



University Presbyterian Church

Rev. Kelly S. Allen, Pastor

September 4, 2015

To the Session of First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio:

How sad it is that the rift within our Presbytery was portrayed so uncivilly last week on the pages of the local newspaper. We are a people of faith, with so many common beliefs and commitments to serving God that bind us together – including active involvement by individuals who participate in the life and service of both our churches. Yet the filing of a civil lawsuit to declare the downtown property and other assets as wholly owned by First Presbyterian paints a picture of enemies battling over earthly spoils. As a session listening for the leading of God ourselves, we share in common that conviction that the church is a body of people who believe in Jesus Christ as our savior and work in unity to serve God individually and collectively. We have struggled with deep feelings of grief that you might see us, as a session committed to the PCUSA, as somehow less than faithful in our service of Christ in the world.

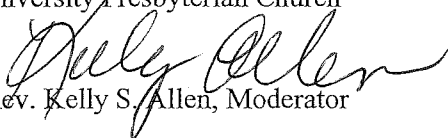
The elephant in the room – the PCUSA's position on LGBT leaders in the church and its decision to allow gay marriage – should not be the issue over which congregations secede from the denomination. First Presbyterian has the right to refuse to marry gay couples if it chooses. In addition, any pastor retains the right to refuse to marry anyone. We ask you to consider that you don't have to go to court or leave the denomination to exercise your right to disagree. There is no doubt that many individual members of our denomination have disagreements about personal beliefs. But that doesn't stop us from serving God alongside each other. Our two congregations work in partnership on many important issues such as immigration and serving the homeless. How sad it would be if that partnership were to come to an end over one point of disagreement.

It is most disappointing that you chose not to follow the route of "gracious separation" that could allow you to potentially leave the denomination in a loving and respectful manner. Just like a marriage that is in trouble, you have two choices -- to negotiate as friends, or litigate as enemies. We are very sad that First Presbyterian has chosen to treat the Presbytery as its opponent.

As your brothers and sisters in Christ, we ask you to withdraw the lawsuit, and sit down and talk with the Presbytery representatives as defined by the "gracious separation" process that was put in place for just this situation. If at the end of the day First Presbyterian leaves the denomination, at least it would be a parting as friends with Mission Presbytery, congregations, pastors and church members who have shared life and ministry with First Presbyterian Church for its 150 plus years of ministry.

We will continue to pray for the leaders and members of First Presbyterian Church, in the sincere hope, that whatever comes, we will continue to share a common bond in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sincerely,
The Session of University Presbyterian Church


Rev. Kelly S. Allen, Moderator


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