

Call to Action and INVITATION from your Maine Conference Staff

Wednesday June 29, 2016 – 7:00 – 8:30pm at

Quitobaquito – our own Oasis at Pilgrim Lodge

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In recent days, all 10 of us gathered for our monthly staff meeting. It was not business as usual. The following is an INVITATION from your staff (sorry for the short notice, there will be other meetings) to gather after the Orlando Massacre, pray, share and decide on what action we will take on our Open and Affirming commitments in the Maine Conference.

We met at Pilgrim Lodge, grateful for safe and sacred, beautiful space where we could share our grief and shock, thoughts and feelings after the Pulse Massacre last Sunday. Our hearts break for those who lost their lives, and their loved ones – for the Latinx community and the broader LGBTQ community. We sat in the place that holds the heartbeat of our Conference, and affirmed our solidarity with the LGBTQ community and our own LGBT staff members, clergy and lay people. We said “enough is enough,” “we need to be part of the healing,” “we want everyone in the Conference to feel as safe as we do here at PL,” “we are in this together,” “this is a Kairos moment,” “we need to DO something!”

OUR CONFESSION: We also realized that, first, we need to confess and repent and ask for forgiveness. We looked for our Maine Conference Open and Affirming Statement and found it was buried on our website. We read that statement, adopted in 2011, and realized that not enough has been done in our Conference to truly live out the commitments reflected there. We acknowledge that in our new structure, we have not yet created an Open and Affirming Resource Team. We confess our lack of commitment to overtly supporting our LGBTQ siblings. And we repent. And we ask forgiveness from the people who have felt unsupported or who have been harmed by our inaction.

CALL TO ACTION: We believe there are others in our Conference who may wish to join in that confession and repentance – others who feel the Call to re-new and strengthen our commitment to being, really BEING, an Open and Affirming Conference of the United Church of Christ. We know there are many ways we have in fact shown acceptance, love and affirmation to all people, especially at Pilgrim Lodge, and in our churches that have declared themselves OnA. We also know we can and must do better, and that we need one another to do this work well.

AN INVITATION: From your Conference Staff, gathered at the safe space that is Pilgrim Lodge, we extend an open invitation to all who have been affected by the recent tragedy in Orlando. Let us gather together to hear from our LGBTQ people, to strategize, to share, and to envision ways we will ACT on our Open and Affirming Commitment. Come to

Quitobaquito – our Oasis in a harsh world – at **Pilgrim Lodge on Wednesday June 29, 7:00-8:30pm**. We will pray, sing, hear first from our LGBTQ people, and see how the Spirit moves us into action. If you bring s'mores makings, you can share the campfire after the meeting. ☺

Be assured, this will not be the only meeting, but it is a place to start. Come if you can. Give us your thoughts and ideas, prayers and concerns, if you cannot be there. We are praying this will start something beautiful and healing and powerful.

In Christ's peace,

Rev. Deb Blood, Conference Minister, djblood@maineucc.org

Rev. Darren Morgan, Assoc. Conf. Minister, dmorgan207@roadrunner.com

Rev. Ineke Mitchell, Interim Assoc. Conf. Minister, ikmitchell@maineucc.org

Mr. Mark Schussler, Business Manager, markschussler@maineucc.org

Rev. Bryan Breault, Dir. Outdoor Ministries, bryan@pilgrimlodge.org

Rev. Bob Ross, Dean of Maine School of Ministry, roberthross@maineucc.org

Ms. Anne Hodgman, Dir. Resource Center & Accounting Assistant,
resourcecenter@maineucc.org

Ms. Renita Dehais, Treasury Assistant, renita@maineucc.org

Ms. Karen Steelhammer, Pilgrim Lodge Admin. Asst., karen@pilgrimlodge.org

Ms. Beth Campbell, Ministries Assistant, conference@maineucc.org