

EXPLORATORY SURVEY RESULTS & PROPOSAL FOR VOTE

123 survey responses: 82% yes / lean yes 18% no / lean no

- The results give a clear indication that adopting the Welcoming Statement and being listed with Reconciling Ministries would be an accurate reflection of who we are as a congregation, with approximately 1/3 of members responding.
- The guidelines we have been following (Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit, welcomingresources.org/welcomingtoolkit.pdf) suggest that if the exploratory survey results are 75-85% positive or higher, “it is a sign that your Welcoming Process is ready for the formal vote.”
- We propose to announce the vote on Sunday, May 27 and on Sunday, June 3, with a vote taken at a special meeting between services on Sunday, June 10. Announcement to be given in the events, bulletins, screens, and spoken during worship.

Proposed Welcoming Statement:

We, the people of First United Methodist Church West Lafayette, welcome everyone, through all life’s stages, with arms that are open, respectful, and loving. And by everyone, we mean regardless of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, race, ability, bank balance, or background. As a Reconciling Congregation, we welcome you into our church family, for it is by joining hands that we support one another and share our faith journey together. Whoever you are, and wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.

Question to be voted on by FUMC members:

Should FUMC adopt this Welcoming Statement, and be listed with the Reconciling Ministries Network (a listing of LGBTQ+ welcoming congregations)?

SPECIFIC COMMENTS WRITTEN ON SURVEYS:

JOYS and SUPPORTIVE COMMENTS (*many* more individual but similar statements were given):

Telling my son that he and others in the LGBTQ community is welcome at our church.

My church will stop rejecting our child

That we can remain in the United Methodist Church.

Affirming we truly do welcome everyone

Putting the issue behind our denomination and moving forward

Finding another church

Acceptance of all. Recognition of heterosexual privilege.

Not being ashamed of having my religion be prejudiced against homosexuals

Welcoming all people is what we are called to do as Christians

that we see people as people and not by their sexual orientation

truly being a welcoming church and being able to share God's love with ALL

An opportunity to reach out to seekers on the margins.

faithfulness to the gospel

Welcoming my family and friends regardless of the sexuality.

Being able to tell others in our community that our church supports LGBTQ people

A on the books defense of marginalized people.

Fully recognizing the dignity and equality of LGBT+ people and their loving, committed relationships

Stating our love for everyone explicitly!

actually coming into being the accepting, welcoming place that celebrates Jesus's love to ALL humans (no qualifications)

Welcoming diverse people.

That there is a church where the LGBTQ+ community feels welcome and can participate in communion, worship, and the activities of the church. That they have a place to go and share and fellowship and live fully a life following Christ.

Knowing that our church is openly choosing not to judge or discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals, that we value social justice, spiritual equality, and human rights

I have a gay son and would like to know that he is welcome.

We accept all people.

To welcome everyone.

Friend, niece, nephew – Christians. Two of the best Christians I know are my husband's niece and nephew. They do God's work every day!

All people will know, without a doubt, that they are welcomed and celebrated in our church

the opening of hearts

That I can invite friends to our church without fear!

Inclusion

That the Methodists (the proposed statement) are open to all. This is the statement that I would like to see on the website and in the newspaper.

Young questioning youth will know they still have a home here at First.

A step in the right direction of inclusion.

FUMC is a welcoming church and wants to proclaim that

Bigger LOVE

A truly welcoming congregation who work together to make an inclusive community

Celebrating the moving forward of “welcoming all”

Welcoming all of creation

Is this statement far enough? Will we also allow gay marriages? I hope so.

I'm concerned about staying in a church that does not welcome all people

I'm concerned about Continued affiliation with an organization that codifies prejudice as part of its official teachings.

I'm concerned about The current lack of the definition of “everyone” within the congregation, how do we SHOW we are more inclusive?

I'm concerned about This (reconciling ministries) not going far enough to welcome a group that has previously been pretty actively discriminated against in our community

I am concerned about the 2016 statement on not accepting homosexuality.

I'm concerned about Having to leave First Church if this Welcoming Statement is not wholeheartedly adopted

I'm concerned and disappointed that a UM book would have such a statement in the first place, let alone in 2016. This is not how I grew up knowing the UM church.

CONCERNS: DIVISION:

I hope even those who vote no will be reconciling

Homophobes saying they are true Christians

The adverse reaction of some people to diverse types.

Conservative individuals potentially spreading rumours intentionally to discredit the LGBT+ community in order to sway the vote to their side

Those who feel alienated or can't let go of the "biblical" thing or whatever

Church members still not being welcoming, especially those of more traditional and conservative values. Ones who misgender, or distance themselves from this who identify as LGBTQA+

people who don't approve the welcoming statement at our church

Remembering to care for, accept their view, and continue to love those who cannot bring themselves to embrace this action at this time

Negative comments from members of the congregation who do not understand what it's like to be LGBTQ. Also, what might happen if this proposal gets shot down.

