Order of Service
June 7, 2026

We Were Always Here

Gathering Music "Kum ba yah", Emma Lou Diemer
Tom Berryman

Chime and Welcome Jada Williams

Announcement
Nathalie Thompson - Summer Services

Chalice Lighting & Covenant Polat Family

With open minds and loving hearts, we gather to search for meaning,
to care for one another, and to work together for a better world.

Invocation "There Is A Love" First Parish Choir

Elizabeth Norton

Opening Words Rev. Lisa Perry-Wood

Good morning! I'm Rev. LPW; my pronouns are she/her.

Welcome to our annual Pride celebration! Happy Pride!

I want to say that celebrating Pride is for *everyone*; if you're here, you belong.

If you've celebrated or stood up for yourself or been an ally to a family member or friend or anyone else who identifies on the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, you belong.

Even if that solidarity is only held in your heart, you belong, although today, today I want to talk about why it's important, even life-saving, to be loud and proud right now, especially as allies.

Again, let me say that celebrating Pride is for *everyone*.

How many of us have someone in our lives (including maybe yourself) who identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Non-binary, Queer, Questioning, or more? Raise your hands, keep them up, look around.

We have a lot of company here.

Our June theme is Flourishing Together, and what better way to ensure our flourishing than to celebrate all of who we are?

This is “A Protest and a Party” by Hannah Roberts Villnave:

People sometimes ask:
Is Pride a protest
Or a party?

And the answer is
Of course
Yes.

And why not?

Why not
Rejoice as we resist
Dance as we demand change
Celebrate as we create community that delights in
All of who we are?

So bring all of that
With you this morning.

Bring your policy demands
Bring your glitter
Bring your supreme court broken heart
Bring your rainbow socks
Bring the emptiness you feel
For our siblings gone too soon.

Bring your Gloria Estefan remix
Bring your tender hope for change
Bring your most garish eyeshadow
Bring your spirit, tattered and battered

By a world that seems insistent on

Choosing fear and hate.

Gather up all these things

And bring them here

To a place where we don't

Have to shoulder these burdens

Or celebrate these joys

Alone.

Come, let us worship

Together.

Dear friends,

Come now into this sacred and beloved space we co-create each week, and let us worship together.

Hymn #1019 "Everything Possible"

Time for All Ages Kate Holland

Hi Kate! Hi Lisa!

Lisa: This morning you and I are offering a Pride blessing!

Kate: Okay! But why is that important right now?

Lisa: Well, because this is a time when the queer community and our allies need our prayers of protection and celebration; it's a time to send ourselves off with armor and joy.

This blessing for, of, and by the LGBTQ+ community was co-created by Revs. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg, Hannah Roberts Villnave and Kayla Parker from their lived experience as queer ministers who love both blessings *and* parties.

Whether you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community or an ally, you're invited and welcomed to participate in this Pride Blessing.

Everyone is welcome in the community of precious, powerful LGBTQ+ siblings and allies!

And you're invited to participate in the Pride Glitter blessing we're about to share.

Kate: Glitter has long been a symbol for the LGBTQ+ movement of gritty, sparkly hope in the face of prejudice and oppression, of joy and pride in the face of hatred and bigotry.

Glitter is resilient and tenacious.

The briefest beam of sunlight causes it to shine out even in the dustiest and dreariest of spaces, and its beauty comes from its brokenness.

Glitter sparkles because it's many different broken pieces coming together, changing in every moment as the light changes.

This glitter that we share with each other today is a reminder that each of us is beautiful in our sacred imperfection, our ever-changing selves, our glorious plurality.

Lisa: *This* glitter comes in a tube; it goes on like face paint and can be easily washed off.

While Kate and I read the blessing, Max and ____ are going to offer glitter blessings, in honor of the sacred beauty inherent in every person.

You're invited to raise your hand if you'd like a blessing and show them where on your face, neck, arm, or hand you'd like to receive your glitter blessing.

Kate: Now, here's our Pride blessing and

Your response is:

"We are precious and we are powerful." Let's try that now!

Lisa: We come from fierce freedom fighters…
who organized and fought for their lives.
…[Black Queens and Kings] who ruled the ballroom,
… [and] insisted we dance even [in the hardest times].
From these ancestors, we learned…

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Kate: With the tenderhearted butches, the powerful femmes, the strong twinks and the soft bears,
With all the complexities that live within each of us
We know that we are whole, just as we are:

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Lisa: From every sibling who is told they can't bring their full self to queer community,
From them, we learn:

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Kate: To the elders who've seen it all
To those with one toe out of the closet
To those who are still in it
To those who tore down the closet altogether, we say:

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Lisa: In the face of hatred,
In the faces of those who deny our wholeness
We root ourselves in the truth we know:

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Lisa: From the dance floor to the Capitol rotunda,
From our kitchen tables to the White House,
From jail cells to classrooms to pulpits,
Whether whispered or shouted,
We will and do proclaim:

All: We are precious, and we are powerful.

Lisa: And our glitter blessing for all of us is:

“May you sparkle inside and out,

You’re fabulous, keep shining on,

Remember, you’re made of star stuff,

and May the beauty that you are shine as bright as the stars.”

Kate: Now we invite you to pause and look around at all the beautiful shining faces around you, at the amazing thing that is our precious bodies gathered in this space together.

Take a moment, now, just to marvel at how extra glittery we are today, how fabulous we are.

Lisa: Remember that everybody in this space and beyond it is a holy thing, every person a sacred being made of stardust.

Sing the Children Out

**May your mind be open to new learning. May your lips bring truth into the world.*

May your heart know love, And your hands do the work of justice, As you go your way in peace(2)

Offering

Shared Plate: The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention nonprofit for LGBTQ young people.

By giving today, you ensure support for LGBTQ+ young people facing crisis in a moment where messages of rejection can feel the loudest. Each gift helps fund critical crisis intervention and prevention services, letting young people know they are valued and belong. It's time to show them they're not alone, to be the supportive adult they need.

Offertory "O Waly, Waly (Surprised by Joy)", Emma Lou Diemer

Joys and Sorrows Ted Barnes

This week, we especially hold in our hearts and minds the people at the Delaney Hall detention center in New Jersey, as well as immigrants everywhere.

We denounce the cruelties being perpetuated by Federal agents, private prison corporations, and the like.

We echo the demands of those inside with our prayers and commitments: free the sick and the injured, the young and the old.

Free them all. May it be so.

Centering Moment

Spirit of Life, if you have a lesson for us, it is that all life is beautiful.

We are each born into this world who we are, tall or short, with our own colour of skin, with our own sexual orientation and gender identity.

How can anyone ever tell us we are anything less than beautiful, anything less than whole?

We pray that this nation and every nation will remember their duty to protect human life and particularly the lives of LGBTQIA+ persons fleeing danger and death.

We pray for those who are forced from their homelands and their cultures and their religions not because of some fault or sin, but because of who they are; who are placed in grave danger simply for being the person they were born to be.

We pray also for the enlightening of governments here and around the world who, with casual disregard for life, would deport those refugees back to their unfeeling homelands and near certain death.

All human beings are born free—equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience.

May we all act towards one another in affirmation of our common humanity.

We pray for the courage to act boldly, the tenacity to hold our state and federal legislators accountable, and the strength to remember our inherent goodness and the goodness of those who disagree with us.

We pray and we keep fighting for the change we know our nation needs; the change we know is possible.

We pray for an end to racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism; we pray for an end to hatred and white supremacy.

And we act to end them in all the ways we can.

May it be so, Blessed be, Amen.

Music for Meditation

Reading "The Queer Beatitudes" (Tim Atkins)

The Queer Beatitudes

Lynn: Blessed are the fabulous,
for they remind the world that life is meant to be lived in color.

Jada: Blessed are the brokenhearted,
for they will find chosen family to hold them together.

Lisa: Blessed are the drag queens, the leather daddies, the femmes, the butches, the bears, the twinks, and all beyond and between,
for they show us the endless creativity of love.

Lynne: Blessed are those who have been told they are "too much,"
for they will discover they are exactly enough.

Jada: Blessed are the lovers who kiss on sidewalks,
for they make the streets holy ground.

Lisa: Blessed are the ones who glitter, who dance, who vogue, who sing off-key in karaoke bars,
for theirs is the kingdom of joy.

Lynne: Blessed are the elders who paved the way,
for we follow in the freedom of their work.

Jada: Blessed are the young ones still figuring it out,
for the world is wide enough for all their becoming.

Lisa: Blessed are we, the whole queer family [and our beloved allies],
for love is our birthright, and joy is our inheritance.

