

July 18, 2022

Dear Canton First family and friends,

Your Governing Board continues working to keep you informed about the ongoing issues that are dividing the United Methodist Church, as well as the implications that this divide has for our congregation and its members. All our previous communications are posted on our website, under Administration > [Future Affiliation](#) should you wish to review them.

If you remember, we first invited our District Superintendent, Rev. John Pinson, to share with us the position of the North Georgia Conference and the process for disaffiliation, should our congregation choose to leave the UMC. Next, Mr. Dan Parr from the Wesleyan Covenant Association addressed the history and reasons for the divide in the UMC. Then, starting in mid-June, the Governing Board began periodic congregational meetings so that our members can ask questions of the Board members and pastors. The next congregational meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 10, at 6:30 pm. This is the last scheduled meeting for members to ask questions of our Governing Board. We will schedule more, if needed.

Additionally, we have continually updated the FAQs on the [Future Affiliation](#) page of our website so that you have the latest information as it develops. On that page, you will find links to information about future affiliation options and some helpful videos from Rev. Dr. Rob Renfro, a United Methodist pastor and editor of Good News magazine. Please take a minute to look at this information and videos and let us know if you have any questions.

Over the last few months more and more people are asking, "Are we going to have a congregational vote?" In anticipation of this, on June 13 the Governing Board voted unanimously to request a called church conference to be held this Fall and sent a certified letter to both the outgoing and incoming District Superintendents. Per the UMC Book of Discipline, the DS has 120 days from the date of the request to schedule a church conference. Unfortunately, we have been told that the North Georgia Conference Board of Trustees and Bishop decided that no requests for a called church conference will be accepted until January 1, 2023, or after February 28, 2023, and that church conferences will be scheduled for some time after March 1, 2023. We were very disappointed in this response. Not only does this push out any decision by our members, this delay also has potentially negative financial implications for our church. In the meantime, our Lay Leader and Board Chairperson have requested to meet with our new District Superintendent to discuss the effects of this delay on our members and pastors.

The issue of future affiliation for Canton First is important, but it is not the most important thing. Despite this distraction, we remain focused on our mission. We recently completed a fabulous Vacation Bible School where over two hundred kids experienced the love of Jesus. Three of our youth accepted Christ or reaffirmed their faith on their retreat last month. We still plan to take a mission team to Ecuador in the Fall, and our pastors are leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land next March. And it doesn't stop there! We have a task force team led by Robert

Logan working diligently on a five-year strategic plan to deepen our faith and reach the next generation of Christ-followers. We are also updating our facilities, including upgrades to our children and youth areas, acoustic treatments in the Fellowship Hall, new flooring in the sanctuary, and new directional signage to assist guests in finding their way around. All of this – both opportunities and challenges – is covered in prayer by our new Prayer Ministry team.

These are challenging and anxious times for sure, but we - your lay leadership and pastors - pledge to maintain our focus on what is of utmost importance – ***Sharing Life, Sharing Christ, For Others.***

Please contact any one of us if you have questions or concerns!

Blessings,

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