

30 April 2017

Pastoral Letter on Judicial Council Ruling

Dear Foundry Family,

We believe the call to ordained ministry is of God. We also believe a person's gifts and graces, together with God's call, are the criteria by which persons are appropriately affirmed for ordained life in the church. As such, we want you to know about a decision that was made regarding ordination in the life of our denomination.

On Friday afternoon, April 28, the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church issued three declaratory decisions pertaining to the nomination, election, consecration, and appointment of LGBTQ+ persons to the Episcopacy and to the commissioning and ordination of LGBTQ+ persons. These rulings support our denomination's discriminatory laws against LGBTQ+ persons. We believe these rulings are unjust and do harm to LGBTQ+ persons and to the church as a whole. There are those who believe these rulings determine the validity of LGBTQ+ persons' calls to ministry or ordination. Likewise, there are those who believe these rulings will determine the future of the church so many of us love. Rooted in the resurrection hope of an Easter people, we know this is not true.

The God we know and serve is a God of steadfast love. There is no law against love. There is no law against joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5: 22-23). Indeed, God's call is not defined by things like "case law" or "statutory construction," but by grace and love which transcends all human law and understanding. Although the church affirms this call in the lives of those who serve it, it is God—not the church—who sounds that call and makes it valid. We are children of God...no matter what anyone else, or anything else, says. No declaratory decision can change that.

Members of the clergy team and laity leaders attended the Judicial Council meeting on Tuesday, April 25. We were present to affirm the prophetic leadership and faithful witness of Bishop Karen Oliveto. We believe God has called her to lead the church for just such a time as this. Here at Foundry Church, we will continue to recognize, celebrate, and advocate for those God

calls to ordained ministry, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

We recommit ourselves to the work for full equity and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. This work has already been long and has left many bruised and weary. But we know that God isn't done with the United Methodist Church and so we proudly take our place in God's ongoing work of reconciliation. We will fortify our God-ordained anointing to 'resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.' We will not be swayed and we will not back down.

Beloved, let us hold one another in prayer and forge ahead in God's love, strengthened by the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"But now thus says the Lord who created you and formed you: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you." - Isaiah 43: 1-2, 4 (adapted)

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