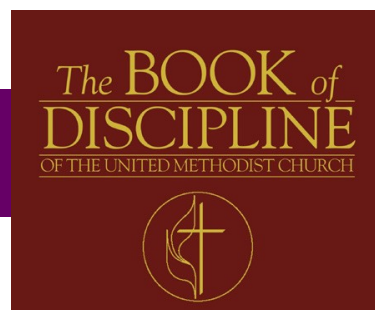


An Update on the 2020/2024 UMC Book of Discipline as it Relates to Weddings



You are all aware that the UMC has been in a multi-year discussion around ministry with LGBTQ+ people and in particularly around conducting weddings for same sex couples in the Church. This month I want to give you an update on the decisions of the General Conference.

The new Book of Discipline will be published in January of 2025 but the changes around weddings and marriage took effect at the conclusion of General Conference. These are the new rules in the Discipline around weddings.

- **Pastors have the complete authority over what weddings they will perform.** Pastors can choose to perform same gender weddings or choose not to perform same gender weddings. No pastor will be required to perform a wedding nor will any pastor be prevented from performing any wedding that the pastor feels led to perform. All penalties for weddings have been removed.
- **Local churches have the authority to decide if same gender weddings will be performed on church property or not.** Per guidelines from our conference based on the decisions of the General Conference, the Church Council of the church can adopt a policy permitting same gender weddings or choose not to.
- **If a pastor wishes to conduct same gender weddings, but the church does not approve, the pastor can conduct weddings at some other location.** The right of the pastor to perform weddings and the right of the local church to decide are separate choices.

Here at Asbury, the Church Council is in a process of discussing the wedding policy of the church. Asbury UMC has had congregational discussions around policies related to same sex marriage and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Also, in the church's most recent CAT survey you were asked your views related to same sex marriage.

The Church Council wishes to solicit your opinions on the church allowing (or not allowing) same sex weddings to be conducted at Asbury UMC. In recent months we've had good, fruitful discussions and many of you have expressed your views. But the Church Council leadership wants to make sure you have an opportunity to express your views.

It is the intent of the Church Council to vote on a policy around weddings at Asbury UMC at the upcoming December 16th Church Council meeting. Before that meeting you are encouraged to contact our Church Council Chair David Stedwell or myself if you would like to express an opinion about our future wedding policy.

Additionally, as always, all church members are invited to attend the Church Council meeting to express your opinion. **Following whatever discussion occurs about the wedding policy, the members of the Church Council, according to Iowa Conference policy, will vote on the church's policy going forward.**

As your new pastor, I appreciate the time and thoughtfulness you have put into making this decision. I know that we all have varied opinions on how best to minister to our community and about LGBTQ+ related issues. I hope that no matter what your viewpoint you will know that Asbury UMC cares about you. And no matter what policy we adopt, the intent is that we minister together as a group of God's children who all approach Christ in our own way.

Always, in Christ's love,
Pastor Tim

