

As a regional association of evangelical churches, Transform Minnesota calls for the restoration of religious exemption to the MN Human Rights Act.

The Christian ministries and churches in the evangelical network are committed to showing love and dignity to all humans, welcoming tens of thousands of Minnesotans into our communities regardless of status or identity. Together we extend that love by caring for thousands more every year, operating food shelves, providing housing, giving financial assistance, welcoming immigrants, assisting single mothers and children, operating childcare centers and schools, and much more to aid our fellow citizens.

We do so because we answer to a divine authority who instructs us to treat all persons with love and dignity, to be inclusive, and to care for the most vulnerable. Given that freedom of religion and liberty of conscience are foundational freedoms from which all other freedoms flow, the First Amendment in our US Constitution, and multiple Supreme Court rulings, make clear that government must respect the autonomy of religious organizations relating to doctrine, polity, and ministerial employment.

Considering this, US and Minnesota laws routinely include broad exemptions for religious organizations to employ clergy and other workers who share in their foundational beliefs and teachings. This is commonly referred to as a religious exemption in non-discriminatory laws. These are essential because the faith that informs our love for others also informs our beliefs about human identity and behavior and are inseparable.

The MN Human Rights Act appropriately seeks to prevent unjust discrimination against protected classes of people. However, the Act was amended in 2023, removing the protection for religious employers from claims against discrimination in hiring practices based on gender identity and expression, decisions that are rightly the domain of religious institutions, not the state. We strongly disagree with MN House and Senate committees that have failed to pass a corrective amendment that would have restored this religious exemption, and we urge the full House and Senate to still do so. This basic religious freedom is essential in a pluralistic and inclusive society.

Many Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other religious groups have deeply held beliefs about the nature of human identity and gender, and they should have autonomy in their governance decisions and be able to hire both clergy and teachers consistent with their mission and values. As it currently stands, Minnesota law is in conflict with federal law and well-established court decisions that expressly grant these protections to religious organizations.

We are asking that the religious exemption be restored to the MN Human Rights Act. Likewise, we ask fellow Christians to continue showing extravagant love, compassionate care, and inclusive welcome to all fellow humans created in the image of God.

SIGNERS

Carl Nelson, <i>President</i> <i>Transform Minnesota – the evangelical network</i>	Bishop Richard D. Howell, <i>Shiloh Temple</i> <i>International Ministries, Minneapolis</i>
Rev. Brian Farone, <i>Superintendent, North Central</i> <i>District Evangelical Free Church of America</i>	Rev. Mark Dean, <i>Superintendent, Minnesota District</i> <i>of the Assemblies of God</i>
Rev. Ron Hamilton, <i>Conference Minister, CCCC</i> <i>Denomination</i>	Rev. Rick Henderson, <i>Autumn Ridge Church,</i> <i>Rochester</i>
Pastor Nathan Brand, <i>Berean Community Church,</i> <i>Rochester</i>	Rev. Kenny Stokes, <i>Bethlehem Baptist Church,</i> <i>Minneapolis</i>
Pastor Larry Orth, <i>Calvary Free Church, Rochester</i>	Pastor Neal Rich, <i>Cedar Valley Church, Bloomington</i>
Dr. Jeremy K. Bratcher, <i>Cornerstone Church,</i> <i>Crystal</i>	Rev. Christian Ruch, <i>Church of the Cross, Hopkins</i>
Rev. Nick Dyrud, <i>Emmaus Lutheran Church,</i> <i>Bloomington</i>	Rev. Joel Sutton, <i>First Evangelical Free Church,</i> <i>Minneapolis</i>
Pastor Tierre Webster, <i>First Church of God in</i> <i>Christ, Minneapolis</i>	Pastor Jordan Borer Nelson, <i>Foundations Church,</i> <i>Minneapolis</i>
Bishop David E. Johnson, <i>Grace Apostolic Church,</i> <i>Minnetonka</i>	Pastor Troy Dobbs, <i>Grace Church, Eden Prairie</i>
Rev. Dr. B. Charvez Russell, <i>Greater Friendship</i> <i>Missionary Baptist Church, Minneapolis</i>	Pastor Clay Edens, <i>Hope Church, Oakdale</i>
Dr. R.A. Pointer, <i>Minneapolis Central Church of</i> <i>Christ</i>	Rev. Matthew St. John, <i>New Hope Church EFCA,</i> <i>New Hope</i>
Rev. Brian Doten, <i>Northwood Church,</i> <i>Maple Grove</i>	Joseph Worrells, <i>The Potter's House Apostolic</i> <i>Ministry, Burnsville</i>
Pastor Rob Ketterling, <i>River Valley Church,</i> <i>Burnsville</i>	Pastors Peter & Carolyn Haas, <i>Substance Church,</i> <i>Spring Lake Park</i>
Pastor George Stagg, <i>Twin Cities Church,</i> <i>Minneapolis / St. Paul</i>	Rev. Richard Coleman, <i>Wayman African Methodist</i> <i>Episcopal Church, Minneapolis</i>
Rev. Kevin Meyer, <i>Westgate Church, Wayzata</i>	Rev. Joel Johnson, <i>Westwood Church, Chanhassen</i>
Rev. Dale Hummel and Rev. Kyle Robinson, <i>Wooddale Church, Eden Prairie</i>	Pastor Keith Kerstetter, <i>Willmar Assembly of God,</i> <i>Willmar</i>
Rev. Charles Teixeira, <i>First Presbyterian Church of</i> <i>Albert Lea</i>	Rev. Curtis Brophy, <i>Faith Church MN, Minnetonka</i>

Rev. David Huizenga, *Bridgewood Church, Savage*

Rev. Steven D.H. Rassmussen, Ph.D., *Bethel Christian Fellowship, St. Paul*

Pastor Eric Spickelmier, *Calvary Baptist Church, Madison*

Dr. Gregory Pagh, *Christ Church, Otsego*

Pastor John Jacobi, *Crosstown Covenant Church, Minneapolis*

Pastor Jason Strand, *Eagle Brook Church, Lino Lakes*

Pastor Aaron Brockmeier, *Faith Baptist Church, Minneapolis*

H. Henry Williams, *Five Oaks Church, Woodbury*

Pastor Bruce Bentley, *City on a Hill Church, Rosemount*

Pastor Brent Knox, *Hometown Church, Bloomington*

Pastor Steve Treichler, *Hope Community Church, Minneapolis*

Dr. Bill Berg, *New Hope Community Church, Cambridge*

Pastor Rod Carlson, *Oak Hills Church, Eagan*

Phil Mather, *Real Church, St. Paul*

Rev. Isaac Gould, *Riverside Evangelical Church, Sartell*

Pastor Jason Maloney, *Trinity Church, Lakeville*

Pastor Doug Vagle, *The Waters Church, Sartell*

Pastor Kevin Sharpe, *Westbrook Community Church, Chaska*

Stephen Countryman, *Woodbury Church of Christ, Woodbury*

Rev. TJ Turner, *Woodbury Community Church, Woodbury*