



Red Hook United Methodist Church  
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Pastor Stephen J. Ernst

February 27, 2019

Open letter to Red Hook United Methodist Church,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As you know, the United Methodist Church has been struggling with the issue of human sexuality and particularly with the LGBTQ+ community and related issues for some time. Over the last few days, February 23-26, a Special General Conference has been in session to try to resolve the differences that exist within our church regarding this issue. Delegates from the entire Methodist Church from all over the world have been meeting in St. Louis to agree on a policy, a vision for the church that would be inclusive and still respectful of the varying beliefs that exist within a world wide church. The result of the effort has been less than clear.

Of the three options that were put forth as possible ways forward, One Church Plan, Traditionalist Plan and the Connectional Conference Plan, the most restrictive of the three, the Traditionalist Plan was the one approved by the Conference. This plan has been deemed unconstitutional relative to the United Methodist Church's Constitution and so has been referred back to the Judicial Council for their final decision. If ruled unconstitutional by the Council the plan will be dead and we will essentially be at the same place we were before the Special General Conference. The New York Annual Conference will have a special conference to discuss how we move forward from here. The conference will be held on March 16, 2019 at SUNY Purchase and all interested persons are invited to attend. You must register by March 1 to attend.

The bottom line of all of this is that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" remain banned from ordination in the United Methodist Church and United Methodist pastors may not perform same-sex marriages.

I know that even in a relatively small congregation such as ours at RH UMC there is a difference of opinion on this issue ranging the entire spectrum of thought. Imagine the difficulty in bringing a world wide church under one agreement on such a difficult issue.

Ours is not to judge, ours is to love. As your pastor I must adhere to the ruling of the large Church but that will not prevent us from being a loving and inviting congregation to all we meet in our community and to all who come to our doors.

In His Peace, Pastor Stephen Ernst  
Church Council Chairperson, Lois Chenkus