



### **Pride Celebrations Committee 2023 Final Congregational Report**

The 2023 *UU* Pride Celebrations were different from other years for a number of reasons. The start of the Celebrations was on June 11 when PFLAG and Trans London had their Pride Kickoff at a bbq at our Oasis on Clarke, after the Worship Service. For the first time, there were two Pride Worship Services. The Staging Area for the Pride Parade was different. As well, the route for the Pride Parade was different from other years.

The 2023 PCC consisted of: Reid Howard; Ann Klinck; Dilyn Muzzeral; Bill Ratcliffe (Chair); Kay Rhebergen; Lori Turner-Otte. As in previous years, planning for the 2023 Pride Celebrations Weekend began in May.

The July 16 Pride Worship Service was a shining example of our new partnership with PFLAG and Trans London. Christa Duvall, Director of PFLAG, and Elliot Duvall, Director of Trans London were Co-Worship Leaders with Bill Ratcliffe, as the Service Leader. This fulsome hybrid Pride Worship Service had a total of 40 in attendance. Christa's Reflection, "Why We Still Need Pride in 2023", was informative and inspiring. Elliot's choice of musical videos including Wrabel - The Village , Born This Way by Glee and The Greatest Showman- This is Me was moving and challenging.

The brief Pre-Pride Parade July 23 Worship Service, "Pride Resilience: A Trans View on Striving for Gender Equality" featured a Ted Talk by trans woman, Paula Stone Williams

The Pride Parade was on Sunday, July 23. Due to construction around the Western Fair grounds, the Parade Staging Area was along Queens Ave., between Quebec St. and Adelaide St., with Adelaide St. being the starting point. There was a record 140 groups participating in the Pride Parade. That narrow

stretch of Queens Ave. created serious problems for those groups with large floats, so all the floats were staged at the front of the Parade. This caused problems at the disembarkation area on Wellington St. by Victoria Park due to the amount of time required to get participants off the floats. This resulted in many stops for walkers in the Parade. Refreshments were served while T-shirts were put on, the Answer the Call of Love Banner was readied, the Rockets were decanted into pails for handing out and flags were readied, while waiting in the Staging Area. There were 17 UUs in the Parade: Lori Turner-Otte (Parade vehicle); Edna Anderson; Bill Ratcliffe; Jerrod Whitman; Bev Ball; Raghul Ramakrishnan; Eileen Howay; Carol Cott; Patrick Breault; Kristin Kumpf; Judith Warren; Jen Sadler; Imran Khan; Michael Sommerton; Klarissa Fear- Firman and her two sons, Dominic and Jon; Being near the end of the Parade, it took 1/2 hour just to reach the starting point at Adelaide with a total walking time of about 1 1/2 hours. The route this year was along Queens Ave., west to Colborne St., north to Central Ave., west on Central Ave. to Wellington St. and south on Wellington. The crowds appeared to be even more enthusiastic and colourful than usual. The walkers were cheered on by UUs along the Parade route, including Melanie Cancade, Michael, Elliott and Ezra, as well as Patricia Daly, Madeleine and family.

The traditional UU Pride Booth at the Annual 3 Day Outdoor Festival at Victoria Park was from Friday, July 21 to Sunday, July 23. The Booth was set up by Ann Klinck, Kay Rhebergen, Lori Turner-Otte, Bill Ratcliffe and Thomas Breault. One of the highlights of the Booth was Kay Rhebergen's painting on a sheet that provided a great backdrop for the Booth. The many identities and their appropriate colours were depicted. The painting resulted in great interest from some of those attracted to the Booth as they tried to find out where they fitted in. Another highlight were Ann Klinck's four display boards at the back of the table. New congregational brochures along with other Informational materials, a beads craft area, wild seed packets, Pride stickers/tatoos, a large qr printout and Rocket candy handouts were features of this year's UU Booth. The qr code probably saved a lot of brochures as people could go directly to the new enhanced UFL web site. Bill Ratcliffe organized volunteers to staff the booth. The many volunteers who made the Booth happen included: Lori Turner-Otte; Ann Klinck; Thomas Breault; Brian Keith; Bev Ball; Jerrod Whitman; Raghul Ramakrishnan; Kat Proctor; Edna Anderson; Eileen Howay; Judith Warren; Jen Sadler; Imran Khan. The Booth was dismantled by Raghul Ramakrishnan, Thomas Breault and Bill Ratcliffe. The Booth staff connected with many people who were interested in Unitarian Universalism. Many of those were probably Unitarian Universalist without knowing it!

Thank you to all who organized or participated in these very successful 2023 UU Pride Celebrations.

In closing, Joy is in the details. It is appropriate that we reflect on the timeless lyrics of Holly Near, "We are a Gentle Angry People" from the Singing the Living Tradition hymnal, #170, " We are gay and straight together, And we are singing, singing for our lives. We are gay and straight together, And we are singing, singing for our lives."

Bill Ratcliffe, Pride Celebrations Committee.