

# **“Let yourself shine so others can see God in the world.”**

(Matthew 5:16, paraphrased)

## **100 United Years**

### **Michiko Bown-Kai**

Michiko has been going to church their whole life. When they were little, they loved singing hymns during worship and they loved the stories and crafts during Sunday School.

When Michiko was a teenager, their church was not always welcoming to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Michiko did not feel safe sharing with the church who they were. This made Michiko feel sad and they stopped going to church.

But after high school, Michiko made friends with people from a group called Affirm United. This group wanted to make sure everyone felt welcome at church, no matter who they were. Michiko met many kind people in this group who loved the church and wanted it to be a safe place for everyone.

Like fireflies attracted to one another's light, Michiko found new friends with similar stories of feeling excluded in church. Together, they worked to make the church a safer place for everyone. They wanted everyone to know they belonged.

As Michiko grew up, they worked with Affirm United and are now a minister at a church in Glen Morris, Ontario.

Michiko's story shows how important it is to find people you can be yourself with. We all need to work together to make sure everyone feels welcome and loved at church. One of the ways we can do this is by celebrating how God uniquely made each of us. When we let our light shine, we help make the world a better place.



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