

News of the Denomination:

Our lives as United Methodists are being challenged through the actions of the Denominational authorities. The Judicial Council of the UM met this past week and issued their ruling about the Traditional Plan that was passed back in February.

Do you remember the key elements of that plan?

1. Affirmed and strengthened the current rules about NOT allowing same sex weddings in UM Churches.
2. Affirmed and strengthened the current rules the only people qualified to serve as a UM minister must be a self-avowed heterosexual...married to someone of the opposite sex, or celibate, as am I. Meaning that LGBTQIAx people who sense a call from God to minister to God's people are not allowed to do that in the UM church.
3. Affirmed new and detailed and strict consequences, penalties and sanctions that can and will be enforced starting January 1, 2020.

By way of background, if you are not inclined to wade through pages and pages of blogs, postings and articles...This has been an issue for the UM since 1972. Why? Because, maybe a little known historical fact...during the Civil Rights unrest in the 1960's...women and gay people got their mojo and said you know, it's not just Black people who are treated badly in this country. We are too. Women's Lib. Gay rights. It all came out of the closet, so to speak in the 60's and by 1972, the General Conference of the UM had legislation that passed...claiming that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings. Pardon my sardonic humor...as though the Bible were the Christian version of Masters and Johnson's ground breaking study on human sexual practices.

I'm told...haven't researched it personally...that every 4 years thereafter...General Conference wrestled with the issue. Failing to ever gain a majority that would remove the incompatibility language which also eliminated the options for becoming a Pastor.

Every year we Michigan UM people faced this issue at our Annual Conference as well. As someone who came in the Methodist Church in the 90's it seemed to me like the issue was kind of like a family quarrel that came up every year when the family gets together for Thanksgiving. Do any of you have that dynamic in your families? In some families, that kind of disagreement is shuffled under the carpet and by tacit agreement, never talked about. In others, that kind of conflict is aired out once a year and then put away with the Christmas ornaments because there's more important stuff to take care of.

But for us U. M. the question of whether or not to allow same sex marriage and whether or not to allow that certain group of people to be considered for Ordination...really heated up in the last decade as one group said:

1. We're not following the rules! The rules in the Book of Discipline and the rules that God gave us in the Holy Bible are being broken without human consequences and We have to DO something.
2. Another group said: Relax. Take it easy. God loves us all and it's OK for us to evolve in our understanding of the Scriptures and look...the Supreme Court just ruled it's OK for same sex couples to get married.

3. And another group said...let's just get on with being the hands and feet of Jesus for the world.

You can see, perhaps, that these various groups are not compatible. And in February, through parliamentary procedures passed down through the centuries...majority rules.

No same sex marriage in the UM church

All ministers have to be heterosexual—married or celibate.

I would like to say...it's done. Let the dust settle and let's get on with doing what Jesus wants us to do. But...

1. There's another General Conference coming up in 2020. The handwriting on the wall says this will continue to be an issue.
2. Various groups who do NOT agree with the Traditional plan are meeting in May...One at the Church of the Resurrection, in Kansas, pastored by Adam
3. Another hosted by people who are in the LGBTQIA community, who feel as though their 12% representation at the Kansas meeting is not sufficient for their voices to be heard and respected.
4. Some of you may remember me mentioning a vote at the Michigan Conference this year...end of May, first of June. I have the exact wording of that vote. Bruce and Beth Clark are your delegates to that Conference and I talked with them this past week. They are writing a letter that will go out to all the families of the church, asking for your input and preference. Slide?

PLENARY Conduct a Poll Motion:

The 2019 Michigan Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church will conduct a non-binding straw poll on the following question: If the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church were offered the opportunity to choose a direction for its future, should that direction be:

(1) a United Methodist Conference whose policies allow for but do not require clergy to officiate at same-gender weddings, allow for consideration for ordained ministry of persons regardless of sexual orientation, and in which appointments are made with consideration given to the full range of contextual realities; or

(2) a United Methodist Conference whose policies include the current Book of Discipline language on "homosexuality," same gender marriage and LGBTQIA+ ordination along with enhanced enforcement of these policies determined constitutional by the Judicial Council.

If agreed to, this non-binding straw poll will be taken without further debate.

Rationale: Information gained in such a straw poll will help the leaders of the Michigan Conference lead in this uncertain time in The United Methodist Church, and better prepare all Michigan United Methodists for the possibility of a church separation.

Submitted: Rev. Amy Mayo-Moyle, Chairperson 49 Conference Leadership Council

And so it goes on. Maybe you're wondering what you personally can do. Always, always you can pray for everyone involved. There are no winners in this battle...we're all losing our religion and our focus if we fail to turn to God whose steadfast love endures forever.

So pray for peace and love and a ceasing of our endless warring factions. Know that you are participating, yes at a distance but also in your heart and mind, participating in a historical drama that has been playing out in one form or another since the dawn of humanity. Would it help you to know that... prior to sometime in the 1950's, re-married divorcees were banned from having a church wedding or holding any Church office or answering the call of God to ordained ministry. That was 70 years ago. Makes you wonder what the Methodists will look like 70 years from now.

Let's just remember: People want power. They want their way. They want respect. We all want to be loved and accepted for who God made us to be...yes, We all want something and until we calibrate our wants with God's greatest desire for peace and love and unity...we will live in distress and disruption. Let us pray....