



St. Paul's United Methodist Church
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Rev. David Czeisel, Pastor

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Dear Sisters and Brothers of St. Paul's United Methodist Church,

Today is a historic day in the United Methodist Church. Since 1972, the United Methodist Church has maintained that, "The practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching." On May 1st, at the General Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, our church voted to *remove* the language from our polity outlawing the ordination of LGBTQ+ people and prohibiting same-sex weddings in our churches and officiated by our clergy. As always, I highly recommend that you read more about these decisions from our *United Methodist News Service*: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/40-year-ban-on-gay-clergy-struck-down>

While no church will be appointed a LGBTQ+ pastor if they are unwilling, this gives the annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry the right to ordain such clergy. It also allows local churches to decide whether to allow same-sex weddings inside their facilities, and grants clergy back the full authority to determine who they will and will not marry.

As the pastor of our welcoming and accepting congregation, I am overwhelmed to be able to share my joy with you over these changes to our denominational doctrine. For 52 years, our denominational disapproval has caused inexcusable harm to those whose gender identity or practice of love didn't meet our expectations or standards. Even though St. Paul's UMC has chosen to stand up for full inclusion, and has been celebrating the giftedness and marriages of queer congregants and pastors, and our annual conference and bishops have chosen to look the other way, our denomination's stance has nonetheless cast a shadow over these actions. Today, that discriminatory shadow has been lifted, and our response to the love of God can be our own. At St. Paul's UMC, we will continue to rejoice in the talents entrusted to *all* of our neighbors, and in the practice of genuine, covenantal love and affection in all of its God-breathed forms.

For us at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, you likely won't experience any noticeable changes. Weddings between two people of any gender will still be officiated; those of all sexual identities and gender identities will continue to be welcomed, celebrated and equipped for ministry; and we may one day again receive an LGBTQ+ clergyperson or lift up such a person to be ordained. But today, God's Beloved, our United Methodist Church's highest legislative body has finally given us the approving nod to answer Christ's call as we have discerned it.

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For those who have awaited this change for a long time now, I would rejoice in sharing the following Scripture, which coincidentally is often read at weddings:

“Love is patient, love is kind, it isn’t jealous, it doesn’t brag, it isn’t arrogant, it isn’t rude, it doesn’t seek its own advantage, it isn’t irritable, it doesn’t keep a record of complaints, it isn’t happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

May the God of Love who never fails continue to illuminate our path and guide us to walk that path hand in hand.

Your Brother in Christ,
Pastor David Czeisel