



Metropolitan Community Churches
Council of Elders

A Call for Faith Leaders in Africa to Stand Together

Love matters. Human dignity matters.

It is impossible to ignore the rise in hate-speech against those who identify as transgender, those in same-sex relationships and, more broadly, the LGBTIQ+ communities. This is happening across countries globally; those in Africa as well. We know that words do not exist in a vacuum. Words can hurt and harm. Words can also spur acts of violence and cause others to pass laws that discriminate and divide us from one another. Misunderstanding, mis-information, and bias may be among the root causes and yet this produces real-world and real-life consequences affecting health, safety, education, and more. Yet, we all share a common desire to live with integrity and dignity and to live fully as who we are and to love who we love.

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We, the MCC Council of Elders, as the spiritual leaders of our denomination, are called to stand up and speak out for love and human dignity and to denounce misguided hateful words that are fueling anti-transgender and anti-gay laws that legalize discrimination and criminalise love. Such hateful words foment fear and hysteria generally – and, specifically in schools, creating a hostile learning environment for students; who are our future leaders and our best hope.

Over the course of human history, the response to important questions has created defining moments: Will we stand together? Will we help? Will we offer loving-kindness or show apathy because of our differences? Simply asked: will love bring us together or will hate and fear drive us further apart? What will we choose?

As faithful followers of Jesus, our words must be of love and love demands that we recognise the human dignity of all. Jesus commanded that we love, saying “...Love your neighbor as yourself” in the gospel of Matthew 22:39. Embracing one’s gender identity and sexual orientation is, in fact, expressing self-love as commanded. Same-sex love, like all love, is a gift from God and rooted in the command to love *others* -- as we love *ourselves*. With this, we embrace the philosophy of *Ubuntu* -- that we are mutually interdependent and that we exist because others exist. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu is quoted saying, “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.” Therefore, to love and to recognise human dignity is a moral imperative.

God **is** Love. If we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and God’s love becomes complete in us - perfect love. (1John 4:12, the Message) We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God and we must never attempt to separate *others* from love -- as hateful words often do.

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Words can harm or heal. Words can unite or divide. Words can welcome or reject. Every day, we choose love or hate as the source of our words and actions – in places of worship, government buildings, schools, homes, and wherever humans are present. Everyone has the right to be seen, to be held, and to have a safe place to call home.

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The MCC Council of Elders calls on faith leaders in Africa to stand together locally and with the Metropolitan Community Churches globally – to lead with love---that all may live and love freely with dignity.

Now is the time. Love has the power to move mountains and hearts whenever and wherever the faithful rise...in the name of God.

We pray for this time of unity---with words of love,

The MCC Council of Elders:
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Elder Hattie Alexander-Key
Rev. Elder Mark Byrd
Rev. Elder Nokuthula Dhladhla
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