

St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, Bowie, MD

Policy for Erecting Signs at SMUMC

(version 1.1 dated 8/21/21)

1. Purpose of this document

- a. The purpose of this document is to define the approval process for erecting physical signs on the property of SMUMC, both within and outside the church buildings.
- b. Implementation of new or revised signs shall be coordinated through the Administrative Council, as defined below.
- c. This policy also applies to messaging appearing on the church marquee.

2. Types of signs

- a. Safety signs (e.g., wet floors)
- b. Wayfinding signs (directions to the rest rooms, instructions about individual meetings)
- c. Event signs (publicizing Vacation Bible School, or other church-sponsored activities)
- d. "Statement/Position" signs. These signs must serve to support SMUMC's defined mission statements/vision statements (see below), reconciling congregation status, United Methodist Church doctrine, United Methodist Church discipline, Biblical principles, etc.
 - i. Inclusive Community. Connecting in Christ. Making a Difference.
 - ii. St. Matthew's UMC is an inclusive church, connected to our community, and committed to welcoming all persons in every phase of church life. We choose to live by Christ's example, affirming that all people are created in the image of God.
 - iii. We celebrate our diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, marital status, nationality, physical abilities, mental abilities and economic position. Through the Spirit we commit to live in the words of John Wesley to "love alike though we may not always think alike."

3. Approval process

- a. Any individual or organization that desires to provide signage for SMUMC shall present the request to the Administrative Council for approval. The request shall include the following information. (NOTE: The Administrative Council may find it helpful to create a form to be used by sign requesters, to ensure all information is provided.)
 - i. Description of the sign, including proposed wording and/or artwork, along with the estimated physical size.
 - ii. Purpose of the sign and justification.
This may include why the sign is necessary and how the sign serves to support SMUMC's vision statements/mission statements (see above), United Methodist Church doctrine, United Methodist Church discipline, Biblical principles, etc.
 - iii. Location and placement of the sign.
This specifies where sign will be located (e.g., either inside or outside church)
 - iv. Duration (i.e., long-term vs. temporary in nature)

Specifies when sign will be erected and removed. If duration is open-ended, a decision review date will be defined (e.g., after 6 months)

- v. Sponsor or responsible party/group.
 - 1. Who will be responsible for installing the sign?
 - 2. Who will care for the sign to ensure it is maintained in good condition?
 - 3. Who will remove the sign?
- b. Administrative Council will have an opportunity to present questions regarding the sign to the presenter, either in person at the presentation, or afterwards
- c. The Administrative Council will vote on the proposed sign at the next Ad Council meeting unless additional questions are raised. A simple majority vote of the voting members of the Administrative Council is required.
- d. The Administrative Council may be asked to reconsider the sign's status at any time if any of the above criteria are no longer valid.

4. Examples of signs that will not be approved

- a. Political/Partisan signs
- b. Private business signs: Ads in support of personal/professional business activities will not be permitted inside or outside the church.

5. Considerations

- a. The Administrative Council, as part of the approval process, will take into consideration the inclusive nature of the church and reflect on the possible discord that may be associated with some proposed messaging.
- b. The Administrative Council will consider the number of signs being placed on church property (inside and outside)
 - i. Weigh "How many signs are too many?"
 - ii. Will the proposed new sign complement or conflict with existing signage?
 - iii. Would it be better to place the message on the church marquee?

6. Exceptions:

- a. The Administrative Council recognizes that it may be necessary to place temporary emergency and wayfinding signs without gaining formal approval. For example: restrooms out of order, facilities temporarily closed, directions to individual meetings, etc. The Administrative Council Chair may approve these signs without a vote of the entire Administrative Council, and/or may work with the Trustee Chair to authorize such temporary safety and/or wayfinding signs. Guidance will also be added to the Building Usage Form.
- b. These temporary signs must be removed promptly, as soon as the necessitating condition is no longer in place
- c. Temporary signs are subject to removal at the direction of the Administrative Council if they are found to be inappropriate or do not meet the criteria defined above.
- d. It is assumed that the church marquee will continue to be utilized to publish information about church-sponsored events (e.g., Vacation Bible School) and wayfinding information

(e.g., Facebook site information, dates/times of church services). Statement/Position messaging must be approved by the Council before appearing on the church marquee.

7. Disputes

- a. If an individual or organization objects to a sign and desires it to be removed, changed, or relocated, the individual or organization shall present the complaint to the Administrative Council for resolution with the following information. The issue will be taken up with the Administrative Council, who will vote and inform the individual or organization of the decision:
 - i. Why the sign conflicts with the mission/vision statements of SMUMC
 - ii. How the sign detracts from the appearance of SMUMC
 - iii. How the sign impacts/impairs safety
 - iv. Other
- b. Status of signs currently in place
 - i. Existing signs will remain in place unless or until a complaint is officially brought to the Administrative Council for a decision.