

Summary of September 19, 2022, Prayer and Discernment Team Meeting

In attendance were: Steve White, Ann Lyndon, Katy Beth Carr, Roy Stevens, Gary Jester, Terry Buchanan, Lisa Keys-Mathews, Al Ford, Mak Knowlden, Terry Stubblefield, Will Beadle, Calvin Durham, Lindsey Mussleman Davis and Dale Cohen.

Terry Stubblefield opened the meeting with prayer. Lisa Keys-Mathews followed with a devotional incorporating I Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Romans 8:26-27.

Initially, the team discussed the role of each of the team members. Each team member, while being a representative from his or her Sunday school class is representative of a part of the church as a whole. As a team member, we are to facilitate the process and to keep all members of FUMC informed and involved. It is the intention that all members will have an opportunity to participate in the process. We were reminded that the prayer and discernment process is not so much about us as individuals as it is about our church.

A proposed covenant for the team members was presented by Steve White which was followed by discussion. Our role as team members is to be unbiased in the process and to assure that the whole spectrum of thought is presented to the congregation. The prayer and discernment process will provide information for the congregation as to the issues regarding disaffiliation including what we believe as United Methodist and what other alternatives are theologically available if the choice is not to remain United Methodist. As to the specifics of the issues which will be addressed, the team will formulate a plan utilizing the Bishop's model tailored to the individual needs of FUMC by the prayer discernment team. Dale encouraged everyone to take a deep breath and let the process unfold. We will continue to emphasize the importance of assuring that all information is available to all members.

A motion was made to accept the covenant for communal discernment. Upon second and discussion, the motion to accept the covenant was unanimously approved. Upon motion made and seconded, unanimous approval was given to utilization of the Bishop's plan as a template which would be individually tailored for the FUMC prayer and discernment process.

Discussion followed regarding ¶2553 which is presently in place until December 31, 2023.

The team discussed various approaches as to surveys which might be available for the congregation to utilize. The team agreed to study various options and methodology as to how to present the survey in hopes of gaining the greatest participation by the congregation. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the motion to offer a survey was unanimously approved.

As to the upcoming meeting on September 25, 2022, the team discussed the specifics of the presentation. The team agreed it was important for people to be aware what the UMC Discipline presently provides as to human sexuality. The team agreed it would be important that those present at the meeting on September 25, 2022 as well as members unable to attend to be apprised of the UMC Discipline's position. Paragraphs from the Discipline and from “the call to Prayer and Discernment from the North Alabama Conference of UMC” as to human sexuality will

be available for review by members at the meeting and otherwise. Information regarding the calculation of cost involved with disaffiliation will be included in the information.

The team discussed what the post Prayer and Discernment church might look like and agreed to study and further address this at future meetings.

A discernment timeline was discussed. Under the Bishop's directives, at least 90 days is required for a prayer and discernment process. In order to begin the process, the district superintendent must be advised of the start date of the prayer and discernment process, the team must enter into a covenant, the team must present the plan to be followed through the prayer and discernment process and must advise of a proposed end date.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously agreed that the Prayer and Discernment process will begin September 26, 2022 and should end by March 31, 2023.

Following this, the team discussed in the event of a church vote what processes would be in place. The Bishop's plan sets forth specific procedures to be followed in the event of a church wide vote.

Discussion was had as to setting up an email for the prayer and discernment team to receive questions. An email account has now been set up which is "discernment@FUMCFLO.org". It was agreed that the emails would be reviewed and treated confidentially. The sent questions posed would be forwarded to appropriate team members for response.

Lisa Keys-Mathews will be presenting a 6-week Wednesday night class on "discernment practices" which will begin on October 5, 2022. Lisa is also willing to present this to other small groups at other available times.

Plans are underway to open up the chapel during the day for prayer during the prayer discernment time as well as to, set up a prayer chapel.

The committee discussed creating a webpage with links to available resources for consideration in the discernment process. Included links would require approval of the discernment team.

In closing, it was agreed that the team would work on a template for the process of prayer discernment at the next meeting as well as consider posting frequently asked questions and determine questions to be considered for the congregational survey.

The next meeting is set for October 3, 2022 at 6:30PM. Dale then closed us with prayer utilizing the unity prayer from John 17.