

Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship Timeline regarding LGBTQ affirmation

Acronyms

CDC = Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

CHMF = Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

CLM = Congregational Life Meeting of CH Mennonite Fellowship

ECD = Easter Carolina District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

FLC = Faith and Life Commission of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

VMC = Virginia Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA

March 3, 2013. At our CLM a motion is put forward by a church member to begin discernment about becoming a congregation that openly accepts all people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Approved by consensus.

April 5, 2013. CHMF Saturday morning workshop to introduce the issues of becoming a congregation that promotes equality in issues of sexual orientation and gender identity; congregation sets activities and needs for the discernment process.

July 28, 2013. CHMF adult Sunday school discussion. Topic: Human sexuality and the anthropology of marriage, led by Martha King.

August 18, 2013. CHMF adult Sunday school discussion. Topic: History of sexuality in the church, led by Sean Larsen.

August 25, 2013. CHMF adult Sunday school discussion. Topic: Mennonite policies on sexuality, led by Clyde Kratz.

October 19, 2013. CHMF discernment meeting and discussion workshop. Topic: Theology and the Bible, facilitated by Isaac Villegas.

November 16, 2013. CHMF discernment meeting and discussion workshop. Topic: Taking the pulse of the congregation, facilitated by Brenda North Martin.

Nov 2013 – March 2014. Period of reflection and conversation.

March 2, 2014. CLM approves by consensus the following statement: "Gender identity and hetero/homo-sexuality shall not be reasons to exclude a person from church membership in this congregation."

September 22, 2014. Letter sent from CHMF to the FLC explaining CHMF's public stance on membership equality, welcoming all people into the congregation, and joining the Brethren Mennonite Council's Supportive Communities Network.

September 25, 2014. CHMF receives response from VMC's conference minister requesting clarification on specific theological questions related to issues of equality within the church on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

November 13, 2014. Letter from CHMF to FLC including detailed responses to the questions from their Sept 25th letter.

January 16, 2015. Letter from VMC requesting CHMF send pastor and representatives to a meeting with FLC representatives in Richmond, VA.

January 30, 2015. Letter from CHMF in response to VMC regarding a request for a meeting, in which CHMF proposes a different location and asks that the meeting be open to all CHMF congregants.

February 19, 2015. Letter from VMC outlining the topics for discussion at the meeting, and proposal to meet at CHMF, although only with the pastor and congregational representatives.

April 25, 2015. CHMF delegation meets with FLC delegation in Chapel Hill, NC. FLC requests that the minutes of the meeting remain confidential.

July 5, 2015. CLM affirms by consensus the following statement: "We authorize our pastor to discern with our deacons for whom our pastor may officiate a wedding, regardless of the couple's sexual orientation."

November 6, 2015. Isaac Villegas meets with VMC conference minister to inform him of Dembinski and Flynn's request for marriage and CHMF's affirmation of the deacons' decision to offer them the ordinance of marriage. The conference minister asks Isaac to write a letter to FLC, informing them of the situation and requesting an exemption of FLC's policy to suspend a pastor's credentials if a pastor officiates a same-sex wedding.

November 7, 2015. Letter from Isaac Villegas to VMC/FLC informing them of Dembinski and Flynn's request for marriage scheduled for May of 2016, and Villega's request for an exemption from the FLC suspension policy.

November 11, 2015. CHMF hosts Theda Good as a visiting preacher, acknowledging her ministry and leadership in MCUSA.

February 2, 2016. At the request of FLC, Villegas attends FLC meeting in Harrisonburg respond to questions.

March 20, 2016. VMC conference minister meets with Villegas in Durham to inform him of FLC's commitment to suspend his ordination if he officiates the wedding of Dembinski and Flynn.

May 5, 2016. FLC distributes to all congregations and ministers via email their new policy that classifies the act of officiating a same-sex wedding as “pastoral misconduct.”

May 12, 2016. The VMC conference minister meets with Villegas in Durham to allow him to read a paper copy of the FLC minutes from the meeting with him on February 2. Villegas was not allowed to keep a copy of the minutes.

May 21, 2016. Villegas officiates the marriage of Dembinski and Flynn in Chapel Hill, NC, and sends official notice to FLC.

May 23, 2016. FLC suspends Villegas’ ordination.

May 23, 2016. Villegas submits his resignation from the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA.

June 6, 2016. Ten year anniversary celebration and reaffirmation of Villegas’ service as pastor of CHMF.

November 7, 2016. Villegas informs the ECD district minister that he will officiate the marriage of Hausman and Golding on December 15, 2016.

December 13, 2016. Villegas informs FLC that he participated in the ordination service of Theda Good in Denver, CO, on December 11, 2016.

December 17, 2016. Villegas officiates the marriage ceremony of Hausman and Golding in Durham, NC.

February 20, 2017. CHMF sends request to VMC to begin the process of transferring our congregational membership from VMC to CDC.

April 20, 2018. FLC relinquishes Villegas’ ordination.

June 9, 2018. Villegas officiates the wedding of Jacoby and Murphy in New York.

June 22, 2018. CHMF is welcomed into congregational membership in CDC.

August 23, 2018. The CDC Ministerial Committee restores Villegas’ ordination.