



March 27, 2023

Dear Living Water Association,

Greetings in the name of the One whom we know as Love!

Once again, our hearts break at the face of bigotry, homophobia and hatred. Last Saturday, Community Church of Chesterland UCC, one of our beloved congregations, experienced a violent attack on its church building. The sign of the church was destroyed. Outdoor light fixtures were broken. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the building. The miracle was that when this hate crime occurred, it was raining, which probably prevented the fire from catching, destroying the whole building.

Chesterland UCC is no stranger to violence. Chesterland UCC is proudly Open and Affirming. Its congregation includes a variety of persons from the LGBTQIA2+ spectrum. Its rainbow flag, which flies outside the building, is often stolen. Still, the congregation welcomes everyone, wherever they are on the journey and on the spectrum of sexuality, identity, and human experience.

This Saturday's incident is only one among many others around our nation. Congregations who are open and affirming are experiencing an increase in violent attacks of many kinds. We are facing profoundly painful moments in our life together. The senselessness of the violence and bigotry against LGBTQIA2+, especially transgender persons, is truly a menacing cruelty and brutal savagery.

Today, we stand with our beloved church, Community Church of Chesterland UCC. We stand in affirmation and support for each person's human dignity and worth. We stand believing that our LGBTQIA2+ siblings are beloved children of God. And, that our congregations provide extravagant welcome and hospitality, creating safe places for all God's children especially the marginalized and the dehumanized as an expression of God's inclusive love made known in Jesus Christ.

So let it be known that we absolutely reject violence. We are allies of, and affirm and support, our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonbinary and all humans unconditionally.

Rev. David Long Higgins  
Conference Minister  
Heartland Conference UCC

Rev. Nayiri Karjian  
General Minister  
Living Water Association

Rev. Michael A. Howard  
Minister of Faith in Action  
Living Water Association