



BELLEFONTAINE
FIRST UMC

Bellefontaine First UMC
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April 24, 2023

Greetings from your Administrative Council,

We are writing to update you on recent conversations we have been having. According to The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline, our annual Charge Conference empowers your Ad Council to establish a vision and set a church direction on your behalf. We take this responsibility very seriously and work to represent the congregation's interests.

As you are probably aware, there are discussions taking place in The United Methodist Church around many issues, including human sexuality. As a result of these debates paragraph 2553 (which expires on December 31, 2023) was added to The Book of Discipline in 2019 that provides a process for congregations to leave and keep their property and assets. Churches choosing to leave will be required to pay their current Conference commitments for apportionments and clergy pension(s). Some churches, including a few in Logan County, have chosen to leave The United Methodist church through a process known as disaffiliation.

Concerned congregations begin the process of disaffiliating with a Discernment Process. The first step requires an email from the Administrative Council chairperson to the District Superintendent indicating the congregation's desire to explore disaffiliation. The District Superintendent then works with the Administrative Council to arrange the required meetings and a date for the official vote if the discernment process results in a church vote by the membership. Only official members who are present are able to vote. A 2/3 majority is required to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church.

We have had two town hall meetings to discuss this issue among ourselves. In addition, Pastor Joe and members of the Ad Council have had individual conversations with members of the congregation. Excellent questions have been raised and heartfelt conversations have been shared.

Your Administrative Council has been praying for guidance and listening for the congregation's feedback for many months so that we may decide how this process may apply to our congregation. Some members of the congregation have emphatically said they want to remain United Methodist. It is our understanding that even though there are people who have concerns, they hesitate to risk damage to our church family by asking for a vote to disaffiliate.

The Ad Council has taken action in response to conversations within our church family. At the March meeting we reviewed the Statements of Faith (titled Articles of Religion) in our Discipline. The Ad Council unanimously agreed that we stand behind these tenets, and we will make them available in print and on our website for your review. At that meeting we passed the following resolution: "We have listened to the

members of the congregation, reviewed the Statements of Faith in our United Methodist Book of Discipline and believe in them, and at this time we do not recommend entering into the process of disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church.” This resolution reflects what we know and have heard from you at this current time. We continue to listen and make decisions based on the information we hear from you and glean from God’s direction for our church family.

The Ad Council is taking further steps toward defining our congregation’s parameters regarding clergy selection and our wedding policy for the future. We have charged the SPPRC to establish a clergy profile that will define our expectations for future clergy appointments. And we have directed the Trustees to review our wedding policy to clarify our position on the performance of same-sex unions. When these two documents are adopted, they will be made available for your review.

Please continue to pray for the discernment of the path God wants us to take. We are listening and hope to hear from you as you have insights to share with us.

Yours in Christ,

Nancy Evans-Donley
Administrative Council Chair