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Bethany CRC – Muskegon, MI

Inclusion Statement

At Bethany Church, we believe each person is wonderfully made in the image of God, with distinctions and unique attributes that make the world more beautiful. Every person is beloved, gifted, and called to serve. When it comes to participating and leading within this community, the identity we share in Christ takes priority over all other identities. Therefore, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability or social and economic class, all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord are welcome to fully participate within the life of this church. In this community, all people are encouraged to live fully into their created goodness and respond to God's call to be a faithful presence of Christ in core city Muskegon. Together, we worship as a way of life, pause daily, practice welcome and care, and invest (+ protest) wholeheartedly in God's good purposes for our church, city and world.

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Calvin CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

**Loving and Learning Together:
a path towards welcome at Calvin Church
in a time of division and uncertainty regarding sexual ethics
January 2024**

Colossians 3:12-17: As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another, and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Background:

After the CRCNA Synod of 2022, the Calvin Church Council responded with "Listening Together." We set as a priority hearing from the members of Calvin Church and encouraging the members of Calvin Church to hear from one another. We held listening circles and conducted a survey of the congregation. We'll continue to listen well to each other as a congregation, and we as Council leaders are committed to that.

In our listening circles and survey, we learned that Calvin Church is not in total agreement on the matter of same sex marriage. Within that disagreement, we learned that a majority lean "affirming" in the traditional/affirming continuum. We learned that we have a strong desire to stay together as a congregation. And we learned that we have a strong desire to be welcoming, even though we do not have certainty or unanimity about ethics of same-sex marriage.

We sent a first draft of this document to the congregation in May 2023 and held further feedback sessions in the summer of 2023. This updated draft reflects Council's response to the congregation's input.

What's next?

1. Spiritual disciplines

As leaders, we commit to structuring our lives so that we can best pay attention to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our church. As the Council has considered this posture, we committed to some form of fasting every Wednesday at lunchtime. For some it was a fast from food, for others a fast from screen time and a renewed commitment to prayer. Our prayer as we fasted was for wisdom and clarity as leaders, knowing that the task is too large for us alone, but trusting that God will help us. We continue this

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commitment to prayer and spiritual disciplines, and we invite the congregation to join us.

2. Learning Together

We urge the congregation to grow in love of God by studying Scripture, and to show love to one another by learning about the other's perspective. This is not an attempt to convince or to win people over, but an effort to show empathy to those with whom we disagree.

- a. Book studies – both sides of argument from LGBTQ+ Christian perspective with biblical support

We have already engaged in a study of the following book including both perspectives this fall, with participation from up to 20 Calvin Church members:

Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church including essays by William Loder, Megan K. DeFranza, Wesley Hill, and Stephen R. Holmes

- b. Panel discussion of LGBTQ+ members and former members of Calvin Church

It is one thing to listen to different positions; it is another thing to listen to those for whom this is an embodied experience. An important part of our commitment to learn. Depending on the readiness of Calvin Church members to share their stories, we could also invite LGBTQ+ folks from the broader CRC.

3. Loving Together Policy

The Council proposes and desires to receive feedback from the congregation on adopting a policy not of ethical certainty but of welcome. In other words, we will not say that our congregation has arrived at a conclusion about the ethics of same-sex marriage, but we propose to state with clarity that LGBTQ+ persons, including those in same-sex relationships, are welcome to participate in all aspects of the life of Calvin Church.

Why have a policy like this when it could be divisive? We would like to take seriously the request of LGBTQ+ people for clarity about what “welcome” means. Our policy needs to offer more than just a general welcome; it needs to spell out if someone is in a same-sex marriage what involvement at Calvin Church will look like for that person. Can they get married here? Be ordained as Elder or Deacon? Our proposed policy of welcome answers those questions with a “yes.”

