

## An Open Letter on RFRA

As the senior minister of North United Methodist Church and through prayerful reflection with our Ministries Council, I stand in opposition to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). This law is contrary to the example of hospitality and humility we see in Jesus and to the core values of our church.

Regardless of its original intention, RFRA will likely foster discrimination against LGBTQ persons because it will be misunderstood and misapplied. The LGBTQ community has good reason to fear how this law will hurt them because they do not have a protected status in Indiana. It creates the potential for or appearance of state-sanctioned discrimination under the guise of religious liberty. In short, RFRA is the latest incarnation of intolerance, cloaked in the language of 'freedom,' that has marked the history of our state.

Legally, it accomplishes nothing in terms of protecting religious freedom which is protected by the Constitution and best adjudicated through the courts. Socially, it has already created unnecessary divisions and economic distress. It brings out the worst in us as Hoosiers.

The media and supporters of RFRA have wrongly portrayed this issue as a conflict between Christian identity and gay rights. Yet, the real identity of a Christian is found in the example of Christ. This week, Christians celebrate the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples. In the Last Supper we see Jesus extending hospitality to everyone at the table, including those with whom he disagreed, and he modeled humility in washing their feet. When he was arrested and persecuted he did not demand his legal rights. Therefore, to be a Christian means to practice the hospitality and humility of Jesus. This way of life needs no legal defense.

Indeed, I share this way of life with many in the LGBTQ community who are faithful followers of Jesus and members of our congregation. At North Church, our diversity is a part of our unity in Christ.

RFRA seeks to limit who will be served, but Jesus served everyone. It is contrary to the values of North United Methodist Church that seeks to be an open, inclusive, and welcoming church. We affirm that through God's redeeming love, all are one in Christ.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Cushman Wood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Darren Cushman Wood