**God’s Good Creation in 2SLGBTQ+**

Pride Sunday, June 9, 2024

Genesis 1: 14-27 Russell Mitchell-Walker

John 1: 1-14

Today marks the beginning of Pride Week in Regina where we celebrate the diversity and gifts of sexual and gender identity. It has been a tough year for many in the community, as rights for transgender and non-binary people are challenged and limited, especially through policies like the pronoun policy of the Saskatchewan government. This policy, established in August and then forced into use through invoking the Notwithstanding Clause of the Canadian Constitution in October, has already had negative effects on students and teachers. A mother and author, Ruby Remenda Swanson was [uninvited to speak](https://leaderpost.com/opinion/columnists/murray-mandryk-chilling-consequences-of-pronoun-bill-starting-to-hit-home) at her hometown school in Humbolt because of the policy that also prevents ‘third party organizations’ from speaking about issues of sexuality and gender. She had written a book about her son’s journey coming out including how he started one of the first gay-straight alliances in a Canadian high school. Teachers have had to [change their](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/pronoun-policy-teachers-1.6976665#:~:text=Human%20rights%20groups%20have%20criticized,they%20don't%20get%20permission.) practices for creating safer space in their classrooms, including refraining from inviting students to identify their pronouns in a get to know you survey at the beginning of the year, or they are afraid to look at the responses, because they don’t want to put a student at risk if they have parents who are unsupportive. Other [teachers](https://macleans.ca/education/saskatchewan-pronoun-law/) have noticed that attendance at GSA’s are down, with students being worried that the spaces are not safe anymore. These realities are not acceptable.

Things are worse in some countries around the world. Within the last few months, Eastside has received two messages via our website and social media accounts from gay refugees seeking support for their claims. One was from Indonesia and another is in Uganda after fleeing the Congo. Uganda has one of the most repressive [anti-LGBT laws](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/04/uganda-court-upholds-anti-homosexuality-act) in the world, including the death penalty in certain circumstances. These laws are often influenced by US evangelical conservative church organizations involvement in these countries. With regard to these individuals seeking support, there is not much I can do as we do not have the capacity to sponsor a refugee as a congregation, which can cost over $17,000 and take many years. All I can do is try to network and find supports through friends I have made who have connections with Rainbow Railroad and other organizations. Perhaps together as a collaboration or as Affirming Ministries across Regina we could take on a sponsorship through the United Church LGBTIQ2S+ Refugee program. 2SLGBTQ+ folk need to know they are loved and accepted regardless of where they are. They need to know that God loves them, that they are good in God’s eyes.

The theme in the creation story of Genesis that we read this morning, is just that. As God creates the earth and the waters, the day and the night, the plants, the sun and the moon, and all living creatures, God saw that it was good. Then God creates humankind, in God’s image and sees that it and everything created was very good. What God creates is good, very good. God blessed creation and us, as we are. Most of us now know that sexual orientation and gender identity are not a choice. It is how we are created. We are a part of God’s good creation. This is an important message for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. To know the blessing and love of God as part of God’s good creation.

God created humans in God’s image, as male and female. What this tells us is that God’s image is male and female. We know as well that we have both masculine and feminine qualities in each of us, some more than others. Those who are transgender, find that they are more masculine or feminine than what they appear. That is who they are, how they are created. As I talked about in the theme time, everything is a spectrum. In the Jewish tradition it is called a Merism, two words that express a totality or completeness. It is not one or the other, it is the whole. We don’t have just day and night, but day and night and everything in between. Similarly, we don’t have just male and female, but male and female and everything in between. The spectrum is all part of God’s good creation. It is good, very good.

The story in John, is a kind of creation story as well. It tells us that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The word, or logos, is a reference to Jesus, or the Christ, the eternal essence of God becoming flesh and living among us, or in the neighbourhood as the Message translation says. It can indicate the importance of words. Words are powerful and it is important to speak words of love and compassion and acceptance as Jesus did. Those who are often excluded and marginalized, including those in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, know too well the painful and hurtful power of words. It is important for us to communicate words of love, acceptance, inclusion and welcome to these communities. This is part of the meaning for Affirming Ministries of being Public, Intentional and Explicit in our welcome and inclusion. The words we use are important and communicate that welcome, that all inclusive love.

The message of John is that God has come in Jesus, the word made flesh. God is enfleshed through Jesus and his message. We may also see that God continues to take on flesh and is embodied in all kinds of humanity. We can see the Spirit working in and through others, to bring light and love and justice and reconciliation to the world, to communities in need, to those who are excluded. Just as Jesus did. It is important to be open to this embodiment of God in others, especially in those we may least expect, because that can be often where we find God, the Christ, in our midst. God transitions into being made flesh on earth through Jesus and others who live God’s message of love and compassion. Trans people can be a holy witness to God’s constant transitioning and authentic self-revealing. Trans people illuminate important aspects of not only God’s being but also how and where we should be expecting to see God in the world. We must be aware, too, of how similarly Jesus and trans people are treated in the world. Criminalized. Attacked. Shunned. Executed. And so we need to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, and work to create a world where these injustices do not take place and let people know we will not put up with such abuse and offensive actions.

As the church, too often we have missed the mark in history through it’s homophobic and transphobic messaging and in too many places continues to, including through influencing government policy. Whether it be in African countries creating unjust laws, or influencing our provincial governments. It is because of this that it is very important for us as Christian communities who see God’s goodness and love in 2SLGBTQ+ people to speak up and stand up against the limiting of rights, the violence and abuse, and to be the word of love and compassion and acceptance and encouragement. This Pride, let us resolve to stand strong for the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ folk in our communities, and around the world, as we celebrate the blessing and goodness that they and we all are to the world. It is good, very good.