



BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DOUG KELLY, D.MIN.
PASTOR

May 2, 2017

Dear sisters and brothers at Bethany,

Grace and peace to you through our Lord Jesus Christ. As most of you are aware, Bethany has been on a 13-month journey in our *Listening for God's Leading* discernment concerning those in same-sex relationships and their place at Bethany. Through a four-phased process involving the congregation and session, our elders heard this from God:

We believe God is saying to us:

- *Be centered on and united in Christ.*
- *Open my sanctuary to all in a way that is both safe and holy.*
- *Be courageous in loving one another across differences.*

Session then embarked on two steps:

- *Revisit the Holiness and Leadership Statement*
- *Equip the congregation and the Session with tools for engaging this issue further*
(for a summary of this process, please see my *Brief's Blog* from March on the home page of our website: www.bethanypc.org)

In revisiting the *Holiness and Leadership Statement*, the session entered a period of study, prayer and listening which included each elder writing a two-page statement on their discernment journey and theology around this issue. The result of this process is a draft of a new *2017 Statement on Unity and Diversity at Bethany Presbyterian Church*. Within this document is a new *Statement on Ordained Leadership and Program Staff* which would replace the existing *Holiness and Leadership Statement*. The session now wants to engage with the congregation to ask for your prayers, input and comments in this stage of the process. Session hopes to approve a new statement on leadership in the coming months and wants to engage with you as part of its discernment before approving the final document.

Where do I go with my questions and thoughts?

- First read the attached *Unity and Diversity Statement*.
- Contact an elder with any questions or to share your thoughts. Emails can be found under "Leaders" at the top of our website. For an elder's phone number, search their name in CCB.
- Elders will be available after worship services on May 7th for one-on-one conversation. Come to an elder with a name tag and share your questions and insights.

- Feel free to engage with Bethany pastors and staff (contact information on website under Leaders).
- See the online document "Anticipated Questions" on the home page of our website: www.bethanypc.org.
- Invite Pastor Doug and/or an elder to your home group.

How can my voice be heard by Bethany's session?

- Write a letter to session. Address your correspondence to "Session" and send to the Clerk of Session: Matt Bell: matthewbell43@yahoo.com.
- Come to one of the two *Congregational Gatherings* in the Fellowship Hall:
 - Saturday, May 20th, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
 - Tuesday, May 23rd, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

These are gatherings hosted by the session and moderated by Pastor Doug. After a brief presentation by a few elders, any congregant will be allowed to speak. People will be allowed two minutes to share, so people may want to write down their thoughts ahead of time. (We will have a time keeper.) After everyone has had a chance to speak once, those who wish to speak some more will be given another two minutes. Bring your thoughts, ideas and questions.

We recognize that this draft of the *2017 Statement on Unity and Diversity at Bethany Presbyterian Church* will seem like a dramatic change to some, while for others it will not seem like change enough. We are convinced that we have identified a third way for Bethany to live into this issue, naming our differences while also equipping us to be united in Christ.

Please engage with session in the next two months of their discernment. We are confident that we have heard from the Holy Spirit, and we are trusting that God will continue to speak to us in this season. We covet your prayers.

In the peace of Christ,

Doug