

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, grace and peace to you!

On behalf of Church Council I want to express a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has so faithfully and thoughtfully considered the three proposals related to inclusion of the GLBTQ community that have been before us these past six weeks. The work has been deep and has required generosity of heart and spirit, and a willingness to be vulnerable. By all accounts sharing in small groups has been honest, respectful and authentic, and was conducted in a spirit of love and grace.

On Thursday, November 15th, Church Council met as planned to discuss the results of your careful consideration. While all eight adult Sunday school classes engaged in these discussions, there were a variety of processes employed to gather opinions on the three proposals including; show of hands, survey monkey, email, and secret ballot. Here's what we learned based on the responses of a total of 120 unique adult participants.

Welcoming Statement:

88% of participants were in favor of adopting the Welcoming Statement though there was some feedback related to precise wording. In particular, a desire was expressed to simplify the list of groups we welcome. The long list seems to some cumbersome and causes some confusion when reading. At the same time, there was acknowledgment that the list is helpful to those who identify with one of the groups since these are groups that have historically been marginalized. This is particularly relevant in the case of the GLBTQ community, as it is currently explicitly named in the United Methodist Book of Discipline as a group that is not fully included in the life and ministries of the church. As a result of your overwhelming support, Church Council voted to adopt the Welcoming Statement in principal and is working on final wording meant to honor your thoughtful feedback. We will publish the final wording by the end of 2018.

Reconciling Ministries Network:

75% of participants favor affiliating with Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN.) Of those who oppose the idea, a common concern is that WUMC will shift our mission and ministry focus to emphasize GLBTQ justice work to more fully align with RMN. This is not a requirement of affiliating with RMN nor is it the church's intention. Others favor the proposal because it is an effective means of communicating that we are welcoming to those seeking an inclusive church. At this time Church Council has not determined next steps related to this proposal.

The One Church Plan:

84% of participants agreed with the proposal to support the One Church Plan as the best way for the global United Methodist Church to move forward without schism while simultaneously acknowledging and making space for theological differences related to the GLBTQ community and resulting practices of ministry. This proposal received dissent for a variety of reasons ranging from concerns about the difficulties the UMC may face when it comes time to implement, to differences around Biblical interpretation, to frustration that this plan does not provide for the full inclusion of the GLBTQ community in all United Methodist churches worldwide. Church Council made the decision to pass the data related to the outcome of these discussions of the One Church Plan on to the ten delegates who will represent the Rio Texas Conference at the special called General Conference in February of 2019.

In addition to the 120 unique responses that we received from adult Sunday school classes there were robust discussions in many other small groups and committees including: Chancel Choir, Heart to Heart, Band of Brothers, Worship Committee, Welcoming Committee, Outreach Committee, Youth Council and Children's Ministry Council. These discussions resulted in support for the three proposals that equaled or exceeded that expressed through adult Sunday school classes.

Again, thank you so much for your faithful engagement in this process. If you have questions or thoughts please contact our Church Council Chair, Rich Egan, our Adult Ministries Council Chair, Ellen Balthazar, or me, Pastor Tracey.

In Christ,

Pastor Tracey (tbeadle@westlakeumc.org)

Rich Egan (richegan@austin.rr.com)

Ellen Balthazar (ellenpbalthazar@gmail.com)