

## **Statement on 2019 Special Session of General Conference<sup>1</sup>**

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church — a legislative body of 864 people from around the world — voted during a special session of General Conference to uphold the current Book of Discipline, our denomination’s book of law and polity, regarding the prohibition of same-gender weddings and ordination of LGBTQ persons. Some people celebrated this decision while others experienced immense pain.

### ***Harm***

This decision was harmful to our LGBTQ sisters and brothers, their parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and friends. Many tears have been shed as we grieve our inability to show patience and forbearance with each other as we seek a way forward that would allow space for traditionalists and progressives to adapt practices to their own contexts while focusing on our common mission.

### ***Global Denomination***

It’s important to note that The United Methodist Church is a global denomination. So while this issue may be playing out right now in the United States, the delegates who vote these matters are clergy and laity not only from the U.S. but also Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and Russia. In some of those places, homosexuality is illegal, punishable by fines, time in prison, or even death. Those factors play a role, of course along with interpretations of scriptures, as votes are cast.

### ***Interpreting Scripture***

In the United States, some people take a literal interpretation of scripture just as some people see the Bible as the inspired word of God with many nuances that must be interpreted based on changes in society. United Methodists in the Great Plains Conference and here in Berryton United Methodist Church are no different.

### ***Welcoming Congregations***

Many congregations of The United Methodist Church have been and will continue to be fully welcoming to LGBTQ persons. In fact, all people are welcome to worship, take part in the sacraments of baptism and communion, and serve in non-ordained leadership roles at all levels of the local church. None of those aspects of church life changed with the special session of General Conference.

### ***Berryton United Methodist Church***

Berryton United Methodist Church is committed to continuing the work to make a lasting impact in our community. We will continue to talk about God’s love for all people and of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for all people. Regardless of any General Conference outcome, we will continue to be about our mission and ministries.

### ***Next Steps***

This matter remains to be settled because of questions related to constitutionality of the Traditional Plan and resolve from people seeking full inclusion. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are called to relationship within our diversity. It is neither that we are indifferent toward truth nor tolerant of error. We approach our work with humility, aware that none of us is able to search the mysteries of God except by the Spirit of God. We proceed in mission together in continued prayer for discernment, in the building of new relationships and trusting that the Spirit will grant us wisdom to continue our journey with the whole people of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a statement prepared by Todd Seifert, Director of Communications, in consultation with Bishop Saenz.