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Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council
Zion United Church
37 Franklin St.
Carleton Place, ON K7C 1R6

Dear Friends of Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council,

I'm sorry that I'm not able to be with you in person, as you gather to celebrate becoming an Affirming Ministry. This is a wonderful day for you, and for the whole United Church of Canada, as you proudly and publicly celebrate the full participation of people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions in the life and work of your ministry.

For a long time, the United Church of Canada has believed that a vital part of following Jesus' Way is to recognize that every person is a beloved child of God, and is deserving of respect and inclusion. It has taken us almost as long a time to move that understanding from our thinking to our living. As individuals, and as a community of faith, you have started that hard work of becoming more inclusive – through study, self-reflection, exploration of mission and ministry, and discerning the Holy Spirit's nudging. In coming to this day, you've committed yourselves to continue to the joyful work of recognizing the space that Christ has made at the table, and making sure that all who wish to sit there are welcome participants in the feast!

I am singing and dancing, "Alleluia, thanks be to God," for each and every one of you, today. Through and in your ministry, Jesus' work of justice and healing continues, not just this day, but into the future.

I hope that you are celebrating well! In becoming an Affirming Ministry, you have taken another step, and helped the wider United Church of Canada take another step, on our journey of faithful witness and service.

Almost five hundred years ago, a sister in faith, St. Theresa of Avila, wrote, "Christ has no body but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world..." Thanks be to God that you are Christ's body, blessing the world with compassion and wonder and hope for all.

In celebration,

The Right Reverend Dr. Carmen Lansdowne
Moderator / Modératrice
The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada