

Children's Time Story: Story Ride, Sally Ride¹! (David Kim-Cragg)

Sally Ride was the first woman astronaut in NASA. She flew into space on space shuttles. Sally loved the stars. She loved looking up and them at night. They helped her dream big dreams. The brightest star in Sally's sky was a woman named Tam. Sally loved Tam very much but she didn't tell anyone else. Sally was afraid knew other people expected her to get married to man. So she didn't say anything to anybody else. But when she had a problem she always came to Tam.

Before her first flight into space Sally was really nervous. "I'm a woman," thought Sally, "No other woman has been a NASA astronaut before. What if I screw up? What if the men won't trust me because I'm a woman? What if there is an accident and I don't come back?" Sally shared her with her feelings with Tam. "Don't worry," said Tam, "You are every bit as good as the men. They will respect you. And although it is a dangerous mission whatever happens I love you and you'll always be safe in my heart. So ride your dream, Sally Ride!"

Sally got on the shuttle and blasted off into space. Up in space she gazed down on the beautiful earth. She saw the bright twinkling lights of a million stars. She wondered at the mystery of it all. And when the mission was over and she had landed safely she went and threw herself into Tam's arms, gave her a big kiss and told her all about what she had seen.

Time passed. Sally got older. The space shuttles got older. Sally retired as an astronaut. The shuttles retired from space missions and stopped flying. "What am I going do to now?" wondered Sally. "I've always wanted to teach kids about science in school. But I've never done that before. What if I get scared in front of them? What if I'm not a good teacher? What if the kids don't like me?" Sally trusted Tam with her feelings. "Don't worry," said Tam, "You have an exciting story. The kids will love you. And no matter what happens I love you and you'll always be safe in my heart. So ride your dream, Sally Ride!"

¹ Sally Ride was the first American woman to fly in space. For fun, she liked to run. She also played tennis, volleyball and softball. Ride wrote science books for children. The books are about exploring space.

Sally went into the classroom. All the kids looked up to her. She gazed down on their beautiful faces. She saw their bright twinkling eyes. She wondered at the mystery of it all. And when the class was over she went and threw herself into Tam's arms, gave her a big kiss and told her everything that had happened.

One day Sally got some very, very bad news. She had cancer. The doctors said she was dying. Sally told Tam. "I'm scared," she said, "I don't know what to do. I love you very much. But I never told my astronaut colleagues, or my school students about you. If I die, who will be there to comfort you and look after you?" "Don't worry," said Tam. But in her heart she was sad and worried too.

Sally died. But before she died she told her family that she wanted everyone to know how much she loved Tam. At Sally's funeral Tam got up and looked out at the beautiful faces in the crowd. There was family, astronaut friends from the NASA, friends from the school, even reporters from the newspaper. They all knew how much Tam and Sally loved each other. She saw the bright twinkling light of acceptance in their eyes and wondered at the beauty of it all. And quietly she said, "Good bye, Sally. I miss you. But you will always be safe in my heart. Ride into the great dream, Sally Ride."

David Kim-Cragg

Questions for Reflection:

Why do you think Sally did not want to talk about Tam?

How would it have been for Tam if Sally had died without anyone knowing how important Sally was for her?

IF you are thinking ahead, a Church School activity (going along with the GenderBread Person below) might be to decorate GingerBread cookies with rainbow colours for a congregational snack after worship.

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Prepared by Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

