



July 22, 2022

As we shared earlier this year, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church has been delayed again until 2024.

Given the continued delay in action at the denomination level, St. Luke's Governing Board has been prayerfully contemplating the issue of full LGBTQ+ inclusion as it relates to our mission statement: **"St. Luke's is an open community of Christians helping people find and give hope through Jesus Christ."**

In order to have the congregation's voice be heard, the Governing Board issued a survey in June to seek your input on opening the practice of weddings to all members of the church. More than 1,000 members and regular attendees responded, **86% approve of St. Luke's extending the opportunities for all committed adults to married in our church.**

**Following the Board's deliberation on July 21<sup>st</sup>, we voted unanimously to approve the following motion:**

*We will support St. Luke's pastors who choose to perform same sex marriages and the utilization of St. Luke's facilities for such marriages. We are doing these things with the same pastoral commitment to provide marriage preparation and other supports that we provide to all Christian marriages we perform.*

**We believe it is time for St. Luke's UMC to live into being the fully inclusive community of faith we have identified ourselves to be.** As long as we allow the discriminatory, exclusive prohibitions in our current Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church to define our practices around marriage, we not only do harm and act inconsistently with our values, we do injustice and dishonor the body of Christ. Our reasons for taking this action now are several and we want to share them with you.

**First, we believe the harmful, discriminatory language in the Book of Discipline regarding homosexuality is likely to be changed in the next General Conference in 2024.** Until then, St. Luke's recognizes the experience of many in our congregation that our church is still not a place that fully welcomes all—Therefore, we want to lead the way of living into a more just, inclusive United Methodist Church.

**Second, we are committed to remaining United Methodists.** We asked about this in our congregational survey and an overwhelming majority of responders also believe this is the right decision for our church. We believe our Wesleyan vision of holding in tandem personal and social holiness best reflects the spirit of Christ and what the church is called to be. This decision is more than an act against our current church law, it is a step of faithfulness toward the Law of the Spirit we discern and the new law of the church that will be.

That said, we know this decision, as it goes against the current Book of Discipline may create some risk for St. Luke's clergy. We have two protections in place to manage that risk. The first is that conducting same sex marriage at St. Luke's is at the discretion of each pastor. The second is a commitment from our Staff Parish Relations Committee and our Finance Committee to provide financial support if needed.

**Our third reason for making this change now is that we believe this decision honors God as revealed through Holy Scripture.** While there are differences of opinion on scriptures related to same sex marriage, we also know the Church historically has changed its interpretation of the Bible on other topics such as divorce, women in leadership, and interracial marriage, just to name a few. St. Luke's will remain a church that welcomes all, and values diversity of opinion provided equality for all people is honored. As John Wesley said, "We may not all think alike, but can we not love alike? Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences." As the Apostle Paul affirmed in his mission to welcome all into the church, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1)

We are proud to serve a congregation that not only welcomes all but believes all who love God and seek to serve Christ deserve the same rights. We are proud to represent you and be in this position at such a historic time. Thank you for being a part of this magnificent congregation and for the way you continue to help people find and give hope through Jesus Christ in the greater Indianapolis community and far beyond.

God bless you!

The Governing Board  
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