

## Rectifying injustice as we fight injustice

by Jason Carson Wilson  
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Faith and pride aren't mutually exclusive. As people of faith in the United Church of Christ, we welcome LGBTQIA people to worship with us. We openly affirm their presence in our churches. We ordained the first "openly avowed homosexual man," the Rev. Dr. William R. Johnson. The United Church of Christ deserves to be proud of that history.

But we also shouldn't be so quick to pat ourselves on the back. Johnson never received a call to serve a local church. And, LGBTQIA people and their allies must essentially campaign for churches to become Open and Affirming. Marginalized people must lobby to be openly affirmed.

Some in the UCC bore witness to and fought the injustices that the LGBTQIA community has faced for decades, while others fought (and continue to fight) against queer parishioners' liberation. As we bear witness to how others inflict injustice on the LGBTQIA community, we must recognize that we inflict injustice too.

Working toward a just world for all is more important than ever. Embracing the United Church of Christ's three great loves - love of children, neighbor and creation - is the only path toward that world. It must start with making all of our churches into sanctuaries, where LGBTQIA children and neighbors (of all colors) never forget that they are fabulous creations. We must talk the talk AND walk the walk.

In the UCC, Justice & Witness Ministries is doing its part through public policy advocacy. We, along with many partners, are supporting the Equality Act of 2017. This proposed legislation protects LGBTQIA people from discrimination in employment, housing, public education and more.

Our commitment to health care for all, of course, also affects the LGBTQIA community. We are working to keep Medicaid and the protections of the Affordable Care Act intact, which help those living with HIV and AIDS. It, obviously, also helps keep healthcare within reach of working families and many others.

Similarly, a recent National LGBTQ Task Force report stresses there are “no golden years at the end of the rainbow” for many LGBTQ seniors. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15 percent of the general population experiencing poverty is LGBTQIA seniors. If we are concerned about this group we must also work for a moral federal budget. A budget that guts Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Meals on Wheels, as President Trump has proposed, won’t uplift this vulnerable group

Safe space is and always has been a precious commodity for LGBTQIA people. They deserve a safe space to survive and thrive as they seek and worship God or celebrate life. And while safe worship spaces are essential, so are just domestic policies that ensure basic living standards are met.

Just domestic policies help make our nation Open and Affirming.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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