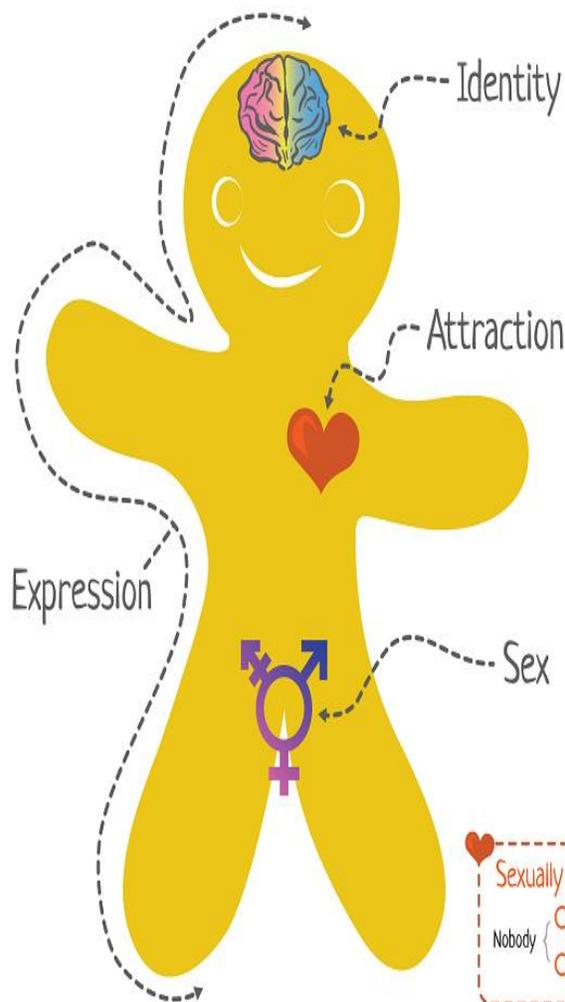
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You may also choose to use the following diagram of the GenderBread Person as a bulletin cover or an individual handout.

The Genderbread Person v3.3

by its pronounced **METROsexual.com**

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more. In fact, that's the idea.



Plot a point on both continua in each category to represent your identity; combine all ingredients to form your Genderbread

4 (of infinite) possible plot and label combos

Gender Identity

Indicates a lack of what's on the right.

Woman-ness

Man-ness

How you, in your head, define your gender, based on how much you align (or don't align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.

Labels: "woman", "man", "two-spirit", "genderqueer"

Gender Expression

Feminine

Masculine

The ways you present gender, through your actions, dress, and demeanor, and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.

Labels: "butch", "femme", "androgynous", "gender neutral"

Biological Sex

Female-ness

Male-ness

The physical sex characteristics you're born with and develop, including genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones, chromosomes, etc.

Labels: "male", "female", "intersex", "MtF Female"

Sexually Attracted to

Nobody

(Women/Females/Femininity)

(Men/Males/Masculinity)

Romantically Attracted to

Nobody

(Women/Females/Femininity)

(Men/Males/Masculinity)

For a bigger bite, read more at <http://bit.ly/genderbread>

In each grouping, circle all that apply to you and plot a point, depicting the aspects of gender toward which you experience attraction.

PRIDE PARADE 2016

Lowell and I attended the Pride parade here in Saskatoon for the first time this June as supporters of Grosvenor Park United Church. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting fellow participants and parade watchers. The fun, excitement, energy, the vibrant colours of the float and the feelings of inclusiveness all added to the enjoyment of the parade. We returned home with a good feeling in our hearts.

Later this year, we attended the Pride Parade in Toronto on July 3rd, the largest pride parade in the world. This parade followed a month long Pride month which included a Trans focused marketplace, family programming, a health zone and a Clean, Sober, Proud Place among other programs. The theme of the Pride month "You can sit with us" was meant to invoke inclusion and breakdown discrimination. There was a conscious effort to include members from Latinx, 2-Spirited, Trans, Middle Eastern and Black communities.

The morning of the Toronto Pride parade, I donned my Grosvenor Park United Church Pride T-shirt and Lowell and I rushed to catch the subway to Yonge Street to get a good vantage point for the parade. I wore my Pride T-shirt in hope that it showed my support for the LGBT2Q community and for diversity. (Mark Trottier also told me that the T-shirt would be a good conversation starter). The street was already lined up for miles, but we were able to find a spot near the front. There was a lot of excitement in the air prior to the start of the parade along with some religious groups protesting. As we waited for the parade to start, we visited with a number of people, mostly youth, from different parts of Ontario. They were open to share some of their experiences. Since there was a very long delay in the parade, store owners and security handed out bottled water which was greatly appreciated in the 35 degree heat.

