

Statement Concerning United States Senate Consideration of Equality Act

Office of the General Overseer

March 1, 2021

This past week, on February 25, 2021, the United States House of Representatives passed the Equality Act. This bill amends federal civil rights laws and broadly prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. This bill will now advance to the United States Senate for consideration.

The Equality Act, as currently written, should cause pause and concern for the Church. Portions of the bill, if passed, could have significant ramifications for religious people and faith communities. The rights of God's people to act consistently with their biblical and sincerely held beliefs are undermined by the language of the Act. Presently, there are no religious exemptions or exceptions to the Act, causing concern that churches could be required to adhere to the practices of the Act as "places of public accommodation," which is redefined in its language. Additionally, the Act has the potential to seek to impact our practices and beliefs in relation to the sanctity of life, pastoral counseling, community care and support, as well as the usage and rental of our facilities.

At times such as these, we are often unsure how the church should respond. Given the significant consequences of this action, we feel compelled to call on our pastors and ministers of the Church of God of Prophecy in the United States to prayerfully consider the following actions:

First, we should pray. The passage of the Equality Act could have significant impact on our society and institutions. It could have consequence on our local church ministries and how they operate. Pray for revival throughout this land and an awakening of God's people. Pray for those considering this bill to uphold the precedent of religious freedom in our nation. Secondly, reaffirm your resolve to God's Word as our authority on such matters. As our Statement of Faith affirms, "We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice."

Thirdly, remember that Scripture directs us to reflect the love and compassion of Christ to all people. We must lovingly and faithfully share with them the truth of God's transforming Word with love, humility, compassion, and civility. As we discuss and debate this issue on public and private forums, it is imperative that we maintain a Christlike love. Many in our societies have been deceived and are struggling in lifestyles and choices that we believe will lead to their eternal punishment. We must reflect the grace that we all have so richly received as a gift of God.

Finally, we call on our members throughout the United States to review this pending legislation and educate yourselves on the issues it addresses. Your personal convictions regarding the issues contained in the Equality Act should be communicated to your two state representative senators by email, phone, or correspondence. You may find contact information for your senators at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>