

Progressive Religious Coalition of Augusta



June 18, 2023

Dear Augusta Pride,

Greetings from the Progressive Religious Coalition. The PRC is “a group of progressive people of faith who strive to promote various causes in the local area.” It is an honor for the PRC to be with you on the occasion of Augusta Pride 2023.

First let me apologize to you for not being with you in person. I am conducting Church services at the Episcopal Church in Dublin, Georgia this weekend, and will be attending the Pride activities here. So, I have asked the Rev. Marc Trimm, Vice President of the PRC, to read this message to you on my behalf.

On the occasion of Pride Month 2023, The Progressive Religious Coalition, (PRC) wants to share a word of support for the lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual LGBTQIA+ communities in Augusta and the CSRA. We lament the role that people of faith, as well as those who profess no faith, have played in marginalizing and endangering the lives of so many LGBTQIA+ people, including many children and teens. We lament the lives lost, the opportunities denied, and the destruction of communities and families due to homophobia and transphobia, often in the name of the Church. We also lament the spiritual isolation and abuse that far too many LGBTQIA+ people of faith have experienced, whether or not they have publicly disclosed their identity.

How is God calling us to love our neighbors and ourselves? The Progressive Religious Coalition, (PRC) do our best to interpret the scriptures through the lens of God’s unending mercy and abundant love for everyone. Love is at the very heart of our mission. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” The Presiding Bishop of my denomination puts it this way, “If it is not about love, it is not about God!”

The Augusta Community and beyond have been blessed by the presence of LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters in our community. We want to make our support clear. We believe that God made us each, exactly who we are called to be. Therefore, we celebrate the full lives of all people, inclusive of all genders, orientations, and expressions. We support the full communion, marriage, and ordination of LGBTQIA+ persons. We know that this is not something that should be taken for granted. Today, we live with the unfortunate reality that the majority of people of faith, in the

United States, are not affirming of LGBTQIA+ persons. We acknowledge that there is work to do, in both healing and justice.

Let us all make it our mission to be inclusive: to love, not to judge, to welcome, not reject, to be open to change, not guided by the ways of the past, but looking forward to what will bring greater humanity to the world now and in the future.

May your faith be renewed this day, and you are truly filled with Pride this Pride month!

Peace and blessing to you,

The Very Reverend Billy J. Alford, President, PRC