

Don't Freeze: Bystander Intervention Training for LGBTQIA+ Allies on June 21

Can you imagine riding on the “L” or on a CTA bus or a Metra train and you realize that a person sitting near you is being sized up by another passenger. Then the denigrating comments start about how the person near you is dressed and how they present their sexual identity. You are concerned for how your fellow passenger’s dignity and sense of safety are being threatened. Your anxiety increases. You want to help. But you freeze. You feel powerless. You do nothing.

But it doesn’t have to be that way.



Knowing how to care for a neighbor and how to do it as safely as possible for all concerned is the goal of a [Bystander Intervention Training on June 21st](#) at Renewed Hope UMC, 3100 W Wilson Ave, Chicago. Their Social Action Team extends an invitation to anyone who wants to learn to be a better ally to LGBTQIA+ or anyone in a marginalized community.

Renewed Hope UMC is a new congregation that came to life on May 19, 2024 – Pentecost Sunday! Through the merger of Irving Park and Berry Memorial UMCs. Those churches stand out with their long histories of commitments to justice for LGBTQIA+ in and beyond the church. Both were early members of the Reconciling movement. Under the leadership of life-long justice worker Rev. Martin Deppe, Irving Park UMC welcomed RMN into their new offices renovated by the congregation for that purpose.

Six months after the birth of Renewed Hope, the congregation hosted Rev. Deppe for a colloquium on the role of faith communities in civil rights – past, present, and future. Rev. Deppe posed a series of questions to participants, starting with “Who is / will be under threat?” A list of more than 20 at-risk groups quickly emerged. Several stood out, including newly arrived persons and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Rev. Deppe continued, “What can be done to protect vulnerable people?” Again, participants came up with a long list which included the need to bear witness and to take action when we find ourselves as bystanders to harassment and threat.

Finally, Rev. Deppe asked, “What are some specific actions we can take?” Participants recognized the need to draw people around a particular mission rather than be overwhelmed by the enormity of the scope of injustice they had just identified.

Funded in large part by the generosity of Renewed Hope UMC, [registration for Bystander Intervention Training is open](#) to all for a modest \$25 registration fee. Membership in a UMC – or any church – is not required. Contact Martha Lundgren for more information or a newsletter block you can use to share the event with your congregation.