



Special Edition Ministry Newsletter

June 4, 2025

OPEN HEARTS

OPEN MINDS

OPEN DOORS

A Joyful Step Forward: Open Hearts UMC Adopts Statement of Inclusion

Beloved Community,

Last week, the Board of Stewards (our governing body), took a joyful and significant step to help our congregation live more fully into our vision statement, which says *"Open Hearts United Methodist Church cultivates a welcoming community – united in God's love, guided by scripture, and empowered by the Holy Spirit – to live out Jesus Christ's teachings."* After prayerful discernment and faithful leadership from our laity, we passed a Statement of Inclusion that reads:

***"Open Hearts United Methodist Church
welcomes all people into the life and discipleship of our congregation."***

By adopting this statement, we affirm that full participation in the life of the church is open to all. We will not discriminate regarding who may preach, teach, become a member, be married here, or engage in any aspect of Christian discipleship and church life.

Board of Stewards co-chair Lee Yarborough says, "Inclusion is apparent in our name, Open Hearts. It is at the core of our identity as a congregation. This statement does not create anything new, it serves only as a reminder to each of us to welcome all people into all parts of our church community."

I am grateful for the leadership of the Board of Stewards in guiding this process with care. And we look ahead with hope and resolve, as we continue growing into the church we are called to be.

Your Partner in Ministry,

Rev. Karen Jones

Read the full Statement of Inclusion Resolution below.



Statement of Inclusion Resolution

WHEREAS scripture teaches us "*Love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matthew 22:39) and reminds us "*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28); and

WHEREAS the United Methodist baptismal vows ask candidates to "*accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,*" and to "confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races"; and the congregation promises, "*... We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others...*"; and

WHEREAS the United Methodist Communion liturgy reminds us of the welcoming spirit of Jesus Christ at his table, as we pray, "*By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.*"; and

WHEREAS the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states in its Preamble, "*...we respect differences within Christ's body, including differences in understanding and expressing faith, in gifts and practices of ministry, and in life experiences, as shaped by ethnicities, cultures, communities, abilities, age, sexual orientation, and gender. We affirm our belief in the inestimable worth of each individual to whom God gives unique gifts.*"; and

WHEREAS our congregation was built on the spirit of inclusivity and love, and continues the story and legacy of being a faith community that welcomes everyone into a relationship with Jesus Christ through the church;

THEREFORE let it be resolved, the Board of Stewards of OHUMC affirms the following Statement of Inclusion:

"Open Hearts United Methodist Church welcomes all people into the life and discipleship of our congregation."

Dated May 27, 2025

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