

## **Following the Rainbow: Celebrating LGBTQ+ and Inclusion into Worship**

**Tamara Shantz**

*Queer*- used to be a derogatory word but has become a tandem word/umbrella word for the LGBTQ+ community/rainbow community.

- There is a layer of fear for queer folk in the Mennonite community b/c it is not affirming by all and LGBTQ+ don't know who is in the room and what they are thinking
- How can we create a space where queer folk can feel truly alive and fully be themselves?
- It's okay and natural to be overwhelmed and a little resistant to this - there's a lot to learn. Acknowledge discomfort but don't let it become a stopping point.

### **Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion and Celebration**

- *Grounded in relationships* - this isn't about "solving a problem" this is about people that we already have in our congregation - this isn't about "us" & "them"
- *Celebration* - the queer community is a gift to the church. Let's celebrate this! Let's not just tolerate, let's love and celebrate the gifts of queer identity.
- *Mutual Need* - How do we need the LGBTQ+ community? What do we have to learn? Spiritual gift - What does it take to know your core identity in Christ and to live it out in the face of obstacles?
- *Understanding and Resisting Spiritual Violence* - violence is a reality in the lives of queer folks - even in safe places, queer folk carry this trauma. We need to do deeper work to tend to spiritual violence to care for this and take a stand in larger the larger community & culture. Be a vocal ally in the public sphere.
- *Pride* - are we proud of our connection to the queer community? How do we develop this? Bring this pride to the larger church community! To be affirming we truly need to be allies not just "welcoming." Are we willing to suffer to be in solidarity? Pride is not just celebrating - it's standing up for something!

### **Worship Considerations**

- Representation: Not just as special/exceptional. Eg. Children's story with 2 dads
- Language/Pronouns: Siblings in Christ, high & low voices
- Praying with the LGBTQ+ community - it shows up just like other communities do
- Relevant Rituals - e.g. celebrating naming ceremonies, coming out rituals etc., pride month
- Hymn Content - include queer experience
- What events are highlighted and supported - put these events in announcement sheets
- When people give feedback, try not to be defensive - listen with grace