



The Love Your Neighbor Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNITED METHODISTS DECIDE AGAINST ATLANTA DUE TO RACIALLY OFFENSIVE PRACTICES

WASHINGTON, DC – MAY 8, 2014 - The Love Your Neighbor (LYN) Coalition, consisting of ten “official” and “unofficial” caucus organizations of The United Methodist Church, announced today they have changed plans from holding an event in Atlanta, Georgia due to racially offensive practices of the Atlanta Braves organization toward Native Americans.

For several months the LYN Coalition has negotiated with the Georgia Institute of Technology about hosting their event in the summer of 2015 (with an expected attendance of 700 participants) in Atlanta. In a letter to Atlanta’s Mayor Kasim Reed, the LYN Coalition states that “Atlanta was the top location on our list. The costs, easy transportation to and from the airport, and the convenience to local restaurants, businesses and tourist attractions seemed to make Atlanta an ideal location.”

However, the Native American International Caucus of United Methodists, an LYN Coalition partner organization, reminded them of The United Methodist Church’s past commitment to not hold events in cities whose sports teams have names, mascots and/or practices that are demeaning and offensive toward Native American peoples. As a result, the LYN Coalition is now looking toward another city and has informed not only Atlanta’s Mayor, but also the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta Braves organization that they “will not be able to bring (our) business and tourist dollars to the city and businesses of Atlanta.”

In their letters the LYN Coalition states, “While we give thanks that the Atlanta Braves organization has changed its mascot from ‘the screaming Indian, Chief Noc-A-Homa’ to ‘Homer,’ we also note that they have not done anything to remove the offensive caricature of “Chief Noc-A-Homa” from screen savers and Facebook pages that still connect it directly with the Atlanta Braves. If recent news stories about racism within sporting organizations have shown us anything, it is that organizations can attempt to outwardly placate the public while systemically continuing to promote prejudice and racist attitudes through their words, actions and deeds. The use of the name Braves and the symbols of the tomahawk and ‘tomahawk chop’ do nothing but offer up racist and demeaning images and stereotypes of our Native American citizens and friends.”

They further state, “It is our hope that the Atlanta Braves organization will consider a different name and symbols for its organization and team. We, the LYN Coalition, will ask others to avoid holding events in cities like Atlanta until they acknowledge that their storied traditions have been built upon racist portrayals of others and forego the continued use of images, mascots, symbols and/or actions that perpetuate and encourage prejudice. It is our further hope that the good and caring people of these cities will speak out within their communities and local governments to encourage positive and respectful change. Once these changes occur we will be more than happy to consider bringing our business back to Atlanta!”

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About the Love Your Neighbor Coalition

The Love Your Neighbor Coalition was formed in the summer of 2011 and has grown to include representatives from ten United Methodist-related partner organizations. We are United Methodists committed to the embodiment of God’s love and justice within and through the people and mission of The United Methodist Church. Our goal is to assure The United Methodist Church is fully open to the presence, love and grace of God offered to all people.

The Love Your Neighbor Coalition is made up of Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns; Black Methodists for Church Renewal; Love Prevails, MARCHA: Metodistas Asociados Representando la Causa de los Hispano-Americanos; Methodist Federation for Social Action; National Federation of Asian American United Methodists; Native American International Caucus of United Methodists; Pacific Islanders Caucus of United Methodists; Reconciling Ministries Network; and, United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities.