

3.20.19

Dear Church,

For the last couple of months, leading up to the recent special General Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC), a group of 25-35 Sunday School participants have studied the issue of **exclusion** or **inclusion** of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) community in our church. Led by Pastor Wade Miller and Dr. James Murphy, we reviewed the Biblical passages often cited as evidence for or against inclusion.

(Just for the record, in the Bible, Jesus did not weigh in on the LGBTQ issue but rather said repeatedly, "Love your neighbor as yourself, and do not pass judgement." (Mathew 7:1-7, 12, Luke 6:37-42, John 8:1-8))

After reading, learning and open dialogue, each individual in the Sunday School was left considering the two options that were addressed:

1. The literal and traditional reading of the Bible, which excludes the LGBTQ community, or
2. The Bible can be interpreted, even with scholarly accord, as to be inclusive with the LGBTQ community.

As you know, the 2019 General Conference voted to exclude the LGBTQ community from full participation, and our UMC has now become an **EXCLUSIVE** General church. We have had encouragement from Bishop Reuben Job to: Do No Harm, Do Good, and, Stay in Love with God.

As members of Brookings UMC, we felt obliged to respond. We believe that our church should be an **INCLUSIVE** General church and that homosexuality is not a sin.

We join people of other UMC conferences in saying:

We believe the special General Conference inflicted deep harm on our LGBTQ colleagues, church members, friends and families and for that we ask their forgiveness. Rather, this church should be a place of love and nurture.

We do not accept the present General Conference stance. We believe, instead, it is compatible with Christian teaching that all people are welcome in God's eyes, beloved children of God and are of incalculable sacred worth. We believe that an inclusive church is what Jesus would have wanted.

Very Truly Yours,

Rick and Lorna Jost
Rick and Joanie Holm
Khris Haensel
Darwin and Marlenna Walker
Rick and Brenda Heib

Sandy Gamradt
Margaret Denton
Nancy Bohlen
Hannah Murphy