

Denomination News

Like Emmanuel Friedens, our next door neighbors at Schenectady First United Methodist Church are committed to marriage equality and to the full welcome and inclusion of all.

Recently the United Methodist Church had a deeply divisive and painful gathering of their international denomination, as they sought to find a way to maintain unity and reckon with the issues around the welcome and affirmation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We hold in prayer our neighbors at Schenectady First United Methodist Church, along with all other United Methodists, following a meeting that yielded more pain and highlighted the deep division, without bringing about a way forward for those committed to inclusion.

In response to the current crisis among Methodists, the national leadership of the United Church of Christ on February 26 sent an open letter to United Methodists, which expresses feelings we at Emmanuel Friedens Church share, whether our denominational heritage is American Baptist, United Church of Christ, or something else completely!

We quote 3 paragraphs of the UCC letter as excerpts here. The full text is available online at [http://www.ucc.org/an open letter to the united methodist church 02262019](http://www.ucc.org/an_open_letter_to_the_united_methodist_church_02262019)

We hold in prayer those whose past wounds have been reopened by the recent debates of the governing body gathered in St. Louis. The Body of Christ has, throughout its long history, not always been kind and loving to those who live outside its established norms and conformities. We confess to our own history and complicity with racism, misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia. Our hope is that we can and will continue to struggle with our closed hearts and minds as we seek to live more fully into the vision of God's shalom for all...

We understand that it is with great sadness and a good deal of grief that many will have been left to feel unwelcome in a spiritual home that gave you hope, sustenance, and nurturance. Many of us have felt the sting of that same rejection – and know full well the grief that attaches to it.

We hold the entire United Methodist Church in prayer as it seeks to heal and to express its faith in light of their understandings of scripture and the gospel.

Emmanuel Friedens and First United Methodist are closely allied—we share youth ministry, share service at meals, share worship from time to time! We stand in solidarity with our neighbors as they seek some way to maintain unity without sacrificing a deep commitment to compassion, integrity and justice.

Peter JB Carman
