

Dear Church family,

As many of you are aware, Fort Payne First gathered at the end of a very long, but powerful day together for a Church Conference to vote on the direction of this church and its continued relationship with the United Methodist Church. The church members present voted to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. Although this was not a unanimous vote, ninety-three percent of those in attendance voted in favor of disaffiliation (200 in favor of disaffiliating and 15 voting to remain UMC). It was a clear indication that God is leading this church into a new season.

The question now is “now that we have voted to disaffiliate what is next for our church” and “what can I expect”?

The next steps for us as a congregation is to learn, discuss and vote on the denomination with which we are led to affiliate. The discernment team has studied and met with leaders of two denominations they believe are best for our church—The Global Methodist Church or the Free Methodist Church.

The Global Methodist Church is a new Methodist denomination officially launched on May 1, 2022, but has been a part of a larger United Methodist renewal movement for many years. The denomination has been in creation for years, and only launched after renewal was no longer possible.

The Free Methodist Church is a longstanding branch of the Methodist Church. It was launched in the early 1800's in opposition to the failure of episcopal leaders, slavery and the renting/buying of church pews.

Tomorrow (November 16) I will be sending a document which highlights and compares each of these denominations. The Discernment Team has scheduled a churchwide meeting for this Sunday, November 20, at 4:00pm in the CLC to present information about each denomination and answer questions you may have. Then on Sunday, December 4 at 4:00 pm in the CLC the Administrative Board has called a Church Conference to vote on the denomination with which the church will affiliate. It is an in-person ballot vote with a simple majority result. I have been asked to preside over that church conference. Like the recent church conference, the results will be announced that night. I hope you will plan to join me this Sunday as we learn more about these exciting denominations.

On December 10, the bishop has called a special Annual Conference in Birmingham to vote to approve those churches who have voted to disaffiliate. At the conclusion of that Conference those churches, including Fort Payne First, will no longer be United Methodist, but will join the new denomination they voted to join.

Finally, I want to thank our amazing Discernment Team who worked tirelessly over the past few months to prepare our church. Thank you! Thank you to our Administrative Board who prayerfully set in motion the recommendations of our Discernment Team. Thank you to the many other people who registered those who attended the Church Conference this Sunday and served in other ways. Thank you to those who served many different times in hospitality! Thank you to Rory Smith who recorded the presentations and updated our website as a central location for information. Thank you to our incredible staff who in so many ways were the hands and feet of Jesus throughout this season!

I am so proud to be your pastor! I am honored to be on this journey with you. I love every one of you more than you will ever know!

Blessings,

Pastor Jeff