

City Council Presentation – April 26th 2021

Overview

St James United Church asks the City of Regina to:

1. Write a letter to the Federal Government in support of Bill C-6.

It will send a message that we all have the right to be who we are – not just heterosexual or cisgender people

2. Pass a By-Law Prohibiting Conversion Therapy in Regina

A By-Law will send a message that there are legal consequences to psychologically harming 2SpiritLGBTQ+ lives.

Background – St James United Church and the United Church of Canada

St James United Church has been an Affirming Ministry of the United Church of Canada since 1999. Affirming ministries are LGBTQ2SpiritIA+ positive ministries.

The mission of St. James United Church is to be an inclusive and affirming community that gathers to nurture faith, celebrate God's unconditional love, live out God's grace and justice, in and beyond St. James.

It is the belief of The United Church of Canada that our faith tradition affirms the dignity of all people, including people across the 2SpiriLGBTQIA+ spectrum. We believe that Two Spirit LGBTQIA+ people are an expression of God's diverse creation and share with cisgender and heterosexual people an equal place in God's love.

We recognize that members of the Two Spirit LGBTQIA+ communities continue to disproportionately experience marginalization, family estrangement, violence, and exclusion in a predominantly heterosexual and gender-binary culture.

Knowing that our Christian tradition has been used to cause great harm, we commit to making amends, and to challenging these beliefs. (1)

Today we offer our response to some of the concerns presented by persons or groups who are opposed to a City By -Law prohibiting Conversion practices and against Bill C-6.

1. We believe that Parent's Rights are not all encompassing.

Parents have the right to bring up their children as they see fit, but they do not have the right to abuse their children and negate their identity.

A person's sexual orientation or gender identity cannot be separated from who they are. We all are a gift from God.

2. Transphobia is at the root of arguments connecting gender dysphoria or gender identity issues in children to this Bill and a by-law. gISLEA

It is inaccurate and misleading to say that children and youth in Saskatchewan can easily enter the medical system and have immediate access to medical treatments such as hormonal therapy and puberty blockers without their parent's consent. The Saskatchewan Medical Transition Guide Updated January 2019 states clearly and explicitly the criteria that must be met. Appendix A and B are attached.

3. There are Spiritual Counseling Misconceptions being presented

Some clergy stated that they were concerned that a bylaw and Bill C-6 banning Conversion efforts would severely restrict and limit their ability to provide spiritual counseling to adults/ youth who are conflicted in their sexuality, gender identity or gender expression. They are fearful that their counseling would be criminalized.

Spiritual counseling of those who are conflicted would not be affected if

- the counseling is non- judgmental,
- keeps the best interests of the person at the forefront
- provides the person with helpful tools to make wise and life-giving decisions
- is non-coercive
- adheres to counseling ethical standards and guidelines.

C-6 is telling spiritual counsellors and clergy that to try and change someone – even without coercive and violent methods, is abusive. The Law needs to lead the way.

Conclusion

A by-law and all laws always have to balance rights and responsibilities with protections and restrictions. We have drinking and driving laws, laws against child abuse and domestic abuse. Parents do not have the right to freely abuse their children. Our society has shifted its thinking on these issues through government legislation and it needs to shift its thinking on this issue too.

A City By-law would have clear guidelines about what is permitted and what is not under the umbrella of conversion practices.

We need to work together to protect children and youth. They need supports to help them sort out their sexual orientation, gender identities, attractions, appropriate and safe relationships and life choices. They need positive supports, not negative techniques and identity messaging.

St. James United Church asks the following.

- 1. That the City of Regina Mayor & Council support Bill C-6 by writing a letter to the Federal Government.**

2. Pass a By-Law Prohibiting Conversion Therapy in Regina

Rev. Laura Sundberg, Gisela Stuhm and Norman Lambert
St. James United Church
4506 Sherwood Drive
Regina, SK

Sources

1. Letter to the Province of Saskatchewan from Living Skies Regional Council
ivingskiesrc.ca/call-for-a-provincial-ban-on-conversion-therapy/
2. The Saskatchewan Medical Transition Guide Updated January 2019

Appendix 1

CALL FOR A PROVINCIAL BAN ON CONVERSION THERAPY
Apr 6, 2021 | LGBTQIA+ Affirming, News, Regional News

ivingskiesrc.ca/call-for-a-provincial-ban-on-conversion-therapy/

From: Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada, Rev Tricia Gerhard, chairperson.

To: Hon Scott Moe, Premier; Hon Paul Merriman, Health Minister; Hon Gordon Wyant, Attorney General; Hon Everett Hindley, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.
CC: Leader of the Opposition; Human Rights Critic

Dear Premier Moe, Minister Merriman, Minister Wyant, and Minister Hindley,

We write to you as representatives of The United Church of Canada within Living Skies Regional Council, which comprises 215 Communities of Faith and over 20 additional ministries or shared partnerships within the province of Saskatchewan.

