptions of safety and give a better overall sense of where particular communities of faith stand.

Support could include:

- facilitate open conversations around 2S-LGBTQIA+ affirmation in communities of faith;
- clearly explain whenever and wherever it is appropriate that individual communities of faith make the decision to celebrate and affirm 2S-LGBTQIA+ relationships (i.e. perform marriages). The denomination cannot enforce this;
- support every community of faith to make a conscious decision to become affirming, stay affirming, or not be affirming. Include the question in the annual reporting process;
- track every community of faith’s status and make that information easily available;
- promote the official Affirming process and commitment. It is important that information and resources be available in various languages as needed by communities of faith. As part of strengthening the process for the United Church, celebrate some specific moments in time. (Examples include: anniversary of the Affirming program; milestones being met of certain numbers of communities of faith or regional councils who have become Affirming.);
- ensure that the courts of the United Church (communities of faith, regional councils, and the General Council) as well as its associated ministries explicitly articulate their stance on the affirmation of 2S-LGBTQIA+ people, and whether or not they conduct same-sex/gender marriages. This clear statement then needs to be regularly and publicly communicated for existing and prospective congregants to easily access; and
- initiate and fund research on why communities of faith and ministries resist becoming affirming, identifying obstacles, and points of resistance.

Recommendation 9 – The General Council to offer education on how to deal with conflict.

One of the core findings of the Iridesce project was that the controversy of the 1988 vote and its aftermath were as much about dynamics of and approaches to conflict as they were about the actual issues at stake. The General Council must address its implicit culture of conflict avoidance and find more constructive approaches to conflict.

Support could include:

- build clergy and lay capacities for navigating conflict in faith-based settings by: adopting or developing resources informed by anti-oppression, harm reduction, and transformative justice frameworks; employing skilled and faith-based mediators and mediation trainers; prioritizing conflict mediation skills in staff hiring; and enabling communities and ministries across the United Church to share expertise around navigating conflict; and
- develop more robust institutional structures of support, safety, and accountability around conflict. Regional supports for ministers engaged in the resolution of disagreements need to include culturally, historically, and trauma-informed approaches to resolution.

Addendum A: Subject Areas

The following subject areas emerged in our conversations and we invite the General Secretary's attention and consideration.

Ethical non-monogamy

Ethical non-monogamy is a way that some people live their lives. This is not solely a 2S-LGBTQIA+ matter, but it is a reality for some within the community and heterosexual people. Are church people ready to consider other healthy committed relationships outside the norm of only two people?

In 1988, we did not require, as other denominations did, that clergy be "non-practicing" (deny expression of their sexuality with another person).

This can build on the work that the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (TICIF) has already begun conversations on polyamory. The General Council Executive and AU/SE might form a working group to formulate how the church can initiate broader conversations around ethical non-monogamy.

Accommodations

Special considerations and allowances may be made with respect to ministry responsibilities for ministry personnel who experience gender- and sexuality-based trauma and marginalization. The Office of Vocation is encouraged to review existing benefits package and the Employee Family Assistance Plan to ensure that these two programs meet the needs of those who experience gender- and sexuality-based trauma and marginalization. This will build on the 2012 transgender resolution at the 41st General Council and subsequent work.

2S-LGBTQIA+ ministry personnel

There is much we do not know for certain about the decision from 1988 and its aftermath in The United Church of Canada, which creates the potential for erroneous and harmful narratives. There is a false narrative that the decision from 1988 resulted in "new" decline (that many communities, clergy, and members left the United Church); however, decline has existed since 1935 and it [continues](#). Conducting quantitative research would help to clarify these histories and would provide a solid foundation for the recognition of past wrongs. Possible questions to explore include: How many clergy had to move shortly after 1988? How many clergy today continue to experience judgement, harassment, or barriers to employment in all courts of The United Church of Canada? What were the actual statistics on clergy leaving the church after 1988? What were the statistics on members and communities leaving? Some of this may be accomplished by current studies being conducted by the Office of Vocation and Office of the General Secretary and Moderator (Anti-Racism and Equity Lead staff).

