



March 25, 2019

Church Council Response re:
Reconciling Ministry statement from Reverend Jessica Naulty

In response to the United Methodist Church, February 26, 2019 General Conference vote regarding human sexuality Reverend Jessica Naulty, our pastor, provided the following statement during her March 3, 2019 sermon:

“The Traditional Plan which was approved by a slim margin of 55 to 45% reaffirmed the existing language in our Book of Discipline, which states that the “practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” It sharpened the prohibitions of pastors from marrying or our churches from hosting same-sex weddings. In addition, the passed legislation added mandatory penalties to the Discipline so that any pastor who officiates at a same-sex marriage is to be suspended without pay for a year. On a second offense they will be defrocked. Bishops, too, have mandatory penalties for disobeying the Discipline. The policy passed at General Conference treats gay and lesbian Christians as second class. “You are people of sacred worth, but so long as you wish to share your life and love with another, you are in living in sin.¹” But I tell you... the sin that fills our churches and our world is not found in any true expression of love, but in the failure to love. The God who forms us loves us as we are and calls us to recognize God’s reflection in one another, and embrace one-another, even as God embraces us. The legislation passed hurt the LGBTQ community and this includes some of my family and many of my friends. So, let me be very clear about a couple of things: I will not treat gay and lesbian, transgender, or queer people as second class. I will not quietly accept the way backwards as an acceptable way for us to live together as United Methodists. I have said it before, and I stick to it, even in the light of this General Conference vote... if I am asked to preside over a same-sex wedding for our congregation, I will even if it means I am defrocked as a United Methodist. The love we need and are called to at this time is the same love that Jesus lived out, and called us to as well. It is AGAPE love. It is God’s love incarnate... lived out in OUR everyday lives, whether there is any benefit to us as individuals or not. It is God’s powerful love that lives and abides in you and in us. The love that proclaims good news to the poor, that sets prisoners free, that gives sight to the blind, that stands with the oppressed, that cancels debts. The love that heals, that turns over tables, that forgives, that overcomes any and all obstacles in its way. The movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr. gives us an example of what this complete agape love looks like in context. Hear these words from Dr. King on what agape love of enemy looks like: To our most bitter opponents we say: “We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul

force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.” That is love that drives out fear. That is agape love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and embodied in the world. This agape love is not reserved for spiritual giants or social movement leaders— it is for and with and in you.

¹ Adam Hamilton: "A Way Backwards: Winning the Battle, Losing the Church"

In support of our Pastor, Reverend Jessica Naulty, the Church Council of the United Methodist Church of Red Bank hereby adopts the following statement:

- We recognize the powerful faith statement that Pastor Jessica made most recently on March 3, 2019.
- We are proud to have Pastor Jessica serving as our pastor and spiritual leader and take inspiration from her leadership.
- We recognize our continuing commitment as a reconciling congregation requires similar strength and bravery on our part.
- We will stand by Pastor Jessica and do our best to shield her and her family from retribution from any policy of the United Methodist Church resulting from her living out her faith boldly and bravely.

Adopted by unanimous vote

March 25, 2019 Church Council Meeting