

## **A Strange World** by Pastor Scott

I have come to realize, that one thing I know about this world that we live in is that today is an age where one cannot predict anything. I had great hopes this week with our United Methodist Church. I had hoped that we would be the church that meets people where they are in the twenty-first century. But that is not the case. Perhaps you heard about it in the news.

This week our United Methodist Church, in the Special Session called the “Way Forward” made decisions that in my opinion move the church backwards. I must confess that I had great hopes. Hopes that we could be the Church that would lead people to Christ Jesus, rather than push them away. Our United Methodist Church has effectively excluded the LGBTQIA+ community, singled them out from everyone else, and labeled them. That, in my opinion, is a travesty and not what good Christians do.

In this Special Session of the United Methodist Church, the delegates (both Lay and clergy) decided not only to keep the discriminatory language in our Book of Discipline about our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters, they made harsher penalties for pastors and churches that go against the decisions made. How is that supposed to bring new people to Christ, if we label them negatively for who God created them to be?

I know that I might be venting here, but you must know that I am in shock and confused, as I have received many mixed messages by our United Methodist Church in this regard. Twenty years ago, I had been hoping we would come to fair conclusions about these issues. But recent events have only confirmed to me that there is a segment of our United Methodist Church that is so rigid in its theology, that it holds back the Church Universal. I grieve the fact that we might exclude many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who love our Lord. With these recent events, our United Methodist Church is saying, “You can love Jesus, but not with us.” What a travesty.

This does not have to be. You must also know that I can respect the many people who have been taught by well-meaning pastors about these issues. It has been preached from the pulpit for more than fifty years, as a whole generation of Christians have heard that message. But in my view, being LGBTQIA+ is not a choice, it is hard-wired. As hard-wired an attraction as being heterosexual. God made all people; how can we discriminate against any of God’s children?

I know that I take risks saying all of this. And that I do not know what our future holds, for our denomination, our church, and myself. We all might have decisions to make. But all of this will take time. It will take time for the Bishops to work out how to proceed. It will take time for the news to settle in and we can still build the Kingdom of God despite what we think about this decision. And it will take time to see how Green Pond United Methodist Church fits into the will of God, given these parameters. I will be preaching on the subject of “Wait”. Wait and see how all of this pans out. Wait and be patient to see how our Council of Bishops in the United Methodist Church deals with this current vote. And Wait for God to intervene. We must wait and listen to the Holy Spirit. I pray that this message is Holy Spirit driven, and not just your pastor disappointed by the church I hoped could be. Because I know that GPUMC is the church God has called us to be, in all of our diversity.

We must all be in prayer at this time, as all of us discern how God is moving His Church forward.