

Message from the Lillian UMC Lay Leader

Dear Lillian UMC family,

On December 4, 2022, the LUMC Church Council met, at my request. The Council voted unanimously to invite the Rev. Jean Tippet, Pensacola District Superintendent to hold a town hall meeting to discuss disaffiliation.

As Lay Leader and the primary representative of the laity, I believe the time has arrived to address the possibility of disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. This will be the laity's decision to make.

Earlier this year I attended the Pensacola District Bishop's Town Hall meeting hosted by our Bishop. At the conclusion of the Town Hall, I was satisfied that our Alabama West Florida Conference was insulated from the growing issues in the other conferences across the country. I no longer believe this to be true.

I have purposely refrained from publicly discussing this at church. However, as Lay Leader, I now believe our members deserve a fair and honest hearing, without delay. After reviewing reports coming out of November's Southeastern Jurisdiction Conference, it seems clear that our conference is not as insulated from progressive policies as I had thought. I no longer believe that we should wait until 2024 to see if our Book of Discipline is grievously changed. Even if it were not changed it is not being upheld and enforced by all United Methodist Bishops. We are blessed to have the bishop we have but will not have Bishop Graves forever.

It is my understanding that the accepted way to address disaffiliation requires the District Superintendent (DS) to hold a preliminary meeting with us to discuss the process. Therefore, the Church Council must formally request the DS to schedule a meeting with us. This has been done. The requested meeting will be Wednesday, January 25 at 6:00 PM in the church fellowship hall. The Town Hall will be open to all in our congregation. The Church Council will meet following the Town Hall and decide whether to ask the District Superintendent to schedule a Church Conference. The Church Conference would be limited to church members only and the vote would have to be 66.7 % (2/3).

Now is the time to pray, seek the face of God, and gather credible information. Now is not the time for rumors or unfounded claims. I pray that you join me in this as we approach this momentous time in LUMC history.

See you Sunday,
Perry Cunningham
Lay Leader