



# Faith Leaders Support Comprehensive Nondiscrimination Protections

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“As a Christian, my faith teaches me that every single human being is made in the image of God, and therefore discrimination is not only a sin against your neighbor, but it is also a sin against God. My prayer is that this is the moment when we make right past wrongs committed against the LGBT community by guaranteeing equal legal access to employment, housing, and public accommodations. I’m glad that the efforts being made towards this end account for the cherished value of religious freedom by mirroring protections for other groups.” — *Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York*

“When the Voting Rights Act was passed, I was five years old. I had already been raced; a little girl named Lisa had called me the “n-word” and I had been hurt. I had seen the images on the Pettus Bridge, seen dogs and hoses turned on men, women and children yearning to be free. I had heard the stories of murdered civil rights workers and was outraged at how hatred could kill a dream, how it could murder hope. The law, my parents felt, was an answer to prayer. Though it has not changed hearts, it put into motion the opportunity for justice. It created a container for change. My ever-hopeful heart yearns for this kind of container regarding LGBTQ justice. The SCOTUS decision about Marriage Equality is such a container. I pray the Equality Act will be such a container as well. All of God’s children deserve to live in a nation liberated from hatred.”

— *Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, Senior Minister, Middle Collegiate Church, New York, New York*

“As a Jew, I believe that each and every human being is created b’tzelem Elohim—in God’s likeness. When we exclude anyone from our community, we lessen the potential we have to make the world more whole. The moral issue of our day is to provide support for non-discrimination protection to all Americans. Any discrimination of the LGBT community is completely inconsistent with Jewish values—for God is present in each of us.” — *Rabbi Peter S. Berg, Senior Rabbi, The Temple, Atlanta, Georgia*

“As a minister in the United Church of Christ, I recognize that faith has sometimes been misused to justify discrimination against certain people. Congress needs to re-affirm the American ideal that religious freedom doesn’t give people license to discriminate but protects the ability of people to worship—or not worship—without government interference. True religious liberty stands in opposition to intolerance.” — *Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie, Director of Center for Peace and Spirituality, University Chaplain, Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon*

“For a nation that has long prided itself on the home of the American Dream—a place where each person has a chance to live full and meaningful lives—comprehensive nondiscrimination protections help us underscore this dream for LGBTQI folk and it does not come at the expense of religious or political viewpoints. We can, instead, lean more forcefully into our religious convictions that teach us to welcome the stranger, love one another, live in hope, and work to create a more just and peaceful world.” — *Rev. Dr. Emilie M. Townes, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Womanist Ethics and Society, Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Nashville, Tennessee*

“As people of faith, we believe that every human being is created in the image of God and has sacred worth. Laws that grant rights and protections to some and but not others, simply because of their gender or sexual orientation, are neither legal nor moral.” — *Rev. Dr. Katharine Henderson, President of Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, New York*

“I was eleven years old when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of interracial marriage (in 1967). It’s hard to believe that many religious leaders, Bibles in hand, opposed the Supreme Court’s decision back then, and that discrimination against interracial couples in housing and other sectors continued for decades. I don’t want us to repeat those mistakes with our LGBT brothers and sisters. That’s why, as a committed Christian, I oppose discrimination against anyone, and that’s why I support legislation that promotes equality.” — *Brian McLaren, author, speaker, activist, and public theologian, Marco Island, Florida*

“We applaud today’s introduction of the Equality Act, a long overdue, much-needed bill that would explicitly ban discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, federal funding, credit and jury selection. Since 1977, both the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis have been leaders in the faithful call for LGBT equality. Our LGBT congregants, neighbors and community members have lived without these critical, guaranteed protections for too long. And, while we continue to be as steadfast as ever in our profound support of the fundamentally American value and promise of religious freedom, we agree that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act should not be used to infringe on other people’s civil rights.” — *Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism and Senior Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism, Washington, D.C.*

“In our nation we share at least one value: no one should be discriminated against and our laws should protect those who are vulnerable. That is why I believe that it is important to ensure equality for all. Creating a place where all are respected is the best way to build our nation and shape a future that lives up to the ‘American Dream.’” — *Sister Simone Campbell, Sister of Social Service, Executive Director of NETWORK, Washington, D.C.*

“The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) places a high value on both religious freedom and individual interpretation of scripture. Our General Assembly has affirmed the civil rights of women, persons of color, persons of different religions and of all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Consistent with our value for religious freedom, Disciples have historically insisted that the basic civil and human rights of all people be respected legally—even while sometimes still debating related issues in the church.” — *Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, Indiana*

