

Presbytery of Genesee Valley Resolution

Given the increase of “right to discriminate” or “religious freedom” bills emerging across our nation, the Presbytery of Genesee Valley declares its opposition to any such legislation that would be used to discriminate against people based on marital status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender identity, genetic information, sex, or disability.

Background

Across the country, local and state lawmakers are considering religious exemption or “right to discriminate” bills. These bills would allow anyone to refuse service to anyone and claim their “religious beliefs” require them to discriminate. Supporters of these bills claim they allow people of faith to exercise their religion without government interference. It is often the case these bills are being used against same-sex marriage couples, LGBT persons and reproductive health and justice for women.

The Presbytery of Arkansas at their meeting on February 21st 2015 adopted a resolution to declare its opposition to Arkansas House Bill 1228, allowing discrimination based on religious conviction particularly intended to target gay, lesbian, and transgender people as well as others; and against Senate Bill 202, barring localities from passing anti-discrimination laws.

Scripture, the Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) inspire and require solidarity and ministry with persons whose well-being are threatened by laws resulting in experiences of discrimination and oppression.

Jesus instructs his disciples to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31) and “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

A Brief Statement of Faith proclaims to the world the way the Holy Spirit inspires us “to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace” (Book of Confessions, 10.4, Lines 70–71).

The Confession of 1967 (9.43-9.44) declares a particular urgency in each time and place when God calls the church to act: “God created the people of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on race or ethnic difference, real or imaginary.”

The Book of Order states (W-1.0403): “The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership... There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person.”

Respectfully Submitted by the Rev. Melissa Lynn DeRosia
Approved by the Mission & Advocacy Committee April 9, 2015
Endorsed by Council on April 28, 2015
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