

# Open and Affirming Sunday— June 28, 2026

## **We Shall Not Be Moved! Rooted in Love, Justice, and Affirmation**

**by: Rev. Derek A. Terry, Acting Executive Director of the Open and Affirming Coalition**

**Anchor Scripture:** Jeremiah 17:5–8

5 Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. 6 They shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. 7 Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. 8 They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. (NRSVUE)

### **Lectionary Scriptures for June 28, 2026, Proper 8:**

Genesis 22:1–14 and Psalm 13

Jeremiah 28:5–9 and Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18

Romans 6:12–23

Matthew 10:40–42

## **Theme Introduction**

For generations, people who were told to move, hide, wait, shrink, assimilate, or disappear have found a way to sing themselves steady. From the Black freedom struggle to Stonewall, from ACT UP to Pride parades, from queer elders who survived silence to trans youth fighting to live out loud today, our communities know that singing can be survival. Joy can be protest. Love can be resistance. Faith can be a root system.

This year, the Open and Affirming Coalition invites churches to celebrate Open and Affirming Sunday under the theme:

**We Shall Not Be Moved: Rooted in Love, Justice, and Affirmation.**

This is not a passive theme. This is not a polite welcome mat. This is a declaration.

*We shall not be moved* from love.

*We shall not be moved* from justice.

*We shall not be moved* from affirmation.

*We shall not be moved* from protecting the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and others.

*We shall not be moved* from the truth that LGBTQ+ people are sacred, gifted, called, beloved, and necessary to the Body of Christ.

Jeremiah 17 reminds us that those who trust in God are like trees planted by water. When the heat comes, they do not fear. When drought comes, they keep bearing fruit. That is the image for this moment. Open and Affirming churches are called to be rooted deeply enough to withstand fear, backlash, silence, and hate.

The lectionary for this Sunday sharpens the call. Genesis 22 forces us to reject any theology that asks us to sacrifice our children. Psalm 13 gives voice to the holy cry, “How long?” Jeremiah 28 warns against false peace. Psalm 89 reminds us to keep singing of God’s steadfast love. Romans 6 calls us to refuse death-dealing powers. Matthew 10 tells us that belonging is sacred, and that even a cup of cold water can become an act of gospel resistance.

So we gather with queer joy and holy backbone.

Not tolerance.

Not token welcome.

Not “you can come, but don’t be too much.”

Not “we love you, but please do not make us uncomfortable.”

Affirmation means we bless what God has blessed.

Affirmation means queer people do not have to be healed from who they are.

Affirmation means trans and nonbinary people are not problems to solve, but beloved members of the Body of Christ.

Affirmation means LGBTQ+ people belong in the pulpit, at the table, in leadership, in the choir, in the nursery, in the streets, in the movement, and in the fullness of the church’s life.

Rooted in love.

Rooted in justice.

Rooted in affirmation.

Like a tree planted by water, we shall not be moved.

## **Call to Worship**

Leader: Beloved, some of us came here tired, or carrying grief.

People: But we are still here.

Leader: Some of us came with joy in our bones and rainbows in our spirit.

People: And we are still here.

Leader: In a world that tries to erase queer stories,

People: We shall not be moved.

Leader: In a time when trans and nonbinary lives are targeted,

People: We shall not be moved.

Leader: When fear tells us to be silent,

People: We shall not be moved.

Leader: When shame tries to pull us from the truth of who God made us to be,

People: We shall not be moved.

Leader: We are rooted in love.

People: We are rooted in justice.

Leader: We are rooted in affirmation.

People: We are rooted in God.

Leader: Like trees planted by living water,

People: We shall not be moved.

Leader: Come, let us worship the God who sees the vulnerable, strengthens the weary, and calls the church into holy courage.

All: Rooted in love, justice, and affirmation, we worship with joy. We worship with courage. We worship together.

## Opening Prayer

Holy and Liberating God,

You gather us in all our colors, all our names, all our bodies, all our beauty.

You gather the loud and the quiet, the certain and the questioning, the joyful and the grieving, the healed and the healing.

You gather queer children, trans children, nonbinary children, questioning children, fierce elders, chosen families, those who struggle, those who are trying, those still fighting.

Root us beside living water. Root us in love that does not flinch. Root us in justice that does not back down. Root us in affirmation that refuses to whisper what should be shouted.

Let this worship be sanctuary and spark. Let it be balm for the wounded and fire for the faithful.

Let it remind us that we are yours, and because we are yours, we shall not be moved.

Amen.

## **Prayer for Transformation and New Life (Confession)**

God of love and justice,

We confess that we have not always loved as you call us to love.

We confess the harm done in your name, especially to LGBTQ+ people: the exclusion, shame, silence, and fear that have wounded your beloved children.

We confess, too, the ways we all fall short: choosing comfort over courage, silence over justice, and fear over love.

