

November 20, 2005

To Bishop Edward Paup, and the Council of Bishops,

Greetings and peace to you from the people of St. John United Methodist Church in the Alaska Missionary Conference,

We are grateful for your pastoral letter regarding the recent Judicial Council ruling that upheld a pastor's decision to deny church membership to a homosexual man. We found the Judicial Council's decision shocking and deeply disturbing. In a single ruling, we are stripped of the single most important characteristic of our Christian community – that of an inclusive body of Christ that struggles together in mission and ministry to *all* people and with *all* people. The Open Doors have seemingly slammed shut.

As members of the global United Methodist Church, we understand the pastor's rejection of any person into membership impacts beyond the local church. What affects the United Methodist Church in Virginia affects us here in Anchorage, as well as in Los Angeles, Monrovia, Atlanta, Manila and Des Moines. The connection is weakened and the people of the United Methodist Church, collectively and individually, are diminished by this action.

We strongly disagree with the Judicial Council ruling and will not tolerate any change to our communal identity at the local level. At St. John, we will continue to practice an inclusive community and would expect this in our pastor, our staff, our leaders and our laity. In mutual accountability, we will move forward in our divine call "to make disciples of Jesus Christ and be a welcoming family joyfully sharing God's light."

We prayerfully and faithfully await the day when our polity unequivocally affirms the Open Doors in The United Methodist Church.

In Christ,

The People of St. John United Methodist Church  
Anchorage, Alaska

Approved at Charge Conference – November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005