

THE MOTION TO ESCROW 24 MONTHS OF APPORTIONMENTS AND BEGIN TO PAY APPORTIONMENTS IN FULL BEGINNING IN MARCH OF 2021 WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL OF KING AVENUE UMC

ON JANUARY 26, 2021

SUPPORTING STATEMENT REGARDING THE PAYMENT OF APPORTIONMENTS

King Avenue Church's vision, which states in part that we "lead reconciling ministries," leaves our congregation missionally mis-aligned with the United Methodist Church given the legislation that was passed at the 2019 General Conference, and the key provisions that were subsequently upheld by the Judicial Council in Decision 1378. The Traditional Plan that was passed at the General Conference is exclusionary based upon sexual orientation, as well as not being accordance with the law of the United States, or the mission and vision of our church.

At the request of Administrative Council in October 2020, the ACTS Committee was asked to seek clarity about what steps have been taken by the Conference to strengthen and support LGBT ordination, LGBT ministries, and creating a healthy, inclusive, and reconciling church in our district and conference.

KAUMC has escrowed apportionments since March 2019. These funds have been escrowed, have not been spent on any other purposes since, and there are no budget or plans made for the use of these funds.

The ACTS Committee remains hopeful about the development and support being generated for the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, which was intended to be presented at General Conference in 2020. We are pleased with the outcome of our recent capital campaign (Coming Together for Transformation) which was, in part, based upon the support of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. As such, we hope to come together with leadership in the West Ohio Conference and Capital Area North District to provide support for reconciliation and transformation to work together going forward.

As such, on December 17, 2021 we sent a letter to Bishop Palmer asking for response to these questions (highlighted below, letters attached). We received a timely and direct response from Bishop Palmer shortly thereafter.

- What actions have been taken to demonstrate growth in the inclusion of LGBT pastors in ordination track?
- What guidance and policy actions have been taken to protect and acknowledge pastors for their support and fulfillment of LGBT ministries?

- What movement, if any, has been made with respect to the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation?

The Bishop acknowledged the harm and challenges of the Traditional Plan:

I am deeply aware of the harm widely felt following the 2019 Special General Conference and in particular the harm felt by LGBTQ persons and their loved ones. I also understand and appreciate the challenges this presents a church like King Avenue UMC.

The Bishop acknowledged support by Capital Area North and West Ohio Conference to promote inclusive ministries through the protocol:

As of this writing I continue to be engaged with the group that advanced the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation.

Bill Brownson, a lay delegate to General Conference, remains engaged with others around the connection whose goals align with King Avenue's.

Dee Stickley-Miner, a clergy delegate to General Conference has also engaged with voices from around the connection, most recently with a movement called "Out of Chaos." This group has seized the moment to convene delegates committed to the future United Methodist Church from around the globe and place at the center of their work voices that have not historically been centered. They are currently writing a draft vision for the church that's grounded in our identity. The writing team includes persons who are young, LGBTQ, from Central Conferences, and people of color.

We are going in a direction where those who wish to disaffiliate because we'll include LGBTQ persons will have a way to do so.

I'm leading with the expectation the West Ohio Conference will remain a part of The United Methodist Church that provides for full LGBTQ inclusion in matters of marriage and ordination.

The Bishop acknowledged support by Capital Area North and West Ohio Conference to include and support LGBTIQ pastors:

Several LGBT elders are currently serving West Ohio United Methodist Churches and at least one other is appointed as a licensed local pastor.

Our role is to avail our clergy of the resources they need to navigate this in the way most healthy for them, whether it's at the beginning, middle or end of their years as appointed clergy.

Any awareness we have of these journeys (as LGBTIQ) will not precipitate a complaint initiated by me or my cabinet.

There have been no other complaints for which the basis involves LGBTQ matters. There have been no complaints related to LGBTQ matters presented to my office since January 2019.

