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Cleveland-based United Church of Christ, Toronto-based United Church of Canada tell baseball fans 'Just Call Them Cleveland'

Churches to push #NotMyMascot campaign during ALCS

CLEVELAND (October 14, 2016) —The Cleveland and Toronto MLB franchises face off in the first game of a best-of-seven series Friday night in Cleveland. While the winner of the American League Championship Series will advance to the World Series, a pair of North American Christian denominations, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada, are calling on baseball fans to support the cause of justice and reconciliation for Native peoples — and push the Cleveland baseball team to finally change its name and logo.

Both churches are asking communities of faith to join the **#NotMyMascot** campaign on social media. The campaign wants Cleveland to retire the Chief Wahoo logo, a cartoon image of a Native American, which has been used in some variation by the Major League Baseball franchise since the late 1940s.

"I love baseball. But seeing this mascot, and hearing over and over again the name my new hometown uses, infuriates me," said the **Rev. John C. Dorhauer**, UCC General Minister and President. "I have spent the parts of the past three decades protesting the use of this obscene and offensive caricature. I join with the leaders of the United Church of Canada calling for a more just logo and name for the Cleveland baseball franchise."

The national offices of the United Church of Christ are in downtown Cleveland, in the shadow of the ballpark where Game 1 will be played Friday. The headquarters of the United Church of Canada are in Toronto.

The denominations became full communion partners in 2015, and as part of that agreement they agree to take on the social justice causes each church champions.

"[A]s these teams prepare to meet again in a series that many of us will be watching, we join together to urge Cleveland's baseball team to find a new name and a new mascot—ones that do not disrespect the wide and varied histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples," the two churches said in a statement. "To do so would be one small but significant step toward racial justice and reconciliation."

"We are encouraged by the steps taken by many sportscasters and writers to refer to the team simply as 'Cleveland.'" the statement continues. "This shows a growing level of awareness and a willingness to change that we must all engage in. And so, as the series gets underway this weekend, we urge all members of our churches, no matter whom they cheer for, to cheer justly—and in a spirit of reconciliation."

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About the United Church of Christ The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.

The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.