

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:35-40 (NIV)

May 13, 2016

Friends,

We don't hear a lot about love these days. We hear about walls to contain “them.” We hear about the unreasonable expense of providing healthcare for all. We hear about bathrooms, even though we're not really talking about bathrooms. But none of that is about love.

Confronted with a trick question, Jesus didn't hesitate to state definitively what rests at the heart of every other single thing he taught us – everything. Love God. Love each other. End of story.

But not quite. A lot of the people who defend their actions or inactions wrapped in the cloak of Christianity seem to have missed that part about loving one another.

We at the NC Council of Churches continue to tell the story of Jesus through the work we do with your help. We are the voice of progressive Christianity in North Carolina that talks about inclusion versus exclusion, service to all rather than service to some, respect and dignity for everyone.

Most recently, that has included opposition to HB2 through both advocacy and education. Notably, we co-sponsored an event with EqualityNC and the Equality Federation that brought together noted Christian ethicist David Gushee, incoming Council President T. Anthony Spearman, Duke psychology professor William Meyer, and transgendered Durham pastor Mykal Slack.

Additionally in 2016, we have preached love by:

- Holding Affordable Care Act events across North Carolina for Latinos who are not native speakers of English.
- Co-sponsoring the North Carolina Bread for the World Conference
- Co-sponsoring the statewide Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace
- Organizing the Katharine Hayhoe tour across North Carolina, bringing her voice as a climate scientist who is also an evangelical Christian
- Working in collaboration on Medicaid expansion
- Working in collaboration on an end to gun violence
- Helping organize the annual Farmworker Institute
- Offering the biennial Critical Issues Seminar, this year focused on Race, Power, and Privilege

At the Council, we don't talk about walls to contain beloved children of God. We don't talk about it being too expensive to extend healthcare to our sisters and brothers. We don't typically talk about bathrooms because, quite frankly, Jesus didn't either.

We work to break down walls, to extend grace, and to speak truth to power. Your personal financial support helps us continue to do this and more; we hope you will respond generously to this appeal.

But we have another request of you, as well. The Council increasingly seeks to engage with individual congregations and organizations (faith-based and secular) as we broaden and deepen our voice on behalf of progressive people of faith in North Carolina. We have found the resulting collaborations, with groups we call our Covenant Partners, a way to reach more grassroots advocates through training and education as well as to grow our impact across North Carolina.

So along with your individual gift this spring, we hope that you will help us connect with at least one potential Covenant Partner. Feel free to share with them the information enclosed about the program and to have them contact me (aleta@ncchurches.org) or Ashley Yohman (ashley@ncchurches.org) at the Council office if they have any questions. You can also suggest the names of congregations and organizations who should know us but might not. That information can be provided on the back of your donor card.

And together, let us be the people Jesus would have us be.

Walk in love,

Aleta Payne
Deputy Executive Director