

The Original Pride Flag - written and presented by Annette Taylor

Isaiah 55:12-13 (The Message)

You'll go out in joy,
you'll be led into a whole and complete life.
The mountains and hills will lead the parade,
bursting with song.
All the trees of the forest will join the procession,
exuberant with applause!

What a wonderful description of a celebratory parade! What a perfect scripture passage for our Pride Sunday. During the month of June, Pride Parades have taken place in cities and towns all across our country and around the world. Here in Swift Current, Southwest Saskatchewan Pride are organizing their parade for Saturday, July 9th. Pride Parades have become a celebration of life and love for all members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirit Communities. And the Pride Flag, the six-colour rainbow flag, has been a key part of those parades for over forty years.

But it hasn't always been this way. Fifty years ago, the recognizable symbol for the LGBT community was a pink triangle. But that particular symbol has a very dark past. It was used by the Nazi's to identify and stigmatize men interned as homosexuals in concentration camps before and during World War II. So, rather than using a Nazi tool of oppression, the queer community sought out a new, inspiring symbol. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_\(LGBT\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_(LGBT))

Some of you may know the name Harvey Milk. If you haven't watched the movie *Milk* about his inspiring life, I highly recommend it. Harvey Milk was one of the first openly gay elected officials in the United States. In the late 1970's, he talked

to an artist named Gilbert Baker and asked him to create a symbol of pride for the gay community. Mr. Baker chose an 8 colour rainbow flag. Baker decided to make his symbol a flag because he saw flags as a powerful symbol of freedom and pride. As he later said in an interview, “Our job as gay people was to come out, to be visible, to live in the truth, as I say, to get out of the lie. A flag really fit that mission, because that’s a way of proclaiming your visibility or saying, ‘This is who I am!’” <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-did-the-rainbow-flag-become-a-symbol-of-lgbt-pride>

The first two rainbow flags, commissioned by the newly-created pride committee in San Francisco, were hand-dyed and then sewn together by a team of thirty volunteers. Those two rainbow flags first flew in the 1978 Pride Parade in San Francisco.

After the assassination of Harvey Milk later that year, on November 27th, 1978 demand for the rainbow flag greatly increased. In response, a local flag company began selling a version using stock rainbow fabric with seven stripes: red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, blue, and violet. It became obvious that the eighth colour (hot pink) was not readily available and even Baker dropped it from his version of the flag. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_\(LGBT\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_(LGBT))

In 1979, the flag was modified again – for practical reasons. Aiming to decorate the street lamps along the parade route with hundreds of rainbow banners, Baker decided that he should have an even number of stripes flanking each lamp pole. To achieve this effect, he dropped the turquoise stripe. The result was the six-

stripe version of the flag that would become the standard for future production—
red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_\(LGBT\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag_(LGBT))

When Baker chose the colours each one had a meaning that was important to
the LGBTQ community:

Red – Life
Orange – Healing
Yellow – Sunlight
Green – Nature
Blue – Serenity
Violet – Spirit

Gilbert Baker knew in his heart that the LGBTQ community is a beloved part of
God's creation and is to be celebrated by creation itself:

You'll go out in joy,
you'll be led into a whole and complete life.
The mountains and hills will lead the parade,
bursting with song.
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Stereotyping in the LGBTQ Community - by Annette Taylor

You will see Deb's name beside this reflection in the bulletin and I want to thank
her for her research on this topic and for graciously allowing me to add my
personal experiences to this reflection.

I want to begin by asking you a question. When you think of people in the LGBTQ community what is the image or images that come to your mind? What's the first image? Is it the image of brightly dressed drag queen, a slim, white, effeminate gay man, or maybe a masculine-looking woman on a motorcycle?

One of the issues that the LGBTQ2S Community has to deal with is the fact that society has a very narrow view of who we are. That is partly because the images that everyone sees are the ones that are available to us in the news, on TV, and on the Internet. They often are stereotypical and ignore the breadth of the community.

The reality is that we are just as diverse as the rest of society. LGBTQ folk come from every gender, race, culture, class, or ability. And like the rest of society we have struggled with coming to terms with our own diversity. This is especially true for those of us who are privileged in other aspects of our lives: by being white, male, wealthy, gender binary and the list could go on. We too were unaware of white privilege and the freedoms that we have just because of the colour of our skin.

Like the rest of society, one of the first issues the gay movement had to deal with was giving women an equal voice in a community that was very male-dominated. I remember going to a lesbian and gay musical performance in Toronto back in the 1980's. The men way out-numbered the women. It was the first time I had every gone to an event where the men's washroom had a much longer line-up

than the women's. It took a lot of work for woman find to their voice within that sea of men.

