



## ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

Doing God's will....finding common ground.

November 2023

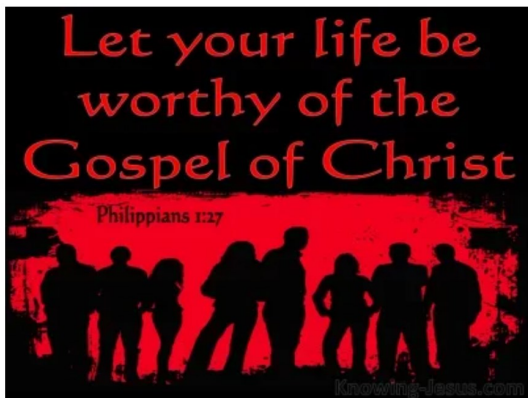
Issue 2

This newsletter is the result of information gathered by various committees working through areas of the discernment process. Its purpose is to ensure that Bethany members have up to date information on the discernment process as well as the many topics affecting the current schism within the United Methodist Church.

If you have questions about the information provided or if you have questions/comments about any other topic related to our discernment process, please send an email to: [discernment@bethany-umc.com](mailto:discernment@bethany-umc.com).

### STAYING THE COURSE PART 1 OF A SERIES

#### *Philippians 1:27 (NIV)*



*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*

These are difficult and unpleasant times for our church (Bethany) and its members. There is much discord within our church which has unfortunately led to some members leaving, others considering leaving, and still others staying but withdrawing or considering withdrawing support (financial and time/talents).

The primary reasons why some of our members have left, are considering leaving, or are staying but withdrawing support/considering withdrawing support appear to be twofold:

- 1) desire to worship without contention
- 2) loss of trust/faith in the UMC organization theologically and administratively is Part 2 of this series

#### *Worship without contention*

The discord within our church is real and the resulting contention can often be felt in just about every aspect of our church. Many members (if not all) are put off by this contention which can and often does affect their ability to worship and fellowship in Christian peace and harmony. So, where do we go from here? How do we address this contention?

Because of our divided nature, Bethany has chosen to enter into Holy Discernment in order to determine Bethany's future path. The discernment process by default requires the congregation to pray about and to discuss the issues that led us to discernment. This in and of itself is going to keep the issues at the forefront which will create some level of contention.



The other unfortunate problem has been the manner in which some of these issues have been "discussed". Some of these "discussions" have created more contention than the issues themselves. So, what can be done to minimize the contention?

The Discernment Steering Committee has initiated several things to promote prayer for our church as well as unity among its members.

- The unity we are seeking **is not** an attempt to unify the thoughts and opinions of Bethany members . It is simply our attempt to unify our members through prayer to continue doing the work of God at Bethany while the discernment process plays out to its ultimate conclusion.
- Secondly, we are asking all Bethany members to treat each other with love, respect, and civility. If we as a congregation can unite behind a commitment to do this, then it will be possible for us to discuss the issues in an open, honest, and non-confrontational manner. To paraphrase a quote from Harry S Truman .... "We shall never be able to remove *disagreements* as potential causes of *discord* until communication is permitted to flow, free and open, *between all parties.*"

If leaving Bethany or withdrawing support (time/talents) from Bethany due to contention is something that you are considering, the Discernment Steering Committee respectfully asks

you to **reconsider** these actions. Bethany continues to do the work of God even as we are in the midst of discernment. These times are not easy and contention is not pleasant but as Christians, we know that God does not promise us an "easy path". He simply promises us that He will be with us and guide us down the path. For this reason, we ask all Bethany members to please **stay the course**

and continue to **support Bethany** in its mission to do God's work as we go through the discernment process.

### James 5:11

***"As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.***

