

The Reformed Church of Metuchen

150 Lake Avenue b Metuchen, NJ 08840 b 732-
548-2463

A Welcoming and Affirming Congregation

The Consistory

December 19, 2006

Dear Members and Friends of Our Congregation,

After a year of careful study and prayerful discernment, the consistory has formed a statement that more clearly defines where we believe God is leading us. We believe that God wishes for us to open the doors of our church a little wider, and to ensure that all members of the community we serve understand our commitment to welcoming and affirming all people who come to us.

Many of you are already familiar with our statement of non-discrimination printed on the back of the Apostle's Creed card in our pews. We have revised this statement, which is included with this letter, to clarify our position with respect to the gay and lesbian community. We have titled the statement "Welcoming and Affirming" because those words are used by churches that truly and openly welcome all people, including homosexuals.

The decision to become a welcoming and affirming church grew from a collective awareness that our church needed to examine our actions and attitudes toward homosexuality. The adult class held at our church in the fall of 2005, "Spiritual and Moral Discernment: Talking Together about Homosexuality," opened a dialogue among our members, and moved us, with written responses and discussion, toward declaring that there should be no barriers to entry and participation in the full life of our church.

In order to help our congregation better understand our welcoming and affirming statement, we will be offering an adult class in January. Pastor Ruch and members of the Consistory are also available to talk with anyone regarding this statement.

Our church will add "A Welcoming and Affirming Congregation" to our church brochure, website, signage, and print advertisements. Our church will offer to gay and lesbian persons, couples, and their families the same pastoral practices we offer everyone. This may include ordaining them to the offices of elder and deacon, receiving requests for baptism of their children, and encouraging them to be teachers and leaders in the church programs. Our church will also allow the minister to officiate at services of commitment for gay and lesbian couples.

continued on other side

We are hopeful that this statement will lead us as individuals and a church toward a life of ever-increasing compassion and love. We pray that we remain firm in our commitment to building a community of God for all people, acting according to the love of Christ that abides within each of us.

In God's Abiding Love,

Your Consistory

Welcoming and Affirming Statement

We the people of the Reformed Church of Metuchen, humbly and faithfully declare that we are a Welcoming and Affirming congregation. We joyfully accept all persons into our community of faith who seek a closer relationship with God and who desire to express their devotion to Jesus Christ through the fellowship of the church. We welcome into the full life of our congregation all persons whom God calls to us, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical or mental or emotional ability, or any other socially limiting barrier.

Welcoming and Affirming Resolution and Statement
The Reformed Church of Metuchen, NJ
2006

Resolution:

Whereas, we believe that all persons are created in the image of God; and

Whereas, we believe that Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again because God so loved the world; and

Whereas, in Jesus Christ we see that the love and grace of God are the core motivation for his life and work, with which we are enjoined; and

Whereas, we are called to respond to God's will as revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, who commands us to love one another; and

Whereas, we are called by God to proclaim our faith aloud and not hide it from the world around us; and

Whereas, we are compelled to welcome all whom God calls into the community of Christ, together submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit in and among us; and

Whereas, we confess that Christian churches throughout the ages have perpetuated injustices toward various people because of their differences; and

Whereas, the Reformed Church of Metuchen sincerely desires to follow Christ more fully, receiving and reaching out to all people whom God leads to us;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Consistory of the Reformed Church of Metuchen approves the following Welcoming and Affirming Statement:

We the people of the Reformed Church of Metuchen, humbly and faithfully declare that we are a Welcoming and Affirming congregation. We joyfully accept all persons into our community of faith who seek a closer relationship with God and who desire to express their devotion to Jesus Christ through the fellowship of the church. We welcome into the full life of our congregation all persons whom God calls to us, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical or mental or emotional ability, or any other socially limiting barrier.

see other side →

Background of the Statement:

The proposal to become a welcoming and affirming church grew out of a 6-week long adult class called “Spiritual and Moral Discernment: Talking Together about Homosexuality,” held in the fall, 2005. This class resulted in the paper, “An Open Letter to the Consistory of the Reformed Church of Metuchen,” which was signed by 14 people, received by the Consistory in January, 2006, and published in the church newsletter, the Link. In February, 2006, the Consistory agreed that our church should become a welcoming and affirming congregation, and that a statement to that effect would be proposed for adoption.

Why “Welcoming and Affirming”

In response to the call of the Gospel and to the pastoral needs of persons in our congregation as well as those who may be called to our congregation in the future, we want the community we serve to know that there are no barriers to entry into the life of our church, and that we are committed to the on-going struggle to build communities of love for all people.

What does “Affirming” Mean?

In the context of our statement, “affirming” means three things: First, we affirm that all persons are created in the image of God, regardless of personal circumstances or issues of self-identity. Second, “affirming” means that we do not place limits upon God’s redeeming grace or even rely on outward appearances in the world and in our lives. And third, we believe that those whom God calls, God also gifts, and we affirm those gifts.

Why Make a Public Statement?

Just as we have other public statements to communicate our values and beliefs, so there is a compelling need in today’s world to declare our church’s pastoral practices regarding persons who are not welcome everywhere. We believe that to simply be silent on this issue amounts to condoning the discrimination and oppression that has often marked the institutional church in the past.

What Will This Change?

Our church will add “A Welcoming and Affirming Congregation” to our church brochure, website, signage, and print advertisements. Our church will offer to gay and lesbian persons, couples, and their families, the same pastoral practices we offer everyone. This may include ordaining them to the offices of elder and deacon, receiving requests for baptism of their children, and encouraging them to be teachers and leaders in the church programs and to organize fellowships for mutual support. Our church will also allow the minister to officiate at services of commitment and covenanting for gay and lesbian couples.