

Lutheran

**GUIDE TO
ADVOCATE**

—for—

**LGBTQ
PEOPLE**

**IN CHURCH
SOCIETY &**

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



*This guide contains resources
and tools for Lutherans as they
create space for people of all sexual
orientations, gender identities, and
gender expressions in our church and
in our society.*

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LUTHERAN GUIDE TO ADVOCATE FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE IN CHURCH & SOCIETY

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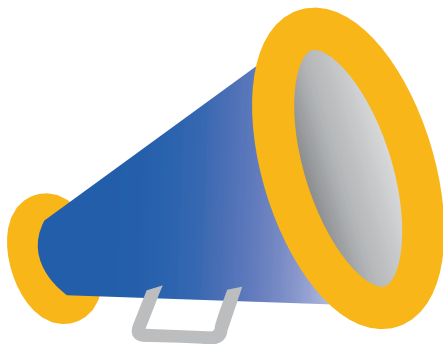
PREFACE

Before you begin

This resource is a starting point for you and your Lutheran faith community as it seeks to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in church and society.

It is ReconcilingWorks' hope that tools and answers in this guide will give your community the boldness to proclaim Christ's gospel of radical inclusion and hospitality to your neighbors, our church, and our world. All Christians, including Lutherans, are called to care for everyone, fight against discrimination and marginalization, and work for justice.

For more information about the Reconciling in Christ (RIC), Lutheran faith communities which have passed statements of welcome to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, visit: ReconcilingWorks.org/RIC.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are answers to common questions about Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) policy regarding LGBTQ people and the ELCA's role in public advocacy.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS?

In the social statement *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (adopted in 1991), the ELCA teaches :

“[the] baptismal vocation of Christians” includes “being wise and active citizens.... Along with all citizens, Christians have the responsibility to defend human rights and to work for

freedom, justice, peace, environmental well-being, and good order in public life. They are to recognize the vital role of law in protecting life and liberty and in upholding the common good. Christians need to be concerned for the methods and the content of public deliberation. They should be critical when groups of people are inadequately represented in political processes and decisions that affect their lives” (p. 4, 5).

“An important way that Christians carry out their citizenship is through participation in voluntary associations and movements, both religious and secular. At times, **these groups may serve a prophetic function as they protest particular evils, question unexamined assumptions, challenge unjust or immoral practices, and organize for structural changes in the workplace, local community, and wider world**” (p. 5, emphasis added).

IN “WITNESSING AS AN INSTITUTION,” THE ELCA HAS COMMITTED TO:

“encourage congregations and affiliated institutions to engage in ministries that promote the well-being of the human community and the environment and that empower people to gain access to and influence in the systems that govern their lives;”

“speak out on timely, urgent issues on which the voice of the church should be heard;”

“work with and on behalf of the poor, the powerless, and those who suffer, using its power and influence with political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek to advance justice, peace, and the care of creation;” (p. 7).

CAN CONGREGATIONS AND SYNODS TAKE A PUBLIC STANCE ON BALLOT INITIATIVES, REFERENDUMS, OR OTHER LEGISLATION WITHOUT LOSING THEIR TAX-EXEMPT STATUS?

Yes. Almost all congregations, and lots of other non-profit organizations, are designated as 501(c)(3) and are tax-exempt. Under 501(c)(3), churches and other non-profit organizations are allowed to speak out on ballot initiatives, public referendums, and other pending legislation. There are certain limitations regarding how much time and money can be spent on such projects, but almost no congregation or synod would ever come close to exceeding those limitations. However, churches are not allowed to advocate for a particular political candidate or political party.

For more information, read “*The Restriction of Political Campaign Intervention by Section 501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Organizations:*” [IRS.gov/charities-non-profits/churches-religious-organizations](https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/churches-religious-organizations)

WHAT DOES THE ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENT ON SEXUALITY SAY ABOUT SUPPORTING SAME-GENDER COUPLES AND THEIR FAMILIES?

The social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009) states that the ELCA:

“...recognizes that it has a pastoral responsibility to all children of God.” (p. 19)

“...supports legislation and policies to protect civil rights” for all and has also “called upon congregations and members of this church to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to **advocate for their legal**

protection.” (p. 19, emphasis added)

“...will attend to the need for **equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities** under the law” for all (p. 33, emphasis added).

WHAT DOES THE ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENT ON SEXUALITY SAY ABOUT MARRIAGE?

