



Dear Bishop Oliveto,

I write to express my gratitude for your bodacious, gospel-centered United Methodist leadership. It is a sign of much needed moral hope for our church and all of the hurting, marginalized peoples in our world.

In our local communities there are so many children, youth, older and younger adults who are: grieving, suffering with physical and mental illness, politically persecuted and disenfranchised, bullied and suicidal, terrified in state prisons or immigrant detention centers, and just plain spiritually hungry. To me, it is deeply shameful that the United Methodist Church's moral example in the current context of our needy communities continues to be a dogged focus on maintaining rules to ensure that heterosexual church leaders are treated as innately superior to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender church leaders. Your election counters this embedded institutional discrimination and blasphemous understanding of how God created God's precious human creation.

Bishop Oliveto, your faith-filled courage and perseverance in the face of the hate from other United Methodists that is directed at you and at other lgbt UMC leaders helps to keep me from complete despair about the current state of the church in which I have participated since I was baptized as an infant.

Bishop Oliveto, as you know, I teach seminarians who have such a fervent passion for serving God's people. In the classroom and in my informal conversations with them I witness a sparkling sense of creativity as well as multiple skills for leadership in the racially, ethnically, theologically, and economically diverse communities where God's people are found. I have also seen the toxic erosion of this passion and sparkle that occurs for seminarians—across differing sexual orientations and gender identities—as they wonder with confusion, hurt, anger, fear why the UMC is so fixated on maintaining discriminatory rules that confers rights and privileges to heterosexuals simply because they are heterosexuals. Frankly, I'm not always sure how to respond to them when they ask me to explain it and reassure them about the future of the UMC.

But you, Bishop Oliveto, you have offered an amazing, steady beacon of Christian hope for my seminary students. I am terribly grateful for your insistent, primary focus on faith leaders with gifts and graces for ministry, exemplified, for instance, by your enthusiastic preaching and teaching of the gospel in response to the particular needs and joys of urban community life and of rural community life. You have challenged a United Methodist church mired in discriminatory practices and debates about those practices to embrace a more faithful vision of Christian ministry.

I pray for your continued stamina while you endure the costs of being a pioneering leader targeted for so much Christian hate. I send loving, supportive prayers that I hope will diminish its destructive impact on you and your wife Robin. There are no adequate words

to express how I awesome I find your courage and challenging, loving, vision of what it means to be the body of Christ that is so desperately needed right now.

Please, please take care,

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ordained elder in the NYAC and
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