

# From the Pastor

October 2018

## The United Methodist Church and Human Sexuality

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Methodist Church with the union of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Churches. Part of the constitution of the denomination called for a General Conference of Methodist churches from around the world every four years. This body is the only one that can make modifications to the Book of Discipline (rule book).

After the organizing conference in 1968, they gathered in 1972 and passed a motion affirming the worth of homosexuals but also stated that we (the UMC) do not condone the practice.

Through the 50-year history, at each of the four-year stops at General Conference, this language has been challenged, but always upheld. Additional action was taken to not allow self-avowed, practicing homosexuals to serve as clergy, nor for celebrations of unity to be performed in our churches or by our clergy.

The United Methodist Church affirms that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons and that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. Since first debated in 1972, each General Conference has continued to debate this matter. At the last conference, held in 2016, the matter was tabled in lieu of a special called session in February of 2019 to be held in St. Louis, Missouri. The special session of the General Conference has been called to address a way forward for The United Methodist Church on the matter of human sexuality.

12 East Ohio delegates (6 lay and 6 clergy) will attend this Special Session. They recognize the importance of the decisions that will be before them and the impact these decisions will have on each United Methodist church and member. They have issued the following statement, "We invite you to attend and share your thoughts and concerns at one of the five scheduled listening posts that will be held throughout the East Ohio Conference."

Following are the remaining listening posts:

Sat., Sept. 29 from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm at Cambridge Christ UMC

Tues., Oct. 9 from 6:30 – 9:00 pm at New Philadelphia First UMC

Sat., Oct. 20 from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm at Ashland First UMC

Tues., Nov. 6 from 6:30 – 9:00 pm at Aldersgate UMC (North Coast)

They add, "We would appreciate participants registering in advance to help with our planning but registration is not required to attend the posts." To register go to the [eocumc.org](http://eocumc.org) website.

As we move closer to this historic conference, in addition to attending a listening post, I encourage you to:

- Be in prayer for those who will be delegates at the General Conference.
- Engage in grace-filled conversation in the congregation.
- Remember that our focus continues to be our mission to lead all onto a path of Christ-centered discipleship.

- Pastor Kurt