

**Statement from Matthew Johnson, Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd
October 14, 2014**

Dear Friends,

Earlier today the bishop issued a statement (attached below) in response to Friday's court ruling regarding marriage equality. When the search committee interviewed me, one of the questions they asked was how I felt about the marriage of two people of the same gender. I said that I am in favor of marriage equality and believe that the love between two people of the same gender can be just as holy as that shared by two people of opposite genders. That said, as a parish priest I must consider much more than my personal feelings on this or any other matter. I told the search committee and later the vestry that if the marriage of two people of the same gender were made legal, if the bishop authorized it, and if two men or two women asked me to officiate at their wedding in the church, then I wasn't sure exactly what I would do. To discern a way forward, I said I would need to talk with God, the vestry, and the Bishop.

Now that day has come. Two people of the same gender may now legally get married in North Carolina, the Bishop has authorized clergy to perform these marriages, and I have been asked by a same-gendered couple to officiate at their wedding. Now I will pray, I will consult the vestry, and I will talk with the bishop.

The Diocese of North Carolina has a suggested process to aid parishes in their discernment. I will be reviewing this process with the wardens and will make a proposal to the vestry at their meeting on October 21st about how to engage this parish in a constructive conversation about marriage. As I preached yesterday, there are many with strong feelings about marriage, and I ask that we honor one another as we engage in open dialogue. Conflict need not drive us apart. With Christ, we can show the world that conflict can pull us closer together as a community.

As Paul told the Philippians, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Yours in Christ,
Matt Johnson, Rector