In adopting *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, the ELCA has committed to allowing for an understanding of marriage that includes same-gender couples. Further, it has committed to allowing practices within the life of the church which uphold such couples in prayer and encourage commitments that can include marriage. ELCA pastors may preside over same-gender marriages as they are legal across the entire United States.

Unfortunately when the ELCA defines marriage, it excludes same gender couples from the definition:

“Marriage is a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God...

The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman.” (p. 15 emphasis added, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*.)

WHAT DOES THE ELCA SAY ABOUT PERFORMING WEDDINGS FOR SAME-GENDER COUPLES?

As of 2009, pastors may preside over same-gender marriages. Here is what former ELCA Secretary David Swartling said in May 2012 about the ELCA’s policy on marriage:

“First of all, the ELCA governing documents, the constitution and bylaws, say nothing about marriage. Secondly, the ELCA’s policies have never told a local pastor in a congregation who that pastor should marry or should not marry. That is a matter up to the discretion of that pastor in consultation, hopefully, with his or her congregation and his or her synod. The requirement is that you need to comply with state law. If state laws allow marriage of same-gender persons, there is nothing in ELCA policy that either says that is permissible or prohibited. . . . [T]here is nothing that prescribes who a congregation pastor can marry or not marry, so long as it is consistent with state law.”

Full statement: RWKS.org/what-do-lutheran-churches-say

DOES THE ELCA PROVIDE A LITURGIAL BLESSING OR RITE FOR SAME-GENDER MARRIAGES?

The ELCA has developed supplemental resources for use within the Evangelical Lutheran Worship marriage service.

“These supplemental resources have been created to offer more inclusivity in language, pastoral care, and openness for all persons who seek to be married within this church,” said the Rev. Kevin Strickland, ELCA executive for worship. The new resources offer materials for each section of the service, which include the gathering, word, marriage, prayer, meal and sending.

These resources are published by Augsburg Fortress, the publishing house of the ELCA, and are available at:

<http://bit.ly/2bSJUpv>



WELCOME

EXTENDING HOSPITALITY TO LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER PEOPLE

The 2016 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly passed the two following pieces of legislation. This section seeks to provide guidance to synods and the churchwide organization as they employ more inclusive language.

MOTION D: RESOLUTION ON GENDER IDENTITY

To refer Motion D: Resolution on Gender Identity to the Church Council and that the Church Council use the resolution to help inform the study of gender identity and the review of existing ELCA definitions and policies regarding gender identity as referenced in the above approved Memorial, and urge all three expressions of our church, whenever possible, and when not otherwise guided by current constitution and/or policy, consider using event registration and other forms that:

1. Include additional options for gender, for transgender, non-binary and/or gender non-conforming people; and
2. When asking for a person's personal information, include asking for the person's pronouns; and
3. When asking for a person's honorific or title, include a gender neutral option

CATEGORY DI: MEMORIAL ON GENDER IDENTITY

Recommendation for Assembly Action:

- To receive with gratitude the memorial of the Sierra Pacific Synod regarding gender identity;
- To refer this memorial to the Church Council for study of gender identity;
- To ask the Church Council, the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Office of the Secretary to review existing definitions and policies in light of the council's study; and
- To report to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA actions and proposals for additional actions as may be required.

Advocacy



QUICK TIP:

It is important to ask for pronouns when making event name-tags, because one can not assume a person's pronouns based on name or gender expression.

Extending hospitality to people of all gender identities and gender expressions can be as easy as a few updates on your registration form.

EVENT REGISTRATION FORM

TITLE:

- Miss Mrs. Mr.
 Mx. None Custom: _____

GENDER IDENTITY:

- Female Male
 Gender Non-conforming
 Custom: _____

PRONOUNS:

- She, Her, Hers He, Him, His
 They, Them, Theirs Custom: _____

The titles “Miss, Mrs., and Mr.” reinforce a gender binary and do not leave space for gender non-conforming people. Consider eliminating titles altogether or providing “Mx.,” “none,” and/or “custom” options.

The term “gender identity” is more inclusive than “sex” or “gender,” because not everyone who was assigned a certain sex at birth identifies as that gender later in life. Including “gender non-conforming” and/or a “custom” options extends additional hospitality.

Additional ways to extend hospitality include:

ADDING PERSONAL PRONOUNS TO NAME-TAGS:

Purchase premade name-tags with pronouns, provide markers for attendees to fill in the blank, or print your own mini pronoun stickers for attendees to select and wear.

