

## First United Methodist Church Omaha, Nebraska

### Church Council

April 2, 2019



First United Methodist Church Omaha [FUMCO] affirms the practice of appropriate and contextually accurate biblical scholarship acknowledging there are no biblical teachings nor mandates for discrimination against lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual [LGBTQIA] persons in the bible. Furthermore, there is ample evidence of the grace of God for all persons and the very image of the Divine within all humankind. We reject the notion that *any* human being is incompatible with Christian teaching and believe the church cannot fully be the church without the full inclusion of all persons, and in this context especially our LGBTQIA siblings.

The Prophet Micah strongly makes a case for that which God requires of us, *"Make Justice Happen, Love as God Loves, and be the very reflection of God in the world."* Citing Hebrew tradition, Jesus said *Loving God, Loving Neighbor as/and Loving Self* is the very core of following his life and ministry. All our sacred texts hang on these three. And finally, in the Letter of 1 John the author states, *"God is love."* We stand firm in the belief this Love is the Way, the way to a fully inclusive church where every child of the Divine is welcome, appreciated, included, and embraced with compassion and worth.

In the aftermath of the unjust and injurious decisions of the Special General Conference of the United Methodist Church [UMC] held in St Louis, FUMCO has entered into a time of discernment and visioning for the future. The Traditional Plan passed at the recent Special General Conference 2019 [GC2019], is harmful, unjust, and does not reflect the values of FUMCO nor our Wesleyan heritage with regard to social justice, quality biblical scholarship, or the inclusive nature of the life and ministry of Jesus. We are steadfast in our opposition to, and will not abide by, the Traditional Plan passed by the GC2019.

In response to this action of the GC2019, to ensure all voices have opportunity to be heard, the FUMCO Way Forward Task Team will convene small group sessions in early May through mid-June to continue our conversation and discernment about the future of our church. These sessions will follow the 2019 UMC Judicial Council, meeting April 23-26, 2019, regarding the constitutionality of the Traditional Plan as well as the Exit Plan passed at the GC2019.

In response to these decisions, FUMCO has begun gathering information to move toward a decision regarding, but not limited to, three possible scenarios:

1. *Remain in the United Methodist Church to determine possible new directions informed by the Western Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, the UMC Church of the Resurrection of Leawood, Kansas, and possible actions by the General Conference in 2020, while standing in solidarity with LGBTQIA persons, both lay and clergy, who have chosen to remain in the UMC to continue to the struggle for full inclusion.*
2. *Disaffiliation with the UMC in order to affiliate with an alternative denomination that more accurately reflects our values regarding full inclusion of LGBTQIA members and clergy into full life of the church, both in regard to same gender weddings and ordination of LGBTQIA clergy; i.e. United Church of Christ, Christian Church Disciples of Christ, or other.*
3. *Become an Independent Community of Faith.*



Following careful discussion and discernment regarding visioning and our future plans we will bring a final decision to an FUMCO Church Conference.

Therefore, *we are Resolved;*

Effective April 2, 2019, by decision of Church Council of FUMCO, we shall withhold our remaining 2019 Mission Share contributions. These funds will be held in a separate account until such time the congregation determines its final decision about our future.

*We are further Resolved;*

As a Reconciling Congregation, effective April 2, 2019, FUMCO will be in full ministry and pastoral care with the entirety of our community of faith and will not deny our sacred space regarding weddings for all persons and will host same gender weddings in its building and on its property. We will affirm and support *all* clergy relating to FUMCO and hired clergy staff, including appointed clergy, who choose to officiate same gender wedding ceremonies. We shall provide support to those clergy throughout, but not limited to, any complaint process including a trial phase if necessary, should complaints and charges be filed. The details of this support shall be under the oversight of the Staff Parish Relations Committee in consultation with Finance Committee and the Church Council of FUMCO.

We shall make this statement of sacred resistance and witness public and known as we are called by virtue of our baptismal vows in the United Methodist Church, as well as the broader church, to *accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves, even when they are within the church.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan D. Dappen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alan Dappen, Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent H. Little", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Kent H. Little, Lead Clergy