

**GREGORY SMITH, ASSOCIATE PASTOR, FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
OF NEW ALBANY**

As someone who seeks to follow in the way of Christ, one of the universal principles that lives at the front of my mind in all situations of life is the idea that we are called upon to love God and love neighbor.

I've found that while Jesus had ideas and thoughts on varying life issues, he seemed to keep at the center of them all this same idea...that we are to love God and love neighbor. Perhaps the thing that troubles, and saddens, me the most about the formulation of and passing of House Bill 1523 is that no matter how hard and long I search there doesn't appear to be any love in it...which by extension, if we are following love of God and love of neighbor as the central premise to our faith, means that the trajectory of House Bill 1523 falls well outside the target of what Christ might be calling us do in relation to the LGBT community. As we seek to answer the question, "who is my neighbor?" it is my hope as people of faith that we can, and will, answer in such a way that far exceeds the exclusionary rhetoric of House Bill 1523.