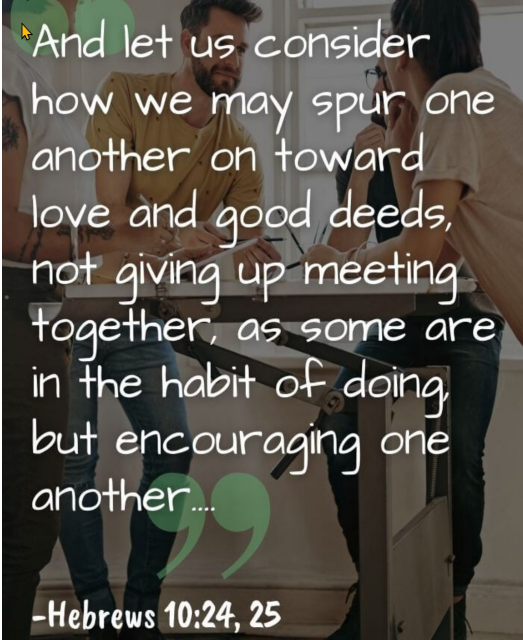




## ROAD TO HOLY DISCERNMENT

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

November 2023  
Issue 5



The God we serve is a God of unity who desires that His church live in *unity and harmony* built on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who draws us together and the power of the Holy Spirit that makes our bond stronger. Since the beginning of Holy Discernment at Bethany, a call for unity among the congregation has been stressed. While many of the members of Bethany have sought and prayed for unity during this period of discernment, others have questioned the purpose of being united in thought and purpose.

**Their values and opinions are important, but God declares that in His Kingdom, nothing is as important as being *united in love*.**

God calls Bethany to be a *vibrant* and *powerful* church that bears much fruit and the way we do that is *by working together in perfect unity, not perfect doctrine, not perfect leadership, or even in perfect agreement with one another.* **The truth, when focused on the person of Jesus Christ, will bring unity and not division.**

So how do we begin the process of being in unity with one another? The following is a step-by-step process based on scripture.

**Repentance—Humility—Vulnerability—Trust—Communication—Relationships—Christian Unity**

The **first step** highlighted in the last issue was **repentance**. This issue will highlight **Humility and Vulnerability**.

## HUMILITY

As Christians we are called to humble ourselves thus being humble in attitude towards one another. We are to be gentle in Spirit avoiding harsh words and actions towards each other. We are called to be **patient, not easily angered, or frustrated with one another**. Finally, we are called to bear with one another meaning we should **forgive, support, and even tolerate each other even when we disagree**.

***Ephesians 4:2-3***

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

***Philippians 2:3-4***

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others.*

# VULNERABILITY

Being vulnerable is not easy. If we share our deepest thoughts or concerns with someone, we are letting them in without knowing how we will be received or perceived. Just as Jesus Christ became vulnerable to us, even to the point of dying on the cross for us, we can trust Him in our vulnerability. **Being vulnerable allows others to**

**help and minister to us.** It is also a way we **can be mutually encouraged, challenged, and built up in faith as we spur one another on in love and good deeds.** Only when we become vulnerable can we begin to open ourselves up to one another and begin to build a sense of trust.

## Matthew 5:5

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

The enemy Bethany is fighting **is not intimidated** by a church that is fighting and divisive with one another. Only when we are brought closer together by the love of God and one another are we in perfect unity with God and a threat to the enemy. God values unity and values relationship with each other within Bethany. The next issue will highlight the next three steps in **Christian unity.**



## Steering Committee for Holy Discernment asks SC Conference Trustees for Clarity

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

*James 3: 17-18*

**The Steering Committee is committed to listening to the concerns of our congregation and providing our congregation with complete and accurate information rightly applied to Bethany's concerns.** To gain clarity to a question that is at the center of debate in Bethany's discernment conversations, we have prepared and sent a letter to the SC Conference Trustees.

At the end of 2022, the United Methodist Churches of the South Carolina Conference received notification of a formal process for separation from the United Methodist Church for those churches in South Carolina who were considering disaffiliation from the denomination. This document, titled '[UMCSC churches have process to discern their future](#)', provided the format for what we at Bethany are currently going through called the Local Church Discernment Process. As directed by our Bishop, churches in South Carolina were directed to use this process centered on the Book of Discipline paragraph for closing a church; ¶ 2549. The document quoted Bishop Holston to say, 'the Local Church Discernment Process has no long-term "sunset" provision' as opposed to the process being used in most other conferences using ¶ 2553 for disaffiliation which has a sunset at the end of this year; 31 December 2023.

Much of the discussion and anxiety within Bethany is centered on whether the SC UMC process will be available after 2024. Additionally, there is much discussion (and anxiety) whether the cost for separation from the UMC will remain the same as the current criteria or will the cost increase after 2024. Therefore, the Steering Committee prepared a letter asking these questions:

- **will the Local Church Discernment Process continue after 2024 and**
- **will the cost increase.**

This letter was sent early this week to our District Superintendent and key individuals in the Conference Office. We do expect to receive a response to our questions and will provide the response to our congregation.

*As announced by the District Superintendent at our Charge Conference, the Bishop/Chancellor is in receipt of the petition that many Bethany members signed that questioned the timing of our discernment. There should be a formal response from the petition soon. We will keep you posted.*



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! **SIGN UP!***

**Set up work is going on now.....come on Saturday beginning at 8:30!**

## Conversation Sundays with the Discernment Committee

**4:00 AND 5:00 o'clock sessions!! Come to room 127.**

The 5:00 session was added especially for those of you dropping students off for ASCEND at 5:30!

**Open conversation every Sunday in November**

**A time to listen and be heard respectfully!**

*We keep hearing that the congregation wants to be heard. Come to these meetings and make that possible.*

**The notes from the November 5 conversation can be reached at the following link:**

[Notes 1](#) [Notes 2](#)

*The notes from November 12th will be in Monday's newsletter.*

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**WHY?** Our .....

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.

### **1 Corinthians 15:58**

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

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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).

