

Crosses for equality

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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A group of Christians gathered at Renaissance Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Chattanooga to construct “[Crosses for Equality](#)” to show their support of a [non-discrimination and domestic partnership ordinance](#). Members of Renaissance and Mercy Junction, a PCUSA ministry, worked with kids in the neighborhood to saw the wood, spray the paint, and hammer some hope.

They constructed the rainbow-colored crosses on holy ground. That very soil bore witness to the fact that love could overcome discrimination. It was the same plot where the Rev. Leroy and Gloria Griffith were married over 40 years ago.

Rev. Griffith and Ms. Gloria were a young interracial couple who wanted to be married in a church, but they couldn’t find a congregation who would risk the violence that threatened the celebration. So, the bride and groom stood on that plot of land without walls, declaring their love before God, friends, and family. In that historic moment, the couple professed their commitment to one another, and they joined in the hope that love would conquer the racism that plagued the city.

It was fitting that on that same plot of land, Rev. Griffith planted Renaissance Presbyterian Church, and now, the members of Mercy Junction use the land for a

community garden and to construct crosses for equality.

According to Tennessee Law, it is currently legal to fire someone for being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. That sort of discrimination would be disastrous for the young, burgeoning arts, technology and innovative businesses that Chattanooga is attracting. So, last November, the Chattanooga City Council passed an ordinance to make sure that discrimination based on sexual orientation can't happen to its hard-working citizens. In addition, the ordinance provided domestic partner benefits for city workers.

Quickly, the Tea Party organized a challenge to the ordinance, collecting a group of signatures to make sure that the ordinance goes on the ballot for the upcoming vote on August 7.

Now, people of faith are joining with [Yes Chattanooga](#) to speak out in support of their LGBTQ neighbors. Six communities have asked for the crosses, so they can display them in support of equality. Austin Young, who organized the demonstration with Mercy Junction and will be attending seminary in the fall said, "We wanted to show that we are standing for what we believe in, justice and love for all people. "

Ms. Gloria echoed the message, "Jesus died for all. Justice is for everyone. Love has no boundaries, no walls. When I vote, I shall vote in love."