

Safe Harbor Declaration

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Western Jurisdiction
The United Methodist Church



Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Believing that when God surveyed creation on the sixth day, “God saw everything, and... it was very good,”ⁱⁱ

Trusting God’s promise, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams,”ⁱⁱⁱ

Assured that Jesus “came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest,”^{iv}

Affirming Jesus’ words, “You will know them by their fruits,”^v observing John Wesley’s practice of authorizing men and women lay preachers whose ministry bore fruit, and witnessing that God has called, gifted and blessed many LGBTQ+ persons for ministry,

Heeding Paul’s caution that “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,”^{vi}

Engaging John Wesley’s question, “though we may not all think alike, may we not all love alike?”^{vii}

Embracing the challenge in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, that “every generation must appropriate creatively the wisdom of the past and seek God in their midst in order to think afresh about God, revelation, sin, redemption, worship, the church, freedom, justice, moral responsibility, and other significant theological concerns,”^{viii}

Renouncing the “spiritual forces of wickedness, rejecting the evil powers of this world, repenting of our sin” and **accepting** the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,^{ix}

Continuing to do our best to pattern our lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ,^x

Fulfilling the vows we made at our consecrations, to “encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries,”^{xi}

Holding fast to Paul’s affirmation that, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread,”^{xii}

Standing on the promise that it is “by grace that we are saved through faith,” and not of our own doing,^{xiii}

We affirm that God's Spirit pours out onto all God's people. We stand firmly within the best of our biblical and Wesleyan tradition in order to maintain a witness to the wideness of God's mercy in a broken world in need of Christ's healing, liberating love.

Our sights are set on God's amazing grace and the high cost of decades-long discrimination against LGBTQ+ siblings within The United Methodist Church. We are haunted by the actions of the 2019 Special General Conference, which impose new and harmful definitions and restrictions on full participation of LGBTQ+ persons in the Church and abandon robust engagement of scripture to narrow biblical literalism. We do not believe that The United Methodist Church has the authority or the power to impose limits on the movement of God's Holy Spirit in the lives of God's beloved LGBTQ+ children.

As of January 1, 2020, when many of the actions of the 2019 General Conference of The United Methodist Church will take effect, we intend to provide safe harbor for clergy under our care who may be at risk under the new provisions, prohibitions, and punishments. We intend to exercise our authority as bishops of The United Methodist Church to encourage and protect the full participation of LGBTQ+ persons as beloved children of God, embraced in God's reign of grace. To do so is essential to the integrity of the Body of Christ, and the unity of the Church. We are unwilling and unable to exercise the office of bishop in ways that harm, isolate, silence or exclude LGBTQ+ persons as they seek to be seen, understood, welcomed and fully included in the community of the Church. We do not intend to withhold or challenge ordination based solely on a person's gender identity or sexual orientation. We are unwilling to punish clergy who celebrate the marriage of two adults of any gender or sexual orientation seeking the blessing of God and the Church for their covenanted life together. At the same time, we recognize and will uphold the requirement that LGBTQ+ clergy, with all clergy, "maintain the highest standards of holy living"xiv in their personal and professional relationships.

Finally, we pray for our United Methodist Church, as the Apostle Paul did for the church in Ephesus, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love. We pray that we may all have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.xv

Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata, Phoenix Episcopal Area

Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño, San Francisco Episcopal Area

Bishop Grant Hagiya, Los Angeles Episcopal Area

Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area

Bishop Karen P. Oliveto, Mountain Sky Episcopal Area

Join Us

The bishops of the Western Jurisdiction do not intend to act alone. We call upon the entire Church to offer safe harbor for LGBTQ+ clergy and laity to participate fully in the life of The United Methodist Church.

We encourage bishops, clergy, laity, to join us by signing the Safe Harbor Declaration.

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