United Church participation in “conversion therapy”

How many 2S-LGBTQIA+ people experienced some form of “conversion therapy” in United Church communities of faith? How many United Churches conducted some form of “conversion therapy”? Before 1988 and after 1988? How many 2S-LGBTQIA+ people were harmed by such abusive practices? This research could be related to the current public project [Conversion Therapy and SOGIECE](#). (This is not an exhaustive list of questions or area of research.)

Addendum B: Glossary of Terms

Below is a short list of common terms and their definitions used in the Iridesce Report and Recommendations to General Council. For a more comprehensive summary and context of these and other terms, we highly recommend The United Church of Canada's [Celebrating Gender Diversity \(A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith\)](#) with a glossary of terms found on pp. 69-75.

Basic Concepts

Gender identities refer to a person's sense of their own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex or can differ from it. While for some, these remain static for their entire life, for others, they may change over time.

Romantic identities refer to a person's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual attraction to others. While for some, these remain static for their entire life, for others, they may change over time.

Sexual identities refer to a person's sexual attraction or desire. While for some, these remain static for their entire life, for others, they may change over time.

The Acronym and its Component Terms and Definitions:

2S-LGBTQIA+ This is a the catch all acronym for gender and sexual minorities. In 1988, the terms gay and lesbian were used. As time progressed and we became more aware and accepting of more nuanced and cultural understandings of gender and sexual minorities, an acronym was formed and continues to evolve to become more inclusive. Please see below for definitions for each portion of the acronym. Other commonly used current acronyms are LGBTQ2S+ and LGBTQ.

2S Two-Spirit is a term often used by Indigenous people to describe sexual orientation, gender identity and / or spiritual identity and describe those whose Spirit contains both male and female attributes. 2S begins the acronym **2S-LGBTQIA+** out of respect for Indigenous communities that were here before "settlers" arrived.

L Lesbian a female-identified person whose primary attraction is to a person of the same gender.

G Gay a male-identified person whose primary attraction is to a person of the same gender, though it can also be used by lesbians to identify their sexuality.

B Bisexual a person who is attracted to both male and female persons.

T Trans or Transgender someone whose felt gender (their inner sense of self with regard to gender) does not match the gender society assigned to them at birth. A trans person's felt gender is not dependent on their physical appearance. See also "Non-Binary".

Q Queer 1) An umbrella term encompassing a spectrum of gender identities, sexes, romantic, and sexual identities. This word is being reclaimed by the community. 2) A term that may include people who challenge the boundaries of sexual orientation, sex, and gender, and whose queerness is informed by an intersection of identities, for example, size, ability, and/or race. It is also used frequently as an affirmative political and/or identity statement, and it describes a school of thought called queer theory.

- I Intersex** a person is born with reproductive anatomy, sexual anatomy, and/or a chromosome pattern that doesn't seem to fit typical binary definitions of male or female. There are over 30 specific intersex variations and each intersex person is unique.
- A Asexual** a person who does not experience sexual attraction or desire; they may still self-identify as 2S-LGBTQ+ or straight based on their romantic identity.
- + PLUS**, all other gender, sex and sexuality identities not explicitly listed in the acronym being used. These include, but are not limited to any of the above that may have been left out and the following:
- **Aromantic** a person who may not experience intellectual, spiritual and emotional attraction to others. They may or may not have sexual attraction and desire.
 - **Demisexual** a person who experiences sexual attraction only when they feel a true emotional bond with another person.
 - **Homosexual** an umbrella term that includes gay and lesbian persons.
 - **Non-binary** refers to a person whose sense of self in regards to gender is neither female or male. They may be completely androgynous or anywhere on the spectrum. They usually use non-gendered pronouns such as they/them. A non-binary person, may or may not, consider themselves to be part of the trans community.
 - **Pansexual** a person of any gender who has sexual attraction or desire for persons of any gender.
 - **Panromantic** a person who experiences intellectual, spiritual, and emotional attraction to persons of any gender.

