

FAITHFULUMC.ORG LAY STATEMENT

Dear Council of Bishops:

We the undersigned have a genuine love and deep concern for our church. We believe that the unity and the future of The United Methodist Church are in jeopardy.

We agree with the sentiments expressed in the clergy letter to the bishops of The United Methodist Church ([click here to read the full text](#)).

In light of the following facts:

- Thirty-six retired bishops have called upon The United Methodist Church to reverse its long-standing position on the practice of homosexuality and same-sex “marriage”
- According to *The United Methodist Reporter* “more than 900 UM clergy, in conferences across the [United States] have pledged to officiate at same-sex weddings and other services celebrating homosexual unions.”
- The Northern Illinois Annual Conference passed a resolution saying that clergy who disobey the *Book of Discipline* by performing services celebrating homosexual unions should receive only a 24-hour suspension.
- In a recent trial, a UM clergyperson who performed a holy union service was given only a 20-day suspension and invited to write a paper promoting her views on how to resolve this issue.
- Various annual conference groups are enlisting clergy to perform same-sex weddings and publicize their availability to the gay community, as well as the broader public.

We believe that a minority within The United Methodist Church is attempting to hold the whole church hostage to its determination to change over 3,000 years of Judeo/Christian teaching on the nature of marriage and sexual morality. We support our church’s gracious, loving, and truthful position on the nature of marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman, and that sexual relations be reserved only for heterosexual marriage. Our church’s position is a balanced reflection of the teachings of Scripture and portrays the mind of God on these matters. We are grieved that a minority has abandoned the process of “holy conferencing” that has characterized our church’s deliberations on these issues. We see these actions as an affront to our United Methodist connection and a betrayal of clergy vows of ordination.

Therefore, we support the following steps:

1. We expect the Council of Bishops to issue a public statement affirming and supporting our church’s teaching on marriage and human sexuality and declaring their intention to enforce the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* fairly and swiftly. Out of integrity, any bishop who cannot affirm and support our church’s scriptural teaching on these issues should resign from his/her position of leadership in the church.
2. We expect pastors who admit to being practicing homosexuals and pastors who have charges brought against them for performing holy unions or same-sex “marriages” to be put on immediate leave until their trial is completed.
3. We expect pastors who are convicted of performing holy unions or same-sex “marriages” to be suspended without pay from their ministerial functions for a minimum of one year, and that before such pastors are allowed to practice ministry again, they must affirm in writing their intention to abide by the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* by not performing any more such unions or same-sex “marriages.”
4. We do not want monies that we give to the church to fund any board or organization within The United Methodist Church that advocates against the current position in the *Book of Discipline* regarding our definition of marriage or our refusal to ordain or marry practicing homosexuals.
5. We expect that clergy who can no longer in good conscience abide by the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* will exercise personal integrity and surrender their clergy credentials or transfer to another denomination more in keeping with their beliefs.

We sincerely believe that the future of The United Methodist Church is at stake. What the dissidents are proposing will lead to anarchy – and the end result will be the demise of the church we love. We speak not as members of any board or caucus group, but as United Methodists who have committed our lives to this great denomination and who treasure our Wesleyan heritage. We believe there is a way forward – and that way requires that pastors and congregations live by the *Book of Discipline*, and that our episcopal leaders maintain its integrity by enforcing it unapologetically.

No institution that values its health and its integrity can allow those who represent that institution to willfully, publicly, and repeatedly undermine its policies by their actions or their statements. Doing so, whether in the name of compassion or diversity, will rupture our unity, weaken our witness, and cause our members to mistrust our leaders. The United Methodist Church must not sacrifice all the positive ministries of transformational discipleship that we are attempting to build for the sake of a defiant minority.

In this time of crisis in our church, words and statements are important, but words are not enough. We must see our leaders act with integrity to uphold and support the *Discipline* as they promised in their ordination and consecration to ministry. We ourselves must act with courage and faithfulness to uphold our commitment to Scripture, The United Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan way. By God's grace we will do so.

Signatures are welcome via the Internet at www.faitfulumc.com or by mailing one's signature (with address, home church, and annual conference name) to:

Bishops Letter Signatures
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