



Oak Hills Presbyterian Church

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Rev. Brian Craker, Interim Pastor

June 22, 2014

To the OHPC Family,

Every two years the “congress” of our denomination (known as the General Assembly, or GA) meets to consider matters regarding the national church. The GA began their work with 268 different items to consider, and on Thursday they made a decision on a more controversial issue. That decision, coupled within multiple votes, was to permit pastors within our denomination to begin officiating same-sex marriages in states that currently allow such marriages, but at the same time specified that pastors “have the freedom of conscience in the interpretation of scripture to decide for themselves whether to participate in such marriages.” In an additional decision that will take up to 2 years to ratify, it allows the Session of local churches to permit or deny same-sex marriages, again based on their collective freedom of conscience and interpretation of scripture within their local body. These decisions were made to allow freedom and protections to both sides of this issue within a diverse denomination while at the same time voicing hope for continued unity. For some these decisions have brought joy, to others it has brought angst, and to many in the national church, it’s brought questions.

In light of the decision made in the federal court of Oregon last May, and the decisions just made at GA, it prompts the question of what effect will these rulings have on OHPC? The simple answer to that question is, “none”. While the federal ruling in May made legal same-sex marriages in our state, it did not create any new law or mandate requiring churches or religious institutions to comply. The decisions at GA on Thursday did much the same. The leaders of each local church in our state as well as each local church in our denomination retain the ability to decide for themselves the interpretation and implementation of this ruling within their religious communities.

Many of us have watched other churches that have chosen to define themselves based on one or more issues. The Session of OHPC has long felt that allowing such polarizing cultures within a church was detrimental and went against the teachings of Scripture. Instead, our church has made a conscious effort in recent years to not be defined by issues, but instead to be defined by its mission and vision. We have chosen to focus on what is of the greatest importance, which in turn allows our church family to worship, fellowship and grow together in Christ. In short, we have been deliberate to articulate who we are, instead of who we aren’t.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior to the World, and that He gave to his followers the “Great Commission”; a direct command to preach the Gospel to all nations, to disciple and to baptize into the family of God (Matt. 28:19-20). When we choose ourselves to become followers of Christ, we recognize that we are sinners in need of a Savior and through this have been called into community with fellow sinners living within that same grace from God (Eph. 2:1-10). Lastly, we realize that our redemption is both instant and continuous; a reality that calls us to regularly evaluate our lives and find new ways to show Christ’s love to the world through action and obedience (Col. 3:1-17).

The events of the last two months do nothing to change our mission as a local church. God planted OHPC 50 years ago to be the physical manifestation of the Great Commission in our community. As the leaders of our church, we are always discerning of God's Will, and we promise to remain in prayer of all the events and actions around us and to seek God's wisdom for OHPC in any future decisions. We will also continue to monitor the situation, work with Presbytery on this issue, and update the church family with any changes. Please continue to pray for our church, for the Church around the world, and for the leaders God has raised up to lead.

Sincerely,

OHPC Session