**Supportive Church Initiative for LGBTQ Seminarians**

The purpose of the Supportive Church Initiative (SCI) is to empower, encourage, financially support, and celebrate LGBTQ seminarians who are called to church ministry and who participate in the congregational life of Duke Memorial UMC as affiliate, associate\*, or full members. As a congregation we welcome persons from all backgrounds and identities. We also recognize that LGBTQ seminarians encounter unique challenges and questions regarding their denominational identity and calling. This is particularly true in the United Methodist Church, where self-avowed and practicing gays and lesbians are barred from ordination as elders and deacons.

Within our congregation we have LGBTQ seminarians, and we love and support them. The Supportive Church Initiative is a way to put concrete action behind our commitment to these persons. Through the Supportive Church Initiative seminarians will have the opportunity to process their experiences in seminary, to explore ordination in and outside the United Methodist Church, to be celebrated and welcomed, and to receive financial support.

SCI is open to enrolled seminary students. The number of students supported each year is dependent upon funding and the needs of the particular seminarian. Each student will receive $1000 in scholarship funds, applied directly to their tuition. Opportunities for nurture, care, and empowerment are based upon the needs of the seminarian. SCI lasts for one year with the possibility of renewal.

The church seeks to support affiliate, associate, or full members of Duke Memorial who hope to participate in a variety of ministries in the church either as ordained or lay ministers. We also recognize that, despite their investment in the United Methodist Church, some students may pursue ordination in other traditions because of the United Methodist Church’s stance towards LGBTQ candidates. Because of the unique situation facing LGBTQ seminarians, students have the option to anonymously receive support from the church.

Summary:

* Open to affiliate, associate, or full members of Duke Memorial UMC (associate members by definition are not required to be members of the United Methodist Church)
* Must be enrolled in an ATS accredited seminary or divinity school
* Seminarians will determine with the committee the kind of support they are seeking.
* All those invited into the Supportive Church Initiative receive $1000 scholarship applied directly towards their tuition.
* Seminarians may receive support anonymously
* Available for one year with the possibility of renewal
* The number of seminarians supported by the church depends upon funding and the needs of the individual student.