

# An Affirmation of the Good Neighbor

In a world that often believes that violence is the answer and that people may hate with impunity, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches has drafted “An Affirmation of the Good Neighbor.” You can use the Affirmation in many different settings.

If a hate group arrives in some area of the Commonwealth, the affirmation provides a way of standing in support of that community's efforts to promote Christian values. One might wish to insert that community's name in the first paragraph of the statement that might read like this:

Leader: As Christians in Pennsylvania, we unite with the community of \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus' call to love one another. We, like most Americans, feel offense when anyone practices and encourages prejudice, violence, and hate, because at the heart of the Christian faith is love, peace, and hospitality.

As a litany, the Affirmation provides a confession of faith for any worship that connects our belief in God with behaviors that follow from an understanding of the Gospel.

You might also use this document as a teaching tool. Placing it beside the teaching of hate groups, terrorist organizations, or even those who promote empire. It provides an important contrast.

To learn more about resources to assist you in promoting tolerance and reducing the incidence of hate crimes, visit the Pennsylvania Council of Churches website at <http://www.pachurches.org/html/ToleranceResources.doc>.



This important message provided by the  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
717.545.4761 ♦ [pcc@pachurches.org](mailto:pcc@pachurches.org)

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**Leader:** As Christians in Pennsylvania, we unite in Jesus' call to love one another. We, like most Americans, feel offense when anyone practices and encourages prejudice, violence, and hate, because at the heart of the Christian faith is love, peace, and hospitality.

**People:** *Blessed are the peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9)*

**Leader:** We repudiate any teaching that suggests that the Gospel of Jesus Christ advocates violence toward, rather than love of, neighbor.

**People:** *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. (Matthew 7:12)*

**Leader:** We pray that the God, who forgives our sins, will so change the hearts of those who act hatefully in person or policy that they will learn the ways of love.

**People:** *Whoever claims to be in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness. (1 John 2:9-11)*

**Leader:** As we remember the parable of the Good Samaritan, we hear Jesus calling us to be this good neighbor who shows compassion to the stranger.

**People:** *Dear God, let the love of Jesus so transform our hearts that we may treat our neighbors with dignity and learn the ways of harmony and mutual cooperation with all people of good will.*

**Leader:** Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21)

**People:** *Amen.*