



First Presbyterian Church OF HOWARD COUNTY

Invitation to LGBTQIA Pride 2022: Speak Love... Speak Peace... Speak Out!

Clarence Baney, for the Peacemaking and Social Justice Team

Let me tell you a story. After the prophet Elijah won the competition of fire on Mount Carmel, and Israel returned to the LORD, Elijah then flees the wrath of Jezebel. He seeks refuge in a cave on Mount Horeb, and there he waits for the LORD to pass by. There was a great wind that split the mountain. And yet the Lord was not in the wind. Then there was a terrifying earthquake. But still, the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then...a fierce fire!!!...But the Lord was not in that either. Finally, sheer silence, out of which the Lord spoke.

It can be bewildering, amazing, and difficult to recognize when the LORD speaks. The medium through which the LORD speaks can also be equally surprising and unexpected. For example, when did we hear the Lord speak about the LGBTQIA community? Did the LORD speak “Love” for creation in the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard? Did the Lord speak “Peace” in the horrific tragedy at the Pulse Nightclub? Has the Lord spoken out in the “*Don’t Say Gay*” bills currently being considered in many states across the nation?

June is LGBTQIA Pride month in our church and around the country. Within the PCUSA, there has been a growing trend to participating and making this celebration a part of the church year. This year will mark the fifth year First Presbyterian of Howard County has celebrated LGBTQ+ Pride. Some of us, this author included, can still remember the tentative feeling of taking it up as a church practice, not really knowing if Pride really had a place in the Church (big “C”). Yet, five years later, we joyfully celebrate Pride as a way of advocating for, affirming, and welcoming those in the LGBTQ+ community who have not been fully included in the Church.

This June, the Social Justice Team invites you to celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride. Our motto and theme this year will be “Speak Love. Speak Peace. Speak out!” Our activities will center on using our speech to proclaim God’s love for creation and demonstrating our affirmation of the LGBTQIA community. We kick off our LGBTQ+ observance with our first ever “*Stories and Doughnuts: Drag Queen Story Hour*”. Additionally, we invite our church community to come together at the church picnic to create a festive Pride Banner that welcomes and affirms members of the LGBTQIA community. And...you’ve heard of “Name Tag Sunday”... this year we will celebrate “Pronoun Sunday” in which we invite you to write your name, as well as your pronouns. Finally, our celebration culminates in Pride Sunday, on June 26th. Lastly, check out our insert in “First Day”, in which we will highlight people and events, as well as offer statements that our denomination has made, affirming the LGBTQIA+ community.