



June 6, 2016

Dear UBC Family and Friends,

Many of you have expressed questions about the work of the Deacons' Openness Task Force. The Task Force is inquiring into how to respond to openly gay Christians who might seek membership with University Baptist Church. The Deacons have not yet sponsored a forum where you can discuss the Task Force's work to date, so we appreciate your need for information.

With this letter, you will find a "Questions & Answers" sheet. This seems a way to address the likely questions most everyone might share about the Openness Task Force. Of course, we cannot anticipate particular questions specific to each person in the congregation. So, please approach either Brad or me with questions which the enclosed "Q & A" does not satisfy.

We feel confident that University Baptist already welcomes all people. UBC has no preconditions on who may share in worship, Bible study, and other events. We believe our congregation affirms that all people have inherent worth in the sight of God, equally beloved of God as, for example, John 3:16 describes.

Our present challenge, though, is this: to discern, based on best Scriptural interpretation, current understanding of sexual orientation, and personal witness, whether God welcomes gay persons in the same manner as straight persons into Christian community.

As we go through this challenging process, we ask of everyone that we exercise patience and forbearance with one another, as Scripture admonishes us, "*...with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" (Ephesians 4:2-3)

"Patience" is keeping oneself calm in the midst of trying circumstances. "Forbearance" is refraining oneself from striking out at those people who are testing our patience. The Bible clearly portrays that as the early Christians found their way forward in living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they sorely tried each other's patience and forbearance from time to time.

This inquiry into whether our congregation should welcome gay Christians into our church family will do the same for us. This will be one of our "times" to practice the virtues to which Ephesians 4:2-3 exhorts us. Let's all do our best, "*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*".

Sincerely,

Gary Dalton
Senior Minister in the Interim

Brad Groff
Chair, Deacons