

Greetings Church Family,

On Sunday, August 28, I shared in my sermon that we would be “hitting pause” on the issue of disaffiliation. In April, we entered into a time of discernment focusing on prayer, Bible study, and dialogue. During this time of discernment, we have learned that the financial cost of disaffiliation would be very high.¹ Beyond the financial cost, many were feeling the spiritual and emotional cost at this time was too much. And so, I believed it best for us to refocus our time, energy, and resources on ministry and not on the decision to disaffiliate or not. The Church Council supported this decision.

I still believe it was the best decision for us at this time. However, I am concerned that this announcement made some people feel as though all conversation and questioning surrounding the topic was shut down. If I have caused any of you to feel that you are not allowed to ask questions or disagree with this decision, I offer my deep and sincere apology. I have tried to open the table to anyone who wanted to be a part of the conversation and decision-making process. I tried to encourage all voices, no matter where they fall on the issue to come to the table and offer their thoughts and experiences. I have said and will continue to say that we don't all have to see eye-to-eye but that we will treat one another with love, honor and respect so that all sides would have a voice. It was never my intent, nor the intention of church leadership to shut the conversation down. Again, if I or church leadership have made you feel that way, I want to say for myself and on behalf of your leaders, we are sorry and our intent was never to shut anyone out.

That being said, I stand before you in grace and humility and insist that now more than ever, we must come together in transparency and trust to ask questions and find answers. I have said before and I will say again, Church is not a spectator sport. We cannot function with the pastor and leadership making all the calls as everyone else sits on the sidelines as if they don't have a say in the way the game is played.

We are a family of faith. A family where all are welcomed to the table with joy and grace. A family where we will disagree and feel frustrated with one another. A family that will, at times, make each other angry and feel uncomfortable. We are a family that is human, fragile, and doing our best to figure out this thing called church. But let us strive to be a family that, in light of all of those things, continues to join together as we build God's Kingdom and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

¹ On 9/29/22, I reached out to the West Ohio Conference Treasurer's office to get the best estimate possible: Enon UMC's estimated pension liability share is \$85,167; our estimated appointments which is based on what we still owe for 2022 and 2023 is \$41,743. This estimate is based on our apportionment payments from this year as the Conference Office has yet to send out 2023 figures. Combining those figures the best estimate we have is \$126,910 to disaffiliate.

Author Rachel Held Evans, in her book, *Inspired*, wrote: The gospel means that every small story is part of a sweeping story, every ordinary life part of an extraordinary movement. God is busy making all things new, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has opened that work to everyone who wants in on it. The church is not a group of people who believe all the same things; the church is a group of people caught up in the same story, with Jesus at the center.

I will close this letter with words from Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Blessings, Pastor Heather

Resources for Further Consideration

Beloved, here are several resources to help you in your discernment process. While you may watch them in any order, I would ask that you watch/read them as I've laid them out in this document. These are some of the best resources I could find representing both sides of the conversation: Those that encourage people to leave the United Methodist Church and join the Global Methodist Church and those encouraging people to remain in the United Methodist Church. It may seem like a lot and I wouldn't recommend doing it all in one sitting.

As with everything, take the time to enter into each resource prayerfully and with open minds and hearts, seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit. I cannot emphasize this enough!

I also can't emphasize enough that at any time if you feel confused or have questions, I sincerely ask that you reach out to me. I don't have all the answers, but I can help and together we can find the answers you seek.

Thoughts on Disaffiliation from Bishop Palmer of the West Ohio Conference

https://youtu.be/Cjr1fT_Occ

Two Sides of the Argument from Rob Renfroe and Adam Hamilton

I highly recommend you watch these videos in pairs. Start with Rob Renfroe first video and then listen to Adam Hamilton's direct response in his first video.

Why You should leave and join the Global Methodist Church: Videos by Rob Renfroe

1. The United Methodist Church is Divided and Dividing
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g48onYSqg0>
2. Our Differences Regarding the Bible
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P35XdF873NQ>
3. Our Differences Regarding Jesus
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNpmGxE8D88>
4. Our Differences Regarding Sexuality
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjOd-fOgAJI>
5. Why It's Time for Traditionalists to Leave
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw5Y4fMRJtQ&list=PL0tdBSkYKNUka0KiJ28rSUM1H1hdc3MUs&index=5>

Why you should stay and be proud to be United Methodist: Videos by Adam Hamilton

1. Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: Why UMC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62qtzyBVCv8>
2. Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: Love of Scripture
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us12L0Tsw_c
3. Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: Committed to Christ
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK7-cTdawU&list=PLYx1IY4ptubjGvzbjKkJ8otHGHAht5EXn&index=4>
4. Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: Human Sexuality
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK7-cTdawU&list=PLYx1IY4ptubjGvzbjKkJ8otHGHAht5EXn&index=4>
5. Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: A Future with Hope
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbNchQ-V4GE&list=PLYx1IY4ptubjGvzbjKkJ8otHGHAht5EXn&index=5>

Video giving reasons to disaffiliate.

Rev. Jeff Greenway, pastor of Reynoldsburg UMC.

Click on the link below and scroll down the page until you find the video entitled: "Informational Gathering"

<https://reynoldsburgumc.com/gmc/>

Video about what we can be certain of in the United Methodist Church

Produced by the Texas Annual Conference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8hSY7N9-WQ&t=78s>

Ask The UMC, Is the United Methodist Church Really...?

Articles put out by the UMC answering frequently asked questions surrounding the issue of disaffiliation.

Part One: <https://www.westhioumc.org/united-methodist-church-really-part-1>

Part Two: <https://www.westhioumc.org/umc-really-part-2>

Part Three: <https://www.westhioumc.org/umc-really-part-3>

Part Four: <https://www.westhioumc.org/umc-really-part-4>