



**The Board of Ministry of The East Ohio Annual Conference
The United Methodist Church**

**Statement on the Removal of the Restrictive Language
by General Conference 2020**

At the delayed 2020 General Conference, all restrictive language that excluded LGBTQIA+ persons from licensed and ordained ministry was removed from the Book of Discipline. In addition, a provision was added that permits clergy to be reinstated who previously surrendered their credentials, voluntarily or involuntarily, because of this language.

The East Ohio Board of Ministry will follow these new provisions.

When a candidate is considered for licensing, provisional membership, or ordination, they are examined for their gifts, graces, potential, preparation, and fruit for set apart ministry. LGBTQIA+ candidates and clergy will no longer be disqualified for ministry in East Ohio because of their sexuality or gender identity.

Our policies have caused harm to beloved candidates and clergy who were unable to respond to or pursue a call to licensed or ordained ministry within our conference and to those who had to hide their identity to avoid being disqualified over who they were. Moreover, our clergy covenant community has suffered in the absence of the gifts of clergy who, either because of their sexuality or because they could not conscience to serve in our denomination or annual conference while we maintained the exclusionary restrictive language, are not here in connection today.

The additional provision for the reinstatement of clergy who were affected by the restrictive language serves as a reminder of this harm that has been done and the healing that is needed. We see this as part of the ongoing Wesleyan work of the Board in doing no harm and doing good. We have been partnering with COSROW in this work for several years, making space for sharing about the harassment that female clergy endure, listening to candidates about their experiences in our credentialing process, and participating in acts of repentance and other work of healing. The removal of the restrictive language is only one step toward wholeness. This is the kind of work that we must begin to do together as we move onward toward becoming an inclusive church.