

Our Beloved United Methodist Church

Like many of you, I grew up in the United Methodist Church. I was baptized as an infant, grew up through Sunday School and United Methodist Church camp. After college, I joined a United Methodist Mission Program and have always been connected to our denomination. When it comes to my faith, like a mom, the United Methodist Church birthed, raised, and ordained me. At ordination, I vowed to serve God and the Church through the United Methodist Church and cannot imagine my life within any other denomination. I have been blessed with four different and each of them wonderful appointments. Since July, I have discovered Avon UMC to be a fantastic community of faith. I continue to look forward to serving and loving God and each other here at Avon UMC. You have already enriched my life, supported my family, and revealed to me your love and compassion for God and other people. Thank you so much for being God's people here.

Last week, a report came out describing a proposal to separate the United Methodist Church into two (possibly more) future denominations. The first denomination would remain as The United Methodist Church and presumably alter the discipline around human sexuality. The second would be a "Traditionalist" Methodist denomination. Of course, this proposal made national news. And many of us are wondering what this means for Avon UMC and our faith life together.

First, this latest proposal is just one of several proposals that may come to vote at General Conference in May. This proposal is not more official than any other proposal. In fact, the authors of the proposal specifically say that they are representing only themselves and not the United Methodist Church or any affiliate group. The strength of this latest proposal and its call to separate into two denominations will rest upon its ability to gain support before and during the upcoming General Conference. At this point, it is impossible to predict the likelihood of this proposal being adopted.

What does it mean for us at Avon UMC? First, we will seek to keep you informed about what is happening on a national level. This is important because a lot of media outlets do not understand how the United Methodist Church works and thus can communicate some things incorrectly. We will seek to rightly understand what is going on and communicate that with you. Secondly, the Avon UMC leadership will actively seek God's guidance as we navigate through this in a faithful manner as a church.

All of us, we are called to live out the faith of Jesus Christ together. That is the church I still love. A church that seeks to give its life to Jesus! You may discover that not everyone agrees, but we can still love one another. In fact, that is the very message of 1 Corinthians 12–13. Declaring Jesus as our "Way" is not just words. It means that we walk through every obstacle and every celebration in the way Jesus would walk. Jesus walked through this world by always being connected to the Father and loving absolutely everyone. Jesus walked with mercy, forgiveness, and the knowledge that God is with us bringing about God's kingdom. Thus, I invite us to walk in these ways. We can reveal Jesus to the world by the way we walk through life.

I am asking that the leaders of Avon UMC keep God and Avon UMC first and foremost as we go through this time together. I am asking that all of us walk with love, respect, and a desire for God's will. And of course, I am asking that everyone prays. As prayer is how we place our lives in God's hands. We will not ignore what is going on nationally. We will seek to walk through it together. Thus, again, I am asking all of us to love as God loves.

Thank you for being my church as Avon UMC is my family's church. I am happy to be one in Christ with you.

Pastor Danny