

May 23, 2017

Dear Members of the Trinity Family,

At their meeting on February 12 the Congregation Council appointed a Wedding Policy Task Force composed of Rachel Balck, John Beckford, Pastor Crowell, Dale Hamann, Amanda Mast, Richard Moose, and Merry Mulcahy to review Trinity's current wedding policy in light of the Supreme Court decision on June 26, 2015 to nationally legalize same-sex marriage.

During a number of meetings involving countless hours of work, the Task Force carefully reviewed Trinity's current Wedding Policy, engaged in an intensive study of scripture, read numerous articles and chapters from books on the topic of homosexuality, explored Trinity's constitution, consulted with Herman Yoos, Bishop of the SC Synod, participated in personal reflection and intimate sharing, engaged the Congregation Council in small group discussion on the topic, and spent lots of time in prayer.

Because there are members of our Trinity family who are gay or lesbian, the Task Force and the Congregation Council quickly realized that we as a congregation can no longer remain neutral on this issue. We must do everything in our power to support and encourage all members of our congregation as well as people in our community who are eager to be a part of a congregation that loves and accepts all people regardless of sexual orientation.

On May 21, the Congregation Council adopted the recommendation of the Wedding Policy Task Force to formally revise Trinity's Wedding Policy to allow same-sex marriage at Trinity, effective immediately. The council's decision is based on fundamental tenets found in Trinity's constitution, the Lutheran biblical teachings that underscore the whole Bible's witness to God's purpose for human life and relationships, the ELCA's previous statements of inclusivity with regard to homosexuality, and our belief that love – genuine, promised for a life-long commitment to one another, exclusive and faithful – that this type of love, above all things, should be honored, blessed, and celebrated at Trinity. We fervently believe that men and women of the same gender can and do enjoy these types of relationships and should therefore have access to the blessings of our church through a Lutheran wedding ceremony performed by a Trinity pastor in Trinity's Sanctuary. A complete copy of the Task Force's formal report (which was provided to Congregation Council on April 30) is available in the Church Office.

As has been the case for many decades, in order for a couple to be married at Trinity, one member of the couple must be a member of Trinity. This will not change. This decision allows Trinity to continue to be a congregation that welcomes, accepts, loves, honors, and celebrates all people. It gives us an opportunity to fully embrace the gospel message of love and grace for all of God's beloved children.

While this is a good, right, and faithful decision for Trinity, we recognize that some people will not be happy with this decision. These folks love Jesus and love this congregation. Their lack of support for same-sex marriage at Trinity is not motivated by fear or hate, but rather out of deep, long-held convictions. Others in our congregation will be happy with this decision. They too love Jesus and love this church and want our congregation to live into its calling to be open and welcoming of all people.

Because it is not possible for us all to agree on every single issue facing our congregation or the larger church, we ask that you continue to focus on the mission and ministry of this congregation as we move forward into the future that God has prepared for us. There is so much more that unites us than divides us. We are all trying to be faithful to our calling as Christians and there will always be times when we see things differently. But that does not change the fact that we are all part of the same journey, bound together in the community of Christ.


If you are seeking to better understand this decision, we encourage you to reach out to a member of the Wedding Policy Task Force, a member of Congregation Council, or one of our pastors. Their names and numbers are listed for your convenience at the conclusion of this letter.

Every member of our church family is a beloved, precious baptized child of God who is loved, honored, and valued in our life together at Trinity. We give thanks for each of you and for the presence of the Holy Spirit working in and through the Wedding Policy Task Force and the Congregation Council as we continue to grow into the congregation God is calling us to be.

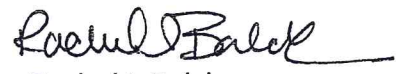
In Christ's Service,



Dale F. Hamann
Vice-President



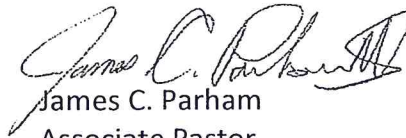
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Wedding Policy Task Force Members

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*denotes members of Congregation Council serving on Wedding Policy Task Force.