

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

Can you imagine riding on the Chicago "L" or on a CTA bus or a commuter train and you realize that a person sitting near you is being sized up by another passenger?

Denigrating comments start about how the person near you is dressed and how they present their sexual identity. You are concerned for your fellow passenger's dignity and sense of safety. 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 LGBTQIA+ neighbors and how to do it as safely as possible for all concerned are the goals 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+ persons or anyone in a marginalized community.

Renewed Hope is a United Methodist congregation that came to life in 2024 through the merger of Irving Park and Berry Memorial UMCs. The originating 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. In 1992, under the leadership of life-long justice worker Rev. Martin Deppe, Irving Park UMC welcomed Reconciling Ministries Network into new offices the congregation renovated for them.

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, attendees 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.

At the meeting following that civil rights colloquium, team members reflected on the responses to the questions posed in the colloquium. One team member observed that even in fairly liberal Chicago, harassment and harm happens - and is likely to happen in front of them. Despite this, the group felt a lack of confidence that any of them could be effective allies in the moment of witnessing harassment in action. Their [June 21st Bystander Intervention Training event](#) offered to the public is a direct response to this realization.

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 (martha@aztec506.net; 520-834-6015) for more information or to receive a newsletter block you can use to share the event with your organization or congregation.