

✝ Pastor's Letter ✝

Dear Church Family,

April 2026

Halleluia! Christ is risen!

As we step into this Easter season, we are reminded that the resurrection isn't just a historical event we celebrate once a year—it is the living proof that **God is with us always**. In a world that often feels divided or discouraging, Easter reminds us that light has a way of breaking through the cracks, often in places we least expect.

A "Data Point" of Hope in Brentwood

As I shared during our service on March 29th, our congregation at Brentwood Community United Methodist Church has been honored with the People's Choice Award for the 2025 "Deck the Park" tree decorating contest. To be honest, I am still reflecting on this victory with a sense of wonder. Given the resistance we've encountered since we first displayed our rainbow flag in 2018, I hadn't dared to imagine such an overwhelming embrace from our neighbors. The most beautiful part of this win is that it wasn't decided by a small committee, but by the hundreds of residents and visitors who walked through City Park. By receiving nearly 700 votes—compared to 200 for the runner-up—it's clear that our tree did more than just catch the eye; it spoke directly to the heart of our community.

The Power of a Brave Space

Our tree touched so many hearts because of the powerful symbols it carried. By wrapping it in a large rainbow ribbon, the symbol of our status as a **Reconciling Congregation**, we provided a "brave space" for people to show their support for LGBTQ+ welcome right in the literal center of the city.

Furthermore, the tree was adorned with decorations from **HOPE HOUSE**, signifying our unwavering commitment to our neighbors in need. I truly appreciate, Jeanette Ruddick and Melissa van Ruiten, the co-chairpersons of the Reconciling Committee for their vision, and I invite you all to join me in giving them a round of applause for this beautiful ministry.

We Are Not Alone

This win is a significant "**data point**" of hope. It suggests that the community is more ready than we might have feared for a message of radical inclusion. Those 700 votes were a big "thank you" from the secret allies of Brentwood—people who appreciate a church that is brave enough to love across traditional boundaries. St. Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:9**: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* In a world full of reasons to be discouraged, we will not become weary easily, and we will not run away.

Love as a Bridge-Builder

The message remains clear: **Love is a bridge-builder**. Love wins over hearts, and peace is possible even beyond traditional "enemy lines." Let's remember that we are not alone; we are surrounded by thousands of allies connected through our common mission. As the Bible says, when we are in God, we find the strength to do all things through Christ who empowers us (**Philippians 4:13**).

May the light of the resurrection guide you this month and always.

In Christ's Victorious Light,



Pastor Hyesung Lee