

ALTAR FOR ALL RESOLUTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Altar for All?

Altar for All Congregations have signed statements committing themselves to fulfill their vow to ministry by marrying or blessing couples regardless of their gender. You can find out more at:
rmnetwork.org/newrmn/take-action/altar-for-all/

On Tuesday, September 20 2016 the Hamline Church Council voted in support of signing on as an Altar for All congregation. The resolution says:

We, Hamline Church, as a United Methodist congregation, have committed to supporting and honoring same-sex marriages in the same way that we support and honor other marriages. We believe that banning same-sex marriage is inconsistent with Christ's teaching, and the constitution of the United Methodist Church. We fully recognize and assume the risks associated with these commitments, because we are called upon by God, through Jesus Christ, to resist injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. Our sanctuary is open for all to make a commitment of love and fidelity through Christian marriage.

The entire congregation will now have the opportunity to vote on this resolution.

When is the vote?

We will have the vote at the Church Conference on:

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4TH AT 11:30 AM IN THE PARLOR.

Why is this important?

Hamline Church has been a Reconciling Congregation since 1999. We are members of the Reconciling Ministries Network of The United Methodist Church, which means we declare ourselves to be open and affirming. In keeping with our values of inclusion, we declare that God's love and grace is available to all. We believe that the Christian altar should be open to all loving couples who can legally marry and who request to make vows in the church, recognizing their belief in the sacred covenant of Christian marriage.

What does the Book of Discipline say?

The Book of Discipline (BOD), the United Methodist Church's book of law, says that everyone is of sacred worth. It also states that "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches."

What are the risks of adopting the resolution?

There is no immediate risk to adopting this resolution. Only once marriages have been performed there is a risk. Under the BOD there is no direct risk to the congregation. However, a pastor that performs a same-sex wedding, or allows one to be performed at the church to which they are appointed, faces being brought up on charges under church law. Punishment for these charges can be as severe as losing one's ministry credentials, no longer being a pastor in the United Methodist Church.

Should we be worried about the risks?

At this time Bishop Ough is committed to avoiding clergy trials on this issue. No clergy trials have ever been held in Minnesota on this issue. Several other churches in the Twin Cities have already adopted this resolution and have been celebrating same sex marriages.

We are already a reconciling congregation, why do we need to do this?

Being a reconciling congregation simply declares that we are an open and affirming church. This does not necessarily specify our position on performing same-sex marriages. This resolution makes clear that the congregation desires to allow same-sex marriages to take place in defiance of the Book of Discipline.

Can you vote absentee?

Per the Church Conference rules as stated in the Book of Discipline, only those attending the church conference on December 4th may vote. This does not limit you from expressing your desire or concerns on this issue in other ways.

Who can vote? Can I abstain?

Those who are professing members of Hamline Church may vote. This includes all adults who are members and those youth who have completed confirmation or were baptized at an age where they took the baptismal vows themselves. Abstentions are allowed, however they will have no effect on the outcome as they are considered not voting and will not be counted.

What percentage of the congregation has to be present to vote?

There is not a percentage requirement. Quorum is defined by who shows up at the church at the church conference.

What happens if we adopt the Altar for All resolution and then there is a change of pastor or Bishop?

This resolution states that our sanctuary is open for same-sex marriages to take place. However, the pastor does have the final say in who they will marry and who can be married in the church. If a new pastor would be appointed that did not support said marriages, they would not be able to occur under that pastor. Under the current discipline, charges can be filed up until 6 years after a same-sex marriage is performed. If a bishop who desires to bring charges to trial is appointed within that time, the pastor could face punishment as described in a previous question.