

FEBRUARY 18, 2018
MOSAIC UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
PROPOSED WEDDING POLICY

Christian marriage is not a sacrament in The United Methodist Church, but those who choose to marry enter into “a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant” (The United Methodist Book of Worship 115), and more specifically “a sacred covenant reflecting Christ’s covenant with the church” (The United Methodist Hymnal 864).

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church states that “all persons are of sacred worth” and broadly prohibits discrimination. Since 1972, however, the United Methodist Church has discriminated against LGBTQ persons after declaring that self-avowed, practicing homosexuals could not be ordained. Since 1996, the church has stated that “Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.” (*Book of Discipline* paragraph 341.6)

On October 6, 2014, same gender marriage became legal in the state of Oklahoma; on June 26, 2015, same gender marriage became the law of the land after the Supreme Court ruled that bans on same gender marriage were unconstitutional (*Obergefell v. Hodges*).

Since its beginning in 2015, Mosaic has advocated for and worked for the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the life of the church. Our predecessor congregations (one of which was Epworth UMC, which became the first Reconciling congregation in the Oklahoma Annual Conference in 1996) also worked for the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons.

Mosaic recognizes that there is a wide spectrum of responses by United Methodist churches to the discriminatory language in the *Discipline* concerning the LGBTQ community. Some in our church wish to hold no weddings at Mosaic until all people can be married. Others wish to move ahead and hold all weddings without regard to the current language of the *Discipline*. And still others desire to continue holding weddings while waiting until the rules change to begin holding same gender weddings. We seek to respond in a way that is consistent with our purpose statement: The purpose of Mosaic United Methodist Church is to welcome all to experience the radical love of God as together we create a beautiful community of justice, compassion, and faith.

Over the years, many members of Mosaic have participated in holy unions and marriage ceremonies with the person they love and with whom they want to spend the rest of their lives. They have sought the blessing of their faith community. Due to the language set forth in the *Discipline*, the pastoral staff of Mosaic has regrettably been unable to officiate these ceremonies. Additionally, Mosaic has been unable to host the weddings on church property. But in many ways, couples have received the prayer, support, and blessing of their pastor and their church community.

In the spring of 2016, the United Methodist Church, at its General Conference, formed

the Commission on the Way Forward to “do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the *Discipline* concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.” A special called General Conference will be convened in February of 2019 to act upon the commission’s report.

In the fall of 2016, the church council was asked to allow the church to be used for the wedding of a same gender couple. The wedding was held at another church, but the church council committed itself to developing a policy for weddings at Mosaic.

We believe that one way we live up to our purpose statement of “welcoming all” is by coming alongside all couples who desire to marry and offering our support in the following tangible ways:

- In the United Methodist tradition, the decision to perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor (Book of Discipline, para. 340). We encourage our pastoral staff to meet with each couple seeking a wedding ceremony and to prayerfully consider each request on a case-by-case basis without regard to sexual orientation.
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- All couples desiring a wedding ceremony shall be made aware of the rules of the United Methodist Church with regards to weddings.
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- Premarital counseling by our pastoral staff may be provided without regard to the sexual orientation of those desiring to marry.
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- If invited, we encourage our clergy to take part in wedding ceremonies in numerous ways (reading scripture, offering prayers, preaching, etc).
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- If a couple desires, Mosaic will offer to provide worship elements that reflect the Mosaic community (songs, dance, Holy Communion, cross, baptismal bowl, etc.) when a couple marries in a location other than Mosaic.
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- Because same gender couples are not allowed by the rules of the United Methodist Church to be married at Mosaic, we realize there may be a greater cost to couples who must marry in another church or venue. Couples may apply for a “wedding grant” to assist them with this cost. The Mosaic church council will develop a policy for these grants.
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- Mosaic will develop relationships with other local churches to allow weddings of Mosaic couples at a possible discounted price for rental of the wedding venue.
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- The Mosaic community of faith dreams of the day when all couples may be married by our clergy and in our church without regard to sexual orientation. At all levels of the church, Mosaic is committed to the elimination of the

discriminatory language in the Discipline by upholding our baptismal vows to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves”. (UMH 34) We encourage our clergy and lay leadership to work, to the best of their abilities, for these changes.

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- The policy will be reviewed after the special called 2019 General Conference.