

An Open Letter to the Arlington, Texas, City Council and Library Advisory Board

December 1, 2022

As religious leaders whose congregations include hundreds of citizens of Arlington, we're writing to entreat the Arlington City Council and the Library Advisory Board to stand up for justice for LGBTQ+ people in the city's library system.

We are aware that fundamentalist religious voices in our city have insisted that their faith demands the elimination of LGBTQ+ materials and displays from the library. We're aware that this group has been applying unrelenting pressure on members of both the advisory board and the city council to act in their interest. We can pledge that our congregations have been prayerful for your peace and perseverance in public service.

We state unequivocally that our fundamentalist neighbors' stance on LGBTQ+ erasure is an ugly and unnecessary misrepresentation of Christian faith, and far from the unanimous interpretation of God's justice among people of devout belief and practice. The faith communities we represent embody God's own love by embracing the most marginalized, feared, and despised people among us, which for this cultural moment are LGBTQ+ people and their families. We yearn, pray, and work for a day when all people will be loved and afforded the dignity of their full existence, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Please stand with the librarians in their commitment to adhere to the high ethical standards of inclusion and representation set forth by their professional guild, the American Library Association. And please hear the voices of so many inclusive citizens of Arlington who want Arlington to remain a "Dream City" for all our neighbors, where the values of diversity, kindness, respect, and integrity are upheld.

Specifically, we urge the city council to receive the compromise position reached in October's Library Advisory Board meeting. Do not require or permit your constituents to continue arguing over the basic human dignity of all God's children. It's a tax on our sense of neighborly community that we can ill afford.

Prayers abound for your wisdom and courage. Thank you for your consideration.

grace and peace,

The Inclusive Faith Coalition of Arlington, including:

Rev. Dr. Katie Hays (convener), Galileo Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Father Kevin Johnson, All Souls Episcopal Church

Rev. Ken Ehrke, Embrace United Church of Christ

Rev. Kristin Klade, Kyrie Pub Church

Cantor Sheri Allen, Makom Shelanu Congregation

Father John Luft, Saint Anne Mother of Mary Independent Catholic Church

Rev. Allison Liles, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Rev. Curtis Smith, Trinity Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Jeremy Skaggs, Welcome Table Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Kate McGee, Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

Rev. Jeremy Pope, community chaplain