



March 1, 2022

Mr. John Thomas McCecil,

We give thanks to God for bringing you and Jesse to be part of our Rivermont family. You are loved and valued members of this community, and we are glad to have you here! We give thanks for the musical gifts you share with us to enrich our worship each week and look forward to seeing our children and youth become more engaged in worship under your leadership in your new role as Director of Music and the Arts. We are deeply grateful for your presence, leadership, and care.

As an expression of our love, the governing body of Rivermont Presbyterian Church stands in solidarity with you and all who have experienced exclusion, hate or have been wounded by the church in other ways. We also lament that we ourselves have also been guilty, consciously or unconsciously, of exclusion and discrimination. Guided by the scriptures and open to the Spirit, we will strive to become a safe haven for all of God's children.

With the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA) in 2018 we:

**Celebrate** that over the years, LGBTQ[IA]+ people have faithfully, lovingly, and courageously served in every kind of service to which Christian disciples are called— notwithstanding the church's efforts to exclude them from particular types of service."

**Welcome** transgender and gender non-binary people into the life of the church and to continue to grow in compassion and knowledge about the full expression of our individual and respective gender identities.

**Affirm** that religious freedom is not a license for discrimination against any of God's people, and cannot justify the denial of secular employment or benefits, healthcare, public or commercial services or goods, or parental rights to persons based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or gender expression.

**Give thanks** for those who continue to seek deeper understanding, and more authentic welcome, even amid discomfort or uncertainty about how best to show hospitality, in the spirit of continuing Reformation

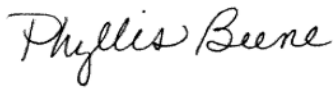
God calls us to be fully open and affirming of LGBTQ+ persons. We embrace diversity in race, sexuality, gender, class, immigration status, ability, and age. We believe all persons are children of God. We seek to be a community that welcomes and affirms all. In that spirit, on March 1, 2022, the session of Rivermont Presbyterian Church approved the following statement:

Following the risen Christ, and seeking to make our church a true community of hospitality, Rivermont Presbyterian Church works for the full participation of people of all sexualities and gender identities in the life, ministry, and witness of our church and society.

As a congregation we are doing the work of listening and learning so that we can fully live into this affirming statement. We are grateful that our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has a longstanding record of commitment to advocacy for equal rights in church and society for all sexual orientations and gender identities. The PC(USA) approved ordination of openly LGBTQ ministers in 2010. In 2014 the denomination made the way clear for ministers to officiate same sex marriage. In the spirit of Christ's love, we want all of Chattanooga and the surrounding communities to know that this is a church family that invites, affirms and celebrates persons in the LGBTQ+ community.

We look forward to partnering with people of faith and good will as we seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.

In Christ,



Elder Phyllis Beene  
Clerk of Session



Rev. Dr. Clay Thomas  
Pastor



Rev. Margaret Poteet  
Associate Pastor