

# Chicago Methodist Senior Services Responds

## What has happened?

As many of you are likely aware, the United Methodist Church (UMC) convened a special session of the UMC General Conference in St. Louis in February 2019. This special session primarily addressed the topic of human sexuality and the ongoing schism within the United Methodist Church over how to address the issues of ordination of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) clergy and same-gender marriage within the church. The General Conference special session voted narrowly to pass the “Traditional Plan,” which calls for increased punishments for UM churches and clergy who embrace full inclusion of LGBTQ people.

While this action by the United Methodist Church has no binding impact on Chicago Methodist Senior Services and how and to whom we deliver services, we want to take a



moment to address the decision and explicitly express where CMSS stands as an organization. We are heartbroken at the outcome of the conference and want to make it clear that we strongly disapprove of the decision and acknowledge the hurt and disillusionment it has caused.

## CMSS' Response

CMSS is an Independent not-for-profit agency that is not affiliated directly with the UMC. Several years ago, when we went through a rebranding process, and after much deliberation, we decided to continue the use of the word “Methodist.” In our organization’s title as to honor our history and the tradition of service from which we arose. For 120 years, we have served the elderly in our community in all aspects of their life. For us, the name Methodist has always represented something positive, and we still aspire to draw on the best our traditions have to offer, but these recent developments have unfortunately threatened to put a stain on the name.

We vigorously reaffirm our core values of providing services in a nonsectarian, faith-based environment where spiritual well-being is placed above a denomination or religious beliefs, culture, and ethnic diversity are honored and supported, and we are mindful of common freedoms, privileges, constitutional protections and civil rights.

CMSS has recently committed to expanding our understanding of the barriers faced by LGBTQ+ older adults and to working within our organization to break down those barriers to provide a safe and affirming environment where the needs of each individual can be

met with dignity and respect. We acknowledge the history of oppression and discrimination members of the LGBTQ+ community have faced. We endeavor to continue working to learn about the culture, needs, and concerns of LGBTQ+ communities and the ways we can identify best practices to improve and expand the care and services we offer. We see this as an important matter of equality and social justice.

CMSS has pledged to participate in community meetings, targeted programming, and continues engagement and dialogue with members of the LGBTQ+ communities with the goal of supporting these communities, which have for too long been marginalized. In the next few months, the CMSS staff will be working to achieve the “Platinum” level SAGECare LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training - The beginning of our quest to expand our knowledge in order to better understand and meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ older adults who honor us with the opportunity to provide them services.

Furthermore, CMSS has joined with the Reconciling Ministries Network, an organization seeking the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in both the policy and practices of the UMC. We stand resolutely with those advocating for change within the denomination.



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