

September 29, 2015

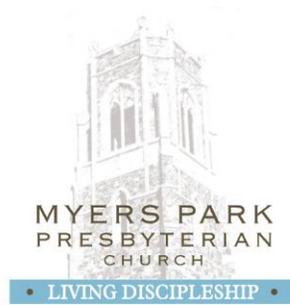
Last night the Session of Myers Park Presbyterian Church met to consider the church's wedding policy and to determine whether same gender marriages will be permitted in our church facilities. A majority of the Session voted affirmatively to change our current policy to permit these weddings.

Our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), passed an amendment to the constitution earlier in the year. The language of the amendment was permissive rather than mandatory, both with respect to the role of teaching elders (pastors) and Sessions. Where a same-sex couple meets the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a pastor may perform a marriage service for the couple according to his or her judgment. However, no pastor is required to perform such a service. For some time, our constitution has already included a provision for pastoral discretion so that pastors may elect not to conduct any wedding ceremony, same gender or different gender, if there is concern about the couple's commitment, understanding and maturity.

By Session action last night, our wedding policy has been amended and now, in alignment with the Book of Order of the PC(USA), states "marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives." We continue to require, as we have in the past, that weddings are only permitted for those who are members of this congregation, or children of members, for one year prior to the ceremony.

Your Session, both ruling elders and teaching elders, prepared for this decision with careful study and faithful prayer. We sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we sought God's will for our community life. We appreciate your participation and your input in the discernment process. We believe our best wisdom is found in the Book of Order when it says, "The Gospel leads members to extend the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the Gospel." [G-1.0302]. We believe we can most faithfully extend the fellowship of Christ when we attempt to treat all our members equally.

We know that the approved change will be a cause of celebration for some and a matter of concern for others. We agree with the moderator and vice moderator of the PC(USA) who have said that the end of voting should not mark the end of our earnest work to live together in community. God has called us to serve together in the life and ministry of Myers Park Presbyterian Church and every congregant is a cherished member irrespective of his or her view on the marriage amendment or the Session's judgment in this matter. We will continue striving to become "in fact as well as in faith, a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of



the new humanity.” [Book of Order, F-1.0404] It is as we stay together as a congregation, even amidst our differences, that we live out Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one....so that the world may believe....” (John 17:21).

If you would like to speak with a teaching elder (pastor) or a ruling elder about this decision, please contact one of them directly.

With the grace and peace of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Peery". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Pete Peery
Interim Pastor, Moderator of Session

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki Garrett". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Vicki Garrett
Clerk of Session