Our rationale for this policy of welcome is biblical. We believe that sincere Christians reading with a Reformed hermeneutic can come to differing conclusions about the ethics of same sex marriage. Within that realm of multiple legitimate interpretations, we lean toward the side of welcome. In order to encompass the different stances held on this issue within our congregation, our policy will be not to exclude members from leadership or membership privileges on the basis of being in a same-sex relationship.

We recognize that this is a significant shift for many members of our congregation, particularly for those who do not view the inclusion of Christians involved

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in committed same-sex relationships as a debatable issue. We also recognize that, while we do affirm more than one of our congregation's stances, it may feel like only one of them is being implemented. We invite everyone to live in patience and humility as we seek to make space for our differing perspectives. We believe that Christ calls us to unity across our disagreements.

We commit to engage with each other according to the five practices of Christian conflict transformation that we learned from The Colossian Forum, about which our pastors preached a series in October 2023. As we follow Jesus, we will go toward one another, initiating and strengthening relationships in the face of potential conflict. We will go Godward, praying often together. We will get curious, eager to learn about the convictions of others even as we remain firm in our own. We will go deep, understanding that love is beneath the fear we see in one another. And we will get right, seeking reconciliation and repairing broken relationships.

4. Denominational Posture

Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

- a. We are taking no steps to leave the CRC, and are not making plans to do so. At the same time, we state our firm commitment to this posture of loving and learning together, and we recognize that for some in our denomination, this is not a posture they find to be consistent with continued denominational participation. In fact, the decisions of Synod 2022 and 2023 seem to indicate that a posture like this will not be consistent with long-term participation in the CRC. We name that reality, yet we disagree; we would very much like to stay in covenant partnership within the Christian Reformed Church.
- b. We desire to remain in relationship with congregations with whom we are currently in relationship. This means that we continue to commit ourselves to the historical confessions and current ministries of the CRC. We covenant to remain in formal or informal relationship with the congregations currently in Classis Grand Rapids East. And we seek future opportunities for connection and cooperation with CRC or former CRC congregations, including both traditional and affirming.
- c. We pray fervently for Synod 2024, and we recognize that many decisions about our denominational identity and posture will have to wait until after that assembly.

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Church of the Servant CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

*Rooted in Christ and nurtured by the Spirit
We grow in grace to share gifts of refuge, fellowship, and hope.*

Our Calling: A Community of Belonging

During our Jubilee year, Church of the Servant has spent time reflecting on our mission as a community of refuge, fellowship, and hope. In response to decisions made by Synod 2022, we now clarify our calling as a community of belonging in Christ.

1. **God gathers us as a community of believers** who are united in the risen Christ and who depend daily on the Holy Spirit.
2. **God provides the life-giving Word** through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who invites us to trust the Bible's promises and submit to its commands.
3. **God cherishes each person** as a bearer of God's very image. We find our primary identity in Jesus Christ, sealed in baptism and nourished at the table. No other identity – whether racial, cultural, sexual, gender-based, political, ability-based, or otherwise – comes before our identity in Christ.
4. **God calls us to holiness**, faithfulness, compassion, and respect in all our relationships.
5. **We grieve over the alienation** experienced by LGBTQIA+ persons among us, and repent of the ways our congregation has ignored, failed, or harmed them – through words or silence, through deeds or inaction.
6. **We believe human sexuality is a gift from God** to be received with gratitude and treated with integrity and care. We affirm that God intends sexual intimacy to flourish within the covenant of marriage.
7. **We seek to honor COS's diversity** with a spirit of respect, humility, and teachability. We desire to nurture the callings and spiritual gifts of everyone. We are committed to discipling, and being disciplined by, Christ-followers from various cultures, communities, and perspectives.
8. **We treasure our unity in Christ** and love for each other whose views on same-sex marriage and gender nonconformity differ. Believing that such differences do not endanger Christ's gift of salvation to anyone, we seek to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3)
9. **We embrace each other because of our common identity in Christ.** All who desire to follow Jesus – including LGBTQIA+ individuals, whether single or married – may receive baptism, bring children for baptism, celebrate the Lord's Supper, join as members, and serve in any capacity, according to their gifts and callings.

