

United Methodist Queer Clergy Respond to Naming of Special Commission

We speak as a collective voice with the authority of those who are called and claimed by a God whose love knows no bounds; as those whose Commissioning and Ordination have been affirmed by the Church: we demand that the Special Commission on a way Forward named yesterday speak the truth about its business: it is not talking about “the present impasse related to human sexuality;” rather, it is talking about *us*, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex children of God, and about whether or not the denomination we serve will continue its 44 year discrimination against us. We feel erased and disappeared in the mission statement of the Commission.

Any movement forward needs to address the roots of our oppression. LGBTQI clergy and candidates are serving throughout The United Methodist Connection, and yet we see only two self-identified LGBTQI persons named to a Special Commission tasked to address human sexuality. In a body fundamentally formed to discuss the future of LGBTQI people in our Church, less than 10% of the commission identifies as LGBTQI people. The geographical location of Texas alone has greater representation than non-heterosexual members of our global connection. Our lives and the ministries entrusted to us will be on the agenda of a body whose make-up is unfairly hegemonic. We are being talked about without just representation. How balanced and diverse would a special commission on race/ethnicity be, for instance, if it were composed of 90% members of one single ethnic group? How “forward” could our church go on matters of racial/ethnic relations with such unfair make up? We also lament that the 32-person Commission appears to be made up of between 50 and 60 percent white people. Even the two openly LGBTQI people appointed to the commission are white, cisgender, gay men. While important, their presence on the commission does not encompass the full diversity of LGBTQI United Methodist people. Ethnic and racial representation is critical at this time in our history as a denomination. We know that the most vulnerable LGBTQI people are those who are people of color and that lives are at stake in particular in places where a U.S.-exported evangelism has preached a message of God’s wrath. The desire for institutional preservation and fostering a false sense of unity on the backs of LGBTQI persons harms our witness as the Body of Christ.

Thus: we respond to the announcement of the Council of Bishops’ Special Commission for “A Way Forward” with concern, sadness, disappointment, trepidation, and deep prayer. Baptized into the family of Christ; confirmed as members of United Methodist congregations; called, commissioned, and ordained as deacons and elders throughout the connection, we ground ourselves in the love of God and the

promises made by the Church to us in our Baptisms. In the **Baptismal Covenant**, the Church promises to *reject oppression in whatever forms it presents itself* as it receives us into the family of faith. In our candidacy, we have been set apart to be ministers of the Gospel. In our commissioning and ordination, bishops laid hands on our heads and blessed us, charging us to “Take Thou Authority” as ministers of the Gospel.

It is this Gospel, the amazing “Good News that our people are dying to hear”¹ that calls us to hold the Special Commission accountable to all of us, LGBTQI laity and clergy: those about whom it will speak, debate, and decide whether to continue to mark as “incompatible”. It is this Gospel that requires us to continue to provide ministry that opens its doors to *all* of God’s people. It is in this Gospel that Jesus preached “good news to the poor... release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” This truth compels us to shine a light on inequity, abuse of power, and complicity in a system that breaks John Wesley’s first rule to “do no harm.”

We pray for the United Methodist Church and the Commission on a Way Forward. We pray for the liberation of all of God’s people: those who are oppressed and those whose blinders have rendered LGBTQI persons invisible at best, excluded and persecuted at worst.

Your United Methodist *CalledOUT* LGBTQI Clergy and Candidates

Rev. Jeanelle Ablola
Rev. Austin Adkinson
Rev. Dr. Israel Alvaran
Rev. Elyse Ambrose
Mx. M Barclay
Rev. Dr. Bonnie Beckonchrist
Rev Anna Blaedel
Rev. Daryl Blanksma
Rev. Thomas Boller
Rev. Dr. Joanne Carlson Brown
Rev Ronna Case
Rev. Randa D'Aoust
Rev. Alexandre da Silva Souto
Pastor Sean Delmore
Rev. Dr. Janet Everhart
Rev. Anthony Fatta

¹ Rev. Brian Adkins, the only LGBTQI clergy person selected as member of the Commission.

Rev. Becca Girrell
Pastor Taylor Gould
Rev. Nancy Goyings
Rev. John Griffin-Atil
Rev. Gregory Gross
Rev. Dr. Emily B. Hall
Rev. Trey Hall
Rev. Marcia Hauer
Rev. Michael House
Rev. Brittany Isaac
Diaconal Minister Peter Jabin
Rev. Marguerite Jhonson
Rev. Michele Johns
Rev. Elizabeth Jones
Rev. Dr. Jeanne Knepper
Rev. Christie Lagergren Brown
Rev. Bruce Lamb
Rev. J. Daniel Lewis
Rev. Nea Lewis
Rev. Lois McCullen Parr
Rev. Courtney McHill
Rev. Cynthia Meyer
Rev. Jerry Miller
Rev. Sharon Moe
Pastor Matthew Pearson
Pastor Kathleen Reynolds
Pastor Jonathan Rodríguez-Cintrón
Pastor Ryan Scott
Rev. Kim Smith
Rev. Terri Stewart
Rev. Katie Stickney
Rev. Kristin Stoneking
Rev. Dr. Jennifer Tiernan
Rev. Adrienne Trevathan
Rev. Sara Thompson Tweedy
Rev. Martha E. Vink
Deacon Vivian Waltz
Rev. Dr. David Weekley
Rev. Jarell Wilson
Rev. Vicki Woods
Rev. Frank Wulf
Rev. Laura Young
Rev. Nancy Yount