Other Terms and Definitions:

Affirming is the full inclusion of all people, regardless of sexual orientations and gender identities. It is public, intentional and explicit. Affirming relates to people and organizations, including faith communities that do not condone non-heterosexual or non-cisgender expression, and do their best to be welcoming.

Affirming Ministries Program A network of primarily United Church of Canada ministries that strive to be fully inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. You don't have to be United Church to take part, though.

Allies As it is typically used in the context of this report, allies refers to cisgender straight (cis) persons who support the legal and societal equality of queer people. But it can be more granular, allowing for anyone of any gender, sex, or sexual orientation to be the ally of anyone of a different gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Allies actively challenge heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia—even when there are no queer people present; they are aware of heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others.

Cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity lines up with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender expressions refers to behaviour, clothing, hairstyle, voice and other forms of presentation that we use to express our gender. While for some, these remain static for their entire life, for others, they may change over time.

Heterosexual/Straight is a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people, or a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people.

Marginalized populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

Phobias:

Homophobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, or/and discrimination against gay and lesbian persons who do not conform to a heterosexual identity.

Biphobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, or/and discrimination against bisexual and pansexual persons who do not conform to a heterosexual identity.

Transphobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, or/and discrimination against persons who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to CIS normative or “traditional” conceptions of gender.

Transmisogyny a specific form of sexism and misogyny that regularly demonizes and ridicules trans women.

Proselytizing is the action of attempting to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another.

Trauma-informed acknowledges the presence of trauma responses and the role trauma may play in a person's life.

Addendum C: Team Members

Rev Michiko Bown-Kai (they/them) is an ordained United Church of Canada minister currently serving in congregational ministry in Glen Morris, Ontario (territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe Nations). As a queer non-binary person of colour, Michiko's ministry is rooted in their passion for social and transformative justice. As a former co-chair of AU/SE and staff to the GCO, Michiko is grateful to have accompanied the work of Iridesce in multiple capacities.

Dieulita Datus-Hall (she/her) is actively navigating her sexuality through Black spirituality. Dieulita is a 40-year-old Black, Haitian, cisgendered woman who has recently stepped into the role of new stepmom. Dieulita hopes to one day become a street chaplain and is currently studying to become a Lay licensed Worship leader. Dieulita currently calls Treaty 7 territory home and uses her voice to speak on issues such as liberation, active allyship, and inclusion.

Aaron Miechkota (she/her/they) is a candidate for ordained ministry in The United Church of Canada, currently serving in a rural Supervised Ministry Education (SME) appointment in Prince Edward County, Ontario, on Algonquin (Anishinaabe) and Mohawk (Haudenoshone) lands. Aaron was raised in both rural and urban settings, a first-generation Canadian of Ukrainian and Irish immigrants. As a White fat femme creative, Aaron's ministry leads with collaborative approaches to engage our faith with heart, soul, mind and strength. The former Project Coordinator, Aaron is grateful to have been involved with Iridesce since 2017.

Hyerim Park (she/her) is a co-organizer of Korean Rainbow United and is studying in the Diaconal program at the Centre for Christian Studies and Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program at St. Andrew's College. Hyerim, 39, is a cisgender married lesbian. She immigrated to Canada with her partner because they wanted to have freedom to marry and live a life with legal protection. Her faith journey has taken her from various conservative denominations in Korea to The United Church of Canada in Canada and she is now in the process of finding her true self, exploring God's diverse images and love. Hyerim lives in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Gary Paterson (he/him) was ordained as a United Church of Canada minister in 1977 and served the United Church in a variety of ways: congregational ministry (rural church, city churches, First United in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside and St. Andrew's-Wesley); BC Conference Office staff; first openly gay Moderator (2012-2015). Now retired, and living on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people, specifically, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. Happily married to Tim Stevenson, the first openly gay person to be ordained in the United Church, celebrating 40 years of commitment in June, 2022. He and Tim delight in their three daughters and four grandchildren.

