

Administrative Council Statement, 1/19/2020

Two weeks ago The United Methodist Church made the national news, with the announcement of an agreement concerning the future of The United Methodist Church. This agreement has come to be called, "the protocol." Its participants reflect the very wide diversity of opinions and perspectives within our tradition.

The Administrative Council is hopeful about the protocol. It seems to offer a way past the stalemate and growing tensions on issues of human sexuality that have tied the church in knots for too long. Still, it is just one of about 10 proposals up for consideration. We will not know for sure what we will be dealing with until the worldwide decision-making body, the General Conference, meets during May 5-15 in Minneapolis. This is the only group with the authority to make decisions for the denomination. So for now, we wait on God.

We acknowledge that this waiting period may be tense and difficult. This congregation is not of one mind. There are those among us who have a view of marriage, joyfully held, as fundamentally involving the complementarity of male and female, ordained by God for purposes of human flourishing. This is indeed the traditional view. The Administrative Council acknowledges that it is painful to be consistent in your own understanding, and to feel that your church home is shifting beneath your feet.

Others do not accept the ramifications of this view, particularly when joined with official language that says, "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." This can imply that mutual devotion is lesser, or invalid, or unworthy of blessing when experienced by a gay couple. The Administrative Council acknowledges that it is painful to wait so long for your church to stop what feels like willful misconstrual of your own lived experience, and that of people you care about.

Some remain in discernment on these questions, and are concerned about whether and where there will be a place for continued exploration. The Administrative Council acknowledges that, during a time of polarization in our culture, it is discouraging to feel that even your church is drawing lines and that you may have to pick sides.

In the midst of this waiting, Ad Council is thankful for the leadership of Pastor Joy Barrett. We are struck by words from her sermon of November 17: “Love is the basic reality and the rule of the Universe.” And “if I err, I’m going to err on the side of grace.” We honor her pastoral authority, which she wields lightly, but with integrity. She has made clear – and Ad Council affirms – that in this place, continued exploration and dialogue will be encouraged.

To this end, we have set two dates for open discussion. The main purpose is to provide Q&A time about the upcoming General Conference. The dates are: February 2 and April 26, with times to be announced. Ad Council is also looking at other options for moving forward; we have not yet finished those deliberations.

Finally, we ask that during this time of waiting, we all treat each other with particular kindness and gentleness, and respect. We know that each of us –this entire church family, we brothers and sisters in Christ – are striving to act “with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right.” May it all be to glory of God.

The Administrative Council of Chelsea First United Methodist Church:

Edie Wiarda, Ad Council Chair

Kerry Plank, Finance Chair

Brenda Beck, Treasurer

Dana Schmunk, Trustees Chair

Sandy Schmunk, Parish Lay Leader

John Seto, Staff-Parish Relations Chair

Jim Alford III, Member-at-Large

Charles Schmunk, Member-at-Large

Mike Vanderspool, Member-at-Large

Joy Barrett, Senior Pastor

Rodney Gasaway, Associate Pastor and Director of Adult Ministries