

Dear First Presbyterian family,

Last June the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), made up of equal representation of ruling and teaching elders from all of our presbyteries, voted to grant individual clergy the authority to perform same-sex weddings in states where it is legal, and also gave individual sessions the authority to determine whether the church property may be used to host same-sex weddings. The actions of General Assembly do not place a requirement on any church or pastor to hold same-sex marriage ceremonies.

In addition, a change (Amendment 14-F) to the Book of Order (part of our denomination's constitution along with the Book of Confessions) was proposed replacing the description of marriage as "*between a man and a woman*" with a description of marriage as "*between two persons, traditionally a man and a woman.*" Our polity requires a 2/3-majority vote of presbyteries to make changes to our constitution. On March 17, 2015 this change received enough votes to approve it and officially change our constitution effective June 2015. Details of this can be found online at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/ga221/ga221-marriage/>

There are many in our denomination who rejoice over this decision and there are also many who grieve it. Our congregation also represents a diversity of opinions regarding these matters. Last year, the church family participated in a marriage study to provide a context for healthy and civil conversation on the issues of marriage. And now, our officers (both deacons and elders) are meeting together each month to pray together, to lovingly consider both sides of the issue, and to discern together, led by the scriptures that have provided the backdrop for our current conversation. Later in the year, our session hopes to vote on whether or not our church property could be used for same-sex weddings.

These conversations are ongoing, and we covet your prayers for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our discussions and discernment. While we recognize our polity is such that we elect our elders to represent us on issues of governance, we want you to be informed of what we are discussing and the process and approach we are taking together. To that end, the PowerPoint presentations that guide our discussions, along with the scriptures and small groups questions that our officers will be doing together will be posted each month on the church website (www.firstpresboone.org). We will update them the week following our officer meetings (fourth Sunday of the month). When the time is appropriate, we hope to have an opportunity for our congregation to meet and discuss these matters, as well. We recognize that this issue can be divisive if we allow it to be. Many churches have split over this particular issue, but they have allowed it to be the defining identity of their congregation. While we all recognize that this is an important matter that requires much thought and prayer, it is not the defining identity of First Presbyterian Church. Just ask anyone who has come through our new members classes and they will tell you that they were attracted to this congregation because we are a "*family who is loving and welcomes all.*" *This is what defines us; not one*

theological issue! As session emphasized in hosting the marriage studies last spring, we continue to remain unified in our diversity of views on this and many other issues. It is our radical call to be the church, the body of Christ, standing united as one body seeking to love, serve, worship, and share Christ with everyone.

We are reminded that our particular identity is rooted in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Therefore, we ask you to pray for the church and this process as we seek to keep the peace, unity, and purity of Christ's church. May God bless our ministry together as we seek to be faithful in all we do!

On Behalf of the Session,

Jeff Smith,
Moderator of Session

Kathy McKethan
Clerk of Session

Elders:

Todd Abel, Neville Chaney, Kelvin Gryder, Mary Hall, Greg Huffman, Heather Langdon, Anna Lehman, Kathy McKethan, Ashley McKinney, Sue Newell, Jeff Williams, Kelley Wilson