



Rev. David D. McManus, Jr.

August 1, 2024

The following announcement will be published in the August edition of our newsletter, the Manning Monthly.

From the Pastor



Dear ones,

I was made aware of some points of confusion and felt prompted to share the following information with you. I hope that it will be helpful.

1. Entering a discernment process is not one of several options available for leaving The United Methodist Church. A time of discernment followed by a church conference is the requirement of the “Closure and Separation” process provided by the bishop and the Board of Trustees of the SC Conference. There is no option for a local church to leave The UMC except to close.
2. It is not possible to simply have a congregational meeting, take a vote, and then leave. The steps in the process outlined by the SC Conference have to be followed if the congregation is to enter into an agreement with the Conference Board of Trustees to retain the property (which is held in trust for the denomination).
3. If you vote to leave, you will remain “Manning United Methodist Church” until the church is closed on June 30, 2025. On July 1, 2025, the church will re-open as a new entity with a new name such as “Manning Methodist Church.” If there are people who do not wish to leave, they will have the option of joining with another United Methodist congregation.
4. If you vote to leave, you will later hold another church conference to decide where you will go— whether to another Methodist denomination or to be independent.
5. Some of you have wondered why the church council elected to wait until the Book of Discipline had actually been changed rather than entering the discernment process in 2022 or 2023. These further pieces of information, which are my recollection, may be helpful.
 - No one knew what the postponed 2020 General Conference would do when it met April 23rd through May 3rd of this year. It certainly was not clear when the Closure and Separation plan was first announced on December 17th of 2022, or at the church council meetings that continued to discuss it. The church council did not want to make the profoundly serious decision to enter the closure and separation process, which will

have significant implications, until the Book of Discipline had actually been changed, not just speculated to be changing.

- Under the terms set by the Conference Board of Trustees, leaving The UMC will be quite expensive (estimates are between \$250,000 and \$350,000). The council thought it reasonable not to spend that amount of money based on speculation as to what the General Conference might do.
 - Out of obligation to my ordination vows, when the church council first considered the Conference's plan in late 2022, I notified them that should you vote to exit The UMC at that time, I would not be leaving with you. I told them the same in 2023. There was concern about planning to exit without a pastor, though I cannot know that for certain.
6. Now, you are in a discernment process. As I disagree with the decisions of the General Conference, I am in a time of discerning God's direction as well. I am praying, writing, and experiencing no small amount of discomfort over this whole thing. I do not yet know when, or if, I will turn in my conference credentials and exit The UMC. For now, please know that I am deeply committed to supporting you through the next few months of work. I would appreciate it if you would pray for me.
 7. It is conceivable that 2025 could be the last year that the Conference Board of Trustees will be making separation agreements with churches that have elected to leave the denomination. At the 2024 Annual Conference a motion was approved recommending just that. The Annual Conference cannot bind either the Board of Trustees or any following Annual Conference, but the Trustees could be persuaded by the request. As such, I cannot say for certain that there will be another cycle in which to separate.
 8. Please pray for our denomination's Judicial Council (our Supreme Court). The Kentucky Annual Conference asked them for a declaratory decision as to whether paragraph 2549 can continue to be used to allow local churches to exit the denomination over questions of human sexuality. I do not expect it, but they could decide that the conferences must stop. This is the paragraph our Conference is using. Their next meeting will be between October 15th and November 15th.
 9. On, September 1 we will receive a new bishop. I encourage you to pray for Bishop Leonard Fairley as well since he must allow the process to continue.
 10. Since the conference began allowing churches to close and separate, some of you have said to me (or our staff) that you will do whatever I do. I appreciate and am grateful for your respect. But I must remind you that each of you will have to make a prayerful decision as to whether MUMC can continue as a congregation of The United Methodist Church. When the time comes, you will have to vote "yes" or "no" based on what you believe to be faithful to God; what you believe God is calling us to do. The discernment process approved by your church council is intended to aid you in doing so.

I believe that you will take this discernment process seriously and make it a priority. Trust that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is with us and press on in faith.

