

March 25, 2011

Dear Al and Helen:

Thank you for sending a copy of the material you have shared with the Bay View Board of Trustees as pertains to Bay View moving toward being more inclusive in our policies. It seems to me that what you have said is appropriate and in keeping with the position most mainline denominations are taking.

It is not a matter of separation of church and state. Bay View has a strong emphasis on its Christian heritage and no one wishes to denigrate this focus. Rather, it is a recognition that "in my father's house are many mansions". Increasingly Christian theologians are finding in the life and teaching of Jesus openness to diversity. Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman at the well. No Jew in Jesus' day would have done that, but Jesus did!

Claremont School of Theology, one of United Methodism's accredited and approved seminaries, has taken a dramatic step toward inclusiveness. They have entered into a consortium arrangement with other institutions in their area and today if you are enrolled in Claremont preparing for ministry in the United Methodist Church you may find yourself sitting in a classroom with persons preparing for the Rabbinate, or to become a Buddhist monk, Or, yes, an Imam in the Islam tradition. Administrators at Claremont assure us that this in no way is to diminish their commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ but to recognize that we are in a new day of ecumenicity and inclusiveness. I envision this kind of thinking can and will permeate our beloved Bay View. Our heritage is Christian. This will not change. At the heart of our life together is when we gather Sunday morning for corporate worship. But a new day has also come in which we welcome and celebrate diversity and can sit side by side with our Jewish and Buddhist neighbors, should they choose to join us. So Al and Helen, keep up the good work. For as we are reminded in the book of Acts by a Pharisee named Gamaliel: "If this is of God, nothing can stop it; and if it isn't of God, it will cease."

With warm regards

Original signed by: *Emerson*

Emerson S. Colaw