

**Belmont United Methodist Church Administrative Board
Meeting**

March 6, 2022, Minutes

Welcome — Jeff Sheehan, Administrative Board Chair

Invocation — Rev. Kate Fields

Minutes* — Cindy Caldwell

- Minutes approved.

Inclusive Wedding Update — Bill Cooper

- Bill Cooper, Belmont's Lay Leader, presented an update on the Inclusive Wedding Working Group. The group was charged to guide Belmont's considerations as we live into our ongoing journey to live into God's call for inclusion and ministry to all by being gender neutral and non-discriminatory in our consideration of requests for marriage. The group took into account Belmont's commitment to our connectional denomination, balanced with our desire to create a safe and sacred space for Christian weddings.
- Bill described the activities since the last report of the Working Group in fall 2021.
 - Belmont's Board of Trustees has adopted a wedding policy that is gender neutral and non-discriminatory.
 - The pastoral staff and the Staff Parish Relations Committee have done important work affirming their mutual understanding of our pastor's call to inclusive ministry and Belmont's strong support and commitment to them.
 - In addition, the Working Group has done collaborative work with the Bishop and the Conference on understanding and navigating processes, recognizing the dynamic nature of the United Methodist Church.
- Bill reported that the Working Group has focused on identifying guiding principles and priorities rather than step by step plans. The priorities include Belmont's commitment to:
 - Love and support individuals requesting marriage and celebrate commitment without introducing tension and spectacle,
 - Embrace gender neutral and non-discriminatory wedding practices,
 - Support our pastoral staff and church family, and
 - Continue our commitment to our connectional denomination.
- In honoring these priorities, Bill shared Belmont's plans to follow our gender neutral and non-discriminatory wedding policy for future weddings, beginning immediately.
- Our communication plan will be:
 - Notes from this meeting;
 - Information will be available to all Belmonters about how they might celebrate weddings and other important life events.
 - Both of these will be posted on our website.

Regathering Update — Jeff Sheehan

- We are doing everything possible to create opportunities to be in person safely, recognizing that returning is complicated for many.
- The taskforce continues to meet weekly to determine how we can safely, smoothly and intentionally increase our in-person time together. We are proceeding carefully and continuing to ask for input from the congregation about what is helpful and necessary.
- We are looking forward to celebrating huge life events that we've not had an opportunity to celebrate together.
- We encourage folks to step out of their comfort zone and make plans to rejoin us in person as they can.

Clergy Reports

Heather Harriss

- Encore ministries:
 - Susan Hays put together a Lent devotional written by, and for, our members over 65.
- Congregational care:
 - We have been focused on keeping in touch with our homebound members. We have a great group of people who are checking in with them on a regular basis through calls and cards. Contact Heather if you know someone who we need to contact or if you would like to volunteer to help.
 - We have also begun taking flowers from worship to some of our members in community and retirement centers. If you would like to give flowers in memory or honor of someone, please let us know.
- Outreach:
 - The outreach team recently had a productive half-day planning retreat.
 - For our Lenten offering, the committee choose to partner with ASP to build one home in Waverly destroyed by flooding. We hope to raise \$15K for this project, and to send teams to help building the house this summer.
- UMW:
 - UMW's focus this year is on children experiencing homelessness.
 - We had a presentation from Catherine Knowles, who works for Metro schools, about her work with children and youth experiencing homelessness.
 - There are many ways that we can help. Heather encouraged us to continue to listen for ways we might be called to help with this work.

Kate Fields

- Children:
 - We saw children in the Sanctuary for first time in two years when the Chapel Choir sang at the Ash Wednesday service. What a gift!

- Children’s Sunday School is now meeting in person (no more hybrid options).
- So grateful for our wonderful Sunday School teachers and choir leaders.
- We are planning an Easter egg hunt in conjunction with the Weekday School on April 9.
- Lent
 - Will begin sending “Lenten Field Guide” emails soon. They will include videos from our ministry staff leaders and ways we can embody our faith each week.
 - We are planning engaging worship experiences for Holy Week.

Ingrid McIntyre

- Excited about the Tennessean Op Ed that our youth wrote responding to the treatment of a Jewish couple by the Holston UM Children’s Home. The facility denied the couple the state-mandated training and home study required to become foster parents. Although the facility is no longer affiliated with The United Methodist Church, it still retains the name. The youth pointed out that the name and actions of the agency misrepresent and violate United Methodist condemnation of religious intolerance and discrimination.
- Our youth and young people have really encouraged us to have anti-racism conversation. We just completed a four-week study on implicit bias, which was attended by 40-45 people.
- We have started an in-person Lenten group that will be offered from 9-10 am and 5-6 pm on Sundays. No one attended the first session, but we will continue to look for times that work best.
- A group will be attending a rally in support of Ukraine and peace at 2 pm this afternoon.
- We have started to gather info from all of our reconciling churches in our area to create some advocacy work around some harmful legislation being considered by our state legislature.

Paul Purdue

- Youth/Young Adults:
 - Grateful for the leadership of our youth and young adults in anti-racism work.
 - So proud of the job the youth did on Youth Sunday. The sermons were wonderful and all approached our Scripture in a different way,
 - Youth choir tour is coming up. The youth are selling “stock” to help fund the tour. They have had a lot of loss recently, so this trip will be good for them. So grateful for the work of Gayle, Darren, Bill and all those who work with our youth.
- Thankful for clergy colleagues and a church seeking to become what God is calling us to be.
- It was announced on Friday that General Conference has again been postponed until 2024.
 - The Book of Discipline requires the Commission on General Conference to take steps to ensure full participation of delegates from around the world.
 - Factors that influenced the decision to postpone were:
 - VISA backlogs for our overseas delegates

- Questions about technology: do all delegates have access to adequate internet service to hold the conference remotely.
- With the postponement we're again in this liminal space. We're committed to being United Methodist for as long as we can.
- The conservative movement (WCA) announced the launch of a new denomination (the Global Methodist Church) in May. There will be some churches leaving to join, and it's difficult to know what the impact of that will be.
- Gives us the opportunity to stay and help pull our denomination toward a more inclusive, loving, welcoming future.
- On March 27, the Ministry Council will meet to talk about how we can live into our calling and best organize ourselves for ministry going forward.

Other Business

Benediction — Rev. Ingrid McIntyre