

FUMC ~ Discernment Questions & Answers  
FUMC Sanctuary @ 9:15 am  
January 29, 2023

Live Questions asked by the Congregation and Answered  
by the Discernment Team

- 1) **Question:** What will be the changes for FUMC Morristown whichever way the General Conference (GC) goes and is there a possibility that there will be an extension after the vote and a new method of disaffiliation?  
**Answer:** There has been talk of extending the deadline for disaffiliation after General Conference, but there is nothing absolutely clear at this point. In terms of what would be different if we affiliated or disaffiliated based on the vote, Paragraph 2553 only allows disaffiliation through the end of this year, December 31, 2023, with our property and contents intact, that would be something we would probably decide before GC meets. After GC meets, assuming they make a decision on the Book of Discipline (BOD), there are some question marks around that. It depends on what the denomination allows at that point.
- 1) **Question:** Should we disaffiliate, would our property go back into a trust with Global Methodist Church (GMC) or whatever group we would become a part of.  
**Answer:** If we went with the GMC, the property would remain with the Trustees of the church. It would not change to the GMC, if we stayed independent it would be the same. I don't know of another denomination that would require us to put our property into a trust. I do know that with the GMC we would not be required to put our property into a trust.
- 2) **Question:** You say that we are going to make a decision. Does that mean the committee is going to make the final decision or will we vote as a congregation?  
**Answer:** So what our team is charged with doing is getting feedback, listening to your questions and concerns, be in prayer, and educate everyone to the extent that we can. So, based on that, we have three objectives (1) continue to be in discernment which can be open ended, which we are still in discussion (2) based on your feedback, we stop the discernment process and remain affiliated with the UMC (3) we would recommend to Church Council that a formal vote take place and Church Council doesn't decide whether we take a vote or not but we begin the process to make that happen. Ten days has to go by, including two Sundays, a vote of church members and the vote would have to pass by 2/3 majority to disaffiliate. So the three outcomes are...to continue to discern, stop

the discerning process and remain a part of the UMC or take a formal vote, which again requires a 2/3rd majority.

**Answer cont'd:** To summarize, the committee is only to make a recommendation to Church Council and then Church Council is the body that would decide what we would do.

- 3) **Question:** If you do take a vote, and it passes. We have people that have not changed their membership and are attending other churches, so how do you decide who gets to vote?

**Answer:** I guess the letter of the law, if you are on our membership role you are entitled to vote, which includes the youth as well, those that have been baptized, gone through confirmation or have joined as an adult. The vote is taken in person. No mail ins.

**Answer cont'd:** If you are on our role, it doesn't matter if you are here every week or haven't been here in years, you still get a vote.

- 4) **Comment:** In talking to several churches, there are so many rumors, there are some churches that don't know of anything going on.

- 5) **Question:** Clarification of dates on deadlines.

**Answer:** *March 6, 2023* - All disaffiliation paperwork turned into the conference and money turned in, *April 22, 2023* - Special Called AC for consideration of those wishing to disaffiliate (AC must approve the disaffiliation) *May 29, 2023* - Annual Conference and hopes that there will be discussion for another date to consider other churches to disaffiliate, sometime in the 4th quarter. Paragraph #2553 expires December 31, 2023, beyond that we are at the mercy of the GC 2024 and what they decide. They may have an avenue beyond that we don't know and we don't know what that conference will bring.

- 6) **Question:** Are we in line to make that decision by March, and if not by March is there still a window or does this decision have to be made by March 6th?

**Answer:** We hit the 90 day minimum discernment on January 20th, and based on feedback from the congregation, we made a recommendation to Church Council to remain in discernment. We feel we are still very early in this education and discovery process. Even if we voted today, I would say it would be impossible to meet the March deadline. The disaffiliation package is very robust and requires a lot of information plus a check in hand. We do not feel prepared to do that, and since we are so early in this process, this is a very important issue, topic and time in our church we want to be as thoughtful and make sure we do not force anything through and look back and say why did we do that? We want to be as methodical and make sure the congregation has all of the answers you need for your own discernment process. There has been formal communications that there might possibly be another date in the fourth quarter of this year for those churches that want to disaffiliate and the applications would be submitted and reviewed at that time.

- 7) **Question:** This is the first time I have heard of the pastors making a decision to disaffiliate or stay...is there a timeline for that or how does that timeline fit into the timeline we have been discussing?

**Answer:** I want to be clear we are not in the disaffiliation process, we are in the discernment process that may or may not come after the discernment process. As far as the clergy and the discernment process. I am not sure what that timeline is.

**Answer**

**cont'd:** For this coming conference year, the pastors have already given their intentions, now whether they will ask in April to update our intentions, we don't know, they haven't given us a timeline. They make appointments in March, so they have been in contact with the clergy of their intentions. In November if we decided to disaffiliate, our current pastors would be having another conversation as to what they would do. However for the upcoming appointments which begin July 1, intentions have already been given.

- 8) **Question:** I have a couple of questions. The paragraph you refer to is in the Book of Discipline and my question is, does it apply to all UMC churches? or just the ones in the Holston Conference?

