

Beloved Child of God: You Matter

Willmar Pride Worship Service

All Are Welcome!

A group of ordained and lay leaders from various churches and faith traditions in Willmar and Southwestern Minnesota—including some of us who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community—are honored to take part in this year's Willmar Pride celebration with a special religious gathering: **"Beloved Child of God: You Matter. Willmar Pride Worship Service."**

The service will be held at **Bethel Lutheran Church in Willmar on Saturday, June 7, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.**

Our preacher will be **Aubrey Thonvold**, Executive Director of ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation (ELCA), who grew up in Willmar and was part of Bethel Lutheran Church along with her family.

We'll celebrate with lots of music, led by **Carol Meier, Jason Parker**, and others. A pick-up choir will rehearse from **4:30 to 5:30 p.m.**, and cellist **Paul Benson** will offer a special musical piece. We'll begin the evening with a joyful **sing-along at 5:50 p.m.**

Following the service, all are welcome to stay for **fellowship and refreshments**.

We are preparing for this service with deep awareness and humility. We acknowledge that faith communities, including our own, have too often caused harm to LGBTQIA+ individuals—through words and actions, through misinterpretations of sacred texts, and through applying ancient passages in ways that wound rather than heal.

We are profoundly grateful to the scholars, activists, and courageous individuals—many of them from outside our faith traditions—who have helped us see more clearly that LGBTQIA+ people are whole persons, exactly as they are, with their sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics. We are especially thankful to the LGBTQIA+ members who, with steadfast love and resilience, have stayed in our faith communities and challenged us to confront our prejudices, learn, and grow. At the same time, we lament the pain that has driven some away—those who have felt judged, unseen, or unworthy in spaces meant to embody love.

We also remember those who struggled in silence, never finding the affirmation they deserved—some even carrying that struggle to their final breath. And we know there are

still many, within and beyond our faith communities, who are wrestling with who they are and whether they belong.

To all of you, we extend an invitation. To our faith communities, our neighbors in Willmar, and especially to the LGBTQIA+ people in our faith communities and beyond—we invite you to join us on June 7th. Together, we will proclaim the sacred worth of every person, rejoicing that each of us is a beloved child of God. Together, we will proudly affirm that we are who we are, with our sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics. And together, we will dream of a community where love, support, and belonging are not conditional, but abundant and shared by all.

Pastor Andrés Albertsen and the whole Willmar Pride Worship Service Planning Team

PS. Those who plan to join the pick-up choir please sign up emailing
willmarprideservice@gmail.com