



THE BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA

April 19, 2012

Dear People of God:

We write to you today as the Bishops Diocesan of the three Dioceses of The Episcopal Church in North Carolina to share our opposition to the state's proposed constitutional amendment, Senate Bill 514, also known as Amendment One. We do so as followers of Jesus Christ, as Bishops in The Episcopal Church, and as citizens of our state and nation.

We oppose Amendment One because the love of God and the way of love that has been revealed in Jesus of Nazareth compels us to do so. We oppose Amendment One because every time we baptize someone in The Episcopal Church, the entire congregation vows to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."* We oppose Amendment One because it is unjust and it does not respect the dignity of every human being in the State of North Carolina. If passed, it will harm not only law-abiding gay and lesbian citizens but other men, women and innocent children in our state. We bid you to hear our plea and, with prayerful consideration, to study the amendment and its potential impact on people. Any and all of the potential outcomes listed below may occur as a result of the passage of this amendment.

Amendment One states, "Marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State." While it is commonly thought that Amendment One is meant only to prevent homosexual marriage, almost 90 percent of the 222,832 North Carolina couples who would be immediately affected by this legislation are heterosexual couples who, for whatever reason, are not legally married.** If it passes, Amendment One would likely outlaw legal protection for all unmarried couples. They could lose health care, retirement benefits, hospital visitation rights, inheritance rights and Social Security benefits. Nine municipalities in our state currently offer family benefits for unmarried employees, and these protections would almost certainly disappear under the amendment.

The amendment would also directly impact the children of these couples. It's estimated that 89,537 of the aforementioned families include at least one child.** Unmarried couples who seek to adopt children might no longer qualify as a family. The grandparents of children whose parents are unmarried may no longer legally qualify as part of the family. Parental visitation and custody rights for unmarried couples, which were put in place solely for the benefit of children, may end.

In addition, parents who are victims of domestic violence and their children may lose the legal protections they currently have under domestic violence laws because the parents are not legally married. This has already happened in Ohio where domestic violence convictions have been overturned or dismissed because of similar legislation.

These are just some examples of the potential consequences and impacts of Amendment One. There is much more that is uncertain and unknown. It is highly irresponsible to amend the Constitution of the State of North Carolina when the extent of negative impact on the lives of law-abiding citizens is unknown. We have included online educational resources for you as you give this your prayerful and careful consideration.

Whether we agree or disagree with same-sex marriage, civil unions or unmarried couples cohabitating, we can agree as people of faith that, as the book of Genesis says, all human beings are created in the "image of God." That means that all persons are to be treated with the love, respect and dignity that befit a child of God. Therefore, we do not believe that the Bible or the Constitutions of our state and nation should be used to oppress, harm or restrict the human rights and dignity of any human being. On the contrary, Jesus has taught us that the greatest and most important of all the commandments of God are to love God and to love our neighbor.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

Amendment One falls dangerously short of that standard.

Your Brothers in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of
North Carolina

The Right Rev. Clifton Daniel, III
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of
East Carolina

The Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of
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Find resources about Amendment One online: <http://www.dionc.org/amenone.html>

* The Baptismal Covenant from *The Book of Common Prayer*

** 2010 U.S. Census