

**New England Conference Board of Ordained Ministry  
Co-Chairs' Response to the Special Session of General Conference  
March 2019**

As Co-Chairs of The New England Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, we receive the actions of the 2019 Special Session of General Conference – “A Way Forward” – with deep concern. The General Conference compromised our baptismal theology, the bishop’s role in ordination and the authority of the Annual Conference.

A primary task of the Board of Ordained Ministry is to discern the call to licensed and ordained ministry in our church. While it is not the purview of the Board of Ordained Ministry to make decisions regarding marriage, we accept our call to fully support and hold clergy accountable to fidelity and faithfulness in covenant relationships.

Discernment of the call to ministry in the Christian Church is an ongoing process. We walk with our candidates in the process of discerning their vocations. We look to see that they manifest gifts for ministry as Licensed Local Pastors, readiness to serve as Provisional Members, and demonstrations of effectiveness in ministry as Ordained Deacons and Elders.

Peter came to recognize and celebrate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Gentile believers, radically altering and expanding his understanding of God’s action in the community of faith. Throughout its history the church has recognized the ever-widening circle of inclusion across ethnicity, gender and categories of “ritual cleanliness.” It is long past time we acknowledge the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministries of LGBTQIA persons.

We believe the Board of Ordained Ministry of the New England Conference should respectfully maintain its current posture with regard to its discernment with those called to ministry in our midst: sexual orientation is not our concern, rather the manifestation of the Holy Spirit expressed in the gifts and graces of those hearing a call from God.

We believe the board has thoroughly examined all candidates and applicants in the qualifications for their ministries, and we stand by the decisions we have discerned together. We will not engage in or tolerate the harassment of others by extending inquiries into relationships and intimacy beyond the scope of fidelity in one’s covenant relationships.

We will continue to look for the Holy Spirit’s indicators of calling to see that God has gifted and empowered those articulating a call. This is the guiding principle in what compels us to license, commission, and ordain by the grace of God.

Rev. Dr. Charlotte Pridgen Randolph  
Rev. Mark Demers