

## ← Asbury Letter Final

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We as signers of this letter are either alumni or current students of Asbury Theological Seminary. We are tremendously grateful for our time at Asbury Seminary; for the passion for truth and the mission of the church that was shared by many faculty and students alike. Though we each arrived at Asbury with a love for Jesus we recognize that our love for Jesus was nurtured through our studies there and we continue to seek after God's Kingdom and its manifestation on earth.

Yet, we also must honestly recognize the part that Asbury has played in the tremendous harm committed against LGBTQ+ people in the United Methodist Church. The ill-named "Traditional Plan," which was enacted by the Special Session of the General Conference earlier this year furthers our marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in the life and ministry of the United Methodist Church. The plan also enforces harsh penalties through mandatory minimum sentences against LGBTQ+ leaders and LGBTQ+ allies. These are the same kind of sentences used in the United States criminal justice system that created mass incarceration, particularly among people of color in the United States. Stuningly, though the United Methodist Church opposes mandatory minimum sentences in the U.S. criminal justice system, the church will be utilizing these kinds of sentences to purge LGBTQ+ leaders out of its fellowship. The Traditional Plan is unbiblical in its construct and in its implementation.

We recognize that many of Asbury's faculty, administration, students, and alumni have either actively aided the passage of the Traditional Plan at the Special General Conference or have stood by silently and been complicit with its passage. Either way, this is sin. As signers of this letter we confess our culpability in not making space for LGBTQ+ people in our lives, churches, and ministries. We have asked God for forgiveness and we seek to live in solidarity with our LGBTQ+ siblings. As we learned at our time at Asbury, to persecute people for who they are - for who God has created them to be - is a denial of the Imago Dei within each person. To stand in judgment over others and to attempt a systematic purge of LGBTQ+ people through a series of complaints and trials is sin.

We urge our fellow Asbury administrative leaders, faculty, current and fellow alumni to repent of this sin and to join us in standing in solidarity with our LGBTQ+ siblings in Christ.

Further, we ask for the current administration of Asbury Theological Seminary, as well as past presidents, to publicly repent from the harm done against LGBTQ+ people in the United Methodist Church as well as LGBTQ+ students who have attended Asbury in the past and who attend Asbury currently.

It is indeed far past time for members of the Body of Christ to rid ourselves of theologies and missional practices that deny the Missio Dei and which cause harm to others. It is time for us as members of the Body of Christ to stand in solidarity with those on the margins of society as well as those marginalized by the church. We rejoice in the overwhelming love and grace and justice of God our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Sustainer and we pray for Asbury's current administration, faculty, students and fellow alumni to receive afresh God's love, grace, and justice.

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