



Dear Church,

After a lengthy time of prayer and discernment, with lots of information provided, this past Saturday we convened our Church Conference to vote on our future denominational alignment. When the ballots were counted, a 2/3rds majority was not reached, indicating that we are not to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church at the December 3rd Called Session of the Texas Annual Conference. 68 votes were cast, 43 (63%) in favor of disaffiliation, 25 (37%) opposed. Therefore, we renewed our charge as a United Methodist Church.

As your pastor, I must echo what our District Superintendent, Rev. Karen Jones, said before announcing the results: "Church, you do not have unity in the Body." I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that over half of our voting membership indicated they desire to align with a different denomination than the United Methodist Church. This means we still have work to do. It means that our time of discernment has not come to an end and that we are still called to continue listening to one another and speaking truth in love.

I know, I personally need a moment to take a deep breath. To step back for a moment, gather my thoughts, assess the current heart-condition of many of our membership before I can adequately address the state of our church. I thank you for your patience as I take the time to focus on my family, particularly during the approaching holiday season, but please know I am available as your pastor to walk you through this phase of our journey as a congregation.

But the main question you may ask is, "What now?" I recognize that some feel wounded and disappointed at the outcome. I understand. My pastor's heart aches for any who hurt. But right now is a time for healing. It's a time to grieve that we do not have unity on this matter. And grief is known to include stages of Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.

However, our call to love one another has not changed; we are still the family of our Father, even amid family struggles. I urge you not to react out of emotion, but rather take a deep breath, and ask God what His will is for our congregation now that we have had the opportunity to evaluate where we are as a whole. I urge you to read Ephesians 4.... And apply it. Live it. Let us show the world how the Body of Christ handles situations in love with grace and mercy.

God birthed this church. It is by His grace alone that it has sustained through almost 200 years of cultural shifts, leadership transitions, and generational trends. God's got this. God is bigger. Always has been. Always will be. I ask, that you trust in God's plan for our church and remain faithful to your membership vows as we journey together towards our goal to make disciples for Jesus Christ. This is the church with the loving heart. Let us live into that mission during this season.

Blessings,

Rev. Amanda Stratton

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