Approved July 6, 2023

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Creston CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

Inclusion Statement

Creston Church celebrates that every person is loved by God and bears God's image.

We lament that too often the body of Christ has rejected LGBTQ+ individuals and the greater queer community. We repent for the ways our own congregation has participated in that rejection – through thoughts, words, actions, and inactions – and we grieve those whom we have driven away from the church.

Creston Church welcomes and affirms all people – Including LGBTQ+ individuals, couples, and families – and aspires to offer full care, love, and support to all. We encourage the full participation of LGBTQ+ individuals in the church: serving as volunteers, receiving the sacraments, holding staff and leadership roles, and being ordained to all offices of the church, as the Holy Spirit calls and leads.

While Creston Church is a community with diverse views, we commit to building relationships across our differences, leaning into tension and difficult circumstances. We celebrate the diversity that God has given us and strive to be a place of hospitality, encouragement, grace, and hope – where we can engage in loving God, loving neighbor, and loving the world.

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Eastern Ave. CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

Our Affirmations [from Website, 2022]

These affirmations guide Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in our worshiping community.

1. We affirm God loves people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. All are created in God's image.
2. We affirm that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are equally eligible to be full members and ministry leaders at Eastern Avenue, without partiality. All belong and can serve.
3. We affirm that the sacraments (baptism, communion) and rites of this church (profession of faith, marriage) are open to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, without partiality.
4. We affirm that marriage is a gift and call of God for two persons to join their lives in a holy covenant of love and faithfulness.
5. We affirm that the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon are open to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are called and equipped to serve God's people, and who are appointed by the council and congregation.
6. We affirm God's will for the community of faith at Eastern Avenue to work together with grace and understanding to further God's kingdom.

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Fellowship CRC – Edmonton, AB

“For we are the body of Christ and each member is a part of it.” (1 Cor. 12:27) Those words signify what Fellowship CRC strives to be: **A community that is called to live and behave as brothers and sisters in the Lord.**

Fellowship Christian Reformed Church seeks to honour God by being an open and inclusive community. As witnesses to the redeeming power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit we strive to be a community of brothers and sisters in the Lord who receive and extend the hospitality and grace of Christ in our worship and our common life. We are committed to embracing people of all ages, colours, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, ethnic origins, and economic circumstances. We welcome all who seek to follow Christ to participate as full members in the life of our church. We strive to remain faithful to the promises made at baptism, welcoming and nourishing the faith of all God’s children. We seek to build community in the midst of diversity and honour God’s greatest commandment – to love one another as Christ loves us.

Each person assumes responsibility for the greater community and seeks the well-being of everyone within it. We desire to be a community where a spirit of trust and mutual respect shapes our relationships. We are a church community that wants to share in the joys and trials of its individual members. We are a place for sisters and brothers in Christ, friends, families, and organized small groups to interact with each other and to show genuine support for each other. It’s a church community that desires to show compassion to all members. Our “Safe Community” document adopted in 2007 describes how we as a church want to be a safe community.

Fellowship tries to be a church that creates space for all its members. Inclusivity is one of its founding principles and remains a key tenet in all decision-making. Fellowship allows room for and expression of heartfelt responses, whether they are of joy and thanksgiving or of uncertainty, doubt, and vulnerability. There is time and space to ask questions about the church itself and to reflect on interpretations of God’s call as found in the Bible. Sometimes these conversations begin in an educational setting for youth or adults; other times the dialog may occur outside the church setting. With humility, all members are invited to assess and reassess the church’s mission and mandate. This dialogic emphasis asks members to speak not only to each other but to people outside of the church community as a way to remain vibrant and relevant in a pluralistic society.

Respect for each member. As well as for other faith traditions, is promoted.

