

Beloved of Aldersgate Church,

By now hopefully you've heard that the United Methodist Church gathered for a Special Called General Conference in St. Louis, MO this week to try to find a way forward in matters dealing with human sexuality. Yesterday a plan was passed called the Traditional Plan: This plan is a step backwards in the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people as it forces stricter and swifter consequences on clergy who perform same sex marriages and on clergy who identify as LGBTQ+ (it, in fact, defrocks them).



Last August we (Aldersgate Church) passed an Inclusion Statement (available on our website), which vows the full inclusion of and ally-ship with the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore it rejects the exclusive language in our Book of Discipline that the General Conference not only affirmed this week but strengthened. **What happened at the General Conference this week is exactly why we did our clarifying work on these matters last year.** Sifting through these already confusing times without that clarity would be even more confusing. It is too early to know what the future holds, but on March 11th Minnesota UMC clergy are gathering with Bishop Bruce Ough where I'm sure he will give us more and good information.

But there are two things that are clear:

1) we have a real and serious problem in our denomination. Though official schism has not happened, there is a giant rift among us, one that is difficult to see a way out of. The harmful things said on the General Conference floor toward the LGBTQ+ community by some delegates combined with the passage of increased exclusion makes it untenable for inclusive clergy and churches to stay in covenant with those who so abjectly wish to exclude and marginalize the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. While it is too early to know the implications of this, we need to name this serious divide in our denomination.

2) **We, Aldersgate Church, know who we are. We are an inclusive church, who guards the dignity, humanity, faith, and call of LGBTQ+ people.** We are an intergenerational, inclusive community committed to creating a safe space for people of all orientations and identities to explore a Jesus-Shaped spirituality and find spiritual connection, healing, nurturing and growth. We must continue that work, no matter what. We must step more fully into that work in such a time as this. Our identity is in Jesus before it is in the United Methodist Church.

To the LGBTQ+ community: We are sorry for the harm the institution of the United Methodist Church has brought. Know that you are loved by God and by us. Know that you matter, that the world needs your voice, and that you are a beautiful beloved child of God. And know that Aldersgate Church is with you, that you have a place in our community, that we are here for you and we are here *with* you. We love you.

Pastor Paul will say more about all of this in the context of our Matthew reading this Sunday (Matthew 14:13-21). We will not only deal with this- we will worship, pray, sing and be together as usual- but Paul will say some more about what this means for us as a church. We hope you will join us. God bless you all. Please contact Pastor Paul if you would like to talk further. He'd be happy to do so. Peace, Beloved. And remember, love wins.

*Pastor Paul Baudhuin
Marjie Brodersen (Lay Leader)*