Forgive us.

Transform us.

Root us again in love, justice, and affirmation.

Make us a church where all people are safe, celebrated, and truly belong.

In the name of Jesus, who welcomed all with courageous love, we pray.

Amen.

## **Assurance of Grace**

Beloved, hear this good news: God does not abandon us to shame.

God does not leave us in the wilderness. God does not ask us to sacrifice our *beloved-ness* in order to be faithful.

In Christ, the old powers do not get the final word. Fear does not get the final word.

Exclusion does not get the final word. Bad theology that rejects does not get the final word.

God's grace is still rising. God's Spirit is still making the church new.

So stand tall, beloved. Breathe deep. You are forgiven. You are beloved. You are free.

Thanks be to God.

## **Passing of the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ is not fragile politeness. It is the fierce peace of justice, truth, and love.

People: The peace of Christ makes room for all of us.

Leader: Let us share signs of peace and remember: every body, every story, every beloved child of God belongs in the circle of grace.

People: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

## **Invitation to Generosity / Call to Offering**

Generosity is one way we stay rooted in love, justice, and affirmation.

We give because queer folk deserve churches that will protect them.

We give because trans people deserve communities that will name them with joy.

We give because individuals who survived silence deserve to see churches become brave.

We give because affirmation takes more than words. It takes resources, courage, organizing, worship, education, care, and public witness.

In a world investing in fear, we invest in love.

In a world organizing against our neighbors, we organize for justice.

In a world trying to uproot hope, we plant seeds.

Let us give as people rooted in love, justice, and affirmation.

# Offering Dedication Prayer

God of abundance, receive these gifts as seeds of holy resistance. Let them grow into shelter for those who have been cast out. Let them grow into courage for churches learning to speak. Let them grow into care for LGBTQ people who need more than words.

Let them grow into justice, joy, safety, and beloved community. Bless what we give. Bless what we hold. Bless what we build together. Please root our generosity in love, justice, and affirmation, so that your people may flourish. Amen.

# Communion Invitation

This is not a table of tolerance. This is not a table where you are asked to check part of yourself at the door. This is not a table where LGBTQ people are barely allowed, trans people are debated, or wounded people are told to be grateful for crumbs.

This is Christ's table. At Christ's table, the rejected are welcomed home. At Christ's table, the hungry are fed. At Christ's table, the fearful are strengthened. At Christ's table, chosen family is holy. At Christ's table, there is room for all!

Jesus said that whoever welcomes the ones he sends welcomes him. So when we welcome LGBTQ people, we welcome Christ. When we welcome marginalized people, we welcome Christ. When we welcome the child, the elder, the outcast, the exhausted, the loud, the tender, the complicated, or any one else, we welcome Christ.

So come. Come if you are joyful. Come if you are tired. Come if you are angry. Come if you are grieving. Come if you have been told you do not belong. Come if you are still learning how beloved you are. This table belongs to God. And God has made room for all of us.

# Communion Prayer

Holy God,

From the beginning, you created a world full of beauty, diversity, and possibility, calling it good. You made each of us wonderfully and lovingly, and call us all beloved.

When people cried out, you listened. When communities were threatened, you made a way. When false peace ignored justice, you called your people back to truth.

In Jesus, you came near with courageous love. Jesus welcomed the outsider into belonging and affirmation, fed the hungry, challenged hypocrisy, and taught us that love is action, justice, and compassion.

On the night before empire tried to silence him, Jesus gathered at the table, took bread, blessed it, broke it, and said: “This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then he took the cup and said: “This cup is the new covenant. Drink from it, all of you.”

Pour out your Spirit on these gifts, and on us. Make us one body in all our difference.

Make us a church where all people are welcomed, valued, affirmed and where LGBTQ+ people, especially trans and nonbinary siblings, are safe, celebrated, and free to flourish.

Root us in love, justice, and affirmation, so we may protect the vulnerable, love boldly, and build a more beautiful world together.

Amen.

## Prayer After Communion

God of the table,

You have fed us with grace. Now make us hopeful in the midst of despair. Make us tender with one another. Make us fierce for justice. Make us faithful in the streets, in the sanctuary, at the ballot box, in the classroom, at the bedside, around the family table, and wherever your people are under threat.

We have tasted belonging. Now send us to build it. We have received love. Now send us to embody it. We have been rooted in grace. Now send us to stand.

Amen.

## Benediction

Beloved, go now like trees planted by living water. Go rooted in love that refuses shame. Go rooted in justice that refuses silence. Go rooted in affirmation that refuses erasure. Go knowing that affirmation is holy. Go trusting that even a cup of cold water can be resistance. Go believing that the Spirit still gives courage to tired people.

When fear rises, stand. When hatred shouts, sing. When the world tries to move you away from love, dig your roots deeper. And whatever comes, remember who you are:

You are beloved. You are called. You are necessary. You are not alone.

