

## Notes for Sunday November 12, 2023 Room 127

*Present:* 9 members

*Others present from Discernment Steering Committee and Church Leadership:* Greg Cook, Rebecca Jackson, David Powell, Dave Bradden, Michael Ritter

### 1. Question – Are there any recent updates we need to know about?

- a. The petition is with the Chancellor (district lawyer)
- b. The Discernment Steering Committee has written the Bishop and Annual Conference Trustees to clarify the timing related to our discernment and whether our exit fee will stay the same as it would be for a 2024 exit.
- c. The date for vote is no earlier than June 1, per the vote of Church Council.
- d. The Discernment Steering Committee serves at the pleasure of what church Council and under the guidelines established by their vote.
- e. Other churches did not go in the same direction as Bethany. This Church Council felt Bethany needed to go through discernment, but also needed to see what was going to happen at the General Conference before a church vote was taken.
- f. The Bishop and Trustees of the Annual Conference determine the rules for separating from the UMC.

### 2. Comment

- a. I am disappointed in the UMC.
- b. Why UMC is trying to make these changes?
- c. I see no reasons to make the Bible fit societal issues.

### 3. Comment

- a. Most of my Sunday School class is leaving church.
- b. MY Sunday School class would like to see a vote soon.
- c. UMC is going progressive.
- d. I believe the General Conference is going to change things and we don't want to wait and take a chance.
- e. Some members of my Sunday School class have quit tithing as well.
- f. I don't like this direction; good people leaving the church because they do not think the church will not be centered on the Bible in the future.
- g. Members were urged to stay and work for Bethany's future.
- h. Don't vote with your feet.

### 4. Comment

- a. I have a friend who goes to Knightsville and have heard from this person that if "you wait until after December, it will be too late."
- b. The Discernment Steering Committee is trying to address this issue with the Annual Conference Board of Trustees. **Will rules be the same in 2025?** (Fear is about increased costs or the do for separation/disaffiliation will be shut completely.)

### 5. Comment

- a. I fear the Bible may be changing.
- b. (Comment in response: That is not currently on the agenda.)

- c. (Comment in response Book of Discipline can be changed at the General Conference to address homosexuality but restrictive rules create much higher bar for Rules of Worship (i.e. Apostles Creed))

**6. Comment**

- a. This issue has been discussed at Bethany in small group for 29 years.
- b. We must be calm and respectful as we proceed.
- c. People leaving really bothers me.
- d. The August 17 meeting in the sanctuary was despicable.
- e. The Men's group meets once each month – the temperature changes with the meeting; we must continue to follow Jesus.
- f. We watched St Paul go through this process; families were split over that, and I don't want that here.
- g. Comment in response: All Discernment Steering Committee wants is for voting members of the congregation can make an Informed decision on all matters.
- h. The setting of the date bothered people more than anything else.
- i. I would like to see what the General Conference vote is before making my decision but the date of the vote remains an issue.

**7. Comment/Question**

- a. **Why are they picking on the UMC?** (Gays and lesbians)
- b. **Why can't they find their own church?**

**8. Comment**

- a. I was born the year the UMC was founded.
- b. I have been active until COVID but conversations in the spring brought me back into the active fold. My Sunday School is smaller; it used to be full and only a few were there today.
- c. Children's service is so small; youth choirs are small.
- d. There are more spaces in the pews during church.
- e. I want to learn more and to hear the truth and not rumors.

**9. Comment**

- a. 1000 petitions have been submitted to the General Conference and I am sure they are all over the place regarding purpose/intent.
- b. Some come from church agencies (Connectional Table, Bibleship ministries. Africa/Philippines etc.) are available now.
- c. In week one of the General Conference, the committees go through all petitions and the second week is there is debate on those brought to floor.
- d. Process is modeled after our government.
- e. Bishops do not vote only delegates.

