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## LESBIAN COUPLE FIRED FROM ALOMA METHODIST ECLC AFTER BEING TOLD TO CHANGE THEIR “LIFESTYLE”

Jaci Pfeiffer and Kelly Bardier, a lesbian couple employed as daycare workers in Winter Park, FL, were unexpectedly fired last month despite being lauded as gifted and beloved employees. After rumors spread that the two may be a couple, they were each given an option: stop being gay or lose your job.

Kelly had long believed Methodist churches to be especially loving and open to people of all identities, but that was before she and Jaci were fired from Aloma Methodist Early Childhood Learning Center because of their God-given identities.

“I was raised in a United Methodist church. When my dad passed away, the church stepped in to help my mom raise my brothers and me. I found acceptance and love in the church, and it became a very safe place for me. This feeling was shattered on the day I was fired. I felt betrayed by the one thing I never thought would let me down,” Kelly shared.

Since Jaci and Kelly were fired, the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) has released a supportive statement saying they believe any “termination based solely on sexual orientation would violate a person’s civil rights.” This statement is in line with The UMC resolution which condemns “*actions rooted in homophobia and heterosexism, including violence, threats, ridicule, humiliation, discrimination, isolation, and rejection.*” The responsibility to condemn injustice in The UMC includes and extends beyond the office of the Bishop and invites all United Methodists in Florida into an examination of conscience.

As long as The United Methodist Church continues to theologically encourage prejudice against LGBTQ people by claiming “*homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching,*” stories like Kelly and Jaci’s will remain a common tragedy. It is past time for all of us in the church to own The UMC’s active role in perpetuating harm against LGBTQ people. It is up to both clergy and lay members to put an end to the destructive teachings of The United Methodist Church.

Reconciling Ministries Network executive director, Matt Berryman, calls on all United Methodists in Florida who believe in the full inclusion of the Gospel to put your faith into action and live into the lifelong calling of baptism by joining the Reconciling movement.

“As those who, by the waters of baptism, are called into the life of God where all are treated with dignity and respect, we must always testify with our actions to the truth we hold in our heart. When others are being harmed in the name of God, our baptismal identities require we speak up, we stand up, and we practice the Kingdom values of justice and love. As United Methodists who do not take the sacrament of baptism and its life-long claim on our lives lightly, we ask you to join us in disrupting the distorted claim of The UMC that implies we can both honor our baptisms and stand idly by while fellow children of God are discriminated against.”

There is no federal law that protects LGBT people from discrimination, nor statewide laws in 29 states for sexual orientation and 32 for gender identity. As we seek to ensure protection for people of all sexual orientation and gender identities through legislation, Reconciling Ministries Network remains committed to Biblical Obedience and invites all who believe the Gospel witness of Christ’s inclusive and transforming love to join us in working to ensure the pain Kelly and Jaci endured is no longer repeated in the name of The United Methodist Church. . . .

*[Reconciling Ministries Network](http://www.rmnetwork.org) mobilizes United Methodists of all sexual orientations and gender identities to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ’s inclusive love.*