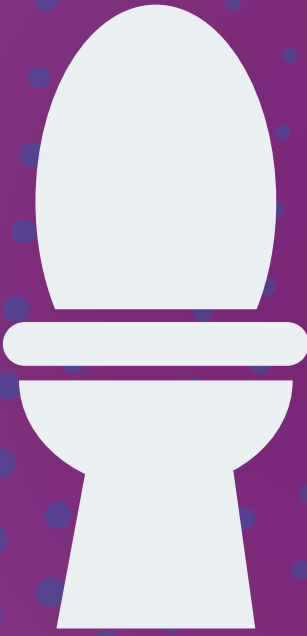


GENDER INCLUSIVE RESTROOMS:

Ensure your gathering spaces have clearly labeled gender inclusive restrooms available for attendees. This can also extend hospitality to families with small children or people with physical disabilities.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:

Work to make sure materials for your gatherings have updated language that is inclusive of gender non-conforming individuals. Try swapping out binary phrases like “women and men” and “brothers and sisters” with more inclusive phrases like “siblings in Christ” or “God’s beloved.”



BATHROOM BILLS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A “BATHROOM BILL?”

A bathroom bill is legislation that seeks to allow or ban transgender individuals from using public facilities, particularly bathrooms, that correspond to their gender identity rather than to the sex they were assigned at birth. Over 200 U.S. cities and 18 states have positive laws that protect the rights and safety of transgender people, allowing them to use the bathroom of their choice. Other municipalities have passed laws banning such use by transgender people, usually by attempting to incite “bathroom panic”—an irra-

tional fear that nondiscrimination laws will compromise the safety of women and children in public restrooms.

Note: As of this writing, the U.S. Department of Justice has declared North Carolina's House Bill 2 (HB2) violates Title IX of the federal Civil Rights Act as it pertains to people who identify as transgender. It is unclear how this ruling may affect other, similar bills and laws. Further, the Department of Education has threatened to withhold federal funding from public schools that do not follow its guidelines to provide equal, preferably integrated, facilities to transgender students.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE LEGAL PROTECTIONS WHICH ALLOW TRANS PEOPLE TO USE PUBLIC FACILITIES CORRESPONDING TO THEIR GENDER IDENTITIES?

Transgender people who attempt to use public restrooms and other facilities are frequently subjected to verbal harassment, physical and sexual assault, forcible removal (and even arrest) by police. This danger confronts not only trans persons who use the facility corresponding to their gender identity, but also, and equally, to those who find themselves forced, by a "bathroom bill", to use a facility corresponding to their "assigned at birth" gender. In short, bathroom bills make it both humiliating and potentially dangerous for transgender people to use any public restroom at all. Fear and avoidance of using public restrooms have resulted in social and physical distress for many transgender people, who simply need a safe place to tend to basic needs. ¹ Further, some "masculine looking" cis-gendered women have been denied access and harassed or beaten out of the same fear. And a father was beaten for taking his young daughter into the men's rest room.

It should be emphasized that use of the public facility corresponding to one's gender identity is not merely a matter of accommodating the transgender person's preferences. A transgender man who has transitioned feels no more comfortable using the "ladies' room" than a cisgender man would. Further, the transgender person's decision to assume the risk of using the facility corresponding to their gender identity is almost universally regarded as a critical point in "transition", and is likely to be important, perhaps critical, in evaluating the person for gender confirmation surgery.

WHAT ABOUT CLAIMS WHICH SAY THAT ALLOWING FOLKS TO USE BATHROOMS THAT CORRESPOND TO THEIR GENDER IDENTITY IS ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN?

These claims are simply not rooted in fact. More than 200 cities and 18 states across America have already passed similar non-discrimination laws—

LUTHERANS *Say:*

“As a trans man, I wish that I could sit down and meet with the people who are afraid of trans people in the bathrooms. I believe if we can each share our concerns and our hopes, we can find connection in our common dream of safety, in the bathrooms and in the world. Trans and gender non-conforming people are victims of too much violence, and women (cis and trans) are victims of too much harassment and sexual assault. Let us come together and make the world safer for all of us.”

**LEO BANCROFT, VICE CHAIR,
RECONCILINGWORKS BOARD
OF DIRECTORS**

and implemented them successfully. These places have not experienced the terrible things that opponents of this bill claimed would happen. Such “bathroom panic” claims have been debunked many times over.

In April 2016, more than 250 leading sexual assault and domestic violence organizations around the country released a landmark statement calling for an end to legislation that harms transgender people and excludes them from restrooms and other facilities.