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First Christian Reformed Church – Grand Rapids, MI

Motion approved by Council on January 24, 2023

Recognizing the differences of Biblical interpretations regarding same-sex marriage and acknowledging that we are in a place of uncertainty, we move to invite all members of First Church to full participation in the life and ministry of the congregation. Neither sexual identity nor being in a same-sex relationship will impact a person's membership or ability to fully participate at First Church.

First Christian Reformed Church – Toronto, ON

Statement of Faith and Action

We believe that all people are created in the image of God and are unconditionally loved by God. We are committed to embrace people of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientation, differing abilities, ethnic origins, and economic circumstances. We affirm that all who seek to live faithfully, that is confessing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, are full participants in the life, membership, sacraments and leadership of this congregation. Our desire is to build community in the midst of differences and strive to honour God's greatest commandment, to love one another as Christ loves us.

~ Statement of Faith and Action, adopted by the congregation on September 29, 2002

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Grace CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

Regarding Full Participation at Grace Church (Fall 2022)

Grace Church has held a long-standing vision to be a healthy, urban, intentionally multi-ethnic, and diverse (in many ways) expression of God’s new family in Christ Jesus. Our name, Grace, reflects our calling to welcome people of all kinds on the basis of God’s undeserved gift of grace. We cling to our proud history of promoting racial justice and reconciliation, women in church office, and inclusion of people of all abilities. We hear echoes of words of grace once spoken by a Black founding elder when White families first began to join our church:

If they are not welcome, I am not welcome.

We as a church have been extensively discussing appropriate inclusion of our LGBTQ+ siblings for some time, both as a congregation and denomination. As Grace stated in our 2017 statement, we have sought “to be a welcoming community where all are accepted as sinners saved by grace” yet at that time we chose not to articulate “an official position statement” regarding same-sex marriage.

Some of our members strongly disagree with each other on the issue of LGBTQ+ marriage. The council of Grace Church respects the fact that faithful, loving, and Christlike members of our congregation have come to different conclusions. We must now discern a way forward together, embracing our diversity “in many ways.” Therefore, longing for God's Shalom for all people in the New Creation, being swept up in the Spirit's campaign of radical inclusion, and in the humble power of Jesus' self-giving love, the council of Grace Church adopted the following policy:

Grace Church celebrates LGBTQ+ people as image bearers, loved by God, and welcomes them whether single, in a dating relationship, or married. Those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord shall enjoy full participation in the life of the church, including ordination to the roles of elder and deacon, preaching, being married, having their children baptized, and filling all leadership roles as their gifts allow.

Grace’s council has discussed and revised this language, welcomed feedback on it from the congregation, held detailed educational classes on the biblical and scientific foundations on the topic, offered various listening circles about its impact, and recently polled the congregation for their sense of it.

This policy proposes a way we choose to behave as a community, even while we don’t all agree on some of the underlying principles or even the full wisdom of the policy. We all do seek, however, to be the body of Christ, known not just in name, but in action, by grace.

This is an important season for Grace Church. As we emerge from the pandemic and call a new pastor, we begin a new chapter in ministry, and we seek to do so as a single body. We don’t all

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have to agree, and there's room for dissent. Paul's words from Ephesians 4 can both challenge and comfort us. May we bear with one another in love, making every effort to keep our unity in the Spirit through the bond of peace. Whatever our position on becoming an inclusive church, let this scripture be our model for how we care for one another.

Grace is a church deeply rooted in our denomination and remains committed to Reformed theology and tradition, with deep love for the Word of God. Many members have spent their whole lives intertwined in the wider church: pastoring, writing, organizing, teaching, praying, and worshipping together. Speaking truth and love and challenging religious authorities is not new to our faith. We are after all in the "Reformed" tradition. Jesus himself was no stranger to conflict with religious leaders. Yet our focus remains in our neighborhood. Continue to pray for us, that God's will be known, for the Holy Counselor to dwell between us, and for all those who have been and are being hurt by the church to know God's healing love despite our many human failings. We worship God together with the words of this Lenten hymn:

*We are people on a journey
Rising up in life reborn
We are people on a journey
Speaking peace accepting scorn*

*We are walking toward a homeland
To a mystery yet unknown
To a kingdom coming quickly
To the light of God's own throne*

We pray that as brothers and sisters, the Spirit will bind us together and fill us afresh to be the voice and hands of Christ, welcoming our neighbors and building each other up.

