



September 27, 2022

Friends,

I wanted to share with you that on August 28, 2022 the Administrative Council of First UMC met with the purpose of discussing and then voting on whether or not First UMC would enter into a time of discernment in terms of disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. After discussion, the Administrative Council decided by vote to enter into a season of discernment at First UMC. This is NOT a binding decision as to the future of this church, but merely a vote to spend time in prayer and discernment as a church before deciding anything further about our shared future together in relationship to the UMC.

Some of you may be wondering what in the world I am talking about and how we got here. Some of you may have already heard that other churches in our area are going through or have just completed this process. For instance, the United Methodist church in Farwell just recently voted to disaffiliate from the UMC. Quite a few UM churches in the Lubbock and Amarillo area have already made the decision as well. Several churches in the NM Conference are currently entering a time of discernment, much like us.

For those of you who may not follow United Methodist politics and what is happening at the “higher” level for fun, hopefully I can fill you in. Since the founding of the UMC in 1968, the UMC has experienced greater and greater conflict over human sexuality, theology, doctrine and scriptural interpretation. While the focus (especially in the media/public forums) has been on human sexuality, there has been a great change or shift around theology, doctrine, scriptural interpretation and abiding by the Book of Discipline (our book of rules/beliefs). While the orthodox positions of the Book of Discipline have not changed - jurisdictions, conferences, churches and pastors have declared that they will not abide by the Book of Discipline and are rapidly choosing not to do so. Additionally, in most of these areas the bishops and boards charged with keeping the Discipline are making the choice not to hold individuals and churches accountable to the commitment and covenant we have made as United Methodists.

In this season of discernment, we will have opportunities for open and honest discussion as well as prayer and study. I will be leading an “Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith” study/class on Wednesday evenings starting Wednesday, October 5 at 6PM (nursery care provided upon request). This class will cover the basic doctrines and beliefs of the Christian faith. In addition, I will also incorporate some background on John Wesley, the Methodist movement and the denomination. I know this is a busy time, but I urge you to prayerfully consider making the time to attend, even if you “already know all about the Methodist church”.

As we prepare to enter this time together, I would ask that you use the 40 Day Devotional that is included in this letter. We have made this daily prayer guide available on our website and it will also be emailed to everyone who is signed up to receive church emails. This devotional starts this coming Sunday, October 2, and contains a scripture and brief prayer for the church, the congregation, and for guidance.

In addition to using the devotional resource, I would highly encourage you to prayerfully attend worship each Sunday. I know it is convenient to worship from home or to do other things; there is nothing that can replicate the act of worshipping God in the same room with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Plan to join us on Sunday, October 23 at 4PM at the church as we welcome and hear a presentation from Rich Jones. Rich is the pastor at Wolfforth United Methodist Church. In addition to his duties as pastor, Rich has served in North West Texas Conference leadership, on General Church Boards, and has been elected as both clergy delegate and reserve clergy delegate at multiple General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Rich is able to present the issues and potential future of the UMC in a helpful and positive way, so I encourage you to make a point to be at his presentation.

I know this is a lot of information, and for many of us we just want to get back to being in daily ministry in the community and not talk about any of this. However, as part of a church within a connectional denomination, this is something that we do need to work through. Just as First UMC has to decide what the future relationship with the UMC will look like, as an UM Elder, I too will have to make a decision as to my future relationship within the UMC. I appreciate and covet your prayers for our church, our leadership and our continued witness to our community during this time. You are always welcome to contact me with any questions by calling the church office or emailing me at jarchey@fumcclovis.net.



Pastor Jeb

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

OCTOBER 2

40 DAY PRAYER DEVOTIONAL BEGINS

OCTOBER 5 | 6PM

PASTOR JEB'S *ABSOLUTE BASICS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH* STUDY BEGINS

OCTOBER 23 | 4PM

PASTOR RICH JONES PRESENTATION