April 15, 2018 Affirming

Ooh, what a sweet little baby. Is it a boy or a girl? That’s a common question to the parent of a newborn.

Some children are comfortable with the gender assigned to them on their birth certificate, whereas some children and youth question the M or F sex they have been assigned. They do not fit neatly into either. They may grow to understand themselves as gender creative, gender independent, genderfluid, genderqueer, trans, two-spirit, intersex, agender, or non-binary. They also grow to understand that they face social exclusion, hostility or moral condemnation by those who fear them because they are “different”.

**Q:Are you a boy or a girl? A: No thanks** was the title of a workshop I attended at the Renfrew Public Library in February, 2018. The presenters Cara Tierney and Behc Jax-Lynx of BECK- describe themselves as a dynamic duo dedicated to the de-stigmatization of transgender individuals. Their workshops are designed to foster constructive, affirmative and forward-thinking dialogues on how we can make space for everyone in society.

Instead of being regarded as unwell or pathological oddities to be studied and defined by the medical profession, trans or gender diverse people define themselves by their own backgrounds and gifts. Cara and Behc help us go beyond terms such as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, and gender non-conforming by offering a beautiful and expansive understanding of humanity in which all are included.

There is growing understanding that M or F binary identification is restrictive, one of the categories by which the world seeks to divide and exclude. In 2017, Canada passed Bill C-16 which amends the Canadian Human Rights Act to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. If we at TSA desire to be affirming, we need to go beyond intellectual understanding and be guided by the law of love that is written in the heart, love that can transform the world.

Our Statement of Purpose says, ”Inspired by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ we strive to recognize the light of God in each person, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression”. I am in favour of TSA becoming an Affirming Congregation so we can proclaim that our church is a safe and respectful place of worship where everyone is valued and truly welcome.

Margo Aubert