

Statement from Foundry UMC Lay Members, At-large Member and Deaconesses – June 3, 2018

As Foundry United Methodist Church's lay representatives, at-large member, and Deaconesses at this week's Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, many of us stood with T.C. on Wednesday night outside the room where the Clergy Executive Session was meeting about the candidates for ordination. We were heartbroken by Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling's decision to exclude two candidates from receiving a vote for commissioning or ordination--including our own T.C. Morrow--because they are openly married to a person of the same gender.

This was the wrong decision, spiritually, morally, and biblically. It did more harm than just allowing a vote by the Executive Session would have done, even if the end result was the same. While we acknowledge the Bishop's position that she felt compelled to rule this way until there is a change in Church law, we mourn with the candidates who continuously give so much of their lives to a church that does not fully recognize their call. And, we look forward to continuing dialogue between Foundry and Bishop Easterling in the coming months, including around her upcoming sermon at Foundry in July. We pray that respectful conversations between Bishop Easterling and the people of Foundry will prove fruitful as we move forward. The Bishop acknowledged in a statement written after her decision that she too wishes to remove The UMC Book of Discipline language that underpinned her decision.

While this was a difficult gathering of our annual conference, it was one that gave us much hope. Much time was spent on the recommendation of the Council of Bishops and the Commission on A Way Forward. The three petitions put forward by BWARM received approval from the conference. One of them calls for churches to have conversations about the called session and the matters that will be before it. Another sends forward to the General Conference a substitute brought by Rev. Dr. Phil Wogaman, our former pastor, supporting the Commission On A Way Forward's One Church Plan, including removal of discriminatory language against LGBTQIA United Methodists. We are glad that the conference did not miss the opportunity to send a resolution forward addressing the special General Conference in 2019. Although we as a group are not of one mind on the plan, we all recognize the value of a hopeful statement coming from the annual conference.

We are also delighted that Irene DeMaris was commissioned as a Deaconess during the Ordination service. And, we are thrilled that four Foundry members went forward in response to the Bishop's invitation to those called to ordained ministry.

We left this annual conference knowing we have many allies--including Bishop Easterling--in our church's long fight for full inclusion of LGBTQIA individuals in The United Methodist Church, and we look forward to working with them as we continue our journey towards the welcome, celebration, and inclusion of LGBTQIA people across the United Methodist connection.

Logan Alley, Deaconess
Nick Beadle, Reserve Lay Member
Ann Brown Birkel, Lay Member
Guy Cecil, Lay Member
Tracy Collins, Lay Member
Irene R. DeMaris, Deaconess
Jay Gilliam, Reserve Lay Member
Paul Hazen, Lay Member At Large
Andrea Johnson, Reserve Lay Member
Kerry Kidwell-Slak, Reserve Lay Member
Allison Kramer, Reserve Lay Member
Jan Lawrence, Lay Member
T.C. Morrow, Lay Member