

Bethany Discernment November Group Meeting (Group #2) 11/12/23

Attendees: 12 attended

BDC Members: George Howard, Elliot Locklear

General

- Meeting led by George Howard
- Opening prayer (George)
- Discussed ground rules – open, honest, and civil (George)
- Introductions
- Closing prayer (Elliot)

Meeting Notes

- **Comment/Opinion** ➔ What do we believe and what do we accept as authority. We have avoided issues but now they are here. Are we at the point where if beliefs are so different, are we of the same faith? We should be unified in the body of Christ and separate from the world.
- **Question was asked – if we leave UMC what (property) do we take with us or if we leave Bethany, what property do we take?** Discussed that property belongs to Bethany and by extension to the UMC via “in trust” clause. If Bethany leaves UMC under current process, we would be able to retain property. If group leaves Bethany, property belongs to Bethany and group would not be able to take property with them.
- **Comment** ➔ No decisions on issues have been made yet as GC has not occurred.
- **Good bit of Q&A/discussion around separation process for SC vs UMC as whole** ➔ discussed SC separation process using 2549; discussed SC process vs UMC process (2553) and why SC did not fall under 2553. Talked about possibility of SC process changing – it is possible but unknown /uncertain at this point in time. Talked about 2023 Separation Checklist, 2024 Separation Checklist, and August Church Council vote and impact on when “official” vote could occur – would not be able to vote until January 2025 with separation (disaffiliation) occurring in June 2025 if 67% majority voted to leave UMC.
- **Question was asked about petition** ➔ Explained that petition “process” was valid as it met the 10% of professing members requirement. Petition has been submitted but was ruled out of order by DS/Chancellor. Waiting on reply from DS/Chancellor as to grounds on why petition was ruled out of order.
- **A fair amount of discussion around the concept of “what’s the rush”** ➔ discussed perception by many that a significant group of members want/need to wait until 2024 GC to know for sure what changes (if any) are made; some present at meeting felt we

had plenty of time already while others stated that they were definitely in the need to find out what happens at 2024 GC. This was an open, honest, and civil discussion.

- **Some questions/comments around finances and apportionments** → discussed change in apportionments from 2023 to 2024 – increased but increased from lower-than-normal level in 2023 to normal level in 2024; SC AC decided to cut costs rather than raise apportionments for 2024 to account for 113 SC AC churches leaving the UMC; did talk about possibility that this path (cost cutting vs raising apportionments) could change in the future but that is another one of the unknown/uncertainties
- **Question was asked about BOD language at 2019 special GC** → discussed that language around same-sex marriage / homosexual ordination was not changed and in fact was strengthened.
- **Question was asked – what benefit does being a part of the UMC provide** → talked about pastor resource pool, pooling of resources for mission work globally by UMC as well as assisting Bethany Global mission – UMCOR/UMVIM provide assistance and insurance, being in “connection” as part of Wesleyan theology
- **Question was raised about options should Bethany leave UMC** → Discussed option of staying independent; option to join another Methodist related denomination – GMC, Free Methodist, Wesleyan, Church of Nazarene; option of joining “methodist network”; discussed that we can stay independent for as long as we want/need to weigh options and make a decision
- **Comment** → my vote to wait was so I could learn more; important to soften our hearts during discernment
- **Comment** → I planted my family here (Bethany); Bethany means a lot to my kids; concerned about hurt caused to kids; older daughter is affected by what is going on
- **Comment** → I am here (at meeting) because of brokenness in Bethany
- **Comment** → I am very concerned about our ministers

Summary

- Meeting time was equally split between asking questions and sharing thoughts and opinions
- Asked if all felt meeting was beneficial – all said yes
- Asked everyone to share experience at meeting with friends/family and to encourage others to attend one of the future meetings in November
- Overall, meeting went well – good discussion that was conducted in an open and civil manner