Let us honor our Lord by our love and care for one another.

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Hessel Park CRC – Champaign, IL

Hessel Park Church Sexuality Policy Statement¹

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

Both historically and currently, LGBTQ people were and continue to be harmed and excluded from the Church. We grieve that for many individuals the harm is irreparable.² With others, we seek to reconcile, and we are committed both to demonstrating love to those in our community who have been harmed by churches in the past and to welcoming those who join our community in the future. Doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God requires recognizing the image of God in our neighbor.

As a community, we came to this policy with deep consideration. Conversations centered on questions related to homosexuality took place at Hessel Park Church from spring 2022 through fall 2023. Many members have personally navigated the topic for decades leading up to the discussion. Through this time of consideration and the conversations at Hessel Park Church (HPC), members came to different and conflicting conclusions. Though we still have disagreements, through conversation groups and congregational discernment, we found that as a church we have a deep love for one another and a strong desire to remain true to Scripture. We found that our commitment to the virtues of faith, love and humility was stronger than our differences. We trust that God has been working among us, guiding us. Although the future will have its difficulties, we trust God will continue to be faithful to us. In humility, we seek to love all people, valuing their different perspectives and experiences.

Through this process, we came to realize several things about sexuality, the Church and our culture. First, while the culture often idolizes sex, the church often makes an idol of marriage and family. The Church frequently prioritizes issues of sexuality over issues of social justice. A full reading of scripture demonstrates that issues related to the poor and marginalized are far more prominent than concern for sexual purity. Second, because of the Church’s idolization of marriage and having children, single people often feel undervalued. In this light, we commit to supporting people in their relationships and in their singleness. For some, singleness will be an act of obedience to God and for others it will be a circumstance of life. We recognize that people will have unique experiences of singleness and our support will also mean walking with those who are discerning how to be obedient to God.

HPC has also come to acknowledge that Christians can faithfully interpret Scripture as affirming LGBTQ identities and relationships.³ Not all members agree that Scripture affirms same-sex relationships, yet we are unified in valuing our LGBTQ members. As a church we will support those who discern God’s guidance in entering the covenant of marriage and those who discern that obedience means remaining single. We believe LGBTQ members are vital to the flourishing of Christian community at HPC and in the global Church. Diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation are not things to be merely tolerated but celebrated.

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Hessel Park Church Sexuality Policy

All confessing believers, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status may participate as full members of HPC. In sexual ethics, all members are held to the same standards in expectations of monogamy and fidelity to their spouses. All church members in good standing may receive the sacraments and lead in ministry. The full inclusion of LGBTQ members includes marriage, baptism, communion, and leading as pastors, deacons, and elders. Same-sex weddings may be held in the church building, and the pastor may officiate LGBTQ weddings.

¹ Drafted using affirming statements from other CRC congregations, published at [All One Body](#)

² The irreparable harm includes the harm to people who have died of suicide, hate crimes, and AIDS. Youth who have heard their parents use religion to say negative things about being LGBTQ are at an [increased risk for suicide](#). For many, there is a [close link](#) between being told homosexuality is sinful and their suicide attempts.

³ The report from Classis Grand Rapids East Study Committee on the Bible and Life-long Same Sex Relationships explains a basis for an affirming position:
<http://www.classisgreast.org/downloads/ssmstudyreport2016.pdf>.