And in the power of God, with queer joy in our spirits and justice in our bones,

We shall not be moved.

Amen.

# Sermon Pathways

## We Shall Not Be Moved

**Primary Text:** Jeremiah 17:5–8

**Supporting Texts:** Matthew 10:40–42, Romans 6:12–23

Objective: We are not immovable because we are stubborn. We are immovable because we are rooted. In a world that keeps trying to uproot LGBTQ+ people, erase trans lives, shame queer joy, and deny belonging to those who live beyond narrow norms, God calls us to be like trees planted by water: grounded in love, sustained by justice, and courageous enough to flourish even in hard seasons. Open and Affirming churches are called not merely to welcome, (welcome is not enough), but to ensure belonging and affirmation and to root people in beloved-ness and stand publicly for dignity, safety, and liberation.

The strength of an affirming church is not that we never face drought, criticism, backlash, or fear. The strength of an affirming church is that our roots go deep. We are nourished by the living water of God’s love, justice, and community.

Movements:

1. The world keeps trying to uproot LGBTQ+ people and their families.
2. Jeremiah says the rooted tree can survive heat and drought.
3. Romans calls us to refuse *death-dealing* powers.
4. Matthew says welcome (preach/think belonging) is sacred.
5. ONA churches are called to be rooted, public, joyful, and brave.

Preaching line:

“Beloved, we are not here because the world has been kind. We are here because God has been faithful. We are still standing not because the heat never came, but because our roots found living water. And as long as God is faithful, we shall not be moved.”

## Children’s Moment

### Roots Help Us Stand

Supplies: a small plant or picture of a tree, and a rainbow ribbon or Pride flag.

Show the children the plant.

Ask: “What helps this plant stand up and grow?”

Let them answer.

Say:

“Roots are the part we do not always see, but they help the plant stay strong. Today our church is talking about being rooted in love, justice, and affirmation. That means we want every person to know they are loved by God. We want things to be fair and kind. And we want LGBTQ+ people, people with different kinds of families, and people with different ways of being themselves to know they are not just welcome. They are celebrated and they belong.”

“Some people have moms and dads. Some have two moms or two dads. Some live with grandparents or chosen family. Some people are boys, some are girls, some are both, neither, or are still learning who they are. God loves all kinds of people, and God’s family is big enough for everyone.”

Show the rainbow ribbon or flag.

“Do you know what a rainbow reminds you of?”

(Let them answer.)

“In the Bible, the rainbow reminds us of God’s promise and God’s love for the whole world. Today, many people also use rainbow colors to remind us that people are beautifully different, and that everyone deserves love, safety, and belonging.”

“This rainbow is a way of saying: You belong here. God loves you just as you are. And if someone is treated unfairly because of who they are, who they love, or how they express themselves, we stand beside them.”

“That’s part of what ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’ means. We keep loving. We keep being kind. We keep making room for everyone.”

Prayer:

Dear God,  
Root us in love.  
Help us be kind.  
Help us be brave.  
Help us celebrate all your children.  
Amen.

## Music Suggestions

### Freedom Songs:

- We Shall Not Be Moved
- Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around
- This Little Light of Mine
- Lift Every Voice and Sing
- Guide My Feet
- Keep Your Eyes on the Prize
- Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Freedom
- Ella's Song
- I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table

### Worship Songs/Hymns:

- For All the Children: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/620d32470cff616b79f03ad4/t/6847890bb6a0596dc9fa0f60/1749518606508/For+All+the+Children.pdf>
- Draw the Circle Wide: [https://www.rofum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Sing\\_3154\\_Draw-the-Circle-Wide.pdf](https://www.rofum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Sing_3154_Draw-the-Circle-Wide.pdf)

### Gospel / Contemporary:

- I Need You to Survive (Hezekiah Walker)
- Total Praise (Richard Smallwood)
- I Smile (Kirk Franklin)

### Queer Joy / Nontraditional:

- I'm Coming Out (Diana Ross)
- You Make Me Feel Mighty Real (Sylvester)
- True Colors (Cyndi Lauper)
- Born This Way (Lady Gaga)
- Freedom (Beyonce)

## Final Charge for Churches

This Open and Affirming Sunday, do not make LGBTQ+ people symbols. Make room for our voices.

Do not celebrate Pride without naming the struggle.

Do not name the struggle without celebrating queer joy.

Do not say "all are welcome" when the gospel is calling you to say more.

Say beloved.

Say sacred.

Say trans lives are holy.

Say queer joy is a gift.

Say chosen family is blessed.

Say affirmation is discipleship.

Say justice is worship.

Say love is public.

Say we shall not be moved.

Rooted in love.

Rooted in justice.

Rooted in affirmation.

We shall not be moved.