



THE HEARTBEAT OF MEAD COMMUNITY CHURCH

October– November 2017

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

By the time you read this article, several things will have happened that will change, fundamentally, the future of this church: First, we will have changed our name to The Mead Community Church, and broken any ties we had to the United Methodist Denomination, and become an independent faith community; Second, a complaint will have been filed in our name against the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church, asserting our rights of ownership to the buildings and property at the corner of Farwell Road and Wilson Street.

Why have we done all of this? It was back in June of 2016, that our congregation voted unanimously to become a part of One Spokane, a church located in Spokane Valley, that was looking for a site on the North end of Spokane to which it might expand its ministry. However, the Pacific Northwest Conference was unwilling to allow us to merge with One Spokane, and told us that the only way forward was to close the Mead Church and allow the conference to sell the property to One. For a number of reasons, not the least of which was the continued liberal stance of the conference, we were not satisfied with this alternative. We wrote and signed, as a body, a letter to the President of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, in the hope that he would intercede for us and overrule the Pacific Northwest Conference's stance. Unfortunately, he was unwilling to do that, and referred us back to our annual conference.

At this point, I contacted John Southwick, the former pastor of Green Bluff Church, who I knew from New York (actually he was my predecessor as Associate Pastor of Trinity UMC in Newburgh, NY) and who had worked for Good News Magazine, asking him if he knew anyone who might help us in this situation. He gave me the name of Keith Boyette, who was a pastor in the Virginia Conference, and had been on the Good News Board of Directors. It happens that Keith, who had been a lawyer before entering the ministry, was the person who argued the case before the Judicial Council, against the Western Jurisdiction for consecrating an openly lesbian bishop. The Western Jurisdiction, by the way, lost that case and was directed to remove that bishops credentials. They are still stalling taking any action on that directive.

Keith Boyette directed me to Daniel Dalton, a friend of his who happens to be an attorney who specializes in land use litigation. I sent Dan an email, asking if there was any way he could help us. He wrote back immediately, indicating that he was on a flight to Portland, Oregon, where he would be litigating the following day. He offered to come to meet with our leadership team on his return trip to Michigan, if we would provide a rental car, gas, and meals.

This is the point at which Jamie Blackhart, of One Spokane, stepped in and offered to pay those expenses on our behalf.

Many of the members of our Admin. Council, met with Dan on an afternoon in May 2017. He filled us in on what we could do to deal with our dilemma, and how much it would cost. It was about a week later that we signed a letter of engagement for Dan to provide his services, and began the process that has led us to where we are today.

Throughout the process of getting materials together, communicating with our attorneys, delivering signed documents, and keeping the board members apprised of what was going on, our church had a secret weapon. Laurie Johnson spent countless hours working on our behalf. We can never thank her enough for all of her time and effort.

What will happen from this point on is uncertain. However, we know that God has faithfully led us to where we are. He has consistently provided us with the people and resources we have needed. Just last week, we needed to find a local attorney to deal with any litigation that might be necessary. It just happened that Bonnie Aagard has a friend who works for a local attorney. Two days later, we signed a letter of engagement for Todd Reuter to work for us in this capacity.

I, and the members of the board of Mead Community Church, believe, with great certainty, we are doing exactly what God has called us to do. At any rate, if we had allowed the conference to close us down and sell our property, all of our assets would now be gone. It seemed much more prudent to us to use some of those assets on the chance that the court may rule in our favor, and make it possible for us to decide how the property and assets will be used in the future.

Please add your prayers to ours, as we lift up our hearts in faith that the will of God will be done!

Peace,

Pastor Bill