A no vote on reconciling ministries being a determining factor about whether this congregation will stay with the UMC at large, should a schism happen at General Conference

Alienation of those who don't hold the same viewpoints as I do

Division within the church.

1) The conference (and United Methodists in general) have not yet settled this question. A vote to join RMN now may lock us into a particular stance if there is further conflict or a split. I went through something similar in another denomination several years ago and the split, while unavoidable, was painful and helped no one. 2) I'm concerned that strong emphasis on this topic of joining RMN now takes focus away from more gradual spiritual development that could lead the entire congregation toward a more accepting unified stance. 3) Some of our members are very welcoming of LGBTQ people but don't want it to be a primary focus of the church. I know a few have already left because of this push. I would like to see us slow down and wait until the new permanent pastor is in place before making this type of decision.

Changing the wording of the United Methodist Book of Discipline merely to bow to cultural pressure. If the wording is changed it must be thoughtfully done with respect to people who thoughtfully and respectfully disagree. In addition I do not want to see other groups neglected if and as we concentrate on welcoming one group. I noticed in the list of Everyone above that regardless of 'age' was not listed. I think that First UM Church needs to reach out more to its elderly and ailing shut ins.

Enough people of a cross-section of the church voting

The church will likely lose many members. The next pastor may not be on board.

I worry that we will lose a few members that do not agree.

Moving forward from decision...consequences of yes or no

Some people will leave and that is ok. We can love them and respect their need to leave. For those who are uncomfortable with this decision but stay, I hope we will still love them and love them along their journey with this topic.

By naming a group you will exclude some. Also form groups instead of growing the Body of Christ.

Those who disagree, if we become a reconciling church, that instead of conversation that the disagreement would be divisive and destructive.

Losing some of our present members.

Those who have HATE in their hearts because some are born different than they are!

Things that are divisive.

Recognizing the reticence of the congregation.

The congregants who have already left because of this issue and losing more who disagree.

I would be concerned about Finding another church

CONCERNS: DISAGREE / WORRIES ABOUT LGBTQ+ FOCUS

There are so many issues that are so important. This isn't the only one. People are dying of addiction at an alarming rate, for example. Four people close to our family have died in the last two years from heroin and opioids overdose. Another one is close. By making statements on a single issue, we market ourselves as a single issue church whether we like it or not. Look at our Narthex. If you didn't know our church, you would already think LGBT issues are our major focus, which is not true at all, as the most prominent displays are all LGBT related. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, dozens of members of our congregation are serving the underserved in our area through Klondike Ministry, Feed the Kids, Teen MOPS, etc. (2)

Welcome yes, celebrating no

Being identified specifically with LGBTQ and the perception that the Congregation advocates specifically for this particular cause. As Christians we are called to welcome equally. Are we going to be come a reconciling church for blacks, hispanics, even white males? I strongly disagree with singling one group to the possible exclusion of others. What is our mission: to make disciples (of EVERYONE), not just a certain group.

I am unsure of whether homosexuality is a sin or not. I realize that we all are sinners and we all need Jesus so it shouldn't make a difference with regard to inclusivity, but I would hesitate to condone any statements about whether or not it is a sin.

I am concerned that aligning FUMC with this "movement" demonstrates that we are supportive of this minority faction in our society. Which through constant media attention has elevated this social microcosm to the top of the list of important topics of the day.

If the anti homosexuality statement in the Book of Discipline is recanted I will seek another denomination. All are welcome, but sin is not. We are all sinners, but we do not condone sin. Why does Methodism do so little to champion the validity and importance of traditional families to Christian nurture. The statement put forth for consideration implies approval of these nontraditional, nonbiblical lifestyles. Not good.

Sexual orientation.

Welcome, yes. Celebrate, no.

Need to communicate more that LGBT is the only group singled out in the discipline, this is why we need to focus on this group.

I am concerned about who will come.

Why are we sexualizing the worship experience? Why is there a need to talk about attendees sexual preference? Heterosexual or homosexual...Just welcome EVERYONE.

Our church becoming a place for LGBT to push their agenda, as they do everywhere. They are relentless, and already in the elementary school system with children who are too young to know what they are being told about their gender, or what the word actually means.

Going against the Discipline, as well as my personal beliefs as guided by scripture. Our church has always welcomed all people including LGBTQ+. I do not believe we need a statement singling out LGBTQ. By singling out a single group you choose to welcome, you are essentially being unwelcoming to other groups of people.

we would be telling everyone that these alternate relationships are on a par with the marriage of a man and a woman. I think that experience, tradition, scripture and reason say that they are not. The Church should be advocating marriage between a man and a woman and non other. Persons living in alternate relationships are already free to participate in the life of the church, but that does not mean that the church is obliged to approve of their relationships.

I would like more information on:

What resources are there addressing the question of whether homosexuality is a sin or not?

What will this mean in actual practice for FUMC?

Does welcome everyone include those who participate in child porn??

What General Conference does going forward

This church's policy and the official one