In the 1990's I was on a community advocacy committee for the gay and lesbian counselling program at the Toronto Family Services Association. While I was there the committee became more aware of diversity and added a transgender member to our group. This was my first experience of a sitting at a table with a transgender man. Up to that point L & G (Lesbian & Gay) were the only initials that I associated with our community.

Then, in the early 2000's I got involved with Affirm United and met someone who identified as bisexual. He represented another group who felt invisible and unheard in our community and another letter got added to our acronym. We were now LGBT.

Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Colour all have different stories to tell. Our First Nations neighbours call themselves Two-Spirited and see themselves as distinct from the rest of our community. Their experience of being gay, lesbian, bi or trans is different than those of us who are white. When more than one area of marginalization is present then the discrimination leveled at individuals is often compounded. Many people of colour still feel invisible and unrepresented within the LGBTQ community.

We are now more aware of our diversity and we are moving forward, along with the rest of society, in our efforts to celebrate all of who we are. But there is still lots of work to be done.

The Progress Flag – written and presented by Deb Fletcher

Thank you, Annette, for sharing your experiences and your perspective on the stereotyping of the LGBTQ community. We still have so much to do and to learn. Annette described how the traditional Pride Flag recognized the gay community but there were many people who were not represented.

In 2018, Daniel Quasar, a graphic designer adapted the design of the rainbow flag by adding five additional colours: light blue, light pink and white to represent the trans community, and brown and black to represent the marginalized People of Colour and Indigenous peoples. The colour black is also meant to represent those living with AIDS and those no longer with us. We call this the Progress Pride Flag.

When the Progress Pride Flag was released, it immediately went viral. People hailed it both for being inclusive and for clearly showing that we have made progress and that we have more strides to make.

Though the Progress Pride Flag has not completely replaced the old six-color rainbow flag, it has taken over in many spaces. Where the rainbow flag gives a

message of supporting LGBTQ people, the Progress Pride Flag offers the message of supporting *all* of them.

The new flag pays homage to the people who founded the movement while simultaneously drawing attention to how People of Colour and trans people remain underserved and discriminated against compared to White, cis queer people. This was an important addition because people of color have often been left out of the queer narrative despite being the driving force behind the movement. It wasn't until recent years that our society acknowledged that the pride movement originated thanks to Black trans activists such as Marsha P. Johnson, who notoriously fought back against police at the Stonewall Inn in June of 1969. The Stonewall riot members were mostly people of color, and many were trans.

With the rise of the [Black Lives Matter movement](#), culture at large began to shift in a much-needed way towards acknowledging the vital roles that people of color have had in our society. The pride movement background is one of many areas where POC, particularly Black people, did not receive the recognition they deserved historically.

Additionally, the black and brown stripes are meant to represent people living with HIV/AIDS, those who have died from it, and the stigma around the virus that is still present in our society now.

Transwoman Monica Helms created the trans pride flag, which first flew in a pride parade in Phoenix, Arizona back in 2000. Monica Helms is a transgender activist,

author, and U.S. Navy veteran. Traditionally, the colors pink and baby blue have been used to represent whether a baby is a boy or a girl. Here, the colors denote those genders. The color white represents people who are transitioning or identify outside of the [gender binary](#). The flag is meant to provide affirmation for trans people.

The word "progress" in the new flag isn't only about adding the new colors to it. It's also because of the shape, which differs from the original design of horizontal stripes only. The Progress Pride Flag shows the white, pink, baby blue, black, and brown stripes in a triangle shape, with the old six-color rainbow stacked next to them.

This was done intentionally to convey the separation in meaning and shift focus to how important the issues represented on the left are. The placement of the new colors in an arrow shape is meant to convey the progress still needed. Quasar spoke publicly about how work is still needed in terms of People of Colour and trans rights. This arrow design is meant to highlight that.

This past Thursday, the Affirming Ministry committee with permission from Church Council, painted the church steps in the Progress Pride colours. We are thrilled at how beautiful they look! It was an incredibly hot day but we had a project to complete. Just as we were wilting and feeling too hot to finish, a man and his son came up to us and asked if we would like help. Dustin and Olen saw us painting. Olen said, "Cool! They are painting the steps for Pride. They look hot!...Should we help?" Dustin agreed and they came to lend a hand. Olen took

over painting the purple step and we felt so refreshed by their kindness!! We told Olen that we need more people like them in this world!! Thank you, so much, Olen and Dustin!! Olen is in Grade 5 and is part of the Gay Straight Alliance group at Irwin School.

When our service is finished today, we hope everyone will join us on the rainbow steps at the front corner of the church and be in the picture which we will send to Affirm United and also to the media. Let's shout it from the mountain tops,,,,First United is affirming and welcoming to all!