

March 16, 2021

Dear Ministers and Lay Leaders of Trinity United Methodist Church of Tallahassee:

We, as members of the church's Friday Study Group, which has been meeting steadily for many years, have been studying and discussing the Sermon on the Mount, as presented in the Gospel of Matthew. We are struck by Jesus's forceful emphasis on inclusion of the meek, the hungry, the neglected, the poor in spirit, the lonely, and those denied recognition and just treatment by society, in his vision of the Kingdom of God.

We are especially impressed by Jesus's prayer to "*our* Father," realizing that this "*our*" refers to all persons in society, not to just us individual church members. As such, it requires that we be concerned to think and act on behalf of all persons, especially those denied equal treatment, equal recognition, and equitable social justice. We are all brothers and sisters in our relations to God. We are all part of the same human family.

We believe that our church should endeavor to be active, visible, urgent defenders of all aspects of social justice, in keeping with Jesus's vision of the Kingdom of God and of God as the loving Father of us all without exception or exclusion. It is our hope that Trinity will be a strong voice advocating for social justice. We believe that this requires commitment, a program of education and thoughtful study for all ages, and bold pastoral and lay leadership.

We recommend that careful, caring, persistent attention be paid by our church to inequities, neglects, and mistreatments of persons in society based on racial prejudice and discrimination. As all persons are beloved and cherished equally by God, so we should do likewise in both attitude and practice.

We urge that the ministers and lay leaders of our church make abundantly clear that all persons including practicing LGBTQ persons are welcomed and entitled to full membership and participation in the life of our church here in Tallahassee. We support endorsement of their eligibility for ordination as ministers and the right of United Methodist clergy to perform marriages of same sex couples.

Finally, in keeping with the belief that all of God's creation is sacred, we fully support the Creation Care Ministry being launched at Trinity. We urge that the threat of global climate change, impending ecological disaster, and widespread species extinctions be kept at the forefront of the church's attention. This is especially necessary in light of the much greater harm posed by these developments to the poor and those less able to cope with them throughout the world, as well as in far too many places in the United States.

We do not think that we have to wait on official denominational endorsements of such concerns before acting on them. Such endorsements will be welcome when they arrive. But in the meantime, we at Trinity, following the stated goals of the UMC Board of Church and Society, can and should resolutely live our faith through actions that seek justice and pursue peace here and now. We urge our ministerial and lay leaders to continue to explore specific, unmistakable ways for us to do so as members of the body of Christ in Tallahassee, Florida.

Respectfully submitted from these members of Friday Study Group:

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