

## Talking Points for Writing Letters to Bishop Lewis

[SEND YOUR LETTER TO THIS ADDRESS BY WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15](#)

Bishop Sharma Lewis  
c/o Trinity UMC  
2911 Cameron Mills Road  
Alexandria, VA 22302

### **I implore you to reject the Traditional Plan**

- The Traditional Plan goes into effect Jan1, 2020
- I reject the Traditional Plan as a form of evil, injustice, and oppression
- The Traditional Plan will inflict harm on our clergy and their ministry.
- I implore you to offer grace-filled moratorium on processing complaints against LGBTQ clergy or clergy who officiate same-sex weddings.
- Stop the harm and agree to not facilitate or move on trial complaints against LGBTQIA clergy or clergy who perform same-gender weddings
- Our baptismal vows are to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. I take these vows seriously.
- Throughout Scripture, we see that God is on the side of the oppressed. This is your opportunity to do that for the LGBTQ community that has been oppressed and harmed. This is your opportunity to speak God's words of grace.
- According to ResistHarm.com, every clergy person tried will cost the denomination \$50,000 -\$250,000
- There is a very real cost to the witness and reputation of The UMC in the United States where a majority already support same-sex marriage (61% according to Pew Research Center).
- LGBTQ affirmation is a safeguard against harm. According to The Trevor Project in 2018, youth who report having at least one LGBTQ-affirming adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year.

### **Bishop Lewis has vowed to follow the Book of Discipline**

- Bishop Lewis has stated that she will uphold the rules as they exist in the Book of Discipline.
- As of Jan 1, 2020, the Book of Discipline will mandates that clergy who are found guilty by trial of performing one same-sex wedding, regardless of circumstances, are suspended for a minimum of one year without pay. The second time, they are stripped of their credentials. This is the only UMC rule that includes a mandatory penalty.
- Bishop Lewis is currently overseeing a Just Resolution involving a UMC clergy-person accused of performing a same-sex wedding. Mid-way through the Just Resolution period Bishop Lewis has issued a gag order on all parties involved.
- The 90 days allotted for this Just Resolution process have passed. The Book of Discipline allows for a 30-day extension should the parties agree to it and we assume that period has begun. This assumption is made as we've not received an update from any source.

**I ask you to hold in abeyance complaints/trials regarding LGBTQ+ clergy or clergy officiating same-gender weddings (at the request of Article V of the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation)**

- Many other bishops have issued statements that they will not move forward on complaints/trials at this time.
- This will save significant time and resources as we all look ahead and work for the future of our Church.
- This will build trust among progressives and conservatives in our Annual Conference and allow us to work together toward an agreeable, peaceful future.

**Bishop Lewis cares about minorities**

- Bishop Sharma D. Lewis was the first African-American woman to be elected bishop in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.
- Bishop Lewis was elected as the first African-American female to lead the North Georgia Conference delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conferences.
- Bishop Lewis is a Cabinet representative for United Methodist Women
- Bishop Lewis is a liaison to the Interagency Sexual Ethics Task Force (IASETF), a taskforce of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

**Bishop Lewis has a responsibility to be a leader to students**

- Bishop Lewis serves on the Board of Governors for Wesley Theological Seminary.
- Bishop Lewis was the recipient of the 2014 Gammon Theological Seminary Distinguished Alumna and Trailblazer Award given by The National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc., Metropolitan Atlanta Chapter.

## **Sample Letter to Bishop Lewis**

January 1, 2020

Bishop Sharma Lewis  
Virginia Conference United Methodist Church

Dear Bishop Lewis,

Greetings in Christ. I am writing to you today because I believe that the call of Christ to the Church is expressed in our baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. I take these vows seriously. It is because of those vows that I reject the Traditional Plan as a form of evil, injustice, and oppression as it seeks to not only continue LGBTQ criminalization in The UMC, but enhances already unjust punishments.

The Traditional Plan will inflict even more harm on our clergy and their ministry. Those who have already been charged are some of the most effective clergy serving The UMC, and losing their faithful witness is an incredible cost to these individuals. In addition to the harm done to those charged, every clergy person tried will cost the denomination \$50,000-\$250,000 (according to ResistHarm.com), not to mention the cost to the witness and reputation of The UMC in the United States where a majority already support same-sex marriage (61% according to Pew Research Center).

The General Conference delegate elections at this year's annual conferences in the United States underscore the fact that our denomination is on the brink of a Holy Spirit-fueled turning point. The American Church is poised to undo decades of discrimination against our LGBTQ brothers and sisters if we are willing to lean into the direction where God is leading us.

Therefore, I implore you to join other bishops in agreeing to Article V of the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation by offering a grace-filled moratorium on processing complaints against LGBTQ clergy or clergy who officiate same-sex weddings. I am asking you to step up prophetically and pastorally to lead us through this season before a Church of justice can be birthed. I know it will not be simple or easy, but I need your leadership.

Throughout Scripture, we see that God is on the side of the oppressed. This is your opportunity to do that for the LGBTQ community that has been oppressed and harmed. This is your opportunity to speak God's words of grace.

We need a pastor. We need someone to minister to the wounded and speak words of encouragement to those who have become weary in the quest for justice and freedom. We need you to offer protection for those in your flock who have been hurt and mercy for those who have been unjustly accused.

In short, we need you to be our Bishop. While the calling is hard, God equips those who are called. I am praying for you!

Faithfully,