Approved November 4, 2023

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Jubilee Fellowship CRC – St. Catherines. ON

Inclusion: Our Calling as a Community of Belonging

Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church is a community of faith where we recognize that all persons are created in the image of God, loved unconditionally by God, and are welcome as part of our church family. We find our primary identity in Jesus Christ, sealed in baptism and nourished at the communion table. No other identity - whether racial, cultural, sexual, gender-based, political, ability-based, or otherwise - comes before our identity in Christ.

At Jubilee, this means:

- We honour committed monogamous marriage between all persons.
- We welcome all who desire to follow Jesus to participate fully in the life of the church, including serving as ordained office-bearers, according to their gifts and callings.
- We regard diversity in humanity as a gift from God.
- We also recognize that sincere and committed Christians can and do hold a range of views on many issues, and that we may understand Scripture differently; but we commit to fully loving all within our community regardless of these differences.

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Loop CRC – Chicago, IL

Loop Church desires to be an open and affirming Christian Reformed Church in the city of Chicago. The term “open and affirming” is a designation used by churches and congregations to publicly articulate their desire for the full participation of people in the life of the church regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or relationship status.

At Loop Church this means that our Sunday worship, table fellowship and community service are open to all. Loop Church affirms the calling of our LGBTQ siblings in Christ to ordained leadership in the church. Loop Church affirms the desire of people in same-sex relationships to faithfully enter into and celebrate the covenant of marriage and supports those who faithfully live in singleness.

The term “open and affirming” can also designate the type of welcome we seek to offer anyone regardless of other markers of identify such as age, economic status, educational attainment, political leaning, (dis)ability, or immigration status. Such a welcome is not radical or progressive, but simply the type of hospitality demanded by God and displayed by Jesus Christ.

Our desire to be full “open and affirming” does not mean that we live out this welcome perfectly, and it does not mean that every church member holds the same theology or view of human sexuality. Within our denomination there is a diversity of interpretations around how the Bible speaks into the possibility of same-sex relationships. As a local church we commit to becoming an “open and affirming” Christian community. We also believe that such a commitment should not become a litmus test of belonging for those who believe differently or are still wrestling. We are committed to meeting each person where they are at in their faith journey, and walking with one another in love even if we disagree.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Our Denomination

Like many denominations, the CRCNA has wrestled with the issue of human sexuality by seeking a Biblically-informed and theologically-sound position on issues such as same-sex relationships, marriage and divorce, and sexual abuse in the church. Study committees have been formed, reports written, and positions approved with the intention of offering churches helpful guidance and pastoral advice for their ministry.

Despite the desire for faithful responses to contentious issues, there has been a history and tradition of excluding and restricting the full participation of LGBTQ+ people in the life of the church. Lesbian or gay people in the church have been instructed to live a life of celibacy or face church discipline.

As we lament the real harm that these denominational decisions have caused LGBTQ+ people and their friends and family, Loop Church firmly believes that the church can and must be a place of welcome and hospitality to all.

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While there is real tension in claiming to be an “open and affirming” church in a non-affirming denomination, we will exist in that tension, living and loving as best we can. We trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to move within our community to make it a place of welcome, encouragement, prayer, hope, love, and service for all people.

Meadowvale CRC – Mississauga, ON

From homepage of website:

We are an inclusive community who believe there is a circle of life, a Great Dance of love shared by the Father, Son and Spirit in which we are all included!

From “About Us “on website:

Meadowvale Community Church is a member of the Christian Reformed Church. All are welcome to join us as we celebrate the outrageous love of God among us.

From the “Justice” section of website:

We are an inclusive church within a denomination still wrestling with their biblical understanding of sexuality. In 2016, Synod called together a group tasked with articulating a "foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality." In 2020, this "Human Sexuality" report was presented. A group of women, mothers and grandmothers, from Meadowvale wrote an overture in response. It was affirmed by both our council and by Classis Toronto.

