



**Wesley UMC**  
2540 Center Street  
Bethlehem PA 18017  
610-865-5715

Dear friend,

In an effort to help our church family process the news of Pastor Andy leaving us, the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) has created this document to pass along truthful and accurate statements about Wesley's change of pastors. It is our desire to foster a time of positive communication that can move our church forward in the healthiest of ways. Our committee asks for all Wesley members to have fact-based conversations about the transition we are going through. In this way, we can avoid rumors and misunderstandings. If you have any questions in the days, weeks, or months ahead, don't hesitate to meet with a SPRC member to talk. In addition, look for meetings to be scheduled periodically where you can ask questions and have informative conversations with Pastor Andy and the SPRC about the transition our church is going through.

Sincerely,

Dave Siegfried - SPRC Chair

Other committee members: Samir Kakade, Mike Krom, Meg Ksenzakovic, Liz Lewis, Nicole Lockhart, Karen Marmaras, Mike Maticavage, and Jaimee Walters

## **Change in Pastor Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why is Pastor Andy leaving?**

In the United Methodist Church, pastors essentially work on a series of one-year contracts. That is, each year the Bishop and her cabinet look at the needs of churches and the placement of pastors. If they feel there is a pastor that has the skill set suited for a needy church, they can be moved. In our case, the Bishop believes Pastor Andy's skill set is needed elsewhere.

### **Who made the decision?**

Bishop Peggy Johnson and her cabinet make these decisions. As with any organization, when one person moves it creates a "domino effect". Sometimes this is started with retirements of pastors. When a vacancy is formed, the Bishop needs to fill it. That is when she and her cabinet start looking at the needs of a church and then they try to find a pastor in the connection that fits the needs best. When a pastor is reappointed, the domino effect continues until all positions are filled.

### **Is Andy leaving because of problems?**

Pastor Andy is not leaving due to problems. He has enjoyed his time here. It was not his desire to move, nor was it SPRC's desire to have him go. In addition, the conference received no letters from our congregants complaining about Pastor Andy. Wesley has valued - and continues to value - what he has offered.

### **Where is he going?**

Pastor Andy will be going to Hatboro, PA. Lehman Memorial UMC will be his new church. This new appointment will begin on July 1, 2019.



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### **Will there be other staff changes because he is leaving?**

The pastor is the only staff member whose tenure is dependent on an appointment. All other staff members are paid employees of Wesley Church. There are no staff changes being made because of Andy's departure. The Bishop's decision only impacts Andy's employment with us, no one else.

### **Who is the new pastor?**

As this document is being prepared, Wesley has not been informed about our new pastor. However, the District Superintendent has told us that our church's vacancy will be filled promptly.

### **Is Andy leaving because of his family?**

Although Andy's family was not part of the Bishop's decision, his family should benefit from the move. During his time with us, Andy has had a 45 minute commute north from his home, while at the same time, his wife and children had lengthy commutes south for work and school. Hatboro offers him a parsonage just minutes from the church. It is also closer to his wife's job and children's schools.

### **Did Andy have a voice in the decision?**

Andy's voice in the process is limited. When he was notified of the move, he had the option of requesting reconsideration. However, Andy feels it's important for pastors to support the appointment process of the United Methodist Church to maintain much needed health in the organization. Therefore, he accepted the appointment.

### **Did Wesley have a voice in the decision?**

The SPRC had a lengthy meeting with the District Superintendent when he informed us that Andy was leaving. At that time, we were given the opportunity to express our concerns about Andy's departure and specific desires for the type of qualities, gifts, and talents we want in our new pastor. The Superintendent then passed our ideas along to the Bishop.

### **What about the congregation? How will we handle this?**

It is the view of the United Methodist Church that the congregants ARE the church. While we have greatly valued and enjoyed having Andy as our Pastor – giving us much needed guidance, support and love – we cannot be solely reliant on a pastor. The congregation must take responsibility for carrying the church through hard times. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and we will make it through this transition by supporting each other with the love, kindness, and respect that Christ asks us to have for each other.

### **Change in our church concerns me. I'm very sad. What can I do?**

We are all sad to be losing Pastor Andy. He has helped us develop our own governing body and we are well poised to grow and have a bright future ahead. We are in a critical time and it is unfortunate to be losing such a gifted pastor. It's ok to feel sad and be upset.

We deeply hope that all our church members and congregants will join us in continuing our positive path forward – to grow as brothers and sisters in Christ and keep our church on a positive trajectory. We further encourage everyone to connect with a SPRC member if they are feeling lost or upset.



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### **Will the new pastor leave us in another 2 - 3 years?**

No one can make any guarantees about how long a pastor will be with us. The nature of the appointment process is on a year-by-year basis. The SPRC made the request, however, that there be special consideration for Wesley going forward as we are in a crucial time. We have no knowledge or agreement that the conference will re-appoint the next pastor to Wesley for any extended period of time. We are, however, hopeful that the next pastor will be a beneficial addition to our church body and that we will enjoy a long and fruitful relationship.

### **Where will this new pastor stand on issues of diversity?**

The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or identification, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. The SPRC expressed to the District Superintendent that the incoming pastor should have an inclusive mentality and be prepared to celebrate the many facets of diversity our congregation has to offer.

### **What types of qualities did the SPRC ask for in the new pastor?**

The number of attributes we listed for the Bishop is extensive. Below are some that we feel are most important to continue the good things Andy has started, while at the same time addressing needs that concern our church. The new pastor should have:

- a grounding in and firm commitment to the work, mission, and Discipline of the United Methodist Church
- a proven track record of reconciliation and healing in a larger church
- a dynamic personality and a vision for the future with skills in team-building and church identity
- effective ideas for addressing financial concerns
- an organizational style that prioritizes committees, policies, and procedures
- the ability to build relational connection within the church body as well as a personality that fosters positive relationships with both staff and congregational members
- a desire to embrace all the diversity that our congregation presently offers--or may offer in the future
- an appreciation for and understanding of both styles of worship at Wesley and a desire to make them both thrive
- an approachable demeanor that demonstrates the desire to lead with a "hands on" approach
- the ability to motivate and inspire the congregation to carry what they learn in church out into their lives
- meaningful and engaging sermons

Friend,

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. Please use the information to promote healthy, factual conversations with other Wesley family members. If you hear inaccurate information being discussed, be sure to guide the conversation down the path of truth, or advise others to seek out a SPRC member for the facts. Only in this way can we make a healthy transition of pastors, and that is what Wesley Church needs.

Blessings,

Wesley's Staff Parish Relations Committee