

Iridesce:

The Living Apology Project

There were many watershed moments in 1988.

Canada and the U.S. signed the historic Free Trade Agreement, George Harrison had a hit with “When We Was Fab,” and Stevie Wonder declared his intent to run for mayor of Detroit. Change was brewing in The United Church of Canada, too.

In 1988, the United Church affirmed that “sexual orientation was not a barrier to full participation in the life and ministry of the church.” These were truly historic words celebrated by people throughout the church and beyond. At that time, it was impossible to foretell where that welcome would lead us—personally, theologically, and as a community.

Now, 30 years later, that welcome to LGBTQ+ people is still a work in progress, and we look on it with wonder and ask, What has happened since 1988? Where has the affirmation taken us? Where is the affirmation, and where are we, as a church, going?

At General Council 42 in 2015, the church voted to support a national project—Iridesce: The Living Apology Project—to share stories from people impacted by the milestone decision. The goal of Iridesce is to help the church determine if, and how, it might live into a possible apology to LGBTQ+ people and move forward together with people who have profoundly transformed the United Church for the better.

Iridesce is a project of Affirm United, and it is funded by **Mission & Service**. The word “iridesce” expresses a vision of infusing the colours of the rainbow flag with the love and light of God, creating iridescent colours that change when seen from different perspectives.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Iridesce invites the whole church to participate in this project, not just LGBTQ+ people. We want to hear from ministers, students in ministry, volunteers, lay people, and people who go to church, or who have visited our churches, from 1925 to 1988 to today.

HOW DO I TELL MY STORY?

Tell us, How was it for you in the decades leading up to the United Church’s 1988 decision, and through “the issue years”? What is it like now?

Maybe you were a member of a church, or ordered ministry, and needed to remain in the closet, or you were outed or persecuted.

Maybe you were an ally, friend, or family member of an LGBTQ+ person during these times. What are your experiences today? What challenges, sacrifices, or celebrations have arisen? How warm was your welcoming into the church as an LGBTQ+ person?

On the other hand, perhaps you were opposed to the 1988 decision. Tell us about that experience. Did you take steps to ensure that a welcome wasn’t extended? Why? Has your perspective changed today?

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Write down your story, record a video, make a collage, or attend a regional workshop. For more information, visit iridesce.ca or email: livingapology@gmail.com.

—**Aaron Miechkota** is the Project Coordinator for Iridesce, an inquirer in our church, and a theology student who is exploring her call to ordained ministry. Miechkota says working on Iridesce, and listening to stories of people in our communities of faith across the country, is a blessing. She looks forward to sharing stories with the whole church throughout the duration of the project.