

The Path Forward

The Administrative Council's Vision for Chelsea First United Methodist Church on Issues Related to Human Sexuality -October 2020-

In the past year, the Administrative Council of Chelsea First United Methodist Church (Chelsea First) has focused considerable attention on the topic of less-than-full inclusion of people in church life, based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. This type of bias is certainly not the only important form of brokenness in our world, but it is one that uniquely affects our future as a congregation. The rules of the global UMC – the denomination to which we belong – currently perpetuate and justify different treatment for gay parishioners and clergy. Divisions over these rules have effectively already split the UMC apart.

We wish to be clear about our path forward, not only within our congregation, but to the community at large. Because of the turmoil within the UMC, members of the public can be confused about where our congregation stands. We provide this statement as a description of the expression of Christ to be found at Chelsea First.

The Administrative Council's vision for our future includes the following:

- Chelsea First welcomes and affirms people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Chelsea First will be known to hold that neither homosexual relationships, nor non-traditional expressions of gender identity, are inherently sinful.
- Chelsea First will be known to hold that God blesses and affirms the love of all devoted couples, including those in same-gender marriages.
- Chelsea First will be known to offer safe refuge and loving care to those who have been mocked and scorned for their marriages, relationships, or for their very selves, due to sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- As soon as we can do so without threat of church legal action against our clergy, Chelsea First will open our facility to same-gender weddings.
- Chelsea First will welcome future clergy who may themselves be gay or part of a same-gender couple.
- Chelsea First will align with a new or restructured denomination associated with United Methodism – one that rectifies the UMC's current prohibitions against gay marriage and ordination, and also affirms people of varied gender identities. We expect that such a denomination will be created out of the actions of the General Conference of the global UMC, set for September 2021. The full process of realignment may extend into 2022-23.

