



February 28, 2019

Dear Hamline Church Family,

The Special General Conference of the United Methodist Church in St. Louis has been at the forefront of my mind this week and I know it has been for many of you as well. I hoped that it would finally be a moment toward full inclusion of LGBTQIA brothers and sisters in the life of our church, and what happened was completely the opposite.

A proposal known as the Traditionalist Plan was adopted in part. This plan affirms current exclusive policies and strengthens enforcement for clergy who violate these policies. All that was approved was referred to Judicial Council to determine its constitutionality and much of it was already determined unconstitutional. No changes would become effective until January 1, 2020. There are still a lot of unknowns and much to be sorted out in the coming weeks.

I am sad, disappointed, disillusioned, angry, ashamed, and heartbroken. Above all else I grieve the further pain and trauma that has been inflicted on LGBTQIA people. The institutional church's failure to see you and celebrate you breaks the Body of Christ. The outcome shows that the hearts, minds and doors of the United Methodist Church are not open to all. It goes against everything I know to be true of our God who is made known to us in the form of love.

The outcome is also the inevitable death of the United Methodist Church as it currently stands. The foundation of our faith is that in death comes resurrection. What I want you to hear from me is that Resurrection is on the way. This is where I place my hope. We are resurrection people. A new reality will emerge in which we will not compromise our integrity and we will realize the opportunity to share the love of God in full – without limits or restrictions.

This new reality will take all of us working and praying together to make positive change. Change will be hard and at times slow, but the process is already underway.

Let me tell you what does not change: **Hamline Church will remain a church committed to the full inclusion of all God's people. We will continue to proclaim and celebrate the sacred worth and diversity of all people. We remain committed to working for justice with our LGBTQIA brothers and sisters both in and outside of the church.**

My commitment to you as your pastor is that I will continue to love, welcome and minister to all. I will continue to work with our leadership to ensure that Hamline Church's path forward is one of inclusion and integrity to our core values. I will continue to be a part of the greater Resurrection conversation in our Twin Cities District, our MN Annual Conference and beyond. Together we will take the lead.



HAMLIN CHURCH

UNITED METHODIST

How you can help:

1. In the coming weeks there will be many opportunities for further conversation, prayer and repentance. We need to hear each other's grief, pain, and anger. We need to be there for one another. Stay after worship this Sunday March 3, for a conversation and debrief on General Conference and what happens next. (And also for the youth mission trip Mardi Gras brunch!) Then join us on March 6 at 6:30pm for our Ash Wednesday service of repentance.
2. Reach out to LGTQIA folks and individuals, talk to young people in our church, in your extended family and in our community. Set the record straight: the General Conference action was wrong – God loves unconditionally. Let them know that you and your church stand on the side of love.
3. Pray.

The harm caused by General Conference is deep and inexcusable. But God is not done with us. Cast your hope in Resurrection. The opportunity to blaze a new way forward in love is here and now. I am blessed to be your pastor and grateful that we make this journey together. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me for further prayer or conversation.

Deep blessings,

Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard

For more information:

<https://www.minnesotaumc.org>

<https://rmnetwork.org>