

Hello, my name is Victoria Kyriakides, and I am a lesbian. I've also been a member of the church since I was born, and I now represent the youth and an LGBT perspective for the committee, so this topic hits close to home for me.

To me, the most important message of the Bible is that God loves all her children with no exception and that we, as God's people, should love thy neighbor. As a kid, that's what I thought everyone learned from the Bible. But I know now that some people definitely skipped over that bit!

LGBT people have unfortunately been the target of hate from the institution of the church and religion for a long time now. Because my generation is statistically the most openly diverse generation in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity than any before it, this notion of religion being exclusive has become alienating. I've watched many young people dismiss the church as a 'thing of the past'. As the youth change, the church needs to change with it. Young people need to explicitly know that our church is a safe place. By becoming an affirming congregation, we are taking a huge step towards that goal.

Aurora United Church is *my* church, and I want my church to accept me for who I am and to declare it to the world.