Living Skies Regional Council of the United Church of Canada, acting on a motion to its membership that passed with over 95% approval in November 2020, calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan to:

a) Enact legislation banning “conversion therapy” for people of all ages in Saskatchewan, thus making it illegal for individuals or entities to engage in the practice of conversion therapy or to refer an individual to practitioners of conversion or reparative therapy.

b) Include conversion therapy and bans on it in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

c) Ban health coverage for conversion practices.

d) Ensure that the Government of Saskatchewan does not provide grants or contracts to any entity that engages in or refers individuals to practitioners of conversion or reparative therapy.

e) Make a public statement against conversion therapy.

OUR FAITH BELIEF

Living Skies Regional Council stands against the harmful practice of conversion or reparative therapy for LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit persons in Canada. Such practices are hostile to a person's identity, an affront to their dignity, and an assault on their well-being.

Many conversion therapy proponents use the Christian faith and specific interpretations of our scriptures to argue that only heterosexual and cisgender identities and expressions are acceptable to God and to the Christian tradition. We disagree.

It is the belief of The United Church of Canada that our faith tradition affirms the dignity of all people, including people across the LGBTQ2SIA+ spectrum. We believe that LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people are an expression of God's diverse creation and share with cisgender and heterosexual people an equal place in God's love. We recognize that members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ communities continue to disproportionately experience marginalization, family estrangement, violence, and exclusion in a predominantly heterosexual and gender-binary culture. Knowing that our Christian tradition has been used to cause great harm, we commit to making amends, and to challenging these beliefs.

OUR VIEW ON CONVERSION THERAPY

Conversion therapy¹ seeks to change core elements of individuals by attempting to change, suppress, eliminate or deny their sexual orientation, and/or their gender identity or gender expression. The United Church of Canada, both nationally and regionally, does not support this dangerous and abusive practice.

There is no credible research to support the discredited and dangerous idea that anything can change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Rather, what research does tell us is that these so-called change efforts frequently have devastating impacts on their survivors, including increased anxiety, depression, self-hatred, compromised mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide or suicidal thoughts, and many other negative and lifelong psychological, spiritual, and social impacts.

OUR CALL TO THE GOVERNMENT

We call on the government of Saskatchewan to do its part, within its powers and responsibilities, to ensure the equality and human rights of all communities and residents. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018 (page 5) names sex, sexual orientation and gender identity as among the prohibited grounds of discrimination. Conversion therapy is a profoundly discriminatory act. It is seriously harmful to individuals and is opposed by the Canadian

Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association and others; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children should not be discriminated against based on what gender they identify with.

Provincial action in Saskatchewan to combat conversion therapy would follow in the footsteps of many other jurisdictions in Canada that have taken similar action. Conversion therapy bans at a provincial, territorial and municipal level are a common and important tool for ensuring the safety and freedom of LGBTQ2SIA+ communities.

Provinces and territories that already have, or are in the process of developing, their own legislation include the Yukon, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI. In addition, we have seen communities across Canada take this issue up by introducing municipal bans through bylaws, policies, or declarations.

These include the communities of Vancouver, Wood Buffalo, St. Albert, Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Beaumont, Strathcona County, Rocky Mountain House, Calgary, Strathmore, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Montreal, and Saint John. Canadians from coast to coast to coast are united in ending these abusive practices, and they have continued to show their support for leaders who have committed to doing so.

Therefore, Living Skies Regional Council and its members look forward to hearing the response of the Government of Saskatchewan to our call for a province-wide ban on conversion or reparative therapy. We thank you for your attention to this crucial matter and would be honoured to be in further conversation with the government.

Sincerely,
The Executive of Living Skies Regional Council:

Rev. Tricia Gerhard, chairperson
Ron Brandow
Tim Ellis
Cam Fraser
Linda Gunningham
Brian Maitland
Yujene Oh
Rob Reed
Dave Whalley
Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister

Appendix B

The Saskatchewan Medical Transition Guide Updated January 2019 [Appendix A and B](#)

Appendix A - WPATH Criteria for Initiating Hormones 1. Persistent, well documented gender dysphoria (see below); 2. Capacity to make fully informed decisions and to consent to

treatment; 3. Age of majority in a given country (if younger, see Appendix B: Standards of Care for Children and Adolescents); 4. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be reasonably well-controlled.

Appendix B - WPATH Criteria for Initiating Puberty Blockers 1. The adolescent has demonstrated a long-lasting and intense pattern of gender nonconformity or gender dysphoria (whether suppressed or expressed) 2. Gender dysphoria emerged or worsened with the onset of puberty 3. Any co-existing psychological, medical, or social problems that could interfere with treatment (e.g., that may compromise treatment adherence) have been addressed, such that the adolescent's situation and functioning are stable enough to start treatment 4. The adolescent has given informed consent and, particularly when the adolescent has not reached the age of medical consent, the parents or other caretakers or guardians have consented to the treatment and are involved in supporting the adolescent throughout the treatment process.