

A RESOLUTION TO BAN THE PRACTICE OF CONVERSION THERAPY

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the Open and Affirming Coalition and UCC Mental Health Network.

Adopted by the Thirty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ, July 18, 2021.

WHEREAS the medical practice known as “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” regards LGBTQ+1 persons as abnormal or defective, and attempts to change or “repair” non-conforming sexual orientation or gender identity through widely-discredited therapeutic practices; and

WHEREAS conversion therapy for adults is legal in 50 states and all U.S. territories, while conversion therapy for youth and children is still legal in 30 states; and WHEREAS many studies have shown that attempts to change or “repair” sexual orientation or gender identity are associated with compromised mental health including, among other harms, lifelong suffering as the result of internalized shame, increased risk of suicide, and difficulty in forming stable and lasting relationships; and

WHEREAS a survey of at-risk LGBTQ+ youth published by the Trevor Project in 2020 showed that 42 percent who were subjected to conversion therapy had attempted suicide, while the attempted suicide rate of transgender and non-binary youth during or after conversion therapy was even higher at 57 percent; and

WHEREAS virtually every professional association in the health care industry has declared that conversion therapy is ineffective, unethical or harmful, including the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, and the National Association of Social Workers; and

WHEREAS in December 2020 UCC denominational leaders joined Archbishop Desmond Tutu and more than 400 other Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu faith leaders as signatories of the statement “Declaring the Sanctity of life and the Dignity of All” which called “for all attempts to change, suppress or erase a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression—commonly known as ‘conversion therapy’—to end, and for these harmful practices to be banned”;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ, affirming the dignity and worth of all people, deplors the practice of “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” that denies LGBTQ+1 youth, children, and adults the opportunity to experience the blessings of love and human integrity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges parents and guardians, caregivers, and authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ to protect those in their care from any practice or program that purports to “cure” their sexual orientation or gender identity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges congregations and all other settings of the church to advocate for state and federal laws protecting youth, children, and adults from “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” by banning the practice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Third General Synod encourages congregations and other settings of the church to work with ecumenical and interfaith partners to raise awareness of the harms of “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy” and to advocate for banning the practice; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that The Thirty-Third General Synod strongly urges congregations and other settings to strengthen their efforts to reach their LGBTQ+ neighbors, especially youth and children, with the Good News that their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are gifts from God.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.