

MORROW

MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST

CHURCH

April 20, 2016

Dear Members of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference,

As we come together to celebrate the diversity within our church at General Conference 2016, may we have truly open hearts toward the important topics that we hear and discuss.

While we at Morrow Memorial United Methodist Church (“Morrow Church”) value difference of opinion and happily welcome discussion from all life perspectives and experiences, we refuse to sit idly as our denomination takes a vote on the very important topic of homosexuality and how it directly applies to the many people who are a part of our church and world right here, right now.

Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (“LGBTQ”) brothers and sisters in Christ exist all around us. It is an irrefutable fact. They are our friends, they are our family, they are our children, they are our leaders and they are hurting, so in turn, we as a church are hurting. The UMC’s resounding silence on a topic that affects so many people so deeply is an injustice and we at Morrow Church consider failure of progress to be an inadequate response for a world that is in constant transition.

We hope and pray that the General Conference will do what is right and vote to remove the derogatory language and dated policy in the Book of Discipline. We anticipate that everyone at General Conference will choose to embrace inclusiveness so that more people can experience the strong Methodist faith that we have and be a part of the excellent work that we do. However, if this does not happen, Morrow Church is fully committed to continue having our hearts, minds and doors wide open as a safe haven to all people, including those in the LGBTQ community.

Morrow Church is a thriving and vibrant church and is known in the community for our inclusive welcome. Morrow will maintain living by our Statement of Inclusion which was passed unanimously by our Church Council in 2013. We will continue to examine qualification for church employment, volunteerism, and opportunity based on character and faith rather than orientation. Our SPRC will endorse qualified LGBTQ persons for consideration for ordination, and our trustees have passed a resolution to allow same-sex wedding celebrations to be held in our building.

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We at Morrow Church embrace ideas and mentalities that uplift and empower people to reach their full potential. We will not be intimidated by stale church policy that limits the boundless confines of love. We will not reduce the acceptance of God to a set of checklist requirements.

We strive to live authentically and radically like Christ Jesus, and we welcome the complexities of life and the beautiful people around us with whom we share God's creation.

We know that many positive decisions will be made at General Conference, and our deepest hope is that the United Methodist Church will be seen by the world for our ability to step out of our silence and journey toward acceptance, inclusion, and love. They will know we are Christians by our love.

Prayerfully,

Morrow Memorial United Methodist Church

Mark Goodman, Church Council Chair

Andrea Wren-Hardin, Lay Leader

Dawilla Madsen, Reconciling Ministry Network Chair

If you wish to reach out to your General Conference delegates to express your view in solidarity with the LGBTQ community, visit <http://www.rmnetwork.org/newrmn/itstime/> to find sample letters.