



Dear Members of the Inclusivity Committee,

In the City Council meeting held on June 9th, 2025, I recommended the following addition (in italics/bold) to the City of Philomath's RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING INCLUSIVITY (Resolution 25-16):

"...WHEREAS, Philomath strives to be a city based on mutual respect and understanding, a community that welcomes and values all residents, and treats everyone with human dignity and respect ***because they are made in the image of God...***"

I made a motion for this addition which received a second from Councilor Nielson. In the discussion, Councilor Saalsaa encouraged the Council to send the addition to the Inclusivity Committee for deliberation. Since the Inclusivity Committee did the work in drafting the Proclamation, that was a very reasonable direction to take, and I withdrew my motion. This allowed me the opportunity to bring the recommendation, with an explanation, to you, in writing, for consideration. (I would have been happy to see you all in person; however, with Mayor McMorran, Councilor Andrade, and Councilor Crocker on the Committee, my presence would create a quorum of the City Council; to avoid that, I submit the following explanation for your consideration).

As a parallel to my recommendation, the Declaration of Independence says that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The writers of the Declaration understood that the equality of the people and their rights are not granted by governments, but rather belong to them naturally, bestowed upon them by their Creator. Likewise, the justification for treating all persons with human dignity and respect is grounded in the fact that all humans are made in the image of God. We treat everyone with dignity not because it is granted by a city proclamation nor because it is the opinion of some that we should do this; rather, it transcends our opinions, and it is objectively grounded in the fact that all of us are made in the image of God.

If we do not ground and justify the reason from this transcendent category, it becomes a mere recommendation and opinion. There are people in the world that may have an alternate opinion: they may think that not everyone is worthy of human dignity and respect. If we do not ground the proclamation in the declaration that mankind is made in the image of God, then we leave it to personal opinion. And, in that paradigm, why is one opinion more valid than another? Perhaps that is the question to summarize: if we call the people of our City to treat everyone with human dignity, but we don't ground the call in the fact that humans are made in the image of God, then what do we ground it in?

As we celebrate Juneteenth, we remember and rejoice in the abolition of slavery in our country. We can call slavery objectively evil because those enslaved are the image of God. It isn't an

opinion. I am confident that the people of the City of Philomath consider slavery objectively evil and repulsive; not because it is a mere opinion and personal preference, but because those enslaved are the image of God and, for that reason, worthy of dignity and love; a truth that resonates deep in our hearts. My recommendation for the addition to the proposed City Proclamation makes it clear that our call to love and treat everyone with human dignity is immutable.

Brent Kaseman
City Councilor