Pegi Ridout (she/her) is a retired intentional interim ordained minister who brings a long history with 2S-LGBTQIA+ discussion and debate: from serving on the first task force on "Gay Ordination" through study of the report, "In God's Image: Male and Female" and acting as commissioner to the 30th General Council and early member of Friends of Affirm; to participation in the formation of Affirm United, and chair of the Affirm Network in the tri-regions of southwestern Ontario. Pegi identifies as White cisgender female bisexual queer

settler, grew up Anglican in Toronto, and lives in what is now called Hamilton, Ontario, the traditional territory of the Haudensaunee and Anishnaabeg.

Leeann Shimoda (she/her) Ojibwe from Saugeen First Nation and the co-chair of the National Indigenous Circle. She is a cisgender, straight mother of three, grandmother of eight, and great-grandmother of five amazing children. She resides in Ottawa and works as a Jordan's Principle Coordinator by day.

Caitlin Smithers (she/her) works in ministry with children, youth, and families while completing her MDiv at the Atlantic School of Theology. Her faith journey has taken her from The United Church of Canada to Baptist and back to the United in the search of a community of faith that supports and celebrates the diversity God designed us all with. Caitlin, 32, is a White cisgender lesbian living in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. Caitlin is an active board member of AU/SE.

Ruth Wood (she/her) is a retired Designated Lay Minister in the United Church. She has been married to the love of her life for 46 years. She is transgender and pansexual. White and of Celtic origin, she lives in Kingston, Ontario which is situated on traditional territory of the Haudensaunee and Anishnawbe peoples. She and her wife have been facilitating a supportive group for trans/non-binary people and their family members for over 10 years.

Brent Alexander (he/him) is the Vice Chair of AU/SE and co-lead of this report. Brent, 56, is a White cisgender married gay man and father of two proud Métis teenage boys. His faith journey from Roman Catholic to the United Church was driven by his conviction that being true to oneself is essential to being true to God. Brent is a Western Canadian now living in Toronto, which is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and is home to many nations.

Julian Munro/King Julez (they/them) is Chair of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (AU/SE) and co-lead of this report. Julian is a trans non-binary, a drag clown, and a to-be-minister in the United Church. They are a lifelong member of the United Church, an MDiv and MPS student at Emmanuel College in Toronto, and a passionate queer activist.

Beth Baskin (she/her) is a Network Coordinator in the Identity and Mission Cluster for The United Church of Canada based in Toronto, Ontario. She is a learner, facilitator, and justice seeker who is aware of her urban, middle class, middle age, heterosexual, White privilege and uses it as she is able to make her community, churches, country, and world better places. It is her privilege to support the working group beginning October 1, 2022.

Ren Ito (he/they) is a habitual overthinker who dreams about dreaming as an act of resistance. He was born in Japan and lives in Toronto (Treaty 13), Canada, where he is leaving institutional church work to focus on his PhD (on Asian North American theology and racial justice). Ren also does a lot of work with Japanese and Asian Canadian communities, and helps lead a nationwide People of Colour Christian collective. His spiritual gift is throwing wrenches into committee processes. He prays, and self-medicates by cooking. He was Network Coordinator in the Identity and Mission Cluster, supporting this work from January to September 2022.

Sarah-Anne Williams (she/her) is a lifelong member of The United Church of Canada, serving her local congregation as a board member, as well as a Network Coordinator in the Identity and Mission Cluster for The United Church of Canada. Sarah, 39, is a biracial (Indigenous mother

and White father), cisgender woman. She and her husband raise their two beautiful boys on the unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Greg Daly (he/him) brings a passion for justice to ministry leadership at Beach United Church in Toronto; finding scriptural grounding for this stance in Micah 6:8: Seek justice, Love kindness, walk humbly with God. Greg has offered spiritual care support to the participants in this process. Greg and his partner Joseph live in downtown Toronto where they enjoy exploring the diversity of urban living, mindful of the guidance that Indigenous leaders continue to offer through centuries of care.