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Neland Avenue CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

Neland has no global statement on being an affirming church. Instead it has stated that its members who identify as LGBTQ+ are members in good standing and not under church discipline. Hence they are eligible to participate fully in the life of the congregation.

Excerpt from Neland’s 2022 Overture to Classis Grand Rapids East

“Responding to Synod 2016 One year after the formation of the Generous Spaciousness Committee, a congregational survey revealed a broad range of views on same-sex relationships, from traditional (40%) to affirming (40%) and in between (20%). The survey also showed us that many were hurting within the dialogue. Those who held the CRC’s traditional view reported feeling less safe to voice their opinion during discussion, and Council recognized its pastoral responsibility to provide safety for these members. Another portion of our congregation felt hurt and vulnerable as a result of the pastoral guidance of Synod 2016 (including that SSM members could or should be disciplined), and some feared that, because they or a loved one are part of the LGBTQ+ community, they might no longer be welcome at Neland or in any CRC. Council recognized its pastoral responsibility to care for these members too.

In a letter to the Neland congregation in the fall of 2016, Council named its pastoral responsibility to all members and pledged to continue to reflect upon Synod 2016’s pastoral recommendations. The letter concluded: But Council also wishes to state clearly that this congregation’s motto is still, “There is a place for you at Neland.” Even when we disagree, Neland Church will continue to be a place where all who seek God are welcome to experience God’s love in our worship, to experience God’s grace at the communion table, and to serve God together with the gifts God has given them. Council was responding to Synod 2016’s pastoral advice, namely, that SSM members should be disciplined, which includes the possibility of withholding the sacrament and even excommunication. (See Agenda for Synod 2016, pp. 440-443, esp. the reference to Church Order Article 81-a on p. 442.) Despite a broad range of opinion about SSM within our membership, Council made it clear that SSM members of Neland were not objects of discipline and were members in good standing.

Members in Good Standing and Eligibility for Office: Neland’s nomination process for elders and deacons, for as long as most of us today can recall, has been to provide the congregation with a list of eligible members and request that all members prayerfully submit nominations; after nominations have been received, Council carefully considers the nominations and finalizes a slate of elders and deacons that is presented to the congregation for approval at the annual congregational meeting. Up until 2020, Neland’s Council did not include SSM members on the final slate, despite their status as members in good standing and despite the congregation’s frequent and numerous nominations of SSM members in the yearly process. Each year many on Council found it increasingly difficult to justify the functional, though not official, exclusion of SSM members from consideration for office. In 2019 Council received the report of an ad hoc

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committee appointed to assess the congregation's varying perspectives about these difficulties. Neland also sought the counsel of advisors from Classis Grand Rapids East, with the counsel given focusing on Neland's process for nominating elders and deacons. After prayerful consideration and many months of careful conversation, Council's decision was that it could no longer justify excluding SSM members from the final slate to be approved by the congregation, since they had never been placed under discipline."

Oakdale Park CRC — Grand Rapids

On 4/24/23 the OP council adopted the following statement (composed originally by First CRC of GR:

Recognizing the differences of Biblical interpretation regarding same-sex marriage and acknowledging we are in a place of uncertainty, we move to invite all members of Oakdale Park Church to full participation in the life and ministry of the congregation. Neither sexual identity nor being in a same-sex relationship will impact a person's membership or ability to fully participate at Oakdale Park Church.

LGBTQ+ Affirming Churches in the CRC

Sherman Street CRC – Grand Rapids, MI

Sherman Street is LGBTQ+ Affirming -- What does that mean?

As part of our mission to be a living testimony of God's grace and justice in this city, the Council and congregation of Sherman St. CRC decided in November 2020 that all who follow Jesus are welcome and should be able to fully participate in the life of the church.

This means that LGBTQ+ people at Sherman Street, those who are single and those who are in relationships, as led by the Holy Spirit and as their gifts allow, are able to receive the Lord's Supper, be ordained to all offices of the church, preach, be married, have their children baptized, and fill all leadership roles.

