

Frequently Asked Questions

re: The Formal Complaint
filed by Scott Chappell and Kenny Barner

Is this complaint because of the Green Street UMC's Public Statement on Marriage, March 2013?

No. Mr. Barner was the Lay Leader at the time of the Public Statement on Marriage and remains in full support of the church's request that no marriage ceremonies take place in the Sanctuary until all couples, gay & straight, can have their marriages recognized by the United Methodist Church. While Rev. Carpenter can and does weddings for opposite sex couples outside of the sanctuary, he is honoring the request of the Leadership Council.

Why did the Pastor refuse to perform the marriage ceremony?

The book of order, the United Methodist Discipline which prohibits pastors from presiding at same sex weddings. The pastor is not challenging this guideline at this time.

Is it possible that the United Methodist Church will overturn this prohibition?

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church meets every 4 years. The next General Conference will be 2016 in Portland. This is the only church body that has the power to change language within The UM Discipline. Efforts to change the language have been made at each General Conference for the past 2 decades,

What are the possible outcomes of the Complaint?

Complaints against clergy are first lodged with the bishop in the conference in which the clergy person serves. The Bishop is charged to follow the process outlined in the Book of Discipline which encourages finding a resolution which satisfies all parties: the bishop, the person lodging the complaint and the one against who the complaint is made. If a just resolution is not reached it can move toward a trial.

Will the Pastor be suspended or lose his credentials?

If the Bishop finds the complaint has merit, the pastor could be suspended, but he would not lose his credentials unless the complaint moved to a trial and a jury of peers found him guilty and recommended such action. It is unlikely, due to recent communication following the overturning of NC Amendment One that reminding pastors of the Church's prohibition against same sex marriage.

Does the Bible condemn same sex marriage?

No. The scattered verses of Scripture that refer to homosexual behavior and desire have sparked many debates in the faith community. It is clear from a reading of all such passages that long-term, committed, monogamous relationships between people of the same gender was not a concept at the time of the writing of Scripture.

Does the United Methodist Discipline condemn homosexuality, or consider homosexuality a sin?

The Book of Discipline, our United Methodist book of polity, states that “homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Since this language was adopted in 1984, there have been many attempts at each General Conference to remove it. Members of the UMC are deeply divided over this issue. This is difficult for many to reconcile with other statements in the Discipline that says that “all persons are of sacred worth.” The Discipline’s language also restricts gay and lesbian clergy, all clergy from presiding at same-sex weddings, and such weddings from taking place in a UMC sanctuary.

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1324>

Is marriage in the Church the right of every member?

No. Sometimes pastors will determine through pre-marital counseling that a couple is not ready to be married and will deny the request to perform a marriage ceremony. It is at their discretion.

What is a Reconciling Congregation?

The Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is a growing movement of United Methodist individuals, congregations, campus ministries, and other groups working for the full participation of all people in the United Methodist Church. A Reconciling Congregation is a United Methodist Church that adopts a public statement declaring itself to be open and affirming of LGBTQ people, registers their statement with an annual contribution to the RMN, and holds an annual Reconciling Worship Celebration. GSUMC became a reconciling congregation in October 2009. www.rmnetwork.com