

A Resolution Declaring the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ
be an Open and Affirming Conference

Submitted by: The Open and Affirming Task Force as called by the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ: The Rev. Kurt A. Walker, Chair; Jametta O. Alston, Esq., Member in Discernment; the Rev. Gary Bagley; the Rev. Barbara J. Libby, Interim Conference Minister of the Rhode Island Conference; Pastor William McMillan; the Rev. Dr. George Peters, President of the Rhode Island Conference; Linda Sable.

Summary:

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ, grace and peace to you in the name of the Triune God whom we know to walk with all, for we carry in our hearts the knowledge that no matter who any of us are, or where any of us is on life's journey, God serves all, welcomes all, and loves all.

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ recognizes the foundational importance of the prayer of Jesus, "That they may all be one" (John 17:21); and

WHEREAS in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 22:37-40) and again in Luke (Luke 10:27-28), Jesus reiterates the two great commandments that we should love God and love our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27-28); and

WHEREAS Roger Williams, founder of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, was himself the object of oppression and persecution having been unwelcomed, excluded, and cast out of the Massachusetts Bay colony based on his spreading of "new and dangerous ideas;" and

WHEREAS the fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (1985) "encouraged a policy of non discrimination in employment, volunteer service and membership policies with regard to sexual orientation encourages associations, Conferences and all related organizations to adopt a similar policy; and encourages the congregations of the United Church of Christ to adopt a non-discrimination policy and a Covenant of Openness Affirmation of persons of lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientation within the community of faith;" and

WHEREAS the members of the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ also recognize the necessity to include persons in the community of faith, regardless of sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS a substantial number of congregations within the Rhode Island Conference and nineteen Conferences of the United Church of Christ are currently recognized by the National Coalition as Open and Affirming.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ hereby declares itself to be an Open and Affirming Conference. To that end...

The Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, transformed by the love and inclusion modeled by Jesus Christ, and aware of God's abundant grace, welcomes all.

Following the teachings of the One who challenged the status quo and boldly embraced even those who were marginalized by the culture around them, we affirm that each individual is a precious and worthy creation of God. We recognize that we are called to be as one with many members. We strive to be a gathering of people of every race, economic and social status, faith background, family structure, gender, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation, class, age, gender identity and gender expression, marital status, and physical or mental ability. We covenant to journey together toward God's promise of love, justice, and peace for all of Creation.

We invite all, without exception, to join in the common life and mission of this, the Rhode Island Conference of this United (and Uniting) Church of Christ, that all are able to fully share in the worship, life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our Conference, as we seek to grow together in faith and love.