

## **Statement of Welcome and Hope for Christ Church United Methodist**

At Christ Church United Methodist, we are becoming living proof of God's love, one person at a time. This mission is alive every day in the many ministries of Christ Church United Methodist. We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, God alone is the judge, and the Bible is essential. We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God, and that we are called to love and welcome all.

Through a process of church-wide prayer and discernment, we have listened to the perspectives of our diverse church community regarding human sexuality. We hear the pain that many in our church feel, we hear the reverence our church has for Holy Scripture, we hear the anxiety many have, and we hear that while we as a church are not of one mind, God calls us to a common mission together. Above all, we hear the deep love we all have for our church.

Together, we can all wholeheartedly agree and proclaim that, as our communion liturgy reminds us, "Christ our Lord invites to his table ALL who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another." Therefore, we welcome and include everyone into the lay leadership and ministry of our community of faith, regardless of sexual orientation, views, or differing interpretations of scripture. We extend this welcome specifically to all those who feel hurt or excluded by the church. We believe that all members and friends of Christ Church United Methodist can live in the tension of agreeing to disagree, with love and respect regarding many issues, including human sexuality and the church.

In order to more faithfully recognize the humanity and image of God in our LGBTQ friends and to show more compassion for them, we support the elimination of the exclusionary language regarding homosexuality in our United Methodist Book of Discipline. While some congregations are leaving the United Methodist Church over human sexuality, we have been, are, and intend to remain United Methodist. As such, we are required by our vows and connectional covenant to abide by the Book of Discipline with regards to same sex marriage and ordination. We understand that while this statement brings joy to some in our church community, we likewise understand that it brings pain to others. While this statement may seem to go too far for some, it may not go far enough for others.

There are a variety of Biblically-based interpretations on this subject formed by earnestly seeking God through scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, but there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, along with one God and Father who calls us to ministry together. We pray that, as a church, we model respectfulness, humility, and love in our conversations with one another so that we may be instruments of God's peace. We pray that all of us, as members of our church community, new and old, whether agreeing with this Statement or not – will recommit ourselves to our mission of becoming living proof of God's love, one person at a time, and we pray that, through all of this, God may be glorified in our hearts and in our lives.