

Resolution

Title: Resolution on Open and Affirming Actions for Adoption by the New Jersey Association of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Proposed by: Been Waiting For You, a local chapter of the UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns (hereafter, the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns).

Summary: This resolution urges the New Jersey Association (NJA) to support its churches in declaring themselves open and affirming congregations with respect to those of all sexual orientations, by inviting all NJA congregations to consider an Open and Affirming educational dialogue.

Theological

Rationale: In the words of Paul, “. . . for in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26b-28, *NRSV*).

Therefore, it is important to take steps as congregations and UCC bodies to support the affirmation that persons of all sexual orientations are welcome in the full life and ministry of UCC congregations.

Background: 1,000 UCC congregations [December 2011] throughout the US, 18 churches within the NJA, and 16 UCC Conferences have already taken this step [September 2011]. Leadership by associations can be encouraging and supportive as local churches consider their own response and action on this issue.

Text of Resolution:

Whereas the UCC General Synod adopted an Open and Affirming Resolution in 1985 calling on UCC congregations to declare themselves Open and Affirming with respect to the welcoming of persons of all sexual orientations into the full life and ministry of the UCC; and

Whereas the Central Atlantic Conference adopted an Open and Affirming Resolution on June 8, 1996;

Whereas 1,000 UCC congregations throughout the U.S. have adopted local Open and Affirming Statements or Resolutions;

Whereas 18 of those churches are in the NJA;

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Whereas the NJA commends and recognizes that its churches, whether ONA or not, have striven to welcome all people regardless of sexual orientation just as our churches have extended the same loving welcome to people of every age, race, gender, physical and mental abilities, ethnicity and marital and economic status;

Whereas the NJA cannot require any of its local churches to become Open and Affirming, even if the NJA becomes Open and Affirming;

Whereas educational resources exist through the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns to assist congregations who wish to explore what it means to become an Open and Affirming church; and

Whereas it is important for the NJA to exhibit leadership and educational opportunities on this issue;

Now therefore be it resolved that the NJA support the General Synod’s 1985 Open and Affirming Resolution as well as the Central Atlantic Conference’s June 8, 1996 Open and Affirming Resolution by the NJA becoming an Open and Affirming Association. We encourage congregations in the NJA to consider an Open and Affirming educational dialogue to support our conviction that all are one in Christ and that persons of all sexual orientations are welcome in the full life and ministry of the New Jersey Association;

Be it further resolved that the Associate Conference Minister of the NJA write a letter to the congregations in the NJA sharing with them this resolution to consider an Open and Affirming dialogue; and

Be it further resolved that the New Jersey Association will assist its congregations by suggesting resources and materials that will be helpful to churches considering Open and Affirming resolutions and by referring them to the existing resources available through the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.