



Pacific Beach

United Methodist Church

Dear friends...

In recent weeks, I have been asked a number of questions that seem to connect strongly with our current cultural and political climate. I have worked hard in responding to these questions in ways that are balanced and that show love for all of God's creation and for all of the good people who worship here at Pacific Beach United Methodist Church and who are connected with this faith community outside of the worship setting. It is my desire to be a pastor to all who find hope and joy here, and not just those who think one particular way.

Even so, this act of balancing a fine line can seem as though nothing is being said. And while it is not my place to make broad defining statements about this congregation, it is surely my place to speak the Gospel and to communicate the defining statements that this congregation has appropriately affirmed through our structured voices.

I have been dismayed these past weeks to hear of the hurtful and harmful statements being made around these United States. And I have been surprised and a bit angry to hear that some hurtful and harmful statements have been – and *are being* – made here on this campus.

The Welcome Statement affirmed by this congregation and noted prominently on our website reads this: "Pacific Beach United Methodist Church welcomes all people, regardless of age, race, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, physical condition, sexual orientation, ethnic background, or economic situation."

I believe that this is a statement of justice and love. And with this statement affirmed by representatives of this congregation, it is both incongruent and harmful to say disparaging things about our gay and lesbian members. It is incongruent and harmful to say disparaging things about our transgender members. It is incongruent and harmful to say disparaging things about our economically disadvantaged community members – whether or not these persons have had the opportunity to shower or have a bed to sleep in. It is incongruent and harmful to say disparaging things about persons of differing or mixed races. These statements have no place here.

In the beautiful diversity of our community, we are bound to face some disagreement. If we disagree with one another, we must speak to one another as neighbors – neighbors who we are called to love in the same way that we love ourselves. We are called to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Let us journey this winding road together.

Bob Rhodes, Pastor