The Black Lives Matter community lead the parade and once the parade resumed after the protest delay it evoked the same excitement, fun, energy and colour as the Saskatoon Pride parade with one surprising difference-the amount of nudity. There were floats from many organizations including the police, health organizations, different LGBTT2Q communities, church groups (primarily United Church), as well as, members of Orlando gay community. Another surprise during the parade was that a member of almost every float came over to embrace me, shake my hand or give me a high five. I was overwhelmed with this attention and mentioned it to a member of the Vancouver gay community. He said the probable reason for this attention was that people in the parade recognized my T-shirt as one from the United

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Church and since the Gay community holds the United Church in high regard for their genuine support of the gay pride movement, I was the recipient of some of this respect for the United Church. (This was only his take on the attention received).

Though we have come a long way in supporting diversity, being inclusive and celebrating love, as a global community, we still have a long way to go in creating a better future for all people. In light of the Orlando shootings, the Pride Parade held a silent tribute for the Orlando shooting victims.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Snodgrass

Being An Ally- Nancy Turner

Today I am going to speak today about being an ally.

Use of the term 'ally' in relation to marginalized groups is relatively new to me, however, what the term represents is not new.

Being an ally means fighting for the rights of a marginalized group that I am not a part of.

I've tried to boil down what I feel I have to work at everyday in being an ally (some days more successfully than others!) and I would like to share 5 key things with you today:

1) I have to understand my position of privilege

This privilege is something that I have not earned, but received simply because of my characteristics – the way I was born.

When explaining this to my 6 year old daughter (who enjoys video games), I liken this to recognizing that some of us are playing this game on level 1, while others are on level 5. There are fewer barriers for me, fewer obstacles in my way and its far easier for me to get to the finish line.

This doesn't mean I haven't worked hard or that I've sailed through life or not met challenges. It just means there are things I don't have to worry about ever facing because of who I am.

I don't have to worry about what bathroom I may use in the mall or at work because they have been designated female and male with me in mind.

I don't have to worry about a job application I put in being set aside simply because of the way my name sounds.

I also don't have to worry about being watched while browsing in a store simply because I am less likely to be viewed as suspicious because of the colour of my skin.

I've never had to get through the game at level 5, but it is my job as an ally to find out what its like as best I can, acknowledge and accept that some things are easier for me and take what action I can to contribute to levelling the playing field.

2) I need to listen and learn.

I need to work to listen to concerns raised by marginalized groups. I need to consider them thoughtfully and recognize that at times my position of privilege can mean experiences sound unbelievable – they are so removed from my reality.

Listening receptively can mean a marginalized group and the barrier they face can become more visible.

3) I need to consider my position in making change.

As someone in the dominant group I should not be at the centre of the solution, I should only be a part of it. This means dropping my agenda and my way of change.

The marginalized community should be at the centre and I should be there to do what I can to contribute to making it happen.

- 4) I need to accept that in being an ally, I will mess up and be uncomfortable and that I just have to deal with that.

Being a farm girl, I liken this to crossing a cow pasture. If I focus ahead with my eyes on the horizon, I am going to step in it on occasion. When it happens I need to apologise, learn from it, bend down, clean off my boots, and keep going.

- 5) Last but actually most importantly I need to be aware that being an ally is a daily activity I wake up and commit to doing – not a title or certificate I earn. It is a verb, not a noun

So as we each move forward in our work as allies for the LGBTQ2 community, the Aboriginal community, or other marginalized groups let's work:

- to recognise our privilege
- to listen
- to find our appropriate place in driving change; and
- accept we will mess up and we will learn from it
- and keep trying

Perhaps we can commit to each other that when we notice someone doing these things or perhaps more importantly, see someone bent over cleaning their boots, that we will take a moment to give them a smile or a nod to thank them for getting off the fence.

A Mother: Dorothy de Bruijn (*brew-in*)

Hi, I'm Dorothy de Bruijn, and I'm a member of the Affirming Committee, and I'd like to tell you why the committee is important to me.