Anthem "Seasons of Love" from "Rent", Jonathan Larson

Sermon "We Were Always Here" Rev. Lisa

So, friends, it's Pride Month, and I *really want* to joyfully shout "Happy Pride!" but, honestly, it doesn't quite feel as happy as it did, even a couple of years ago.

So many LGBTQ+ rights in this country, laws we thought were settled, have been overturned, relitigated or threatened.

The right to foster or adopt children, protections for transgender folk in schools or work, or to serve in the military, for trans kids to have therapies they need; even 22 years of same sex marriage is at risk of being reversed - the list goes on and on.

And those of us in the queer community and our allies, we are tired, so *very* tired of fighting for rights we thought we'd already won.

It's called "queer exhaustion."

And I mean queer as in the *bell hooks*' words:

"Queer not as being about who you're having sex with (though that can be a dimension of it), but queer as being about *the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent it and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live*."

The word “queer" was reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community in the 1970s to embody the power and solidarity of our broad spectrum of identity and self-expression.

You’ve probably heard the old rallying cry of the queer community: We're here, we’re queer, get used to it!”

Not everyone in the LGBTQ family identifies as “queer”, but many of us have come to embrace it.

There is “queer exhaustion” not just because LGBTQ+ rights are under attack.

The queer community (and ours here) are fierce allies to black, brown, Latinx, Asian, indigenous, and immigrant siblings, whose lives feel much less safe than ever, with racism, white supremacy, ICE deportations and Christian Nationalism on the rise.

We’re allies to women, whose control over their bodies and reproductive health are dangerously at risk.

Allies to anyone at risk of gun violence, which is pretty much anyone who shops, attends worship, goes to school, or just walks around their neighborhood.

No wonder queer folk are exhausted.

No wonder we're ALL exhausted.

And queer exhaustion is coupled right now with queer rage.

This hate-filled movement has to stop.

It's more dangerous to live openly as LGBTQ+ in this country right now than it has been in decades.

No wonder we're angry…and scared.

June 28th will be the 57th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall uprising, named for a bar on Christopher St. in New York City.

And just remember what it was like to be a queer U.S. citizen in 1969:

- Gay sex was illegal in every state but Illinois.
- No federal, state, or local laws protected gay men or lesbians from being fired or denied housing.
- There were no openly LGBTQ politicians or identifiable TV or movie characters.
- No openly LGBTQ police officers, public school teachers, doctors, or lawyers.
- No political party with a gay caucus.

That was the background against which ordinary LGBTQ+ folks reached their limit and rose up.

In the late ‘60’s, the Stonewall Inn was like a speakeasy in Prohibition—the mafia paid off the police, but they still regularly raided bars like Stonewall.

Saturday night, June 28, 1969, was different.

The police raided the Stonewall at 1:00 a.m. Saturday morning, with a large crowd of customers.

First a police officer shoved a cross-dresser, who struck the officer over the head with her purse.

The cop clubbed her, a wave of anger passed through the crowd.

An eyewitness reported:

“The cops, used to the cringing and disorganization of gay crowds, snorted off.

But the crowd didn’t disperse,” it *grew;* people ran to pay phones, calling their friends, urging them to come to the Stonewall.

The next patron taken was a lesbian; three or four policemen were on her.

Lesbians, right? We're tough!

She fought them all the way to the police car.

Inside the car, she yelled out, "Why don't you guys *do something*?"

That was the turning point that "set the crowd wild."

The Stonewall Uprising has gone down in history "as the first time thousands of LGBTQ+ folk went into the streets to protest" for equal treatment under the law.

One year later, the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March was held.

There've been pride marches all over the country every June since then.

We're raised up on the shoulders of the Stonewall Uprising that galvanized the LGBTQ+ rights movement.

In the face of state-sanctioned oppression, fired up with queer rage, people rose up and said “No more!”

That’s what it means to take a stand for justice, my friends.

Stonewall showed us how to be brave.

And, beloveds, we’re going to need to be brave again.

As for me, I didn’t come out until I was in my 40s, even then I was only out to myself, the first couple of years.

It took some fifth grade girls, who didn’t understand why their school principal wouldn’t talk about her sexual orientation.

Also, my son saying: “Mom, when were you going to tell me that you were a lesbian?”

Still, my feelings of being a fraud kept me in the closet.

