



First Presbyterian Church OF HOWARD COUNTY

Let Us Build a House: Pride 2023

This season of LGBTQIA+ Pride our anthem is the hymn “Let Us Build a House Where Love Can Dwell”, where we jubilantly and whole heartedly sing that all are welcome in this place! Truly our church strives to be a house of worship for all, amid the never-ending reports of new state laws designed to target and marginalize LGBTQIA+ youths and adults, particularly members of the transgender community. Lawmakers and elected officials, the very people who swore oaths to uphold Constitutional freedoms including the right to freedom of speech/expression and equality under the law, make very clear their agenda to limit the personal and civil liberties of LGBTQIA+ persons.

Recently, the Washington Post put out an article titled “For LGBTQ spaces, being safe takes on new urgency”, in which they reported that LGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces are needed now more than ever. Additionally, members of the LGBTQ community are becoming increasingly aware of the locations where they can congregate, live out their authentic lives, and find community in spaces that are, well, SAFE!

Is First Presbyterian a safe space? Is it an LGBTQIA+ Safe Space? Can it be an LGBTQIA+ Sacred Safe Space? Searching for a spiritual guide to help explore these questions, our team turned to our church’s Pride anthem, *Let Us Build a House*. We found that this hymn even gives us a guide that we can follow for making ours a church that openly, willingly, and enthusiastically serves and welcomes all.

This season of Pride, we invited you to participate in the activities that we designed around key phrases from this hymn. We invited you this season of Pride to be part of creating, imagining, and, yes, building our house so that it truly welcomes all. Here was our line-up for the 2023 season of Pride:

Week 1 - Let Us Build a House where Prophets Speak: We had a Social Justice Book Drive this year to create a Social Justice section of our church library. Church should be a place where children and adults can feel safe to explore and learn and explore their identities - a place where acceptance, being an ally, and working for social justice should be encouraged. In honor of PRIDE Month, we expanded our church library with more inclusive titles for children and adults.

Week 2 - Let Us Build a House of Dreams and Visions: We welcome back Drag artist, Mama Bella, as she leads us in our second Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH). At First, we intentionally make space for DQSH as a means of grace and reconciliation between the church and the LGBTQ+ community.

Week 3 - Let Us Build a House where Peace and Justice Meet: The Third Sunday of Pride has become our Pronoun Sunday when we put our pronouns on display and invite each other to intentionally share our pronouns.

Week 4 - All Are Welcome in this Place: Our season of Pride culminates in Pride Sunday, the last Sunday in June, in which we assert our commitment to welcome and serve the LGBTQIA+ community.