

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Affirmation of Welcome

Reason:

The Mission Statement of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Indiana says, "Celebrating all that God has given us, moved by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we accept everyone around one table, worship together and reach out to the world in love."

To live fully into that mission statement, the vestry partook of a workshop entitled, "All Love is of God" created out of the Oasis Ministry of the Diocese of Newark. This statement of affirmation comes out of the work done at that workshop.

Statement:

We believe that all people are worthy of respect because all are created in the image of God and can respond to the love of God. In our baptismal vows we commit ourselves, with God's help, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, love our neighbors as ourselves, respect the dignity of every human being and strive for justice and peace among all people

We welcome and affirm all persons whatever their race, religious affiliation, age, socio-economic status, nationality, ethnic background, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or mental/physical ability. We offer all individuals and families, with or without children, our spiritual and practical support. In an effort to be clear as to the meaning of "All are welcome" and "affirming," we offer the following examples. All who attend St. Paul's Episcopal Church are welcomed and encouraged:

- to participate fully in worship;
- to take an active part in the life and activities of the parish;
- to contribute their time, talents, spiritual gifts and resources to God through our parish;
- to apply for and serve in positions of paid, public ministry or other positions of leadership in the parish;
- to test and shape their personal beliefs and spiritual practices and help others to do the same;
- to invest themselves in our common efforts to improve and heal the world;
- to help us to discern God's will in our common life together.

We regard same-sex couples who are in committed relationships as families. Although the State of Indiana does not make provision for the marriage or civil union of same-sex couples, St. Paul's does perform Ceremonies of Commitment for same-sex couples on the same terms as for other couples.

We aspire to incarnate the message, "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You," by welcoming all who come to St. Paul's. We seek, with God's help, to demonstrate a love that casts out all fear and to be ministers of reconciliation and healing in the world, offering a safe place in which to encounter God.

Approved: December 8, 2009