At my first pride parade, I wondered if I belonged, if I was really wanted.

Having had a husband and living with white, cisgender, straight privilege for 40 years, could I possibly be wanted in this family, this community?

It took me years to fully absorb the reality:

We are *all* wanted in this family, no matter how we identify, no matter who we are, because queer family is a family of *radical* welcome.

The current fight to hold onto the rights of LGBTQ+ people will take all of us.

This is *all* of us *for* all of us.

That means men and male-identified for women’s rights, the whole LGBTQ+ community for transgender rights, adults for the rights of young people just coming out.

Every one of us is needed, because the fights ahead of us are going to be long and hard and we’ll need all the courage we can muster.

According to a report from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation released two years into the Trump administration, the LGBTQ+ community is hurting by nearly every metric.

We're living through reduced access to healthcare, increased stigma in the workplace, declining financial security, and more.

Perhaps most concerning of all, nearly half of all LGBTQ+ people report being "less out" in some area of their lives.

That truth should alarm all of us.

Because openly embracing LGBTQ+ pride has been life saving;

no one should be forced back into a silence that could threaten their survival.

This year, the Trump administration announced that June was no longer Pride month.

Arkansas renamed June “Fidelity month”; Tennessee and Indiana are calling it “Nuclear Family month”.

Republican lawmakers introduced a resolution to make June “Family Month”, honoring the “nuclear family” and rejecting Pride Month as “perverse”.

Also, trans people are on the newly designated lists of terror groups in the United States.

Still the queer community, advocates and allies continue to fight back.

Throughout our history, the LGBTQ community has always found the light in our darkest moments.

We've always fought back when our rights and freedoms were under attack.

Because pride has — and always will be — a protest *and* a party.

And this year's Pride sees an LGBTQ+ community more engaged, more organized, and more powerful than we're given credit for.

We're here, we've always been here, and we're not going anywhere.

Can I get an "Amen"?

So, here's where it gets very personal.

As a late-blooming lesbian, I embraced the word queer because it places me in solidarity with the full expanse of my LGBTQIA+++ family.

The word queer means claiming a heritage, to which I am proud to belong, even if my white skin and wealth and education and nationality put me in a very privileged position, compared with the majority of my queer siblings.

It has always been that way for me; I have always identified with the underdog.

That famous statement by Martin Niemoller has always rung a deep and resounding bell for me.

And now, here we are….

First, they came for our transgender siblings; they came for immigrants and all people of brown and black skin (who, by the way, they have been coming for, for centuries).

They came for left-leaning lawyers and media and journalists, and government officials.

They came for health care, for Medicaid, for people with disabilities, and are coming, make no mistake, for anyone who does not identify as their brand of white, straight, ultra-conservative Christian.

There is a road map, a sinister plan, and it is being followed to the letter, relentlessly.

So, dear, dear friends, I am asking you not to wait for them to come for you and your loved ones, but to think about what you can do now.

Whether it's giving money or time or energy, writing postcards, making phone calls, having tough conversations; whatever it is, that is yours to do, I am asking you to do that.

I’m asking you to do that because I know you.

I love you, and I know you love me, and you also love some queer people.

I saw those hands!

And, as a group, we are scared friends. We are terrified.

Now, we are fighters, we always have been, we always will be.

But we are going to need your help.

It might be scary, but, let me remind you, we can do hard things.

We need you to use your privilege, your influence, your wealth and power and connections, your voices and actions, to survive.

We have always been here. We are here now.

I hope, I pray, that my big, loud, wild and wonderful queer family will always be here.

And we are going to need your energy to add to our own, because that's what it means to be an ally.

It's Pride month - and no one can take our pride away from us.

Pride will always be filled with joy because we will be together.

All of us.

There'll be times to celebrate and *all* of us will be in the celebration.

There'll be joy in tender moments, like the hesitant coming out of a teenager, and joy in big moments when we celebrate a legislative or election victory.

We'll be in all of that together; we'll all be in both the rage *and* the joy.

That's what it means to be a family; that's what it means to be a community.

When we're together, it's easier to be brave.

We should all be filled with rage at the injustices enacted upon the bodies of black and brown people, the bodies of immigrants, the bodies of trans folk and women, the bodies of the sick and elderly.

And we should be outraged by how many people in this country, how many elected officials support these backward moves toward injustice.

