

For Immediate Release

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Billboards about gays seek clarity for hearts and minds

People have heard it preached for years that homosexuals are condemned as wicked and perverse people but for many there's a quiet voice that asks a **nagging** question – how does such a hateful message square with **religious** teachings that stress love and full acceptance.

Rev. Jeff Miner, Senior Pastor of Jesus Metropolitan Community Church, Indianapolis, believes that quiet voice **in our hearts and minds is** trying to tell **us** something about the difference between bigotry and **religious** truth.

In the past, Americans experienced that same nagging question when certain religious teachings were misused to justify bans against interracial marriage or denying equal rights for women.

Disguising bigotry as religious truth was wrong yesterday and it's wrong today – and that is the essence of the third phase of a billboard campaign that Miner's church is co-sponsoring with the national civil rights organization and his national church organization.

The billboard message is simple: Don't confuse bigotry against gays and lesbians with religious truth.

"We think a lot of people are troubled **by** that nagging question they hear **in their soul** every time someone uses the Bible to bash gays," Miner said. "It's a question that we are going to ask publicly again and again and again – from taxi cab drivers to presidential candidates. And there is a very important follow-up question which forms the basis for this segment of the campaign.

"If you interpret the Bible to justify treating gay and lesbian people as unequal, is that not identical to how people have interpreted the Bible to justify slavery, segregation and the subjugation of women in the past?"

Absolutely, says Mitchell Gold, founder of Faith In America.

“There was a time when most Christians believed slavery was of God," he said. "There was a time when most Christians believed women should not be allowed to vote. There was a time when most Christians believed that interracial marriage was wrong. Each position was elaborately supported with biblical arguments. In our hearts we know that it's wrong. With our minds, we can learn from those times in history when it was used against others.

Each billboard invites readers to go to *WouldJesusDiscriminate.com* – a web-site that provides detailed analysis of what the Bible says about homosexuality and the history of faith-based discrimination – not just against gays, but also African Americans, women, and interracial couples. (See billboard photos at WouldJesusDiscriminate.com/pictures.)

This is now the third 30-day round of billboards. In all three rounds, the tagline on each billboard has been the same: *Would Jesus discriminate?* “Instinctively, people understand that Jesus would never discriminate,” says Rev. Cindi Love, Executive Director of Metropolitan Community Churches worldwide. “It makes no sense to tell people that God rejects them simply because of their sexual orientation. Jesus would never do that – and everybody knows it.”

“We will not be deterred,” Rev. Miner said. “We will keep sharing a positive, Bible-based message of hope regardless how mean-spirited the opposition gets.” Rev. Miner indicated that Round 3 will include a few “surprises.” He declined to elaborate, so as not to tip off those determined to censor. “Stay tuned,” he said. “We’re going to be as creative as the early Christians were in sharing God’s message of love for all people.”

The campaign is being coordinated locally by Jesus Metropolitan Community Church of Indianapolis, with critical support from Faith In America and Metropolitan Community Churches worldwide. Faith In America is a national organization devoted to ending religious bigotry against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Jesus MCC bills itself as “a church that is passionate about Jesus and the Bible, but not afraid of diversity or independent thought.” It is part of a denomination – Metropolitan Community Churches – with a long history of outreach to the gay and transgender community. Jesus MCC is the largest church of its type anywhere in the Midwest.

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