

CONTINUING TESTAMENT
EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME
CHANGING LIVES

March 30, 2015

United Church of Christ Collegium of Officers
United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Coalition
Statement on Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act



We, the Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Coalition, express our grave concern regarding passage of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and the action of Governor Pence to sign the bill into law. The principles of religious freedom are essential to the framework of any free society and they are core values of this country, which is why they are protected under the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. However, it is a grievous injustice to exploit these principles in any way that could be misinterpreted as giving legal license for discrimination or to deny full and equal protection under the law for every person. In light of Indiana's enactment of this law, we call for additional legislation that would guarantee civil rights protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which currently does not exist in Indiana statutes.

While we have supported RFRA laws in the past that were clearly aimed at preventing government interference in religious practices, we reject the politicization that occurred during the lead-up to Indiana's enactment of this law, which supported a false notion that it could be used to license discrimination against same-gender couples.

Our Christian faith calls on us to love one another as God loves us, and to treat one another as we want to be treated. Every person as a child of God is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside; discrimination damages that worth and dignity. We believe that as a people we are stronger when we offer extravagant welcome to everyone. Our communities are richer when we are inclusive of people of diverse identities and perspectives.

The United Church of Christ is a church with a wide mix of people. We are committed to being inter-cultural, multi-ethnic, accessible to all, and open and affirming of persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Our members hold a wide range of theological beliefs and political perspectives, but we continuously engage the vision of our motto, "That they may all be one." This value is similarly expressed in a motto of America, *e pluribus unum*, "out of many, one."

COLLEGIUM OF OFFICERS
Rev. Geoffrey A. Black
GENERAL MINISTER AND PRESIDENT

Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo
JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

Rev. J. Bennett Guess
LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRIES

Rev. James A. Moos
WIDER CHURCH MINISTRIES

This value should also inform the principles of religious freedom. Public businesses should not be allowed to deny service in restaurants, evict tenants from their apartments or refuse to serve customers simply because of who they are or whom they love.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is wrong for Indiana until its proponents make clear that it cannot be employed to discriminate against anyone — especially the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender community.

Given the understandable outcry in reaction to the signing of this bill into law, absent any nondiscrimination guarantees, we call upon people of faith and good will to organize for passage of fully inclusive federal legislation that will ensure that all citizens are free from discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations, not only in Indiana, but for Americans everywhere.

/signed,

Rev. Geoffrey A. Black

Rev. M Linda Jaramillo

Rev. J. Bennett Guess

Rev. James A. Moos

Mr. Andrew Lang, Executive Director

United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Coalition