



The United Methodist Church
The Philadelphia Area Episcopal Office
(*Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences*)

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

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November 14, 2019

Rev. Joseph F. DiPaolo
29 E. Walnut Stsreet
Lancaster, PA 17602

Dear Rev. DiPaolo,

Thank you for your letter dated November 13, 2019 in which you stated that you “do not intend to file complaints in response to any acts of defiance to the disciplinary standards on marriage which may occur thereafter.” Same-gender weddings actually are not my main concern. The enhanced enforcements of GC 2019 put in peril the personhood of people in the gay and lesbian community by further defining such in more detail. Gay and lesbian pastors could be charged for being who God created them to be and this is the more difficult challenge as I see it. As a woman entering ministry 40 years ago my gender was considered contrary to Biblical standards (1 Timothy 2:12). A person’s identity should never be cast in a negative light and our Discipline protects the civil rights of all people and proclaims that we are people of sacred worth.

With regards to your questions: 1) I will engage all complaints and continue to work at them for a Just Resolution, no matter the subject. That process brings needed conversation, face to face. A heart of peace can only come through talking and prayer. 2) I believe that the “sides” here are not equal in power and influence. Heterosexual people are the majority, the mainstream, the center. It is true that the “sides” are able to hurt each other, however I believe that the homosexual side of the house is the target population, as are people of color, women, poor people and people with disabilities. The church is called to be on the side of those who are oppressed. Our church through history has worked through our social issues with an eye to justice. Our rules were many times challenged in order to liberate people. With each victory (such as the end of the Central Conferences and the ordination of women) the church has become more and more gifted and inclusive. I mourn the contempt, disdain and grief you describe. I pray along with you for a peaceful move into the future. It is not in my heart to make any further statements at this time. May God bless you on your journey of ministry that you are following.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Johnson

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