I was brought up in a fundamentalist Christian home, and I certainly didn't know any gay people! Words like "gay" and "fag" were insults. I don't think I ever used those terms, and I had no idea what they even meant.

Fast forward a few years, when I defied my upbringing, and became a dance teacher. What a surprise! There are quite a few gay men involved in the dancing world, and I made an important discovery – gay people are like everyone else!

Fast forward a few more years, and I'm married, with 3 children, and we're living in small town Saskatchewan. While there were some lovely people living there, I learned to keep my more "radical" ideas to myself. I suspected very early on that my son was gay, but we never discussed it. I thought I would let him figure it out, and he'd let me know when he was ready. He did, when he was 15. It was no big deal to me. I just want what any parent wants – for their child to be safe and happy. What I didn't realize was what a huge struggle it was for him. He was anorexic and suicidal. It took a long time for me to ask him about those details. I felt like such a failure as a parent, for not helping him through that. I focused on loving him, supporting him and finding safe places where he could figure things out for himself. We started with going to the youth drop in night at the Avenue Community Centre.

He's doing great now – holds down 3 jobs in Vancouver, was an elder at a Presbyterian church here before he moved, and still attends the annual youth conference as a leader/chaperone.

That's why Affirming is important to me, because we are creating a safe place, and creating opportunities to have those critical conversations, so our struggling youth don't have to struggle alone

A teen two-spirit voice- Tana Forsberg

My name is Tana Forsberg. I am two spirit. This means that I don't feel that I am male or female, I am somewhere in between. I am Cree. My Church makes me feel welcome. At church I can be proud of myself and be and dress the way I want to express myself. The people there don't care how I dress. They just like me because of the person I am. (Tana is 12 years old, and sings in the church choir).

A father and two children Kim-Cragg family

David Kim-Cragg

My name is David Kim-Cragg. I am the Ecumenical Chaplain at the University of Saskatchewan.

It is a real honour to be here with my children, Noah and Hannah, to introduce a Pride Week movie on behalf of River Bend Presbytery of the United Church of Canada. Presbytery, for those of you who wouldn't know, is the fancy church name we give to the bunch of Churches in a given area. So I am here on behalf of the churches and ministries of the United Church in and around Saskatoon. Our presbytery is proudly Affirming which means that we have collectively gone through a process of education and have taken a vote, declared ourselves to be a church happily made up of individuals of many different sexualities and gender identities, and committed to resisting homophobia and transphobia, within and among us, and anywhere it might be found. I can tell you that as an ordained minister of the United Church, to have been given the chance to serve an Affirming ministry has meant a lot to me. It has challenged me to open my mind and heart and continues to heal me from the homophobic and transphobic things that I learned growing up.

It has meant a lot to me as well that I could raise my kids in an Affirming congregation and I am proud that they are here beside me to help me

Noah and Hannah and HyeRan and I are very happy to be on a journey of transformation with everyone in this room towards a new vision of a community where everyone is accepted, valued and honoured for their unique identities and orientations.

Hannah, a teen

Hi, my name is Hannah. I grew up at a church where people are accepted for who they are; whether they are lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, or if they still are trying to figure out which category they want to be in, or none of the above. It has never been strange to me; it still isn't to this day. It's rather special and amazing. Learning about these different sexualities in the community of my church; has made a different and wider and cooler perspective of the way I think of people, that I don't think I would have had if I hadn't been educated in the specific church I am in now. there are so many people in my church that I know have creative ideas and amazing personalities, that it doesn't matter if you are a girl that likes a girl, or a boy that likes a boy, or a boy that wants and becomes a girl, or vice versa.

Noah, a teen

I'm Noah, and I will be telling you about why being part of an affirming church is important to me. Because I am part of an affirming congregation, I get to meet many LGBT people.

Since I meet these people, I learn that there's nothing wrong about being LGBT. At church I learned that 70% of Canadians support the right of LGBT people to be who they are, free from discrimination.