In January 2020 following the rollout of the Protocol, I facilitated a conversation between Jeff Greenway and David Meredith that made clear both were supportive of the Protocol and moving forward with a moratorium on complaints about marrying or ordaining LGBTQ persons.

The outcome from the Committee on Investigation was appealed to a jurisdictional body. Since its ruling, there has been no movement to advance the judicial process.

The Bishop acknowledged support by Capital Area North and West Ohio Conference to protect and support LGBTIQ ministries:

The Lilly Endowment awarded the Conference with a \$1 million grant, the largest available, to our Fear+Less Congregations Initiative (FCI). In the grant application, fear of the unknown is named as a challenge for the church today, and LGBTQ matters are specifically named as a theological fear some congregations are grappling with. Over the five-year grant period, FCI will include five cohorts, 60 congregations, 60 clergy, and 240 lay and community partners.

2021 New Church Start (NCS) grants have been awarded. Two of the four first-year 2021 grants are to churches that are explicitly inclusive and reconciling in their mission, one of which received the largest grant amount.

The Bishop also highlighted support of LGTIQ and affirming ministries in Capital Area North District including King Avenue, Stone Village, North Broadway, Short North, and Central City.

The Bishop concluded with a sincere appeal for King Avenue to change its policy with regards to escrowing apportionments:

I am grateful for the witness of King Avenue United Methodist Church in Columbus and beyond.

I pray this response leads to a change in your policy of escrowing apportioned connectional giving. Yes, I would be most grateful, but more important is the support of the ministries it makes possible in Columbus, West Ohio and beyond.

The ACTS Committee met in January 2021 to review the Bishop's letter, discuss options, and provide a recommendation.

The ACTS Committee remains steadfast in our stance as illustrated in our earlier statement:

In response to the United Methodist Church Special Session of the General Conference and the passage of the Traditionalist Plan, we will be actively supporting our LGBTQIA+

and studying a future that honors, nurtures, and includes ALL. **King Avenue will remain a welcoming, reconciling, and serving church which shares God's love with ALL! King Avenue Church will not change what it is and what it stands for.**

We acknowledge and mourn that the Traditionalist Plan remains the law that governs the United Methodist Church as of January 2021, and that we remain not missionally-aligned.

The ACTS Committee feels it is important to proceed with caution in light of this difficult circumstance. We reviewed and cite these three important aspects of the Traditionalist Plan as it is presently in effect:

Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.

In light of these aspects, **the ACTS Committee recommends that the current status of escrowed apportionments, not to exceed 24 months, proceed until the law governing the United Methodist Church should change. This change in policy would allow King Avenue to pay apportionments beginning in March 2021.** It is imperative that the important ministries of King Avenue be preserved in Capital Area North and the West Ohio Conference, in spite of the obstacles we may face. Doing this ensures we are best positioned to empower the decision-making bodies in the future to deal prudently with decisions.

Since the decision was made to escrow apportionments, there have been significant challenges to our church and society. It is imperative we rejoin with the Bishop, other signers, and other leaders in Capital Area North and the West Ohio Conference who have done important work needed to develop the Protocol on Reconciliation and Grace. It is our ardent hope that this will pass at the General Conference in 2021. We are emboldened by the vote of confidence received from the congregation with the completion of the Coming Together for Transformation Capital Campaign at King Avenue. It is time to come together with other

leaders and to create the change that is needed for King Avenue, Capital Area North, and West Ohio Conference to move forward together.

King Avenue Church Mission Statement:

We invite, welcome, and honor all people and nurture them to grow in service with Christ.

King Avenue Church Vision Statement:

We are a community of servants called by God's reconciling grace to open doors of sanctuary, to create new avenues of ministry, to equip Christians for discipleship, and to lead reconciling ministries.

ACTS Committee

Tim Bechtol, Janet Blocher, Linda Guyton, John Keeny, Rhonda Luetje, Colleen Ogle, Andy Shockney, Pam Springer, Cean Wilson