

## **Rocky Mountain Conference Privilege Speech: WE ARE A CHURCH FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN**

Bishop and members of the Conference, I am Rev. Maggie Roe, chaplain at the Lutheran Medical Center in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. If I am in order, I would like to speak on a matter of personal privilege in response to the video we have just seen about the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and the inclusive nature of our ministry as United Methodists.

(Bishop allows privilege speech)

Thank you, Bishop Karen. I am grateful for the commitment of the Council of Bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward to chart a path for our denomination to be united in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ, while also recognizing that we have differences of opinion on how we do ministry with all people. The word that kept coming out in the video testimonies from members of the Commission is the word "HOPE" – we are, as people of faith, hopeful. We place our hope not in our own strength and capacity, but in the power of the Spirit to make us sacraments of grace for all people.

The work of radical hospitality is not an easy task. We live in a society that is increasingly polarized and fearful of others that we see as different. It would be such a powerful witness for our church to show the world that the Body of Christ celebrates diversity and values inclusion.

Our challenge today is clear in John Wesley's question: "Though we cannot think alike, can we not love alike?" I believe we do love each other and we are able to be gracious with each other. We are, after all, a faith community cradled and rooted in hearts that are strangely warmed by the grace of God.

I am thankful for the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, of which the Rocky Mountain Conference is a part. Our jurisdiction affirms in its Vision Statement, that we are "A home for all God's people, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation." I affirm the prophetic voice of our jurisdiction in

extending hospitality to all who are marginalized in the communities we serve. And I affirm the history of this Conference over the years in proclaiming support for LGBTQ persons and their full inclusion in the life of the beloved community.

I am inspired by and give thanks for the wisdom and witness of our jurisdiction's College of Bishops. On May 4, 2017, in response to Judicial Council Decision 1341, that left Bishop Karen's election in place, our bishops issued a pastoral letter – "A Message to The United Methodist Church from the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops." Their statement reflects prophetic courage and grace. They celebrate our diversity and recognize our contexts for ministry. I hope you will all visit **WesternJurisdictionUMC.org** and read their full letter or watch their video.

I celebrate with our College of Bishops "the good news that Bishop Karen Oliveto is continuing to lead the Mountain Sky Area of The United Methodist Church."

We have different contexts of ministry in every church and ministry location, but our College of Bishops' statement says that "For many years, the Western part of the United States has been a refuge for LGBTQ persons from across the US and around the world. Our region is a place where they can live fully into who God has created them to be, free from discrimination, violence, and closets."

Even as I acknowledge that we have some deep divisions in our beloved community, I affirm the College of Bishops' statement which says, we "witness daily the gifts and reflections of God's grace in LGBTQ persons who faithfully serve among us as lay leaders, pastors, district superintendents, and now, as a bishop." I believe that our life as a jurisdiction "has been enriched by the fullness of their presence and participation."

Lastly, as a pilgrim people who rest only in the boundless grace of God in Jesus the Christ, I pray that we continue to walk together, even in the tension of our differences, and join our bishops and jurisdiction in striving "to be a home for all God's beloved."