



Called to Love at Church of the Master, UMC

"Called to Love" lives into our shared baptismal covenant to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. We celebrate God's gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community equally shared and shepherded by all. We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status, and so much more. We acknowledge that we live in a world of profound social, economic, and political inequities. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and pledge to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.

"Called to Love" works within Church of the Master and our city of Westerville to facilitate education and communication around the complex topics of gender identity and sexual orientation. We offer an environment of support and community for LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) persons and allies, transforming the church into a fuller expression of Christ's inclusive love.

August 19, 2024

Community Report: Judie Salyer

In the wake of HB68 passing

Stay up-to-date on the status of current legislation that impacts the LGBTQ+ community at:

<https://equalityohio.org/our-work-legislations/>

Content & Conversation: Understanding the outcomes of General Conference 2024

Regionalization – Passed! The U.S. Regional Conference would be allowed to contextualize the Book of Discipline for its own cultures, just as non-U.S. central conferences currently do. Still needs to be ratified by a 2/3 vote of all annual conferences – will likely happen at 2025 Annual Conference gatherings.

Revised Social Principles – Passed!

The voting body of GC2024 adopted revisions to the social principles that included three different protections for gender identity and seven for sexual orientation. These do not need further ratification – they now call for the church to live into these aspirational goals.

Remove anti-lgbtq+ language – Passed!

The General Conference voted by *overwhelming majorities* to remove from the BOD the discriminatory language and bans related to LGBTQ+ people. **HOWEVER:** These changes bring the Book of Discipline back to a neutral place, but they do not *prevent* discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals and communities, they merely states that discrimination is no longer the church's default; the *option* to discriminate still exists.

Why is "Called to Love" and our work as a Reconciling Ministry still critical?

I'd like to share some words from Rev. David W. Meredith, openly gay former pastor of Clifton UMC in Cincinnati, and a leader within the Reconciling Ministries Network. He made this statement at the end of June:

I've been doing quite a bit of reflecting since the 2024 General Conference and the pivot it made from mandated harm toward lgbtq+ persons. It is a significant shift and yet incomplete. In the United Methodist Church and the public square, full equality and justice for persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer has not been accomplished. **Yes, there has been progress. Thanks to years of hardworking faithful folk and God's presence and persistence. Nevertheless, the current state of church and world is still a challenge.** Let me be clear.

- It's not as bad the days before Stonewall, **unless you're a trans teen of color.**
- It's not as bad as the UMC before the deletion of the "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" clause from the United Methodist Book of Discipline, **unless you're non-gender binary, explaining and defending yourself** before a District Committee on Ministry.
- It's not as bad as the season before governmental and corporate decisions to not discriminate in the work place, **unless you are restricted from posting a rainbow flag in your Zoom camera, office, or classroom.**
- It's not as bad as forty years of unjust laws against persons who were lgbtq+, their friends, families, neighbors, allies, pastors, and congregations in the United Methodist denomination, **unless your congregation is still opposed to you or your district/conference is notably silent.**
- It's not as bad as the time before marriage equality, **unless you are still waiting to be married in your home church.**

As PRIDE month comes to a close, and as the implementation of lgbtq+ justice in the UMC unfolds, I realize that my own re-commitment to this work is not only called for, but a world stands in wait, hungry for it to be realized. PRIDE is celebration and it is recommitment to the work! **I hope your glitter blessings and message t-shirts and welcoming banners will continue in daily action at home, school, work, play, church, public square, and voting booth.**

Called to Love: Ongoing goals check-in

In process already:

- Connect with Otterbein "Freezone," student-led LGBTQ+ organization to offer support
- Promote an in-depth study of racism
- Pursue a connection with "A Place to Be" at Church of the Messiah

Ongoing

- Work to remain aware/engaged with state legislation and how we can best support; anyone is welcome to contact Cindy with relevant updates or calls to action so that the whole group may be emailed.

Needs attention

- Offer gender-neutral bathrooms in our church – this may be as simple as a signage issue. Bailey Ault has agreed to work with staff to make this happen

Upcoming events:

Sat. 9/28, 9am-2pm: Colby Martin at Epiphany Lutheran Church, Pickerington

Register here: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/f873428b-b36a-4175-8e96-0904a940408c>

Thur. 10/24, 7-8:30pm: View "1946" documentary, sponsored by *A Place to Be* at Church of the Messiah

Movie trailer: https://youtu.be/qJnWNnRfjhs?si=0d-hfkf_vHwQYPJy

November, date TBD: dinner to support Otterbein "Freezone"

February, date TBD: attend and discuss The Laramie Project at Otterbein