

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

The differences and divisions in the UMC are not new. Even before 1972 (the General Conference that set the stage for officially excluding LGBT marriage and clergy), differences existed in theological and biblical interpretation, in worship styles, and in how best the UMC would welcome and include others in its ranks. What the Special General Conference makes new is a church-wide attempt to realign the denomination's commitment to one "way forward," so it can live out its mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ," its primary strategy to transform the world.

As you likely already know, the delegates voted to move forward as a "Traditional" denomination that will be guided by its "Book of Discipline" (how the church is ordered) and its current restriction on same-sex marriage and LGBT clergy. Every local church, Annual Conference, as well as each Jurisdiction, will discern and decide if their ongoing work and ministries can flourish under this church-wide "way forward" decision. I will do my best to resource the Council (and standing committees) of FUMC, PA as it comes to terms with this decision.

Today is Wednesday, the day after St. Louis, and our Clothes Closet will open to greet individuals in need. Our front office will continue to serve as the voice and face of FUMC, attempting to resource leaders of the church, walk-ins with questions, phone calls for the pastor, and requests to use our beautiful building. Today is also the day when supplies are purchased for our Friendship Dinner and this week's cooking team begins its preliminary work; ingredients for the baking of communion bread will be gathered for baking our bread for our communing on Sunday. Thursday, our men's study group will gather, and after studying the Gospel of Luke will pray for whatever is on their hearts. Friday, of course, will be our day of welcome to all who hunger for a hot meal and a little bit of fellowship to ease the difficulties in day-to-day living.

And Sunday? Our choir will gather at 8 AM to rehearse. At 9 AM our Sunday School class will resume. At 10 AM, I pray that you will find your way to church to join Juli and me, our choir and musicians, to once again quiet ourselves and be students of the living Christ, to sing and pray and enjoy each other.

Blessings,
Pastor Tom