

THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAMILTON

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Rev. Victoria Ingram, Minister
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June 25, 2019

Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Councillors
City Hall, Hamilton

Re: Violence at this year's Pride events and protests in the City Hall forecourt

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

Like many other Hamiltonians, we condemn the violence and hatred directed against people attending this year's Pride celebrations at Gage Park. We, as a religious faith built on the principle that all people have worth and dignity, stand with all people of good will in condemning hatred.

While we respect religious freedom and the right of people to make up their own minds about what they believe, we reject shaming directed at any identifiable group as contrary to the Golden Rule, found in Christianity but also most other major religions, that calls for us to do to others what we would want done to us, and to not do to others what we would not want done to us.

We note with dismay the continuing presence in the City Hall forecourt each Saturday of people who express hatred of Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people and other minority groups and that they are joined by members of other extremist groups, from Proud Boys to the Canadian Nationalist Party. Even before Pride, some of these rallies turned violent.

We note with dismay that a significant minority of Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people in Hamilton, and most trans and gender non-conforming people, do not feel safe here, as the recent *Mapping the Void: Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ Experiences in Hamilton* (June 11, 2019) report showed. The June 18 community meeting at City Hall made clear that those feelings have been heightened by the violence against Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people at Pride.

We note with dismay the evidence that relations between Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people and the City, as well as with the Hamilton Police Service, were already strained before Pride and have become more strained since. A particular sore point is that the rallies in the City Hall forecourt still continue. They are an ongoing affront to Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people, and ought to be to all Hamiltonians.

In the spirit of inclusion, and in solidarity with our Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ siblings, we urge Council:

- To immediately suspend and ultimately deny permission for the City Hall forecourt to be used for rallies that express hate against identifiable people. These rallies have shown they can spill from nasty words to violence and are reasonably likely to do so again.
- To engage in dialogue with willing participants from Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ communities. The first order of business should be for councillors to listen to and

learn about the experiences of living in Hamilton today as Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people.

- To encourage the Hamilton Police Service to engage in a similar exercise of listening.
- To avoid reacting to the expressions of frustration from the Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ communities until Council has taken the time to do that listening.
- And we urge each councillor to read the *Mapping the Void* report and the earlier *Speak Out! Community Consultations on Making Hamilton an LGBTIQ+ Positive City* (September 2018) and for Council to act on the reports' recommendations.

We offer any help we can provide, including use of our space, for dialogue and efforts to advance issues important to Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people, to improve where possible relations between them and the City and police, and most importantly, to ensure that Two Spirit and LGBTIQ+ people are safe and welcome wherever they are in this city.

Yours sincerely,

Irene Laurie,
President
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Victoria Ingram,
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First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

Bill Johnston
Co-chair, Affordable Housing Subcommittee
First Unitarian Church of Hamilton