



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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Dear Sister and Brother Clergy in the Virginia Conference,

During my visits for District conversations I have been asked several times about guidelines related to same-gender marriages. As one pastor put it, "how can I honor my commitment to support the Discipline, and honor my relationship with and God's love for LGBTQ family, friends and parishioners?" I encourage us to be sensitive and pastoral to all persons seeking marriage and consult with your District Superintendent in the event someone requests a same-gender marriage.

Our Book of Discipline (BOD) states the "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." (BOD 341.6)

While precise "do's and don'ts" are not defined, after consultation with others, it is my opinion that our clergy may provide pastoral counseling, attend a service, usher, escort a member of the wedding party down the aisle, read scripture, offer a prayer or give a meditation at same-gender weddings.

On the other hand, clergy may be subject to our complaint process outlined in BOD 362 if they "conduct" the "ceremony" including the vows, exchange of rings, declaration/pronouncement of marriage, sign the certificate of marriage, or wear clergy attire, such as robes or stoles, which can be a sign of "conducting" the service. This also applies in non-United Methodist settings.

In matters related to the use of our churches, a United Methodist pastor is responsible "to administer the provisions of the Discipline" (BOD 340.c.2.a).

While I believe that the above guidelines are in keeping with our Discipline, if for some reason a complaint is brought concerning you, the Cabinet and I will follow the Discipline process (BOD 362) which is meant to be both "pastoral and administrative...directed toward a just resolution." May God be with us as we journey together in this time.

Grace and Peace,

Peter D. Weaver