



THE RIGHT OF LGBT PARENTS TO ADOPT AND RAISE CHILDREN

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the

United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns.
(Adopted by the 28th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, Tampa, FL, July 1-5, 2011)

SUMMARY

Today more than 460,000 children in the United States live in group or foster homes. Nearly one-fourth of that number have waited five or more years for adoption: many never find adoptive parents, and continue to live in the foster care system until they become adults. Every year, nearly 20,000 of these children leave the system when they turn 18—without the support of an adoptive family, and facing an uncertain future.

A growing sign of hope is the willingness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) couples to adopt children who otherwise might be unable to find adoptive parents. According to the 2000 census, 65,500 adopted children are living in LGBT households, and the number continues to grow. Both the American Psychological Association and American Medical Association support the right of LGBT couples to adopt children.

Many states, however, do not allow co-parent adoption by LGBT couples. In these families, if the legally recognized parent dies, the surviving parent may have no right to care for the child. Moreover, powerful lobbies are campaigning in many states to deprive LGBT couples of even the right to single-parent adoption.

This resolution calls upon General Synod to support the right of LGBT parents to adopt children, and encourages all settings of the church to defend the LGBT community when their families are threatened by campaigns to limit or eliminate their parental rights.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The care and nurture of children is a moral responsibility for families, the church and the community. Care for orphaned children is the very definition of "religion that is pure and undefiled before God" (James 1:27). The protection of children from harm is Christ's commandment, for "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5), and "it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14).

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, tens of thousands of children in the United States have little hope of adoption, and are moved from foster home to foster home until they finally age out of the system; and

WHEREAS, many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and couples are willing and able to provide the stability, nurture and love that all children need in order to grow into emotionally healthy adults; and

WHEREAS, both the American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association have determined that gender identity and sexual orientation do not hinder a person's capacity to be a good parent; and

WHEREAS, a child whose primary legal parent dies or is incapacitated may in many jurisdictions be removed from the second parent and become a ward of the state; and

WHEREAS, co-parent adoption entitles children to essential benefits, including Social Security, child support, health insurance, inheritance rights and a continuing relationship with one parent in the event of the separation or death of the other parent; and

WHEREAS, LGBT children in the foster-care system need responsible and supportive role models;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, call on the United Church of Christ in all of its settings to defend the rights of all children to have loving parents without regard to sexual orientation or gender expression, and to recognize a family to be any loving, nurturing, ethical relationship between a child and one or more parents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on all states to evaluate prospective adoptive parents solely on the basis of their individual character and ability to parent, not on their sexual orientation or gender identity, and to grant second-parent or joint adoptions when it is in the child's best interests; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests Justice and Witness Ministries to communicate this resolution to local, state and national legislators, urging them to support the rights of all children to have a loving parent or parents without regard to the parent's sexual orientation or gender identity.

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to implement this resolution.