

## Rainbow Heart Mural Meanings:

**Hummingbird/Film Wheel:** “My name is Grace Beek. I have been attending Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church my entire life and I recently came out as Bisexual, so when Hannah Wingerter asked me to help design part of the mural I was super excited. For me, one of the most important parts about my identity, and what I think will make LGBTQ2S+ identities more accepted in the future, is representation in the media. The media, especially film and literature, has a huge effect on kids, and I was no exception. When I was young I remember thinking that lesbian relationships only existed in porn, before I even really understood what porn was. I believe I was indoctrinated into this idea from the media, and from the reactions of the people around me who were themselves only shown one specific image of LGBTQ2S+ relationships. This negative portrayal made it much harder for me to accept myself, and while I started to question my identity at age 12, it wasn’t until I was 16 that I finally connected the dots. This story is not unique. I know many people who struggle with the same thing and so I’ve begun to connect the concept of pride, and full LGBTQ2S+ acceptance, with proper representation in film and literature. As I go on to study acting I hope I can make a significant change to the industry. The film wheel, with pride flags in it, and a hummingbird representing healing flying out of it, was perfect to describe this very important piece of LGBTQ2S+ reconciliation. I spoke to Hannah, who wanted some kind of bird in the piece, about how Hummingbirds represent joy and healing and we decided to use that in the piece because that’s really what the mural is all about: healing. The film wheel has a flag for each letter in the acronym in order: Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queen, and Two Spirited. We thought that it was very important to include all these flags, especially the Two Spirited one, as Indigenous identities are so often overlooked, even in the LGBTQ2S+ community. I hope that my part in the mural is something that people can identify with and I am very proud to have worked on this piece as part of my full-time job in the summer of 2021.” - Grace Beek, Pride Mural 2021

**Film Wheel:** Representation in the media (film, literature, etc.) with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and 2Spirit flags. This is important as our portrayal in the media effects public opinion on us and our rights.

**Hummingbird:** Healing. The hummingbird springs forth with a rainbow from the film wheel. The colours green and blue have meaning as well, with green representing safety, growth, and renewal and blue representing acceptance, recovery, and compassion.

**Eyes/Handprints:** The reflection of the pride flag in the eyes and the treatment of the LGBTQ+ community becomes tears. The handprints are part of these tears and represent an awareness and mourning for queer people who have been discriminated against, bullied, attacked and denied access to places, especially faith communities. Tears for the pain of conversion therapy within spiritual spaces. There are over 300 handprints from Prince George community members in remembrance of the abused, acknowledging the hurt that continues and those who have fought for queer rights who haven’t been able to see the progress that’s been made. It’s a call for the church to take ownership, that we’ve done this horrible thing to these human beings. The Christian church in general has to be held accountable for that. Not in a way that is hateful but in a way that says, "You have to accept the wrong you’ve done in order to start again and do the right thing." If that transgression isn’t acknowledged then there won’t be any trust built between the queer community and the church. Whether the specific church has had anything specific to do with it doesn’t matter. A church is under the umbrella of the larger church. These are first steps towards a new beginning. Moving forward.

**Eyes:** The eyes represent strength, survival, and mourning for the pain of our community. They are shown crying and reflecting an image of a pride flag.

**Handprints:** This section of the mural is meant to address and acknowledge the great pain, abuse, and loss that the LGBTQIA2S+ community has suffered at the hands of Christian Churches. It is well known that the Christian faith has often been misused in “justifying” and enforcing discrimination against the queer community; this has taken many forms including conversion therapy, excommunication, estrangement, hostility, and more. The handprint tiles are meant to acknowledge this hurt and hold a place for all those who have suffered in spiritual spaces simply for being who God has called them to be. Our Saviour’s Lutheran is actively taking steps to become a place of healing for all, and although acknowledging the pain does not make it go away, it is another step forward in reconciliation with the LGBTQIA2S+ community. There are over 300 handprints, each from a different person in the community.

**Human figure:** “This represents my understanding of God, the universe, the spiritual force that I call God. I want to represent it in a way that is above human perception or limitations. One of the best pictures we have of God is space because space is never ending and we are such a small part of it but still part of it. We are part of God in that way. This force makes the world turn and gives life to things. It’s a vast limitless place where there’s so much possibility. It’s dark with so many lights in it, a beautiful place that shows how the darkness is part of the light and they work together to bring life. It’s a defined image of God in that it’s so undefined. It allows anybody to connect to it. No gender, class, status or height or weight. It just is. It’s something we get to be a part of. The hand is on the handprints, connecting into the pain that they hold” – Hannah Wingerter

**Green circle:** artist Case Lettinga’s personal representation of herself. In her words, “The bounded circle represents myself, with the radiated green background symbolizing growth in Christ. The three triangles (or “tops of the trees”) represent the Holy Trinity living inside me, with the “tree shapes” rooted in three “planters.” The angled lines coming off of the “planters” represent tent stake lines, an ode to my time with the Calvinist Cadet Corps, a scouts-like organization which was a feature of the Christian Reformed Church of my youth.”

**Sunflower person:** This representation of the Queer community at large incorporates many flags in the LGBTQ+ community, a black power fist, and one eye that is crying pooling into a broken heart.

**Butterflies:** Each made from a separate pride flag, the butterflies represent freedom.

**Background:** Swirls and pastel gradient represent the Holy Spirit (ever-changing/flowing).

**Major themes:** Pain/suffering, the Christian god, Survival, Healing, Self-Identity

## **Historically Queer icons represented:**

### **The Rainbow:**

The rainbow became a common LGBT symbol in 1978 with Gilbert Baker's Pride flag, originally made specifically for gay men. This was the predominant flag for the LGBTQ2S+ community for many years until the progressive pride flag (shown behind the cross) was introduced in 2018. The rainbow is still a symbol of the diversity of the LGBT community and each colour has a specific meaning (as it did with the Baker flag):

- life (red),
- healing (orange),
- sunlight (yellow),
- nature (green),
- harmony/peace (blue),
- spirit (purple/violet).<sup>[24]</sup>

The original flag also had sexuality (pink) and art/magic (turquoise) but these colours were removed because of an issue with the fabric.

### **Other flags:**

Each flag in the LGBTQ community has a very specific history and usage. Some communities have multiple flags, for example, the Lesbian community has 13 different flags, each with a different history and meaning. Many LGBTQ flags are recent, and more continue to be made to this day. We've tried to incorporate some of the most iconic flags in this mural.