

## **Press Release** - June 1, 2014

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Local congregation affirms marriage equality despite denominational policies

Members of the East Longmeadow United Methodist Church today declared at an all-church meeting that no congregation member would be denied the services of the church because of sexual orientation including use of the building and property for marriages and holy unions. ELUMC joins a growing list of churches and regional conferences that are defying the larger denomination by passing resolutions in support of non-heterosexual marriage.

The congregation had previously declared itself to be fully inclusive in June 2010, but the Church Council determined that a formal declaration of marriage equality was needed because the denomination's "*Book of Discipline*" expressly states that "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted in our churches." In addition, recent United Methodist clergy trials in the news showed the struggle against denominational policies on non-heterosexual marriage and pastors.

Church Council Chairperson John Dunlop of East Longmeadow explained, "We felt the best way to respond to these events was to adopt an explicit marriage policy that doesn't discriminate against LGBTQ persons and treats all couples the same regardless of sexual orientation. Our understanding of the Gospel and the example of Christ in placing people above discriminatory rules is in direct contradiction to the *Book of Discipline*, and so in the spirit of 'Gospel obedience' we have decided to ignore the specific policy that forbids weddings for gay people while upholding the core tenants of the *Book of Discipline*, the UMC's strong legacy of social justice, and ELUMC's own Statement of Inclusion."

The church has posted additional information about the decision on its web site [www.elumc.org](http://www.elumc.org).