

For immediate release

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EPISCOPALIANS PLACE FULL PAGE AD URGING “YES” VOTE
ON KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, NON-DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCE

Encouraged by the actions of the Episcopal Church’s General Convention, Kalamazoo area Episcopalians have been hard at work urging residents of Kalamazoo to adopt a non-discrimination ordinance that would add protections for gay and transgender citizens.

“Our denomination was very clear this past summer when it’s legislative convention met in Anaheim, California,” said the Rev. Cynthia Black, Rector of the Parish Church of Christ the King, and a resident of Kalamazoo, “As Episcopalians we are to actively work to defeat discrimination of any kind, especially discrimination against our transgender and gay sisters and brothers.”

Lay and clergy representatives of all of the Kalamazoo area Episcopal churches began meeting in September to consider the Nov. 3rd ballot initiative. “We tossed around a lot of ideas, and finally settled on two: to raise money and signatures for a full page ad in the local paper, and to go door to door, sharing our perspective on why a ‘Yes’ vote is necessary,” said Rev. Black. Over 40 clergy and people of faith participated in the Oct. 22 neighborhood canvass.

“We had no idea if we could raise the \$6000 necessary for a full page color ad, so we sought a grant for matching funds. When that didn’t come through, we decided to step out in faith, and raise the entire \$6,000 ourselves.” The group easily exceeded their goal, raising over \$7,000. “It’s a wonderful position to be in, and clearly demonstrates the conviction of Episcopalians in this area,” said Rev. Black.

A full page ad with the signatures of 276 Kalamazoo area Episcopalians will urge a “Yes” vote on the ordinance in the Sunday, Nov. 1 edition of the Kalamazoo Gazette, and a ¼ page ad will run the next day.

“We know that not all Christians feel the same way about the inclusion of gay and transgender persons,” said the Rev. Beth McLaren, Associate Rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Kalamazoo. “We think it is important that people of faith know that it is not only possible to support equality and fairness for those who are gay and transgender, but that we believe it is a gospel imperative.”

Additions of “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the City of Kalamazoo’s non-discrimination ordinance were proposed and passed by the City Commission in 2008. The Commission later chose to rescind the amendment to seek additional public comment. After considerable public discussion and comment, the City Commission again voted unanimously to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” in the ordinance. A petition drive was initiated by those opposed to the ordinance, requiring the amended ordinance to be put on the Nov. 3 ballot.

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To view the Sunday, 11/01/09 ad: <http://www.edwm.org/news/documents/YesEpiscopaliansSundaylo.pdf>

To view the Monday 11/02/09 ad: <http://www.edwm.org/news/documents/YesEpiscopaliansMondaylo.pdf>

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