This decision comes after many years of prayer, listening, studying the scriptures, and discernment. We have held small groups and listening circles, taken surveys, written reports, and engaged with organizations such as All One Body.

The reasons for this decision are as diverse as the members of our congregation. Some emphasize grace, some emphasize justice, some emphasize love, and some members disagree. All are welcome. We are one in our commitment to our God. We embrace our shared identity as God's children, redeemed through Jesus Christ.

Together, we are part of the body of Christ, but we know that the body is incomplete without our LGBTQ+ members.

We lament that too often the body of Christ has rejected its LGBTQ+ members. We repent for the ways in which our own congregation has participated in that rejection, in both our actions and our inactions.

As we move forward with the work of the church, we commit ourselves to being a place where all those who are hurting experience God's grace and love, a place where we work towards the justice and liberation that are at the heart of God, a place where if one part of the body suffers, all suffer together with it; if one part is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).

We are all one body, and if the body is to flourish, we need our LGBTQ+ members. We need their gifts and their voices.

LGBTQ+ Affirming Churches in the CRC

The Road Church – Calgary, AB

The Road community is committed to seeing, knowing and being God's love everywhere we are. This includes our siblings in the queer community. We mean it. You, your story, and your embodied identity are valued here and are welcome to participate fully in the life of the community as we follow the path of Jesus together. At The Road Church, our hope and encouragement for human relationships, intimate and otherwise, is founded on relationship with a reconciling God. We follow Jesus here. It is Jesus' character and example that shapes our understanding of God's design for healthy, life-giving relationships.

Because we firmly believe that the image of God is in each one of us and because we lament the ways that those who identify as gender and sexual minorities have been harmed and excluded by the church at large, we have been on an intentional learning journey over the last several years, considering our own Biblical theology around inclusion as well our own contributions to harm, whether knowingly or unknowingly. We are genuinely seeking to ask ourselves, is The Road Church truly a safe space where all who are wishing to journey together with Jesus can be welcomed and valued?

In January 2022, we entered into a focused Affirming Discernment Process culminating in a congregational vote on April 3 that was overwhelmingly in favour of our local church becoming "fully affirming." **When we say "fully affirming" we mean that people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations are valued and welcomed into full participation in the life, discipleship and leadership of the church including baptism, communion and marriage.** This may include roles in leadership, worship, children's ministry, or staff roles based on an individual's qualifications, gifting and spiritual maturity.

We also acknowledge that we are part of a denomination that is in the middle of a conversation about human sexuality, and whose members hold many divergent and in-process views on specific issues, including the affirmation of same-sex marriage. (Currently, our denomination does not officially support same-sex marriage, yet our local congregation voted in favour of full participation for marriage, so we find ourselves in this tension.)

We have much still to learn but we want all of our 2SLGBTQIA+ siblings in Christ to know that they are welcome and valued. We need you and what you bring to our community!

For further conversation and clarification about this, please do not hesitate to contact one of our [pastors](#). See Rich's sermon on the "clobber passages" of Scripture [here](#), our PIE Day service [here](#), and video responses to the CRCNA Human Sexuality Report by both Rich & Jess [here](#).

LGBTQ+ Affirming Churches in the CRC

Washington D.C. Christian Reformed Church

Affirming Statement [approved by Council on 12.14.2022]

The Washington D.C. Christian Reformed Church believes that God loves LGBTQ+ people. They are created in the image of God, baptized into the covenant of Jesus Christ, and welcomed into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. People of all sexual orientations and gender identities belong in God's family of believers. We believe that God and Scripture can embrace committed, monogamous same-sex relationships as an example of God's covenant community and a model of Christ's love for the church. Sincere, devoted followers of Jesus, including those in same-sex relationships, have the privileges and responsibilities of full membership in good standing—such as eligibility to hold office, presentation of children for baptism, and full participation in the work, life, and mutual discipline of the congregation.