“Safety and privacy are important for all of us,” said Terri Poore, Policy Director at the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

“Passing laws like the one in North Carolina to harm transgender people, or denying them protection from discrimination, does nothing to help survivors of violence or reduce assault. In fact, they do the opposite by putting transgender people at even greater risk of violence than they already are.” ²

There is an additional fear that people (especially boys) will declare themselves to be transgender in order to

LUTHERANS *Say:*

“As a transwoman and semi-nary student, I am willing to work with any congregation to help them understand our needs and to assist them with becoming more inclusive. I find one of the most helpful things is simply exposure to the Other; once we become a face instead of a concept, we are more welcome. We confess ‘Forgive us, renew us, and lead us that we might delight in your will and walk in your ways.’ ⁶ Jesus welcomed all to his table, we can too.”

NANCY WICHMANN

access the other bathrooms and then switch back after they have satisfied their curiosity. Given the harassment that such individuals will almost certainly endure, the probability of this is low. The DOJ/DOE guidelines as of this writing require that schools may not request any evidence of the student's intent. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) ³ provides a number of resources, including a "Standards of Care" guideline. ⁴

AS A CHRISTIAN, WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP STOP THESE BILLS FROM BECOMING LAWS (OR REPEAL THEM IF THEY HAVE ALREADY BECOME LAW)?

The single most important action you can take towards ensuring all transgender Americans remain free from discrimination is to

LUTHERANS *Say:*

"I am a mental health counselor who specializes in working with individuals who are questioning their gender or are actively going through a gender transition. I spend about 10% of the time in the counseling room helping people come to terms with who they are as a gendered being. I spend the other 90% helping people develop coping skills to deal with the vile rhetoric they experience when they do not fit neatly in to a gender stereotype. Gendered bathrooms are the most dangerous place for a person in the middle of a gender transition as they may be subject to verbal and physical assault if they do not conform to someone else's concept of male or female."

**NICOLE GARCIA, MA NCC,
TRANSGENDER LATINA &
CANDIDATE FOR ORDAINED
MINISTRY, ELCA**

start a conversation with the people you know about why caring for individuals, families, and communities is important to you. Think about whom you can talk with.

- ◇ Schedule a meeting your State Representatives or write them an email to share how your faith teaches that discrimination is wrong.
- ◇ Write a letter to your editor. Letters to the editor are one of the most read sections of your paper. Be public in your support against discrimination. (Check out the letter writing section of this guide on p. 26.)
- ◇ Talk with your pastor and your synod's bishop about why this matters and encourage them to make a public statement in church newsletters, Facebook page, or blog. Ask them to talk about it in one of their sermons.
- ◇ If you are not yet fully comfortable advocating for non-discrimination, your synod or ReconcilingWorks may be able to find someone to speak with your congregation. You might also check with Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries' Proclaim Pulpit Supply. ⁵

LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT YOUR FAITH TEACHES YOU.

You might say:

- ◇ "I do not want my faith used as justification for treating a group of people like second-class citizens. This doesn't square with Jesus' own example."
- ◇ Jesus taught: "Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:13)
- ◇ "As a Christian, I must speak out against this law as it will actively hurt citizens of our state. Transgender people will not

LUTHERANS *Say:*

“As a transgender person, use of the restroom corresponding to my (female) gender identity was really the last step in the public part of my transition. Like most transgender people, this step in the process was scary. It’s a confined space and you’re absolutely vulnerable. The answer to the question, ‘What’s the worst that could happen’ is ‘A lot, all of it really bad.’ I did eventually ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’ and thus far have fortunately had no bad experiences. I don’t know if that’s because I ‘pass’ or because older people get away with stuff. But that is not the experience for many of us, and the ‘bathroom bills’ (and related publicity) have already had the effect of making our public lives even more hazardous than before. As an attorney involved in LGBT legal issues, I view the ‘bathroom bills’ as a very thinly veiled effort to restigmatize transgender people and deny them any legally protected public existence.”

DANIELLE A. MODEEN, MARY L. GAUDIO & ASSOCIATES

be able to use bathrooms in libraries, public hospitals, or most airports in the state. It might also allow hotels and apartment owners to refuse accommodations to transgender people. Worst of all, transgender students who attend public schools and universities won’t be able to use the bathroom, which will make it impossible for them to learn effectively.”

OTHER MESSAGES

- ◇ This bill puts state law into direct conflict with some federal laws that say transgender people have the right to use re-

strooms that match their gender and will subject schools and public facilities to expensive federal complaints and lawsuits. It also bars local protections in public accommodations on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation, and veteran status. The Supreme Court of the United States has held that states may not sue the federal government over its departments' publicly stated interpretations of the law. Therefore the courts will have to declare state suits to be frivolous.

