

# Love it or Leave it? Disagreeing with Your Community

*Rise & Shine, June 30<sup>th</sup>*

## **James 1:22-25**

*But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

### **Questions:**

- When have you disagreed with a community that you were part of? Did you choose to leave the community?
- When have you chose to work from within to make a change to a system instead of voting “with your feet?”
- How have you witnessed groups operating in complicity to issues that you feel strongly opposed to?
- What can we learn about our own communities from what is happening in the Methodist Church or at Wayfair?

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*In the News*

## **Protesting Methodist LGBTQ policy, confirmation class takes a pass**

United Methodists across the U.S. have protested the global denomination’s crackdown on LGBTQ members in all kinds of ways. But now eight teenagers aged 13 and 14, who make up this year’s confirmation class at First United Methodist Church in Omaha, Neb., stood before the congregation on Confirmation Sunday and read a letter saying they do not want to become members at this time.

“We are concerned that if we join at this time, we will be sending a message that we approve of this decision,” the confirmation class wrote. “We want to be clear that, while we love our congregation, we believe the United Methodist

policies on LGBTQ+ clergy and same-sex marriage are immoral.” The eight teens received a standing ovation.

Since the February vote at a special session of the General Conference in St. Louis, some Methodist churches across the United States have protested through newspaper ads. Others rallied in front of their church administrative offices. Still others voted to withhold their annual dues.

But this is the first known refusal to join the church at the end of confirmation, a formal rite of passage that includes education in the faith. Traditionally, confirmation classes spend a year learning about Christianity, the history of the United Methodist Church, its social principles, its polity, and what it means to be a member before deciding if they want to join the church as members.

Tim Fickenscher, the class’s teacher at First United Methodist Church, said that the group’s idea originated about a month before the scheduled confirmation day when two girls announced they didn’t want to join a denomination that denies LGBTQ full rights.

Fickenscher explained that would mean they wouldn’t be allowed to vote at churchwide meetings. He also made it clear that others in the confirmation class may have different opinions. “It was a very thoughtful, well-discussed decision,” Fickenscher said. “We tried to give the kids as much latitude in decision-making as we could.”

First United Methodist of Omaha has a history of confronting its denomination’s policies. In 1997, its then pastor, Jimmy Creech, performed a same-sex blessing for two women on church grounds. After a church member complained, Creech was put on trial and defrocked.

More recently, the church council voted to host same-sex weddings should its clergy choose to perform them and to withhold funding, or apportionments, to the denomination for the remainder of the year.

The Rev. Kent Little, current pastor of the church, supported his young people. “Myself and our associate pastor are in full support of their decision,” he said. “We’re proud of them. It’s not an easy thing to do to resist.”

The United Methodist Church’s top court has upheld an “exit plan” that allows churches to leave the denomination with their property over decisions made at the special session. That is something First United Methodist is considering.

Little, who came on as pastor in July, said the church council voted on April 2 to hold small group discussions about whether to remain in the United

Methodist Church. He said the church would consider three options: staying and continuing to resist church rules in solidarity with LGBTQ people; affiliating with another denomination such as the United Church of Christ, which gives LGBTQ people full rights; or becoming an independent, non-denominational congregation.

Amidst the decision to stay or leave facing many Methodist congregations, people across the nation are deciding that complicity will not be tolerated on a range of issues. Last week, employees of the furniture conglomerate Wayfair learned that the company was planning to fulfill an order by BCFS, a government contractor that is operating camps at the border, for \$200,000 of bedroom furniture.

More than 500 Wayfair employees signed a letter to leadership stating: “We believe that the current actions of the United States and their contractors at the Southern border do not represent an ethical business partnership Wayfair should choose to be a part of.” They asked Wayfair to cease business with BCFS and other contractors doing the same work, and also to establish a code of ethics for business-to-business sales.

When the company executives wrote back to the employees Monday, saying they appreciated their “passion and commitment” but indicating that the sale would go through, employees staged a massive walk-out. “It is our business to sell to any customer who is acting with the laws of the countries within we operate,” the unsigned letter said.

News of the walkout exploded internationally, drawing the support of progressive politicians such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Elizabeth Warren, as Wayfair’s decision drew the ire of customers from across the country. Within days the supportive Twitter account @wayfairwalkout had gained more than 20,000 followers.

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Here are some Bible verses and a question outline to guide our discussion:

**Galatians 5:1**

*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

**Romans 12:2**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

**Luke 17:3-4**

*Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive."*

**Proverbs 31:8-9**

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,  
for the rights of all the destitute.  
Speak out, judge righteously,  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

**Prayer for the Human Family (BCP p.815)**

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.