

Brothers and Sisters of the Home Church congregation,

We are the Home Moravian Church Elders of 2019. Elected by the congregation to the task of spiritual leadership, we work together to nurture, support, and lead the body.

There is much that we hold in common: our faith in Jesus Christ, our love of Home Church, our participation in worship, and our action in the work of the church.

Since November 2018 we have been in a process of discernment as to whether Home Church affirms the opportunity of marriage for all its members. We have read (many of us more than once) 135 heartfelt letters representing 153 of our members' varied voices on this topic. In thoughtful, respectful conversation and with prayer, we have considered a multitude of options. Other Moravian congregations have made a variety of decisions. We have studied their examples.

There is value in deciding by majority vote; there is value in finding consensus around a single decision. Both can be holy because both can reflect the work of the board and allow us to care for the congregation.

The board has come to a decision on marriage, but we feel the need to speak about that decision in different voices, to a congregation that also speaks with more than one voice.

A majority of the elders strongly believe that same gender marriages should be affirmed at Home Moravian Church. Our strong beliefs grow out of our conviction that God did not cease to reveal God's self to us after the Bible was completed. God continues to reveal God's self through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). We desire to be a community that follows in the example of Jesus: one that embodies compassion, love, inclusion, and welcome; and we continue to discern the Holy Spirit's leading as we together seek to live "in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things love." We affirm the extension of the rites and sacraments of the church to all of our members.

A minority of the elders believe strongly that same gender marriages should not be held at Home Moravian. The reasons we feel strongly are (1) that as we interpret Scripture, the Bible speaks against homosexuality and therefore we should not allow same gender marriage at Home Church; (2) that both the Bible and the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living affirm marriage only between one man and one woman; and (3) Resolution 44 of the Unity Synod (paragraph 819 COUF) clearly states that "Christian marriage is between a man and a woman."

We elders acknowledge one another as faithful Christians with differing beliefs, striving to live together in community.

We have listened deeply to one another and to the voices of the letters. Understanding that a majority of the elders affirms same gender marriage in Home Church, we have passed the following resolution of the Board of Elders:

Whereas Home Moravian Church extends the rites and sacraments of the church to all its members, and

Whereas Resolution 14 of the Southern Province Synod does not require or compel the Home Church Board of Elders to make a decision regarding the rite of marriage for same-gender couples, and

Whereas neither the Southern Province Constitution nor the Home Church Constitution gives the Board of Elders explicit authority to decide on who is, or is not, to receive the rite of marriage,

The Board of Elders resolves to uphold current Home Church practice that the pastors decide who is, or is not, to receive the rite of marriage.

We have made this decision prayerfully, recognizing we are a church of members with a variety of strong beliefs on the matter. We will release a detailed report on our process, which has been thoughtful and respectful and represents the very best effort of every member of the board.

There is no change to the process required for all couples who wish to marry at Home Church. Any couple requesting marriage must meet for three counseling sessions with the pastor, who makes the final decision about whether to perform the wedding. Only members and children of members may be married at Home Church, and a current Home Church pastor must perform or assist in the ceremony.

The Board of Elders also resolves to encourage the congregation to read the Daily Text and to read and know the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living, as important resources for building up the body of Christ in these days.

We covet your prayers during this time for Home Moravian. We have felt your prayers with us. We commit to praying for you.

--The Home Moravian Church Board of Elders 2019