

A Message from our Church Council Chairman

Dear Church Family,

Many of you are aware of the ongoing and serious theological struggle that has been developing in the worldwide United Methodist Church. The battle between existing traditional theology and newer nontraditional views particularly surrounding issues related to the ordination of openly gay clergy and same sex unions has been in conflict for years. For many in our region especially, the theological differences between the two viewpoints are too vast to be reconciled. As a result, there has been a “splintering” of more traditional churches from the United Methodist Church. Many local United Methodist churches as ours are conscientiously making decisions regarding staying in the United Methodist Church with the newer nontraditional theologies or leaving the United Methodist Church to continue in more traditional theology and join the new Global Methodist Church or another similar denomination.

Our Church now is at a crossroads and faces this decision. Your Church Council has been studying these issues and evaluating alternatives for months, but Church Council cannot and will not make the decision to disaffiliate, because the greater decision regarding the direction of our church must be accomplished by the congregation. At its last meeting Monday night, the Church Council voted to go forward and continue the Discernment process and to give you, the congregation, an opportunity to vote and determine the future of your Church. It is anticipated that the actual vote will be taken sometime next year at a special called Church Conference presided over by the District Superintendent. The Discernment process leading to that vote is a time to educate and inform the congregation about all facets of the decision. The Discernment process has already begun with information in emails, newsletter, on our website, and the church-wide meetings held this summer and fall and winter. There will also be a Town Hall Meeting with our District Superintendent before the Church Conference is held.

Some of you may have been closely following this conflict for years or have at least heard some talk of a crisis in our denomination. However, for others this is a new and startling development, and if you are in this group, you likely have many, many questions.

We will not have any church meetings related to this subject until after Advent and Christmas. But heading into next year, you will receive further information to:

- Further explain how the United Methodist Church arrived at this crisis.
- Clearly define the theological choices our church faces in a simple and balanced manner.
- Provide detailed information about the impact, steps and costs associated with the decision.
- Details and timeframe for the Town Hall Meeting.
- Explain the process and requirements for the vote.

Our goal is to have each member of the congregation prepared to make an informed decision when the time to vote arrives. Each member present at the Church Conference will have a vote.

This is a difficult time for our Church and for all United Methodists. The decision and the theological differences driving it will evoke strong opinions and will have a deeper emotional impact on our Church and congregational family regardless of the final choice. These are the realities of the present situation.

Even though there will be a variety of viewpoints within our Church body, we are still a family and remain brothers and sisters in Christ. Please be in prayer for our Church and Church family.

Jim LaRose
Chairman, Church Council