

Resolution on Calling on United Church of Christ Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming MACUCC Annual Meeting 1984

Whereas the Apostle Paul has said that, as Christians, we are many members but we are one body in Christ, and recognizing that lesbian and gay people are already members of the church of Christ through baptism and that these same persons have gifts of ministry and faith to offer the United Church of Christ; and

Whereas the United Church of Christ has historically affirmed a rich diversity in its theological and biblical perspectives and, as a free church, has encouraged freedom of individual response to the Gospel of Christ; and

Whereas the Tenth through the Fourteenth General Synods have adopted a number of resolutions affirming the civil rights of gay and bisexual people, encouraging the inclusion of gay and bisexual people on association church and ministry committees within the United Church of Christ, and addressing the concerns of same gender oriented persons and their families within the United Church of Christ; and

Whereas the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ adopted in 1980 equal employment opportunity policy which does not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of sexual orientation; and

Whereas the United Church Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns has urged the implementation of a process whereby United Church of Christ congregations adopt a statement of openness and affirmation of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons in the life and mission of the local congregations:

Therefore Be It Resolved that the 185th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ calls upon all Massachusetts UCC Congregations to adopt a statement of openness and affirmation of gay, lesbian and bisexually oriented people who seek to lead Christian lives such as statements adopted by the Presbyterian Church(USA) “More Light” churches and Lutheran Church in America “Reconciled in Christ” churches; the UCC congregations may adopt the following statement or write one of their own:

AFFIRMATION OF OPENNESS AND WELCOME

We know, with Paul, that, as Christians, we are many members, but we are one body in Christ, and members of one another. With Jesus, we affirm that we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves and that we are called to act as agents of reconciliation and wholeness within the world and within the church itself.

We know that lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons are often scorned by the church and devalued and discriminated against both in the church and in society. We wish to witness to our caring and concern for our gay, lesbian and bisexually oriented brothers and sisters in Christ by affirming the following:

- That we believe lesbian, gay, and bisexually oriented people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God;
- That gay, lesbian, and bisexually persons are welcome as members and participants in this congregation through the same affirmation of membership as is made by all other members of this church;
- That we expect to celebrate and use the gifts, talents, and resources of our gay, lesbian and bisexual members as we use and celebrate the gifts, talents and resources of all our members to build a church which is faithful to the mandate of God and working to bring about the fullness of God's reign;

- That we welcome gay, lesbian, and bisexual members to participate fully in the life, leadership, and employment of this church.

And:

Further urges all Massachusetts UCC Congregations to initiate immediately an education process that would be helpful in enabling lesbian, gay, and bisexual Christians to find all churches a home in which they would be truly welcomed; and

Further calls upon the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC to provide and promote educational resources which local churches may use in seeking to become churches which will be welcome homes for gay, lesbian, and bisexual Christians; and

Further calls upon all Massachusetts UCC Congregations to adopt a non – discrimination employment policy covering lesbian, gay, and bisexual seminarians, clergy, and other church professionals and support staff persons.

Further, the 185th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference submits this resolution to the 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ with the following work changes:

“185th Annual Meeting...”shall be changed to: “15th General Synod”, “Massachusetts Congregations” shall be changed to “UCC Congregations”, and “Massachusetts Conference of the UCC” be changed to “The United Church of Christ.”

(Note: the “Affirmation of Openness and Welcome” borrows heavily in wording and sentiment from the Affirmation of Welcome printed in Adventus, Vol.V, November 8, 1983 and from the Church of the Covenant “More Light” Statement, September 1980)

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