

This past Sunday, I received questions related to the future of 1st Church, specifically regarding the survey and the responses of a couple of weeks ago. (A summary of the questions and the responses can be found below.*) I want to answer those questions, hopefully clearing up any confusion that members and friends might have.

This process has been complicated and drawn out, filled with repeated delays, and perplexing to many. We thank you for your continued prayers, your patience, and your commitment to Christ and his Church.

As a result of the responses to the survey, church leadership, following the path prescribed by the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, has indicated to the Florida Conference our congregation's intent to leave the denomination; has asked for a date to hold an official vote on this matter; and has begun the required paperwork to accomplish this at this year's Conference meeting in June.

That **VOTE** will be held on **Sunday, May 1, at 4:00 p.m.** in the Life Center. Our District Superintendent will preside. The **ONLY** issue for that meeting will be whether or not our congregation will leave the UMC.

This time and date was coordinated with the schedule of our District Superintendent. **Full Members** (also called Professing Members) **are the only ones who can legally vote** per *The Book of Discipline*, and they **must be present in person in order to vote**. There are no exceptions to this. In order to withdraw, a 2/3 vote of those present and voting is required. These are requirements of the denomination over which we have no say.

This May 1st vote will determine the next steps for our congregation.

If you still have questions about why we have come to this point, please join us for a final **townhall meeting on *Monday, April 25th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Life Center.***

The townhall meeting is the time for understanding, questions, and discussion, NOT the May 1st meeting to vote.

Following the May 1st vote, if withdrawal from the denomination is approved, we will talk about the best fit for us for the future. This could include joining a new, conservative Methodist denomination; becoming an independent congregation; or, other options.

Finally, as we have worked to determine possible outcomes and paths, and to discern our future as a congregation, there has been significant preparation that needed to be done. **This required us to have a name to use to set up all the legal and business items that need to be completed before leaving.**

After the vote, a team working on possible names will narrow suggested names down to three, then offer a survey to the congregation to help choose one of those names.

We will be emailing more information out to our members as we go through this process to provide you with all the information you will need to vote on May 1st.

Again, thank you for your deep commitment to the ministry of Jesus and His Church. We continue to ask for your prayers as we navigate the future.

Yours in Christ,

*Here is a recap of the most critical responses to the survey questions:

- 70+% of those responding felt they understood MOST of the issues 1st Church and the UMC is facing, while another 18+% felt they understood SOME of the issues.
- 82+% STRONGLY SUPPORT current, orthodox Christian/Methodist theology and practice.
- 70+% of those responding STRONGLY OBJECT to coming changes in current, orthodox theology and practice, and another 12% SOMEWHAT OBJECT to those changes. Those changes would likely impact respondents support of 1st Church and its ministries.
- 65+% responded that they believe we should withdraw from the UMC to a different orthodox Methodist denomination; 11% thought we should become an independent (non-denominational) congregation.