

From the Pastor

April 2019

The United Methodist Church's General Conference has the exclusive right to speak officially for the denomination. No person, no paper, no organization has that authority. Typically, the General Conference meets every four years. It is made up of equal representation from laity and clergy, voted to serve by each conference across the United Methodist Church. It represents our global denomination from the United States, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Philippines. The last regularly held General Conference was in 2016. At that conference, after years of debating matters of human sexuality, the General Conference spoke by vote and called a special session for 2019 with the issue of human sexuality the only matter on the agenda.

The Special General Conference was held on February 23-26. During the conference, the United Methodist Church spoke to adopt a Traditional Plan that affirms the historic belief in monogamous, heterosexual marriage as the Scriptural standard for those who follow Jesus. This plan keeps the language that has been in UMC Book of Discipline for forty years outlining "the practice of homosexuality as incompatible with Christian teaching" and prohibiting the church from performing same-sex marriages and ordaining those who practice homosexuality. The traditional plan which was adopted additionally attempts to hold denominational leadership accountable for enforcing church rules on this issue.

The actions of the Special General Conference are NOT intended to bar LGBTQ+ individuals from being welcomed and invited into congregations of the UMC and into a life of discipleship and faithfulness to Jesus. In the Book of Discipline, the church still affirms that "God's grace is available to all" and proclaims that "we will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

We know that the people of Mentor UMC do not see eye-to-eye on the issue of human sexuality. We know that most (if not all) of our beloved people here have friends and family who are LGBTQ+. Many in our congregation are heartbroken over the message that these friends and family are receiving that they are rejected and unwanted by God or the church. We also know that many of you share the conviction of the majority of delegates that loving the LGBTQ+ community does not preclude upholding the traditional standard for Biblical sexuality. We are committed to remaining in community, conversation and fellowship with each other on this issue, as well as so many others, that will continue to face our church in the years ahead. We remain focused on our mission to lead ALL on to a path of Christ-centered discipleship, extending that call to every person of every background. Our identity and worth as Christians is found in who Jesus says we are in His Word, and every person in this world is a priceless soul for whom Jesus died. Our greatest hope and prayer is that our church will be a place where EVERY person is met with the truth of the Gospel message and called to a life of transforming love and obedience to our Savior and Lord.

Pastors Kurt, Quincy and Beverly

