



Dear Bishop Karen Oliveto,

As a faith leader who has worked with colleagues and friends in the United Methodist Church (UMC), I continue to celebrate the historic moment of your election to the episcopacy of the Western Jurisdiction. Your election sends an inspiring message of hope that with every step toward equality and inclusion we are indeed living into God's beloved community. I applaud the wisdom and spiritual leadership that is leading the UMC into a fuller understanding of holy scripture that church life includes all God's people; including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons.

In all that you have accomplished and the many ways you have faithfully served, more apparent than anything is your love and passion around creating community where all God's people can be at home. As a lesbian clergy person of color who has experienced exclusion, the mere fact that you and your ministry exist is inspiring. In this day and climate, your leadership, faith, courage, and humility is so needed.

Being a trailblazer and the 'first' in anything can be fraught with unknowns. And I imagine for you there are times of aloneness and uncertainty. So I want to send an encouraging word to say, the steps of your life are blessed and guided by the Divine. The spiritual and civil equality bell cannot be unrung! Your election as the first lesbian bishop in the UMC was not a fluke and will forever serve as a beacon of light for what is possible for LGBTQ inclusion not only for the UMC, but for other faith traditions and secular communities as well.

I join with many around the world who are praying with and for you. Sending you and your beloved Robin, love for the journey.

Love prevails, love sustains!

Candy

Rev. Candy Holmes
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