

General Conference: *A Note from Our Pastors*

February 28, 2019

Dear Wesley Family,

This week, as most of you know, the United Methodist Church held its Special Session of the General Conference in St. Louis. The vote of the Conference favored what is known as the “Traditional Plan” for the Church’s response to questions of human sexuality as regards ordination and marriage.



The “Traditional Plan” maintains the Church’s current teachings prohibiting same-sex marriage and ordination of gay/lesbian persons into the ministry. In addition, the Traditional Plan increases enforcement measures for pastors who would conduct same-sex weddings and Boards of Ordained Ministry and bishops who would ordain gay/lesbian pastors.

We your pastors understand that within our faith community there will be some of us relieved by such an outcome, while others will be disappointed, or even devastated. In fact, there may be members of our church family wondering whether they are truly welcome in the United Methodist Church anymore, or whether they will feel they have to leave.

Our hearts hurt for those who are wounded by the outcome of this Conference, and especially for the LGBTQi community. We believe that God loves all people, and that all people are of sacred worth. We want you to know that the decision of the General Conference does not change the commitment of Wesley Church to be a warm and welcoming place for everyone. And every part of the Body of Christ is needed and valued.



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We would like to offer these suggestions for working through our grief together (you’ll recognize them from our February sermon series from Ephesians):

- 1) *Breathe deeply and pray often.* Ask for guidance, patience and peace – for yourself and others. Try to take it slowly and give the Spirit time to work and to heal.
- 2) *Seek out those who are hurting and tell them that they matter.* Don’t avoid people whose feelings about these issues are different from your own; just reach out to the wounded and offer comfort.
- 3) *Take time to listen to people who need to talk about their feelings.* Even if you don’t share those feelings – you might learn something to help you understand.
- 4) *Be gentle with yourself.* Remember that God loves you - and we love you, too.
- 5) *Come see either one of us if you’d like to talk.* Our doors are always open.

In addition, we would invite you to join us for worship every Sunday morning, at 9:00 (traditional) or 11:15 (contemporary).

Special Note from Pastor Sara:

I am so grateful for all the kind thoughts, encouraging words, faithful prayers and support I’ve received from this congregation over the past few days and weeks. I have felt cared for and upheld in ways I never expected. As the events of General Conference unfolded, I worried about how I would take care of my church. But it turns out, you were taking care of me all along.

Pastor Justin sent me the photo below on the evening of the last day of Conference, of our “Patchwork Prayer” project in our Garden Room and this message: “Look what you get to come home to! We are blessed to serve these people! God will see us through.”



We are, indeed, blessed to serve alongside you at Wesley UMC. Be of good courage, sisters and brothers! Your prayers are powerful and your witness to Christ’s love cannot be overshadowed or outvoted.

With love, hope and gratitude, Pastors Sara Isbell and Justin Iverson