

From Rainbow Crossing

William Pollard and Michael Williams are being married today, May 15, 2016, at The United Methodist Church of Palm Springs, California. And this weekend the United Methodist Church is in the midst of General Conference, its top legislative body which meets on a quadrennial basis to address matters of importance to our denomination. How, might you ask, are these two events related?

William was born into the First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor. He was baptized, confirmed and was an active MYFer here. He has been a member of this church for most of his life. Michael joined more recently. They sit together on the right side at the 9:30 service, toward the front, on most Sundays. Together they usher on a regular basis, serve on committees, and serve communion. We appreciate their time, talents and financial support.



They wanted to be married in this church, their church.

But even though it is now legal in the United States for same gender couples to marry, the UM Book of Discipline denies UM clergy and churches the right to perform same gender weddings. Our Book of Discipline gives Bishops the power to terminate a pastor's employment should they perform such weddings. You may remember Rev. Frank Schafer speaking at our church having had this very experience in the state of Pennsylvania.

But in several areas of this country, Bishops essentially "look the other way" when pastors marry same gender couples. There are no (or minor) repercussions for pastors in those areas of the country. California is one of those areas. So at great personal

expense and with most of their friends unable to make the trip, William and Michael are being married in a UM church in Palm Springs this afternoon. It was not their first choice. A barrier has been set up by the United Methodist Church between William and Michael and this church.

There is legislation that would change the language in the Book of Discipline, but we have a history of *not* changing that language. As long as United Methodists vote as one united group (including Africa, the Philippines, and European conferences), the language in our Book of Discipline which discriminates against LGBTQ people and those pastors who would like to see that language removed, will likely remain the same.

We also hope that the jurisdictional conference this July will work to elect progressive Bishops. Bishops who will decline to punish pastors and parishioners around LGBTQ issues. If you would like your voice heard, if you feel it is wrong that William and Michael could not be married in the place where they worship and serve, **please write your Michigan Area General Conference delegates and alternates** (addresses on the next page.) Become involved in Rainbow Crossing. We meet the fourth Sunday of each month. This congregation adopted a Welcoming Statement in 2007 ... let us challenge ourselves as congregants to do what we can to live up to that Statement.

And when you see them next, please congratulate William and Michael on their marriage. We know they will appreciate your thoughts for them.

Michigan Area General Conference Delegates and Alternates

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Information about our Rainbow Crossing ministry

Rainbow Crossing is a growing ministry dedicated to ensuring that all persons can be full, dynamic members of their faith in our church. This group was established expressly to be a supportive community for persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or allies (LGBTQ). We also welcome those who are questioning or intersex.

Rainbow Crossing meets on the 4th Sunday of each month at 3:30 PM in the Chapel downtown. We always have refreshments!

Through healthy discussion of these issues we pray that our church family will better understand the needs of every person.