



MCC.

FIRST METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF KANSAS

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I appear before you today in opposition of SB175. I am the senior pastor at First Metropolitan Community Church in Wichita Kansas. I earned a Masters of Divinity from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa as well as a Masters in Sociology from Wichita State University. First MCC of Wichita is a member congregation of the world wide denomination Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Metropolitan Community Churches were founded forty five years ago as an outreach specifically to the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgendered (GLBT) community. The church I pastor, in Wichita, is a church of 120 members, with a deep desire to be the hands and feet of God.

Fifteen years ago our local congregation began a small food pantry with the goal of assisting GLBT community members who were experiencing financial hardship. As the congregation matured in its faith and observed challenges faced by the broader community it became clear to all of us that our vision and outreach must expand. Determined to put into action the commands of the Christ to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul...and to love your neighbor as yourself," we began to serve everyone who came to us. Our commitment to follow Christ's mandate to love and serve others resulted in incredible growth. At this time First MCC's Loaves and Fishes food pantry serves approximately 900 persons each week. We ask no questions, we strive to meet a need. Church affiliation or income seem less important than feeding God's children—all of them. Whether or not those who come to the food pantry understand or accept those who identify as GLBT, they are welcomed. No one is turned away because of their religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, income or any other label which might be used to limit access to services. Serving all of God's children seems to be the closest imitation of the life of Christ that we can exemplify.

When the homeless needed a place to stay and hot meals to nourish their bodies, we again responded in the way that we understand to be the way of the Christ. We opened our building to house the interfaith ministries overflow shelter for over five years. Currently the overflow shelter is housed in one location and we still provide a minimum of three weeks' worth of hot meals every year. No questions asked. Jesus said...feed my sheep. There are no qualifiers on that command. We don't get to refuse service to someone simply because we disagree with them or don't understand their religious belief system.

I urge you not to allow a few people to influence the trust that has been given you by the residents of this fine state. It is your responsibility to protect all of the residents of this state, not simply the majority. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."

Rev. Jackie Carter, M.S.,M.Div.

GOD
LOVES
YOU.

PERIOD