



# The United Methodist Church

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To: Queer Clergy

From: Bishop Sally Dyck and the Northern Illinois Cabinet

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The Bishop and Cabinet of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference are thankful for you who are queer clergy and who have remained faithful to the UMC even though the UMC doesn't affirm your personhood. We see you in your pain and it deeply grieves us. All of us are shocked, grieved, angry and pained at what the church has done but we know it affects you to the core of your being in ways that we cannot fully comprehend. But know that we see you.

As the Bishop and Cabinet, we hold deeply the values of diversity, graciousness, compassion and justice. We imagine a church that welcomes all and works to that end. Because that's who we are, we will not use our power to perpetuate harm but to do all the good that we can through our roles and positions.

Over the years we acknowledge that harm has been committed through the structures and offices of the church, causing candidates and clergy to stop their pursuit of education and ministry, harming persons' mental, emotional and spiritual health, pushing people toward desperate acts, including suicide, and forcing gifted people from offering themselves to the United Methodist Church or leaving to serve elsewhere. For these experiences and more, we are deeply sorry and will continue to work for good, not harm.

However, as the Bishop and Cabinet, we have welcomed LGBTQIA+ persons onto the cabinet, demonstrating our commitment to diversity and inclusion, sought to appoint LGBTQIA+ clergy to places where they can best flourish in ministry, worked to minimize the possibilities and impact of complaints, and taught through word and example a message of God's welcoming love and grace. We resolve to continue these actions in the future.

We return over and over again to the first baptismal/membership vow: "to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of



(our) sin.” We invite others to join us in that recommitment as baptized children of God, members of the church, and commissioned/ordained clergy. Therefore, we continue to educate ourselves and others in the intersectionality of injustice around us, including but not limited to homophobia, racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, classism, and exclusion of others no matter who they are. We recognize that all of us experience varying “levels” or “layers” of these forms of injustice and seek to care for those who find themselves, such as queer persons of color, under many layers of oppression.

As the Bishop and Cabinet, we seek to continue to find ways to do good and not harm in the midst of the injustices in our church, especially as they directly affect our work. We will not seek information about a candidate or clergy, or anyone under appointment, related to their sexual orientation, gender expression or partnered status that would be intimidating or discriminatory. In order to fulfill our values and to do good and not harm, we will be open to such information and will hold it with respect and care.

As the Bishop and Cabinet, we respect that some clergy are called to fulfill their ministry by performing same gender marriages. In this new reality we find ourselves in, we will make every effort to avoid harm by seeking a just resolution.

We will continue to struggle with where we are as the United Methodist Church and provide leadership as we go forward. We ask that as we navigate these times, that we do so in mutual respect and care for each other. Again, our aim is to not perpetuate harm but to do all the good that we can.