**Answer:** It applies to all UMC churches.

**Question:** Is the team aware of any movement on churches, it seems we are asked to go into a period of discernment in the shadow of some mystery as to what is going to happen at General Conference. That is not being said, we know that other churches have voted to leave without knowing the vote of GC. Is there any movement within the denomination to push for an extension of this paragraph until after the GC?

**Answer:** Our team has addressed this question as well. It almost seems like we are putting the cart before the horse. We don't know why they have decided to have disaffiliation end this year; but, they are not going to vote on the issue at hand until 2024 and again it is only one issue, but they are forcing churches hands and we don't know the rhyme or reason to that. We discussed this last week, we hope there is a push to extend it out of fairness.

**Answer cont'd:** As for the paragraph, it was added to the BOD in 2019 at the Special Called General Conference to deal specifically with the homosexuality. Then we had a global pandemic which pushed the meeting of 2020 to 2024. There just wasn't any room for what happened globally, so I think there was this panic for a lot of us to know what was going on and have the meeting pushed four years down the road from where we are. The Invitations Team, which is the task force for the Holston Annual Conference, has put together a resolution that will go to the General Conference in 2024 asking for a very similar way out and they are talking to other task forces in other annual conferences to try to get enough backing to make sure that will happen. The upper echelon of our leadership realize that when it is time to separate it is time. We have tried to stick together and so they are trying really hard to let the churches that want to leave to

do so after 2024. Our Annual Conference is trying to lead the way and making sure there is a way after 2024.

- 9) **Question:** To follow up on that, if we got to a discernment vote to disaffiliate and we did vote to disaffiliate it would be a binding vote based on the paragraph as it is now.

**Answer:** Correct

- 10) **Question:** There are no conditions to that, no if and or buts on what happens in 2024.

**Answer:** If you vote to disaffiliate you vote to disaffiliate.

- 11) **Question:** I have 6 girls and I think we have to think about our children and the future because what kind of example are we setting when quite a few of them are going to be one way or another so that's my biggest problem and I will have to think about. I do think the cart is before the horse, but I was in the military for many years and I had to get rid of a lot of great people and kick them out crying and I had to say, you have to go, but now my whole mindset has changed because the military, our military, has done all of that and I think we just need to go with the flow and I think I will tell you we need to stick up for this church, ourselves and fight. How do we take this to our children that we are giving up when some of our children are one way or another now. I know a lot of people who are one way or another. But we have to think about change. Change is good and I don't necessarily agree with it but we have pray and remember they are all his children.

**Answer:** We have to remember the Golden Rule and we have to remember our God is one of love and we have to treat others accordingly. As far as the issue at hand and as far as youth goes and we have talked about that as a team, it is really up to the parents to educate their children in the way they want to. It is our responsibility as parents and how each parent/guardian does that is up to them. What our team hopes to do is present information to consider, pray over and how you discern that is up to you and your family.

- 12) **Question:** Could the committee give us a schedule of where we are. It was said we have completed our first 90 day and we are continuing to discern I think this would help everyone be aware and give clarity as to what is happening.

**Answer:** Timeline and expectations... our team has talked about this and being at the end of the 90 day requirement we talked about putting a timeline on it of another 90 days, we decided to keep it open ended at this point. Where we are on the continuum, based on conversations, questions submitted we are still in the first quarter, early in the process and we have a few more sessions that will be coming down the pike. We are trying to communicate things in a thoughtful way and maybe we need a bit more structure around that, and we will take that back to consider.

- 13) **Question:** I have a timing questions. I think I remember in the Donuts meeting that you guys said that you were going to ask for an extension of the March 6th

deadline. Have you had a response back on this?

**Answer:** Our letter was to our DS about getting clarity around other windows that may be available. Her response back to us was we do not know about future windows in the year for application for disaffiliation. We have received some communication that there could be another window in the fourth quarter of this year but no date has been set. But as mentioned, I think it is in the June meeting for Annual Conference that they will potentially set that date. We don't know and we asked for clarity from the DS and she did not know.

**Question:** So if we miss the March 6th deadline are we out?

**Answer:** Paragraph 2553 in the BOD does allow disaffiliation until December 31, 2023. Our suspicion is they will have to have another day. If we miss it I really don't know the implication of that. We would be disappointed if that were the case.

Again, if you have further questions, you can write them down and submit them in the box located in the Narthex or submit questions through the Church App.

14) **Question:** What would God have us do? I believe that the good people should stand up and not let the minority rule the majority. I don't see why we have to discern, why can't we band together and send our people to conference and say we are not going to change, if you want to change you need to start your own church and we are going to keep ours the way it is.

**Answer:** Thank you. It has been mentioned several times we are in the season of discernment and that allows us to individually and collectively pursue what is on our heart. How it all shakes out is to be determined. It is not up to our team to decide but each person has to go through discernment, pray, read your Bible, ask questions.

On behalf of our team, the church leadership, we thank you for being here and engaging in this process. In most things what you put into something is what you get out of it and so far we are on a great path and we appreciate it. Cards are in the Narthex or you can grab one of us and we will do our best to answer your question.