



Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine. I am about to do a new thing. Isaiah 43

January 7, 2020

Dear Ones,

You are part of a Reconciling UMC which affirms and will continue to affirm that all persons have sacred worth and ability. We are grateful that LGBTQ+ persons and their families are part of our church family and we refuse to participate in the injustice, oppression and discrimination that is codified in our Book of Discipline. Emmanuel publicly says that we refuse to follow the rules of our denomination that make LGBTQ+ persons second-class members by denying them the ability to have their pastors officiate at their weddings, get married in their UM Churches, or pursue their calls from God to the ministry of the ordained and the consecration of being a Bishop.

Lots of prayer is needed at this time. As of January 1, 2020, our denomination is now living under new rules (called "The Traditional Plan" which was passed by the 2019 General Conference). These new rules include stronger prohibitions on the ordination of LGBTQ+ persons at multiple points along that journey, and more severe responses to complaints regarding clergy who officiate same-gender weddings. And worse than that is the way that these rules reaffirm that LGBTQ+ persons are second-class members of a denomination that is called by God to affirm each person as of sacred worth and ability.

If you want to read a summary of the new rules from "The Traditional Plan" and how they affect EUMC go to:

<http://www.eumclaurel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Emmanuels-Way-Forward-One-Page-Final.pdf>

We do not have to wait until May 2020 to change things: we are empowered to act, pray, agitate and protest at many steps along the way. We hope you will participate in the #ResistHarm movement. Emmanuel joins other UM's throughout the world taking action to show our resistance to the Traditional Plan. Emmanuel UMC will continue to work on being followers of Jesus where we care for those in harm's way, and we provide a refuge of inclusive Christianity for all people.

If you have found it hard to participate at Emmanuel because of the dissonance between your beliefs and your denomination's rules, know you are in the prayers of your community and church staff and we are available for prayers and conversation. We are sorry for the failings of the UMC to tell you the Good News of the Gospel: you are a beloved child of God, no matter what the church says.

- The Staff of Emmanuel United Methodist Church

Statement about Media Coverage of Possible UMC Split

Many of you have seen the media headlines from Friday, January 3, that say the UMC is headed for a division. While headlines and some of the content do not accurately share the complexities of how decisions are made in our

denomination or the complexities of dividing an organization of 12 million global members, they are right that this is a big moment in the life of the church.

In short, a proposal, named The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, was put out by a 16-member group of diverse and global leaders, who, if they can manage to gain and sustain the support of their constituents and the votes of the delegates to the 2020 General Conference in May, might result in a path forward that includes the division of the current UMC.

This proposal, hammered out with the help of a professional mediation attorney, allows a path for The UMC to remove the harmful anti-LGBTQ+ language, and for those whose faiths are so entwined with the belief that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings to leave and form their own denomination. Approved changes would take place in May. For some, this protocol is a sign of hope that after decades of legal discrimination in our denomination, a separation agreement like this seems like a logical way to move forward, a way to finally be free of the rules that support LGBTQ + discrimination and a way stop fighting with each other about these rules. For some this protocol does not go far enough because it does not affirm LGBTQ + persons; there were not enough LGBTQ+ people present at the negotiations and our historic racial-ethnic caucus groups did not have representatives in the negotiations.

If you want to read more a more details about the Proposal go to:

The Council of UMC Bishops Press Release

<https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/newsdetail/united-methodist-traditionalists-centrists-progressives-bishops-sign-agreement-aimed-at-separation-13133654>

FAQs about the Protocol

<https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/newsdetail/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-united-methodist-mediation-team-13133711>

Important Facts:

The only body that can change the book of Discipline of the UMC is the General Conference of the UMC, which meets every four years with representative delegates, ½ clergy and ½ laity, from all over the globe, as the UMC is a global denomination. Bishops do not have voice or vote at General Conference. Our next GC is in Minneapolis in May of 2020.

The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation must be ruled on by our Judicial Council (a UM version of the US Supreme Court) who will declare all, parts, or none of it constitutional, and only plans that are ruled constitutional by our Judicial Council can become church law.

Since 1972 we have had numerous plans and studies on Human Sexuality that have been offered to the delegates at each GC and the delegates have been unable to pass a legislative solution to remove the harmful language in our rule book about persons who are LGBTQ+. The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation is one of many plans to be presented to the GC delegates in May of 2020, and the delegates will adopt, reject, or change one of the plans, or none of the plans.

- Written by Rev. Stephanie Vader, Senior Pastor of Emmanuel UMC