**10. Comment**

- a. I am saddened that Bethany is not the Bethany that I have known for the past 25 years because of the discord among us, and the way issues/decisions are being made/discussed.
- b. We have hurt ourselves.
- c. We are called to be united in Christ and one another.
- d. Discord is sinful; we are to love God and one another.

### 11. Comment

- a. I want to save the church.
- b. Comment: Giving is above last year.
- c. Comment: Budget was much higher than what we could have been reaching for. What is happening is also based on economics.)
- d. Comment: (There are a lot of reasons why children left (COVID, masks, etc.)
- e. Comment: It's a great church with great people.
- f. Comment: Everyone is encouraged to unite in support of the Living Christmas Story. The LCS has nothing to do with the UMC and the divisions that exist in the church. Let's unite in everything we can. Be "one Bethany".
- g. Comment: The Gift and Gourmet market did well in raising money for local missions.
- h. Comment: 375 shoeboxes have been turned in.

### 12. Comment/Question

- a. All I hear seems to be rumors after rumors.
- b. I am disappointed in extremists and those spreading rumors as it makes it difficult to believe anything – I am conflicted.
- c. I am going to ride it out.
- d. My opinions about LGBTQ+ (alphabet group) have changed over the years.
- e. Concerned....we have not been getting updates.
- f. I will wait to decide about my membership until vote – I don't want to see our church indoctrinate people into the alphabet community.
- g. I have nothing against alphabet group – they are God's children too; they are trying to force me to believe in something I don't believe in.
- h. Hitler started his movement in the same way.....in the churches.
- i. **Why is LGBTQ bothering me?** They can't make me change my ideas.....if GC makes these changes, ever so gently the Book of Discipline changes and it opens the door to bigger changes.

### 13. Comment

- a. Petition has not been ruled out of order.
- b. Revote was ruled out of order.
- c. Petition is still sitting with the Bishop/Chancellor.

### 14. Comment

- a. Benefits of petition – petition gives us legal standing in the future.
- b. Communication is a two-way street. People receiving information must read/listen/hear it.

### 15. Comment/Question

- a. **Who are friends of Bethany that are sending emails?**
- b. **Why am I getting emails?**
- c. Comment: The vote and voice are with church council only on Tuesday.
- d. Church Council was not stacked.
- e. Time and Talents was used to fill openings – were brought up – these sheets are important.

### 16. Comment/Question

- a. I like to wait and see because I want to know what I am voting for.

- b. The role of the GMC has been questioned; do they welcome all?
- c. I am not going to be bullied to leave.
- d. I keep hearing “They are going to change……. who are THEY?”**
- e. We don’t have to be mean about disagreements.
- f. We, as a local church, have rights as to what goes on in our church.
- g. Most of what I hear is based on rumor and speculation.
- h. What is the UMC saying in response to what the GMC is putting out?

**17. Comment**

- a. I am sad.

**18. Comment/Question**

- a. Issue 1 – I support Bethany the way it is.
- b. I do not support what the UMC is doing.
- c. Where do we get our information?
- d. We need to look outside UMC for information.
- e. Duke had a Queerly beloved service.
- f. Gay bishop in California; people need to listen to her services.
- g. At a church, an individual in drag gave the Sunday message to children.
- h. The alphabet soup group is not going to give up and go away.
- i. Homosexuals don’t recruit others. They believe the church should be able to deny me the right to a job.
- j. God don’t make no junk.
- k. I don’t care about sexual orientation – why change our church to suit them and not me – that upsets me.
- l. Book of Discipline has not been honored and I have no faith in the UMC; formal complaint has been made; it is held in abeyance right now.
- m. Research the extremes.
- n. Penny Cost (and she is not the only one) is a drag queen. She is trying to become a Certified Candidate for Ordination within the United Methodist Church. His/her local church is allowing that to happen.

**19. Comment**

- a. The Discernment Steering Committee is diversified in opinions and approaches, and we can have open discussions.
- b. The church can do the same.

**20. Comment/Question**

- a. **What is planned for December?** Nothing because it is the Advent season.
- b. Plans for January will be developed.