

May 6, 2022

Dear Canton First family and friends,

As you will remember, our pastors, Lay Leader, and Administrative Board Chair sent a letter to our congregation on June 10, 2021, concerning the rumors and opinions surrounding ongoing theological differences within The United Methodist Church and the North Georgia Conference. You may access that letter via [this link](#). In the last year the differences have not been resolved; in fact, many say that our denomination is more deeply divided now than ever before.

Since last year, our pastors and lay leadership have worked diligently to neither ignore, nor be distracted by the challenges facing The United Methodist Church as disputes around historic church doctrine and Biblical authority continue in our denomination, but rather to focus on the mission and ministries of our local church. In the correspondence from June 10, 2021, details were shared concerning the passage of the *Protocol for Grace and Reconciliation through Separation*, which was meant to be the roadmap for separation and would have been voted on at General Conference in 2020. The vote was rescheduled for 2021 because of COVID, and then rescheduled to August of 2022. Several weeks ago, the Commission announced that General Conference would be postponed again – to 2024. With the General Conference meeting dates pushed out for two more years, no vote can be taken for approval of the *Protocol*. This postponement further prolongs and deepens the conflicts within our denomination and prevents us from resolving the issues currently dividing it.

What does this mean for Canton First?

- Our Governing Board and staff are studying all aspects of the issues that divide us, the current situation, and the options available to us so that we can continue faithfully following God's vision and direction for our local congregation.
- We are also gathering information so that, if the congregation should decide to pursue disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church and align with another Methodist denomination, we will have a clear understanding of what is involved and what steps must be taken.
- Our goal is to provide Canton First members with all the information needed to make the best decision for the ministry of our church.

In that regard, we have invited our District Superintendent, Reverend John Pinson, to share information with our congregants concerning disaffiliation – what it means and how it works. Reverend Pinson will join us on Sunday, May 22, at 3 pm in the Fellowship Hall. All members of Canton First are invited to attend.

In the meantime, please be in prayer for our church and our denomination. Please pray for guidance and wisdom for our congregation, our staff, and our Governing Board members as we discern God's plan and God's path for Canton First.

Blessings,

Dr. Kenny Ott, Lead Pastor
Rev. Kelly Beckley, Executive Pastor
Dave Sullivan, Lay Leader
Susan Dreschel, Governing Board Chair