Appendix – Workplan

DRAFT: General Secretary Iridesce Workplan

RECOMMENDED ACTION	WHO DOES WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES & COMMITMENT	STRAT PLAN LINK*
<p>Recommendation 1 Continue collecting the Affirming Ministries information from statistical collection and intentionally share that with AU/SE and the UCC as part of broader communications strategy.</p>	<p>GCO collects information annually, for AU/SE to take action as appropriate and within capacity (roles clearly defined in MOU) Communications & Church in Mission work together to communicate with AU/SE AU/SE & GCO staff work together to gather and share information in forms (Affirming, Not Affirming, in Process, affirming in practice with anecdotal information)</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>S.1.03.003 S.5.01.001 Growth</p>
<p>Explore with Non-Affirming Regions what supports, or encouragement would be helpful to become an Affirming Ministry.</p>	<p>AU/SE and local members of 2S-LGBTQIA+ community with support of Church in Mission and Regional staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		<p>S.1.03.003 Growth</p>
<p>AU/SE to research the barriers to becoming an Affirming Ministry, funded by the United Church Foundation. Possible research scope (TBD by AU/SE when funding is secured): Why do CoF not engage the process?</p>	<p>AU/SE apply for funding, with coordination as needed by GCO staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		<p>S.1.03.003 S.2.01.001 Growth</p>
<p>Develop a plan for highlighting Affirming Process and resources that enable ministries to engage. Support a presence on ChurchX.</p>	<p>New Church in Mission colleague to modify education component being developed for ChurchX for staff (one</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>Possible cost for hosting and some staff time in further</p>	<p>S.1.03.003 S.2.01.001 Growth</p>

RECOMMENDED ACTION	WHO DOES WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES & COMMITMENT	STRAT PLAN LINK*
If education component is developed, candidates and new admissions could also access.	of 6 components of an overall “equity arc”). Connect with Office of Vocation re candidates and new admissions accessing component		development and AU/SE time	
Recommendation 2 Change language to reflect sexual orientations and gender identities in all formal communications. Style guide, etc.	GCO Communications staff	2023		S.1.03.003 S.2.01.001
June 1 Pride Sunday – official focus differs from year to year to celebrate people who embody a specific identity and/or orientation within the larger community (a different letter each year from the acronym). 2S-LGBTQIA+ identities are salient and foregrounded, with the recognition of people having multiple identities (a delicate balance of focusing on one issue, not in isolation, and not also homogenizing the work overall)	Identity and Mission staff	2023 and annually (in relation to the direction of the Strategic Plan)		S.1.03.003 S.5.01.001
Then Let Us Sing project – will commission a song for the 2S-LGBTQIA+ community – also possibly We are a Rainbow with ASL interpretation	Alydia Smith	2024	Within current Identity & Mission budget	S.1.03.002 S.1.03.003 S.2.01.001

RECOMMENDED ACTION	WHO DOES WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES & COMMITMENT	STRAT PLAN LINK*
Develop a broad communications strategy that focuses primarily on 2S-LGBTQIA+ identities (and that is also intersectional in approach)	Communications (AG maybe) and new Church in Mission colleague and Alydia as appropriate	2023		S.1.03.003
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>As part of the broad communications strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pay for the Iridesce.ca domain and collaborate with AU/SE to maintain and refresh this site 2. Regularly update and add to the United Church.ca related pages 3. Hire summer student (2024) to be engaged in website updates on an annual basis 4. Add to the Iridesce website to honour contributors as noted in recommendation – are there archive resources available to support this 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identity & Mission staff – ongoing care to be clarified in MOU (ideally content AU/SE with minimal support from GCO) 2. Identity & Mission staff and new Church in Mission colleague 3. Amy C and new colleague 4. Summer student connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archives • Communications 	2023 CSJ 2024 application	I & M budget and staff AU/SE staff	S.1.03.003 Growth
Anniversary project (2025) – connect with the Anniversary planning committee for a formal commitment of storytelling	AU/SE to convene a group and create proposal for Jennifer Henry to take to planning committee	ASAP	Staff time & AU/SE time	S.1.03.003 S.2.01.001
Use some of the stories from Iridesce site on designated days	Communications? New Church in Mission Colleague? Aaron M contract?	2023	Staff & AU/SE time	S.1.03.003

