



The United Methodist Church

The Philadelphia Area Episcopal Office

Peggy A. Johnson
Bishop



Eastern Pennsylvania Conference
Peninsula-Delaware Conference

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To Whom It May Concern:

As bishops of the United Methodist Church in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we urge our state legislators to pass the "Pennsylvania Values Act" (SB 224). This is an important moral issue of our times. It calls our state to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment and public accommodations. Pennsylvania remains the only state in the Northeast without these important protections, which harms countless LGBTQIA+ citizens in the state. We believe that when all people are protected from discrimination, our entire community is strengthened with respect and mutual regard.

The United Methodist Church is having ongoing and complicated conversations within our denomination about the morality of same-sex relationships and marriages. However, we have been very clear in our Book of Resolutions that all people are of sacred worth as children of God and should experience the freedom and dignity of participating in civil society as equals under the law.

The United Methodist *Social Principles* state the following: "We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protections. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups of persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity or religious affiliations." (Paragraph 162.III)

Furthermore we state: "Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons regardless of sexual orientation. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting the rightful claims where people have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities and liabilities and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation." (Paragraph 162.J)

We call upon our law makers to recognize the unjust suffering experienced by our LGBTQIA+ citizens when they are marginalized and dehumanized and act to protect them from harm by passing this bill. It is long overdue and greatly needed at this time, filled with polarization and violence. Working for justice takes courage and wisdom but it the only way human rights have ever been advanced in the world.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson
Eastern Pennsylvania
Conference

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park
Susquehanna
Conference

Bishop Cynthia Moore –Koikoi
Western Pennsylvania
Conference