

Dear Ladner United family,

I alternated between tears and fury as I drove to work Wednesday morning after learning about the latest vandalism at LUC. For those who might not have heard, someone splashed black paint on the front entrance, front steps and the outside wall of the minister's office – wherever there was a Pride flag, essentially.

The one blessing is that it was water-based paint, so Doug, assisted by Willow and Shirley, got the worst of it off already. But the damage done by the physical paint is the least of the damage such actions cause.

It's hard not to get angry when someone acts like this. But when the disciples asked Jesus how many times they had to forgive their brother ("Seven times?" Peter asked), Jesus said seventy times seven (Matthew 18: 22). He didn't mean you can stop forgiving after 490 instances; the number was metaphorical, to mean always.

But forgiveness doesn't mean acceptance. We can and should forgive the person(s), but it doesn't mean we have to accept the hatred behind their actions. Hatred such as this is often the result of deep-seated fear of anything different, reinforced by associates and organizations that share hateful beliefs.

We're not taking down our Pride flags any time soon. Already today, several people and organizations have contacted us to offer their support, and their thanks for our stand on this issue. In his time, Jesus associated with quite a few people his culture didn't think worthy, but his enduring message was that all are worthy as children of God.

What events like this do show us is that we can't assume that everyone agrees with us and a problem no longer exists. Obviously, this hatred is still out there. Writer, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Eli Wiesel once wrote, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Beginning this week, we've got a basket on the table at the back of the sanctuary with rainbow ribbon pins in it, similar to the one I wear with my name tag every week. Feel free to pick one up and pin it on, so the people targeted in attacks like this one know that hate doesn't rule, that there are people who care and support them.

Blessings,

Nancy