RECOMMENDED ACTION	WHO DOES WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES & COMMITMENT	STRAT PLAN LINK*
[insert dates from report] – ongoing collection of stories				
Recommendation 4 Collaborate with the Office of Vocation and the Anti-Racism and Equity Lead to follow up on recommendations from the Pastoral Relations Equity Research Project	Sarah & Beth to connect with Office of Vocation and Anti-Racism and Equity Lead	2023	Staff time	S.1.03.003
Support spaces for ministry personnel – similar to POC circles in anti-racism objective. Defined and determined by individuals who access group.	New Church in Mission colleague in concert with AU/SE and Sarah Williams (who supports current POC circles)	2023 (evaluate in relation to the Pastoral Relations Equity Research Project & OV)	Staff & AU/SE time	S.1.03.003 S.2.02.008
Recommendation 5 Establish an apology working group to develop language of apology and gratitude	General Secretary to convene group as appropriate (with Diane Bosman and nominations committee) Gary Paterson as advisor? GCE? Global Partner? Archives? Ecumenical Partner? (Presbyterian Church in Canada recently issued apology)	2023		S.1.01.003 S.1.03.003

RECOMMENDED ACTION	WHO DOES WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES & COMMITMENT	STRAT PLAN LINK*
Determine appropriate moments for sharing with General Council (anniversary, Oct 2023/24, both? With education in between)	Apology Working Group in consultation with GC Business Committee and/or GCE	2023		S.1.03.003
Recommendation 6 Share with AU/SE current status & nature of TICIF conversation re Polyamory. TICIF & AU/SE determining in consultation need for further conversations	Beth & Sarah to connect with Theology Interchurch Interfaith Committee for context (and Office of Vocation?). TICIF (and OV?) AU/SE	2023		S.1.03.003
Possibly support training and use of Our Whole Lives curriculum via the United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association	Amy Crawford New Colleague In relationship with Strat Plan	2024		S.1.03.002
Recommendation 7 Report back from Global Partner Consultation with AU/SE and reflect on ways to engage the learnings in creative ways. Share who we're connected with – accountability in practice (i.e. Dignity Canada, Rainbow Railroad, etc) Discernment with community via AU/SE in terms of other connections (i.e. Rainbow Faith & Freedom)	Amy Zavitz (with Warren and Kelsi input) New Church in Mission Colleague	2023		S.1.03.001 S.1.03.002 S.1.03.005

***Strategic Plan Activities**

- S.1.01.003 Reparations
- S.1.03.001 Refugee Sponsorship LGBTQ
- S.1.03.002 Support to Global Dialogue
- S.1.03.003 Honouring the role of AU/SE based on learning from AM 2022 and following up Iridesce Report
- S.1.03.004 Developing engaging campaign that increases support of Cdn gov't to 2S-LGBTQIA+ refugees
- S.1.03.005 Build relationships with partnerships with key 2S-LGBTQIA+ initiatives i.e. Dignity initiative, etc.
- S.1.04.001 Federal advocacy (doesn't explicitly name 2S-LGBTQIA+)
- S.2.01.001 The whole people of God training, with a view of strengthening life-long connection to church of lay people
- S.2.02.008 Leadership Counts Ministry Personnel – Data collection to improve understanding of ministry personnel who are Indigenous, 2S-LGBTQIA+, Francophone, Racialized, etc.
- S.5.01.001 Tools for Communities of Faith – concrete tools and grants/loans to CoF to strengthen their invitation and the future of their ministry and be clear about their identity (not explicitly 2S-LGBTQIA+)