

Belmont United Methodist Church Engagement Plan March 2019

Belmont's resolve is fixed. God calls us to live out our Welcome Statement. Our exact path is unknown. There are many issues and events before us – it is likely that the divisive dust stirred by General Conference 2019 will not even begin to settle until sometime after June.

As we move forward, we remember Belmont's deep and beautiful Methodist connections through agencies, boards, colleges, candidates, clergy, missionaries, pensions, publishing houses, retirees, e-readers, and the trust clause. Our lament is how could we leave and how can we stay?

It is a season to live with our lament and to listen to God and to each other (Acts 15). As we listen and discern, we are called to action. "Let us be bold, but not rash!"

To that end, this engagement plan creates three teams. Each team is charged collectively with helping Belmont to be a leader for ministry and full inclusivity in our city, our community, our region and our denomination. We affirm that:

- We will be guided by both our welcoming statement and our four core principles of Hospitality, Nurture, Diversity and Mission;
- We must listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit;
- We serve in a missional context and, as such, we need to listen to our neighbors;
- We need to lead and not fall into reactive responses;
- We need to work at our messaging and we need to rebrand our inclusive UMC vision;
- We must connect with like-minded Methodists locally and globally.

In addition, each engagement team will coordinate its work with the other engagement teams and church leaders. Each team is charged with specifically considering the implications of engagement for our people, pastoral staff, finances, missions and programs, faithfulness to Belmont's call, connectionalism, and potential legal issues. The shepherds of each team will be expected to keep in communication with each other and church leaders to ensure we continue to convey a unified message along all of our efforts.

ENGAGING WITH THOSE WE SERVE

Grow our membership and current ministries by reaching out to the community and those looking for a fully inclusive space

Team Shepherd: **Jennifer Bagwell**

This team's focus is to expand and direct existing ministries, as well as start new ministries, that can help Belmont grow during this time of uncertainty. There are people that are in need of a church like Belmont in the wake of the message from GC. We need to use our ministries to find those who feel lost and need a place to know God's love. This team will also focus on our branding and messaging in both the short and long term to position Belmont to continue to spread God's inclusive message. This team will be working closely with the Ministry Council to identify and take advantage of opportunities.

Practical example: Herb Mather's suggestion about opening the chapel for those passing by during the lunch hour. Staff it with retired ministers and serve as a refuge for those seeking a sacred space – a way to engage our community and spread our message.

ENGAGING WITH LIKE MINDED CHURCHES AND CONFERENCES

Strengthen and forge new connections with like-minded Methodists, Methodist clergy and Methodist congregations in the city, the conference and beyond.

Team Shepherd: **John Pearce**

This team's focus is to reach out and insert Belmont into the conversations locally, regionally, and nationally. The team will look for both short and long term opportunities for Belmont to forge and strengthen relationships with other progressives and centrists. The team will also be aware and thoughtful about ways to leverage those relationships for advancement of Belmont's inclusive vision.

Practical Example: We are in the inceptive stages of creating a regional conference to unite and educate progressive and centrist congregations about post GC19 thoughts and possible movements.

ENGAGING WITH THE UNITED METHODIST DENOMINATION

Brainstorm, strategize, and explore ways to interface with the denomination as we move forward with the goal of Belmont being fully inclusive to all.

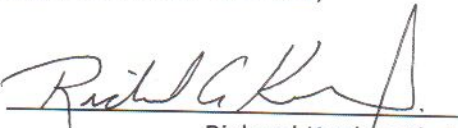
Team Shepherd: **Rick Keuler**

This team will focus on both short and long term developments and planning on a denominational level. Starting with short term needs like influencing delegates to the 2020 General Conference and then expanding into more longer term planning and into positioning

Belmont to respond appropriately to denominational developments as they occur. This team will follow decisions made that effect the denomination and consider how Belmont can use those decisions to further living fully into our welcoming statement and stated goals. The team will consider the implications of actions on our people, property, pastoral staff, ministries and connectionalism while still achieving our goals of full inclusivity for our congregation and denomination.

Practical Example: Review our candidates to GC2019 and think about how we can lobby within our annual conference for a stronger voice for inclusion.

We, the members of the Administrative Board of Belmont United Methodist Church, after discussion and debate, charge these teams with implementing this plan on this date, March 31, 2019.


Richard Keuler, Chair