I also learned that a trans-gendered woman committed suicide after being disowned from her Christian family and church, and I am glad that I belong to a congregation where that would never happen.

We are not yet living a new vision of a community where everyone is accepted, valued and honoured for their unique identities and orientations. But if our spiritual communities, our families and our groups of friends keep their eyes on the prize I know we will get there.

Jeff's Letter

Dear Friends,

I have been privileged to be able to actively seek out a church that welcomes me.

Being gay and being faithful in some denominations appear to be at odds.

My family is not big on homosexuality and points it out as a religious deviation. This doesn't resonate. It is an absolute relief to experience a faith community that sees the same side of God that I do. It is welcoming in the same way that a tall glass of water is on a hot day.

Grosvenor has put significant effort into this and it was evident from the moment I stepped in the doors. Being able to listen to regular 'minute' talks given specifically for people of different sexual orientations is more amazing than what I can put into words.

I know this came at a cost of public opinion when it was introduced. What I see are people who bravely made that choice and all I can say is that I am very thankful it was done.

I've met others who have faced a painful relationship with organized religion and have spent extended periods of time away from all faith communities. It has been my pleasure to be able to show a few of them a way to reconnect with something they felt wasn't possible.

Bre & Amery Deren

Being part of an affirming ministry is something that most people don't or didn't really understand. It is more than just a title saying, "Gay people can come here", to me it means all are welcome and all are seen equally in the eyes of god. As a young person I gave up my faith. To me being a homosexual person meant I could not belong to any type of faith, and more so god did not want me to be part of a church community. As I was going through life I had a lot of hate for god, or perhaps misunderstanding. I was trying to figure out who I was as a person, who I was as a young adult, as well as whom I was as a gay person. Not having anywhere to turn made some of these times very trying.

I will never forget the first time I saw the small group from Grosvenor Park united church walking with their signs at the pride parade. It was like everything I knew about religion was being set aside and this was a new beginning. When I discovered what an affirming ministry was I was overwhelmed with the idea that perhaps the church and god could accept for who I am.

My wife and I began going to Grosvenor United just for this reason, an affirming ministry. I had been away from church for quite some time so returning was quite frightening. I was simply looking for like-minded people with whom I could worship with on Sundays. Once we set foot inside the building we were greeted with "Welcome! We are so glad to have you". Beyond the handshakes, multiple introductions and welcoming words we were blessed with a service that left us with a yearning to come back. Not only were we accepted as a homosexual couple but also we were seen as just a couple.

We began to learn more about what an affirming ministry was and how the church does accept all people. Humans with a variety of flaws, colours, cultural backgrounds, gender identities and sexual preferences are equally loved children of god. We began to believe and restore our faith in the church and its community. With the ability to feel accepted and safe in a place of worship was something new for us and with that we began a new chapter of our lives. Being part of this affirming ministry as helped teach not only us but also our children the importance of faith, faith in god and faith in the human race.

I believe that being an affirming ministry can help people who may not have anywhere else to turn. Knowing that every human is accepted for who they are or who they were or who they have become is a leap above the closed minded idealistic we used to hold. All people are

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welcomed with open arms and open hearts. Not only was I welcomed in to a loving church family but it opened my heart to be able to welcome others in as well.

Troy Chmil

I am baptized Roman Catholic.

I am a proud Gay Man.

At times in the past I have found it difficult if not nearly impossible to reconcile these two statements. The result of which led me to stop going to Church or services of any kind and pretty much led me to question the existence of God in general.

That was until I was invited, by my boyfriend to attend a service at Grosvenor Park United Church (An Affirming Ministry).

I was not aware and was quite ignorant at the time what that meant...all I knew was that I was going because it meant something to him and I wanted to support that.

Now I am surely not saying it was some kind of religious epiphany or an event which immediately brought me back to embracing God or any organized religion. I went with an open mind, but as well a cynical heart.

Fast forward 3 years.... I am now a regular member of Grosvenor Park and I volunteer in several areas.

This could and definitely would not be at all possible without the fact that it is an Affirming Church. This is a snapshot of why...