There's still plenty to be angry and heartbroken about.

But there's plenty left to sing about, too.

Queer rage, like any good rage, doesn't mean shutting out the joy.

Amid all the horrible news out there, queer joy has helped the queer community survive.

There's room in the halls of anger for celebration; and our joy has always pushed us forward.

It has brought us gifts, like growing the capacity for radical welcome.

There's laughter at the riot and dancing in the march.

As Hannah Roberts Villnave says: "Pride is a protest *and* a party!"

Queerness has always been an act of creation;

in our deep belief that there's a world worth imagining, we find strength to fight against the world we've been handed.

Friends, when we say love is love is love, that's what we mean.

Whoever you're attracted to, however you choose to identify.

Choice is sacred.

Not only is all of who you *are* welcome here,

all of who you *love* is welcome here.

Welcome, deeply wanted, celebrated.

Let's be proud of who we are, proud of this family, proud of this community; let ourselves swell with joy and pride today.

It doesn't matter how we showed up, the fact is we did show up.

That is what always will matter.

Showing up for each other, showing up for our family, every single time.

This country, dear friends, is ours to reimagine.

Let's be loud and proud, and let's be brave, because we've always been here, we've always been doing the work of liberation, and there's still so much work to be done—to move the cause of liberty and equality forward, to resist those who would roll back the tide of progress—and we're lifted up on the shoulders of courageous ancestors who've come before us, acting for peace and justice.

Dear ones, I'm so grateful to have been on this journey to human liberation alongside you these last two years.

Let's keep going; there really is no other choice.

Happy Pride, my friends!

May it be so, Blessed be and amen.

And now, please rise in body or spirit…

The choir will sing the first verse and chorus through, and then we'll all sing together from the beginning.

Hymn "Draw the Circle Wide", Gordon Light, Mark Miller

Closing Words

How could anyone ever tell you…

Dear friends, take all that we have shared…

Choral Response "Love is a Circle", Ross Lee Finney

Postlude "The Cascades", Scott Joplin

There’s also a history of LGBTQ+ rights in Unitarian Universalism.

And while there’s much to be proud of, it didn’t start well.

In 1967, two years before Stonewall—a survey showed that *80 percent of UUs believed homosexuality "should be discouraged by education"*.

But change was coming.

In July 1970, a year *after* Stonewall, the UU General Assembly passed a resolution urging "all people immediately to bring an end to…all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality".

Those words didn't end discrimination against LGBTQ+ folks within our congregations, of course, but it was a big move in the right direction.

Fast-forward to the '71 General Assembly, where two UU ministers wore buttons saying, "I'm gay, how about you?" holding signs that said, "Gay is groovy," and passing out "posters, fliers and pamphlets."

By the end of the week, the UU Gay Caucus grew from two to fourteen members and it kept on growing.

In 1971 the UUA released *About Your Sexuality*, "the first sex education program to affirm that gay sex was natural and should not be criminalized."

That curriculum, known today as **Our Whole Lives**, or OWL, is widely regarded as a gold standard in lifespan sexuality education.

In 1980 two openly gay men were called to two different UU pulpits; the first two openly lesbian UU ministers were called in '84 and '85.

But it wasn't until 2003, two days before the anniversary of Stonewall, that the Supreme Court struck down the sodomy law in Texas and, by extension, invalidated sodomy laws in thirteen other states.

“Wow,” we thought.

“The world can change.

We don’t have to passively accept discrimination.

Together we can work to build the world we dream about.”

It took queer people *and* their allies to change this reality.

Being brave needs all of us.

Wow. The UUs are sure mad about being removed from the military’s list of acknowledged religions.

Meanwhile, (edited to add: On May 6) the White House added trans people to their list of terrorists and promised “we will hunt you down and kill you” and almost no UUs (who aren’t themselves trans) said anything.

It’s not a social media post or an opinion, it is a policy and threat made official on the White House website. But, you know, get mad when you’re excluded from the war machine instead.

“In addition to cartels and Islamist terror groups, our national CT activities will also prioritize the rapid identification and neutralization of violent secular political groups whose ideology is anti-American, radically pro-transgender, and anarchist. We will use all the tools constitutionally available to us to map them at home, identify their membership, map their ties to international organizations like Antifa, and use law enforcement tools to cripple them operationally before they can maim or kill the innocent.”