



## The First United Methodist Church of Oakhurst

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### TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY

As the recent leak of the Supreme Court's discussion on the matter of Roe vs Wade hit the news, a whirlwind of activity was provoked on both sides of the abortion issue. In this time, people of faith are called to speak with love and respect to one another. Given the myriad of medical, political, social, theological, and economic issues tied into the matter of abortion, wisdom dictates that there is no simple way to abbreviate a discussion of such magnitude.

As I shared a few weeks ago, United Methodists have four tools through which we seek to discern God's movement: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Each of these instruments is vital in the work of discernment. I invite you to consider how you have heard God speak through the Bible, through the words and work of faithful people from the past, through the gifts of science and research, and through your own life journey, when it comes to the question of abortion. And once you have done that, broaden the exploration, using the same tools with regard to the questions of reproduction, the 'conflicts of life with life' in other circumstances, gender equality, and access to medical care (among a host of other potential related topics!)

In doing our work of discernment, it quickly becomes clear that this social issue, like most, is complex and calls for careful, faithful reflection. And such reflection is thus followed by respect for those who differ.

For the official denominational statement, look here:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/social-principles-the-nurturing-community#abortion>

As you read this article, listen for signs of wisdom from scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

In a world of heightened animosity and rancorous exchange, we are called to be caring and careful with our words, thinking and thoughtful with our positions, and loving in all ways.

Peace;

Shawn Callender Hogan

### ALSO FROM THE PASTOR

As another class of confirmands confirms their faith and is received into membership this Sunday, we give thanks to God for the way that the Spirit has been at work in them, not only in this year but across their entire lives. David and Kayleigh are caring, dedicated young people. In the course of our time in class, we discussed a myriad of faith topics, and at the end of each session they were given specific questions from which to reflect on how they relate to the material we have covered. Here are some of their reflections:

*Two of my favorite images of God are:*

Kayleigh-God moving the world; him not making anyone feel left out, because it's showing a true person and someone you know loves you more than anything

David-when he's on a cloud, because of what it represents-that he's always watching over us

*In the past year I have discovered the following about God:*

Kayleigh -that God is true, faithful, one, a trinity, and self-existent

David -that even if you don't see him, he is always there

*Like understanding the Trinity, much of our faith is mysterious and hard to explain. When things are not straightforward and clear I tend to feel:*

Kayleigh -confused, unsteady, and overwhelmed

David -alone and unguided

*Some questions I have about God are:*

Kayleigh -How do you forgive those who did horrible things?

David -Why is he so distant?

*My favorite Bible story is*

Kayleigh -Noah's ark, because it tells a story of life; also the animals 😊

David -Noah and the ark, because it shows the wickedness of humanity at that time

*My favorite season of the Christian year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary time...) is*

Kayleigh -Christmas, because I like hearing the story of Jesus's birth and it's a time when I can spend time with my family.

David -Christmas, because it's cold and I get to spend time with my family

*My least favorite season is*

Kayleigh -Lent, because I feel when you go to church during Lent it feels like Easter is further away

David -No answer

*My definition of the word "grace" is:*

Kayleigh -to give your thanks to god. I feel like when you give grace you're praying for something important like family for example-you're thanking God since he gave us the family.

David -to say a prayer

*The place and time I find it best to pray is*

Kayleigh -night, because it is quiet and you're calm

David -my room because I get to be alone

*The suggestions I would have for others who want to pray are:*

Kayleigh -go to a quiet place where you can focus; take some deep breaths while doing it

David -sit in a quiet room

*When it comes to works of piety, I am drawn to...*

Kayleigh -praying for others to God

David -prayer

*When it comes to works of mercy, I am interested in...*

Kayleigh -donating food, clothes, etc. to those who need it

David -helping out the unfortunate people

*Thinking about the way our church is structured for getting ministry done, the advice I would give to the church is:*

Kayleigh -to show a little bit of leadership and bravery

David - no answer

*The fact that the United Methodist Church celebrates diversity of thought and expression of faith makes me feel:*

Kayleigh -happy; a little more relaxed knowing there's more than one way to think of something

David -happy

*My commitment to God will show in the following ways:*

Kayleigh -reading the Bible at night and praying

David -by never sinning

*My commitment to the church will show in the following ways:*

Kayleigh -going to church; praying all together; helping out

David -by always worshiping each week

I trust you will welcome them on this special day and continue to uphold them in the journey of faith!

Shawn Callender Hogan