- 1 I am not sure if anyone other than a member of the GLBT2Q community can truly appreciate how incredible it is to go to church every Sunday not worried or concerned about what people are thinking or whispering when you walk in with your boyfriend. Yet instead walk in feeling comfortable, welcome and proud to be there and a part of a community who doesn't judge you for who you are or who you love.
- 2 To be a part of a community that supports the wider community at large. Is concerned about issues regarding the GLBT community, yet also takes action to change the negativity that unfortunately rears its ugly head.
- 3 To have a safe and loving place to meet and be with people of all ages and all ethnicities who support you, offer you their wisdom, their love and their counsel, while sharing that my sexual identity is just as significant as the colour of my tie.

- 4 Most importantly it means hope! Hope that years from now when my 9 year old niece has children of her own, no matter whether LGBT2Q, we will no longer need Affirming Churches or ministries, but just churches where all are welcome.

Paul Ottmann-Campbell

Hello, my name is Paul Ottmann. I was born and raised in South Western Ontario the youngest of three children to a German Catholic farming family.

I grew up learning to fear God and believe that I was going to Hell for all my sins.

I continued to follow the Catholic religion well into my early 20's. As I started the coming out process I was shunned by the church and by my family.

No longer welcome to attend family functions or be apart of the only faith community I had known since childhood, I went on a spiritual journey alone.

Feeling overwhelmed and isolated, I educated myself by reading, meditating and creating a community of family by meeting other gay people who had strong beliefs.

What I learnt, was to interpret the passages of the Bible with an open mind, heart and soul. I began to hear the message of unconditional love and acceptance that Jesus and the Disciples wrote of many centuries ago.

My fear based understanding of religion and of God dissipated to a new understanding of our life's purpose and journey on earth.

We are here to demonstrate a 'Christ like life'. To be God in motion and demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance in all that we are, all that we do and all that we shall become.

Once I internalized and understood that my sexuality was not a barrier to acceptance I returned to the world of organized religion and educated myself in different faiths.

Embracing my Christian upbringing and understanding that we are all love, we are all children of God I did not feel complete without a faith based community to embrace and call home.

An 'affirming' parish that welcomes, that is inclusive of my sexuality is representational of my beliefs and understanding of God, faith and our life's purpose.

It is important for me to be whole and present in a faith community. No longer living in fear or hiding a piece of 'who' I was born to be.

Celebrating the joy of life in communion with other people brings great joy to my week and to my life.

In my darkest days of being shunned by family and my community a very cherished friend said, "God created you in the image of love, go and be who you were born to be and rejoice".

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Words will never express the joy my heart feels to attend church weekly and be accepted and present with my partner and so many other loving people of all generations and walks of life. I am humbled and filled with such gratitude to have travelled this journey and found home in a affirming congregation.

Fran Forsberg: a Mother (and chair of GPUC's affirming ministry committee, amongst many other things)

Becoming a member of an affirming church stirs many emotions for me.

I was not raised in the church. I always felt church was an exclusive club. Then one of my daughter's and I visited G. P. U.. I truly believe that the Creator puts you where you need to be, when you need to be there and introduces you to the people you need to help you on your journey.

I have been blessed to have a beautiful trans gender daughter. This child has taught me to be who I am. Showing me with her own strength and courage the gift of acceptance. I am also gifted with a child who is two spirit. This youth has shown me how it is to embrace and be joyful of who you are and who you are becoming.

At G. P.U. all of my family is accepted and cared for with such love and acceptance. We are not tolerated, we are accepted and celebrated! I cannot express my love and gratitude enough for this safe and caring community, to know my children in their diversity are embraced! I thank the Creator for putting us on this path.

Another part of being an affirming church is that it saves lives. For example, a youth who had been told that who they were an abomination to God. This youth reached out to the then pastor of GPU who reached back. Because of this compassionate response the youth decided to live and to do so true to themselves. This person is a gift, currently teaches in our Sunday School and I am thankful for the direction and live he has brought into our lives.