

Board of Trustees
Fresno Pacific University
1717 S. Chestnut Ave.
Fresno, CA 93702
Attention: Joshua Wilson, Board Chair

Dear Members of the Board:

We are a group of Christian leaders here in the Central Valley who are reaching out regarding the potential discussion and vote on an LGBTQ+ Pride club. We believe that FPU is not only an essential educational institution here in our valley, but also an essential Christian institution. All of us deeply value FPU and have witnessed the positive impact the university and its faculty have made on countless individuals' Christian faiths. Not only has the faith of many been strengthened while at FPU, but we know of many students who made first-time commitments to become followers of Jesus through the university's ministry.

It is evident that a primary goal of the FPU administration and its trustees is to create a safe and welcoming community where every student can experience the love of Jesus. Therefore we, as a collective group of Christian leaders, call on the Board of Trustees to approve and support the proposed LGBTQ+ Pride student club. It is our belief that this club will demonstrate the university's commitment to Christian hospitality. After reviewing the mission and goals of the LGBTQ+ club and meeting with its potential student founders, we are confident that the presence of this club is not a contradiction of the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith, but instead an affirmation of it. Some of our congregations maintain the traditional Christian view of marriage, yet intentionally offer spaces of belonging for LGBTQ+ individuals.

As Christian leaders, we are called to welcome and love everyone no matter how they identify themselves. A core tenet of our faith is the love of neighbor. As Jesus explains in Matthew 12, our neighbor is not limited to those who are like us and believe what we believe, but instead Jesus describes a neighbor as someone who might live a life counter to our faith. Too often, the church has been like the religious leaders in this passage who ignore the needs of others. It is our hope that the board emulates the Good Samaritan by providing a space and resources for the LGBTQ+ Pride club.

This letter is written by your brothers and sisters in the faith who admit to a history of failing to show Christian love to the LGBTQ+ community. Our statement is not written as those who have arrived at the destination of Christ-like hospitality, but as those who are still on the journey towards it. We invite you to join us on this journey. With humility, we offer ourselves for any services or consultation you might require.

Sincerely,

The Right Rev. David C. Rice,
Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

Pastor Arthur Stewart,
Community Pastor, Willow Avenue
Mennonite Church
FPU Alum, BA (95)
Former Student Body President

Yammilette Rodriguez
Former Pastor, United Faith Christian
Fellowship

The Rev. Cn. Anna Carmichael, Ph.D.,
Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of
San Joaquin

The Very Rev. Samuel S. Colley-Toothaker,
Acting Dean, St. James Episcopal Cathedral

The Rev. Nelson Serrano-Povedo,
Missioner, Episcopal Diocese of San
Joaquin

The Rev. Deacon Nancy Key,
St. James Episcopal Church

Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner
United Methodist clergy

Rev. Raygan Baker
Pastor, The Big Red Church of Fresno UCC

Rev. April Alkema
Woven Community Church,
University Presbyterian Church
BA 07, M.Div 19

Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner
United Methodist clergy

Rev. Simon Biasell
Pastor, Woven Community
FPU Alum, BA (12) M.Div (16)

Rev. Raygan Baker
Pastor, The Big Red Church of Fresno UCC

Cindy Jurado Hernández,
Adjunct Faculty Biblical & Religious
Studies
MA (16)

Rev. Ara Gukazian
Pastor
Presbyterian Church USA

Pastor Marcel Woodroof
Faith in the Valley
M.Div (12)

Tim Neufeld
Associate Marriage and Family Therapist
Adjunct Professor, FPU
BA (85), M.Div (92), MFT (20)