

October 5, 2017

Dear Retha and Phil:

I am writing to officially inform the Northwest Yearly Meeting of an important decision recently made by Silverton Friends Church.

At a business meeting on September 24, 2017, members of Silverton Friends Church met to seek God's leading around a single query:

What should our church's corporate stance be toward LGBTQ people who are, like us, following Jesus as faithfully as they know how, and who want to fully participate in the life of our meeting?

After discussing, praying, and discerning together for more than three hours, we approved the following minute:

We are a community that loves one another, yet even in our love we do not find ourselves in full agreement regarding all matters of human sexuality. Even so, as Silverton Friends walks the path of Jesus together, the LGBTQ+ community will be welcome to fully participate in the life of the Meeting.

By "full participation" we mean that an LGBTQ+ Jesus-follower who wants to be a part of our community will have all the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of non-LGBTQ+ people. This includes membership and opportunities to exercise their spiritual gifts within the context of our church, including leadership.

There was a clear sense of the meeting and no one stood in the way. That said, not long after the meeting ended we did hear from a couple members who felt they could no longer walk with the church. One of our elders, Stanley Muhr, wrote this about the discernment process and the approved minute: "This decision has not come without cost in time, introspection, and relationships. Indeed, relationships that are dear to us may never be the same. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide all of us to God's Glory, that we may continue to gather God's people and show the world what true love and peace are."

That Friend speaks my mind, and I know it reflects the hearts of the other elders.

There are details left to work out. As I mentioned to Phil on the phone yesterday, Silverton Friends has not yet begun the process of determining whether to join the new yearly meeting or whether to be independent. We plan on addressing this for the first time in our October business meeting.

Thank you for giving churches the time and space to discern what God desires for them moving forward. I appreciate your wise and generous leadership during this time of transition.

Sincerely,

John Pattison
Clerk of Elders
Silverton Friends Church