



ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

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

November 2023
Issue 3

Staying the Course – Part II of a series

Give
LUKE 6:38

"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

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). Let's discuss the reasons why this is happening.

The last issue of this newsletter discussed members desire to worship without contention. This issue tackles the second reason: loss of trust/faith in the UMC organization both theologically and administratively.

There is a loss of trust/faith in the UMC organization.

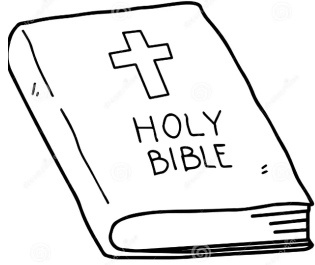
Many members simply feel that the UMC organization has lost its way theologically and succumbed to societal pressures. They no longer trust the leaders of the UMC (Bishops) to dutifully fulfill their obligation to follow and enforce the Book of Discipline. For some members, this theological and administrative distrust extends to

- ◆ Bishops
- ◆ General Conference
- ◆ Judicial Council
- ◆ Southeastern Jurisdiction
- ◆ SC Annual Conference
- ◆ Charleston District
- ◆ Bethany UMC

What can be done to address this loss of trust/faith in the UMC organization?

At this point in time, there is probably not much that can be done to restore the lost trust/faith in the UMC organization that several members have experienced.

Let's take a look at why and how this loss of trust/faith is or may be leading some to consider leaving Bethany (UMC) or withdrawing support (financial & time/talents) from Bethany.



- ⇒ Many members feel that the UMC already has (or soon will) deviate from what they believe to be Biblically supported theology. Many members are upset by the apparent lack of enforcement of the Book of Discipline by the UMC leadership. As a result, these members feel that continued membership within a UMC church (Bethany) is supporting a theology they do not believe and is supporting an organization that cannot be counted on to follow its own rules and are therefore contemplating leaving Bethany. For those that feel this way but are not contemplating leaving, then some feel that withdrawing financial support to Bethany will by extension withdraw financial support to the UMC organization that they no longer can support.
- ⇒ Another often stated reason for withdrawing support (financial & time/talents) is that some believe that this will force Bethany to hasten the discernment process.

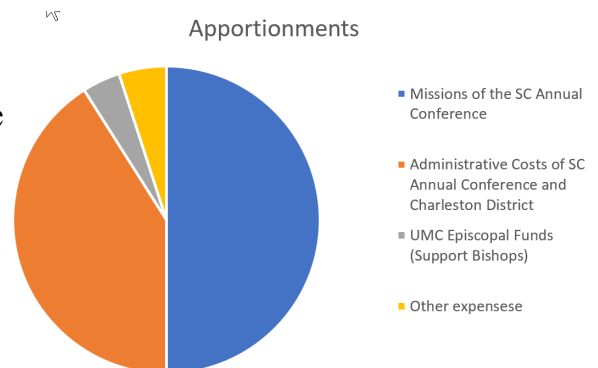
What we can do is listen without judgement and pray in one accord for God's guidance as our church moves through this process.

Facts and information that may affect the decision of those members contemplating leaving or withdrawing support

Changes to the official *theological direction* of the UMC will not be **known** until the 2024 General Conference is held in April/May 2024. There are those who believe it is **likely** (but not certain) that changes to the Book of Discipline will be made at the 2024 General Conference to allow for same sex weddings and ordination of practicing homosexuals. The direction that Bethany will take as related to its place in the UMC will not be known until the discernment process is completed and a separation (disaffiliation) vote is taken.

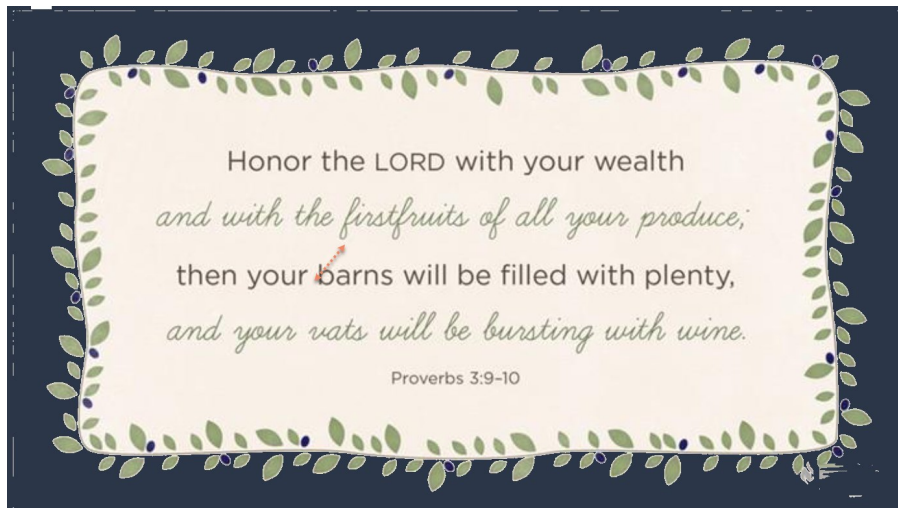
Financial support for the UMC is provided by Bethany through our apportionments. These apportionments are included as part of the Bethany General Operating Fund. The proposed 2024 general operating fund budget includes \$206,967 for apportionments. As a matter of reference, 10.4 cents of every \$1 that you give to the Bethany General Operating Fund goes to paying Bethany's apportionments. From this 10.4 cents,

- 5 cents go to paying for the various mission activities of the SC Annual Conference
- 4.1 cents go to pay for the administrative costs of the SC Annual Conference and Charleston District.
- 0.4 cent goes to the UMC Episcopal Fund – this is the fund that supports and pays for the UMC Bishops.
- 0.9 cent goes to miscellaneous expenses



The *Bethany Building Fund* is a fund that does not contribute to apportionments and is an option for those that feel that they cannot financially support the UMC as a matter of principle or personal belief.

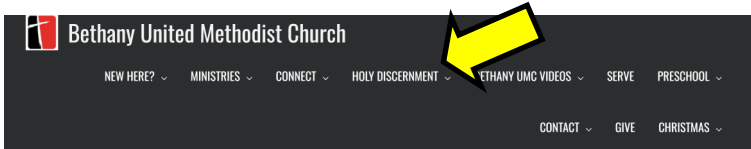
The direction of the UMC and Bethany will not be known for months. During this time, Bethany will continue its mission to *love and follow Jesus, invite others on the journey, and joyfully serve in Jesus' name*. Once the decisions are known for the UMC and for Bethany, then Bethany members will have the opportunity to prayerfully make their personal decisions.



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.



Support Bethany UMC by supporting something Bethany is known for.....
THE LIVING CHRISTMAS STORY (Nov. 30, Dec 1,2)
Get involved in doing God's work right here in Summerville!



http://www.bethany-umc.com/?page_id=11310 is the **Discernment** Committee Website. All documents, committees, and shared resources can be located there.

If you have a question or concern you would like to have addressed, please email discernment@bethany-umc.com

ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

Conversation Sundays with the Discernment Committee

4:00 in room 127 every Sunday in November

Open conversation

A time to listen and be heard respectfully!

To be heard, you have to attend!



Our **WHY?**

With each publication of our newsletter, the Discernment Committee will be transparent about our WHY to insure we are working with God's Purpose for Bethany as our focus.

"I have the right to do anything," you say – but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything" – but I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12

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.

