

## The United Church Canada Makes Bold Move to Crack Down on 'Atheist Minister'

12:00PM EDT 6/2/2015 Jessilyn Justice (/component/search/?

searchword=Jessilyn%20Justice&ordering=newest&searchphrase=exact&areas[0]=authors)



Gretta Vosper is an atheist minister. (YouTube)

The United Church Canada filed a unanimous motion to review a proud atheist who is also a minister.

According to the Toronto Conference minutes (<https://torontoconference.ca/downloads/exec-meeting-minutes-2015-05-11.pdf>), Past President Ann Harbridge and Living Waters' Linda Parson made a motion to investigate the effectiveness of Rev. Gretta Vosper.

They will interview her "with a focus on continuing affirmation of the questions asked of all candidates at the time of ordination, commissioning or admission ... ."

Vosper "came out (<http://www.grettavosper.ca/about/>)" as an atheist in 2001.

After I spontaneously preached a sermon in which I completely deconstructed the idea of a god named God, rather than fire me, the congregation chose to step out on an unmarked path. With them, I've labored, lamented, lost and loved. It's (a) hard road but a worthy one with no finish line in sight," Vosper writes.

Vosper writes that people can live compassionate lives with or without God, and has taken a proactive role in fighting for freedom from religion.

Where it may once have seemed justifiable, ours is not a time in which personal religious beliefs can be welcomed into the public sphere; we can no longer claim that the impact of religion on political and social structures is purely beneficial," Vosper writes (<http://www.grettavosper.ca/letter-gary-paterson-regarding-paris/>). "This truth is

obvious in the shadow of Paris, Ottawa and countless other tragedies. We must boldly stand with those who would clear the public sphere from the prejudices of religious belief even as we defend the rights of individuals to hold whatever beliefs allow them to sleep at night."

And now the Toronto conference is addressing those red flags.

In her interview, the committee will investigate the following, UCC Toronto Executive Secretary Rev. David Allen says (<http://www.christianpost.com/news/united-church-of-canada-to-investigate-effectiveness-of-minister-who-professes-atheism-139696/>):

Do you believe in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you commit yourself anew to God? Do you believe that God is calling you to the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call? Are you willing to exercise your ministry in accordance with the scriptures, in continuity with the faith of the Church and subject to the oversight and discipline of The United Church of Canada?"

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