

“Breaking Barriers / Building Bridges”

Special Kick-Off Meeting: Sunday, April 7; 12:30 pm, in the Sanctuary

Dear Church Community,

In late February we wrote to you immediately following the specially-called General Conference of the United Methodist Church on human sexuality. We explained that a majority of delegates to General Conference voted to adopt a “Traditional Plan” that retains current restrictions against same-sex marriage in the church and prohibitions on ordination of gay clergy.

During the March 14 meeting of our Church Council we had a candid discussion about what the decisions reached at General Conference mean to our denomination, to our local church, and to each member of our church community. We reflected on our Bishop’s statement that, for local churches like Franconia that currently follow the Book of Discipline, there will be no significant changes. While that may be true, it does not consider the public’s perception of our denomination and, by extension, the perception of local churches such as Franconia. Many people were pleased with the General Conference’s decisions and many others were very hurt. Regardless of whether someone believes the decisions were right or wrong, emotions are personal and are neither right nor wrong.

Franconia has always been welcoming and inclusive of everyone who wishes to worship with us, regardless of ethnicity, physical ability, or sexual orientation. However, we also know that we can do better. It is too easy to become complacent with how things have always been done or how we always feel welcome without taking time to understand whether others feel the same way.

We are therefore inviting everyone to a special meeting on Sunday, April 7, at 12:30 pm, to kick-off a six-month collective effort to “Break Barriers and Build Bridges.” We will explain more at the meeting, but we are setting a goal of presenting a report to Church Council, by this fall, of practical steps that can be taken immediately or over the longer term to ensure Franconia lives its commitment to welcoming all into fellowship regardless of ethnicity, physical ability or sexual orientation.

Please join us on April 7 and in the coming months to make this a success.

-Rev. Melissa Porter-Miller, Pastor

-Barbara Lawrence, Lay Leader

-Jeff Sheldon, Church Council Chair