- ◇ Major companies are lining up to speak out against this law because discrimination is bad for business. Laws that give transgender people the right to use the right restroom do not endanger others. In fact, over 200 cities and 18 states have similar laws. In some places, they've existed for decades without causing any harm. To claim otherwise is fearmongering.

1 williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Herman-Gendered-Restrooms-and-Minority-Stress-June-2013.pdf

2 lambdalegal.org/blog/20160421_sadv

See also: politifact.com/north-carolina/statements/2016/apr/01/chris-sgro/equality-ncdirector-no-public-safety-risks-cities and <http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/05/05/comprehensive-guide-debunked-bathroompredator-myth/210200>

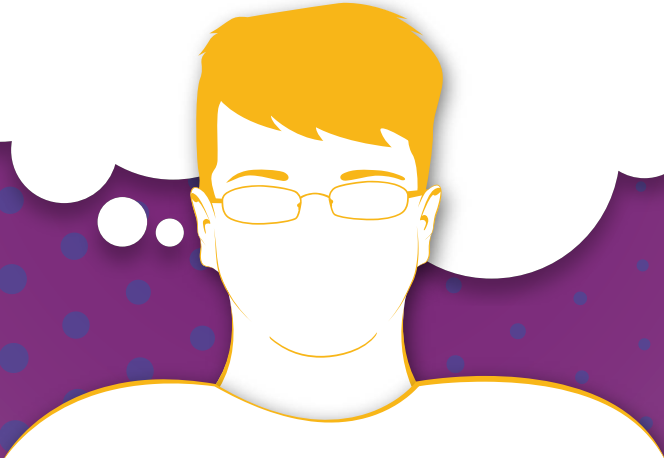
3 wpath.org

4 wpath.org/site_page.cfm?pk_association_webpage_menu=1351&pk_association_webpage=4655

5 elm.org/proclaim-pulpit-supply

6 ELW, Setting One, p. 96

*I don't want to serve
_____ people because
of my personal religion.*



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights as Americans. This is why it is already protected in the very First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution. However, Religious Exemption laws are making their way into states across the country and would allow an individual to use their religious beliefs to discriminate against others by denying them goods and services.

HOW WILL THESE NEW LAWS AFFECT LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER (LGBTQ) PEOPLE AND FAMILIES?

The languages of these bills vary from state to state, but one thing is clear, the lives of LGBTQ people and their families will be greatly affected. When these bills become law, individuals will have the right based on a personally deeply held religious belief to refuse service, accommodations, goods and protections to LGBTQ people.

WILL THESE LAWS AFFECT ONLY LGBTQ PEOPLE?

No. As this harmful discrimination law make its way into states it would allow individuals to claim that any number of laws – including, but not limited to domestic violence and nondiscrimination laws – don't apply to them.

- ◇ A hotel owner who objects to cohabitation outside of marriage could refuse to provide a room to any unmarried couple.
- ◇ A landlord who believes a man should be the head of a household could refuse to rent an apartment to a single mother.
- ◇ A guidance counselor could refuse to help a gay teenager by saying it goes against their religious belief.

DID YOU
Know?

RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION LAWS ARE WRITTEN WITH LANGUAGE THAT IS TOO BROAD, POORLY WRITTEN, AND WITH LOOPHOLES THAT OPEN THE DOOR FOR DANGEROUSLY HARMFUL, UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES FOR PEOPLE IN STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

- ◇ An abusive spouse could claim that domestic violence laws do not apply to them because their religion teaches that a spouse has the right to discipline their family (their spouse and children) as they see fit.

AS A CHRISTIAN WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP STOP THESE BILLS FROM BECOMING LAWS?

I. TALK ABOUT IT

The single most important action you can take towards ensuring all Americans remain free from discrimination is to start a conversation with the people you know about why caring for individuals, families, and communities is important to you. Think about who you can talk with. Let people know your faith teaches you. . .

- ◇ to love God and love my neighbor
- ◇ that it is not my place to judge others
- ◇ to treat others as you would want to be treated

2. REACH OUT TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Schedule a meeting your State Representative or write an email to share how your faith teaches that discrimination is wrong.

3. WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR EDITOR.

Letters to the editor are one of the most read sections of your paper. Be public in your support against discrimination. Talk with your pastor about why this matters and encourage making public a statement in your church newsletter, Facebook page or blog, or as a sermon topic.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR TOOLKIT

Did you know letters to the editor are one of the most read sections of a newspaper? What a great way to get out our message as we defend LGBTQ folks against discrimination. Using the four easy steps outlined below, we can send hundreds of letters to the editor to newspapers all across the map.

As people of faith we have been taught through our traditions, sacred text, and worship the values of love, welcome, inclusion, and non-judgment. We know that treating some differently because of who they are and who they love is wrong. But too often an inac-

curate story is told that people of faith, especially Christians, are “anti-gay.”

We can help change this perception and bear witness to our faith and values. One way to do this is with letters to the editor. These worksheets will help you and your friends, family, and fellow faith community members write letters to the editor that will help share our convictions against discrimination.

STEP 1: PICK 1 OR 2 OF THE POINTS BELOW TO WRITE ABOUT.

- ◇ Treating people differently because of who they are causes tremendous harm and unforeseen consequences to them. As people of faith, we believe in the common good of treating people as we want to be treated. We believe that treating people differently, simply because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is fundamentally wrong. This discrimination, for any reason, is counter to who we are and the values we share.
- ◇ Gay and transgender people are our friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and congregation members. They work hard, serve in the military, and pay taxes. When they walk into a business or a government office, they should be treated like anyone else and not be discriminated against. This is how my faith inspires me to act -- treating people with dignity and fairness.
- ◇ Business owners and service providers have the freedom of their religious beliefs just like everyone else. But businesses and services that are open to the public should be open to everyone on the same terms, including to customers who are gay and transgender
- ◇ If these bills pass, it will allow people to take advantage and claim that their religion gives them the right to ignore laws. It

would mean the law no longer applies to everyone in the same way, resulting in special treatment.

STEP 2: MAKE SURE YOUR LETTER IS 150 - 200 WORDS.

What prompts you to write? Are you responding to an article, editorial, letter to the editor, or local event? State the date and headline. (20 to 30 words)

What is the “big idea” you want to convey? What are the overarching values that informs your view? (50 to 100 words)

What is your hope or wish for the community? What do you want people to take away from your letter? What do you want people to do? (25 to 30 words)

Reaffirm your commitment to vote against the discrimination measure. (15 words)

STEP 3: SIGN THE LETTER WITH YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME AND SEND IT TO YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER.

Include your phone number and street address as well as city, state, and zip code. Only your name and city will be published.

Please copy: ***AubreyT@ReconcilingWorks.org***, or mail a copy to: *ReconcilingWorks, Attention: Aubrey Thonvold, 1669 Arcade St Suite 2, Saint Paul, MN 55106*

SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

As a person of faith I am writing in response to the up and coming discrimination initiative _____ will be seeing in the legislative session.

My Lutheran faith has taught me through its tradition, sacred text, worship, and community strong core values. Those values are love, welcome, inclusion, and non-judgment. It is because of my faith I know treating someone differently because of who they are and whom they love is wrong. Religious freedom is a fundamental part of America, which is why it is in the federal and state constitution. However, that freedom does not give a business or corporation the ability to deny good and services to someone because of who they are and whom they love.

I believe all _____ should treat one another as one would want to be treated. Faith is about loving our neighbors, not discriminating against them. I understand not everyone holds the same religious beliefs I do; however, I do know _____ is about building strong communities. Discrimination has no place in _____. Religious freedom is not being threatened. What is being threatened is strong communities and a strong economy.

It is because of my faith I want to keep discrimination out of _____.

Sincerely,

Sarah Smith

Dear Editor,

I recently heard about proposed legislative bills that, if passed, would discriminate against LGBTQ people. I sincerely hope that this measure does not pass, as it would appear to rewrite discrimination into our laws.

As a member of the Native community, I am personally familiar with discrimination. Businesses have been allowed to refuse to serve people based on our skin color, and as a community we have fought against that. Treating people differently based on who they are is discrimination.

We need to work now to keep our communities moving forward regardless of whom individuals love. Discrimination doesn't belong in _____ and we have to come together to defend our state against discrimination.

Sincerely,

Mike Johnson

Advocacy



QUICK TIP:

Don't forget to look up the sponsors of anti-LGBTQ bills and utilize the power of social media. Ask your pastor to tweet your letter to them from your congregation.

NOTE: FEEL FREE TO BASE YOUR LETTER ON THIS LANGUAGE, OR YOU CAN PUT IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS. REPLACE “_____” WITH YOUR STATE’S NAME.

