

The committee designing a process for Aldersgate to Consider Reconciling Congregations (CRC) is strategically re-starting their work this summer, under Pastor Brad's leadership. The committee is not a decision-making organization, but rather a group committed to finding a way for everyone at Aldersgate to both hear and be heard in the process of coming to a decision about whether Aldersgate will join the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN). Whether or not Aldersgate chooses to join RMN, the process that the committee is designing is meant to help us learn to recognize opportunities to grow together in the Spirit with all who come seeking to follow Jesus. The committee meetings are open and all are welcome to attend, although the focus of committee meetings is entirely on designing a congregational process, not on debating or even identifying issues important to the congregational decision.

The CRC committee took some time off this spring for a number of reasons, after a relatively successful Scripture study series in January. Many people from the congregation were able to participate in one of six times that the Scripture study was offered weekly. Scriptures that have been interpreted as inclusive and others that have been interpreted as exclusive were paired together, along three themes: Laws, Letters, and Stories. After the Scripture study series, the committee paused their work partly because of needing a break for Lent and Easter, partly because of Pastor Brad's sabbatical, and partly because the committee was not in agreement on the next logical step. Now with Pastor Brad back from sabbatical and ready to provide guidance for some next steps, it's time to restart.

So far the committee is working with both pastors to coordinate sermon series through the summer and 2018-19 academic year with approximately monthly congregational events. Some of these events may include question and answer sessions with our church leaders about changes happening within the denomination, panel discussions featuring people from other congregations who have done this research before us, Table Talks which are listening sessions using a protocol designed by our UMC conference, and more. Very likely the first of these events will be on Sunday afternoon October 7. We hope you will mark your calendar now and plan to bring a potluck item for lunch and plan to stay for the discussion. This first event will be led by Pastor Brad and will outline the process the committee has developed over the summer, set some ground rules for participation within a covenant agreement, and answer questions about the Reconciling Ministries Network.

There is no date set for our congregation to make a decision. That is intentional. We will take the time we need. However, we will not drag out the process unnecessarily. When we are ready, all members and active participants will have a chance to weigh in on the final decision.

Our denomination is also making preparations for General Conference 2019 in February where issues around the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual persons and their allies (LGBTQIAA) will be discussed. No one knows what the outcome of General Conference will be or how the Pacific Northwest Conference will respond to General Conference. Those bodies and the decisions made at those conferences may affect some of what is happening at Aldersgate. However the question of whether Aldersgate is called to join RMN remains and will remain, no matter what else happens. Our calling to be the Body of Christ in South Bellevue will not change, no matter what else happens. Our vital ministry in our neighborhood and in our city is not different, no matter what else happens. That is why this process is ongoing, and why your participation in it is important. Even if your mind is made up and nothing will change it, your voice is important and needed in the discussion. We hope that we can all show up with enough love and grace in our minds and hearts that we are willing to listen and consider alternative viewpoints.

If you have questions, thoughts, suggestions, or ideas, please do not hesitate to share them with one of us.

Yours in faith,

Pastor Brad, Pastor Laura, and Joe Lee, Core Leaders Team Chairman