



November 20, 2014

A pastoral letter from Bishop Julius C. Trimble

A formal complaint has been filed against Rev. Dr. Larry Sonner, alleging, “practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings...performing same-sex wedding ceremonies.” [2012 Book of Discipline ¶ 2702.1(b)]

The Appointive Cabinet, in accordance with ¶ 363.1 of the 2012 Book of Discipline, filed the formal complaint when it became aware of his actions. At the time of a consultation with the Bishop, the Appointive Cabinet entered into a time of prayer and commitment to promote and engage in Holy Conversation around the ways in which our church is in distress and disagreement. Matters of human sexuality, race, and gender beg for honest commitment to listening and respecting the stories of all of God's children as we pray for unity in the perfecting love of Jesus.

While your Bishop and Appointive Cabinet grieve over the pain that our church exhibits, we do not proceed as people without hope. We acknowledge our commitment to welcome all people and our prohibitions regarding same-gender weddings.

We live as prisoners of hope. As “prisoners of hope” we believe that a time such as this is ripe for engaging in that which promotes unity, deep prayer, gracefulness and mutual respect.

A formal complaint against a clergyperson, when accused of violating the sacred trust of The United Methodist Church, results in that person's membership of his or her ministerial office being subject to review. "This review that begins with the bishop...shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust, in hope that God's work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ." (2012 Book of Discipline, ¶ 363)

What does it mean for us to fully claim our identities as followers of Jesus Christ during this prolonged season of disagreement regarding same-gender weddings, biblical interpretation, and what constitutes full inclusion?

We are one family! I began my 2014 Episcopal Address by reminding United Methodists in Iowa that this is who we are. We are all children of the “Most High God.” That is the answer to whose we are.

I invite you to a season of prayer as the supervisory response to Rev. Sonner's action is directed toward a just resolution.

I invite you to join me in reading the book Finding Our Way, Love and Law in The United Methodist Church. “By reflecting on the ties that connect as well as on issues and words

that divide us, we find hope in our common baptism as the central covenant that ultimately defines and binds us. 'Through baptism we are initiated into Christ holy church. We are incorporated into Gods mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.'" (The United Methodist Hymnal, p.33)

Again, I ask you to join me in a season of prayer. May God's will for the church be done. May we be found praying as "prisoners of hope" bound together in love.

Be encouraged,

Bishop Julius Calvin Trimble