



Let's be the church

A message from Bishop David Alan Bard
Michigan Area of The United Methodist Church

Dear Michigan United Methodists,

Many of you have heard about the [decision of the Judicial Council](#) of The United Methodist Church regarding the election this past July by the Western Jurisdiction of the Rev. Dr. Karen Oliveto as a bishop. The Judicial Council has ruled that Bishop Oliveto's election as a bishop violates church law because of our denomination's limits on the service of "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals." The Judicial Council further added that Bishop Oliveto remains in good standing as a bishop until an administrative or judicial process is complete.

For some of you reading this, you are celebrating that we are maintaining Biblical faithfulness and holding one another accountable to our covenant. For others, this is another step in moving The United Methodist Church away from inclusivity, from being a denomination more reflective of God's love in Jesus Christ. Within Michigan United Methodism I expect there are tears of joy and tears of sadness, shouts of acclamation and shouts of anger. This decision may leave some of you asking, "What's left?"

In responding let me begin by reminding us of the way The United Methodist Church is organized. There are several denominational bodies which give expression to United Methodism. Only the General Conference speaks for the entire church. The Council of Bishops provides oversight and support in service of the mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Judicial Council determines the constitutionality and "legality" of actions taken by others within the church. In the case just considered, the Judicial Council was ruling on the constitutionality and legality of an election in the Western Jurisdiction. While we share a mission, each body has its task within our denomination. The Judicial Council provides its perspectives and rulings and offers its reasons for doing so. When the Judicial Council acts, it does so regarding a very particular set of circumstances. Their rulings do not change *The Book of Discipline*.

THIS DECISION MAY LEAVE SOME OF YOU ASKING
“WHAT'S LEFT?”

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. - 1 Peter 3:8

Unity **Love** HUMBLE
Sympathy **Tender**

David A Bard

The Judicial Council has