“When any one of us is denied our full rights as a human being, no human being is safe. And as long as religion is used to permit this—as it did slavery, segregation and women—religion itself has failed. The God who made us all loves us all and wants us all to be able to live free and full everywhere. It is that God my religion enabled me to know and it is that religion that assures me that the Equality Act must be passed, must be extended and must be lived if religion itself is to be true.” — *Joan Chittister, Order of Saint Benedict, St. Scholastica Priory, Erie, Pennsylvania*

“In every age, Christians are called to stop and assess our complicity in marginalizing those we consider to be other. Today, in this age, we have a chance to undo centuries of dehumanization and denial of full citizenship to members of the LGBT community in the U.S. We exhibit the compassion and profound love inherent to all faiths by supporting measures fighting discrimination.” — *Rev. Fred Davie, Executive Vice President of Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York*

“God doesn’t need protection, religion is already guaranteed protection in the Constitution, but LGBT people lack many of the protections taken for granted by most American citizens. God is always working for the compassionate treatment and full inclusion of the marginalized and mistreated. The Equality Act is a way for us to join God in that work of compassion and fairness.” — *Bishop Gene Robinson, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress, and former Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, Washington, D.C.*

“I am happy to add my voice to the chorus of faith leaders supporting full equality for LGBT Americans in all areas of our civic life. The scriptures are clear: God’s vision for humanity is one of expanding compassion and justice. Our legal tradition is clear: we should never turn our precious First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom into a warrant for discrimination. Passage of the Equality Act will strengthen the freedoms of all Americans.” — *Very Rev. Gary Hall, Dean of Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.*

“As Americans, we have a duty to protect religious freedom for all people and we have laws that do just this. Just as resolutely, we must protect the core Constitutional principles of freedom, equality and protection for all. That is exactly why we need a federal law protecting LGBT Americans from discrimination—a reality we are all too familiar with here in the South—and why this legislation does not infringe upon religious freedom in any way at all.” — *Rev. Jasmine Beach-Ferrara, Executive Director of Campaign for Southern Equality, Asheville, North Carolina*

“The Supreme Court ruled that same sex marriage is a constitutionally protected right. What seemed definitionally impossible is now, plain and simple, the law of the land. Now it’s time to ensure full equality for LGBT Americans, not only in marriage but in all walks of life. This nation was founded and is fueled by the promise of justice and equality for all. It’s time.” — *Rabbi Sharon Brous, IKAR, Los Angeles, California*

“Liberty and justice are core ideals that, as Americans, we must all value. Likewise, in the practice of my Christian faith, I am always compelled to uphold and respect the full personhood and worth of every individual. The ideal of justice will be made even stronger by assuring that our LGBT sisters and brothers are guaranteed the fullest measure of equality in every facet of society. And the ideal of liberty is, in fact, made stronger when it is safeguarded so that discrimination is not able to hide within its folds. Let us always remember that fairness and justice are never a threat to the religious liberties of others.” — *Rev. Dr. Derrick Harkins, Senior Vice President for Innovation in Public Programs, Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York*

“Comprehensive LGBT nondiscrimination protections have become imperative in the wake of the recent Supreme Court decision that extends gay marriage rights to all 50 states. When American citizens lack federal protection in areas that puts them at risk of losing their jobs or housing, we are all adversely affected by it—socially, economically and in other ways. As Dr. King, Jr. once said: ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.’” — *Rev. Frank Schaefer, Pastor of University United Methodist Church, author of Defrocked, Isla Vista, California*

“As part of a faith tradition that ensured religious liberty by erecting a high wall of separation between church and state, we Unitarian Universalists have advocated for equal rights for historically marginalized people and the freedom to worship in whatever religious institution speaks to them (or not) since the founding of our nation. Our faith has been on the forefront of LGBT equality (including housing, employment, public accommodations and marriage equality) because our religious principles teach us to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. In a society that has been polarized based on our core identities, I hope we can begin to heal our broken world by respecting the inherent worth of LGBT citizens by granting them equal protection under the law.” — *Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kūpono Kwong, Congregational Life Staff, Unitarian Universalist Association, Long Beach, California*

“Faith communities are called to advocate for the safety of and equal opportunity for young people. Comprehensive LGBT nondiscrimination protections uphold the rights and dignity of LGBT youth and their families. As a faith leader and parent, I support nondiscrimination protections as an act of justice and love for my own children and all our youth.” — *Dr. Kate Ott, Assistant Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Drew University Theological School, Madison, New Jersey*

“The love and compassion of God extends to all of God’s children, created in God’s image, which of course includes God’s LGBTQ children. That comprehensive care is reflected in the respect the American people have for their LGBTQ neighbors. Comprehensive legal protections are the necessary extension of these deeply held values.” — *Rev. Harry Knox, President/CEO, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Washington, D.C.*