

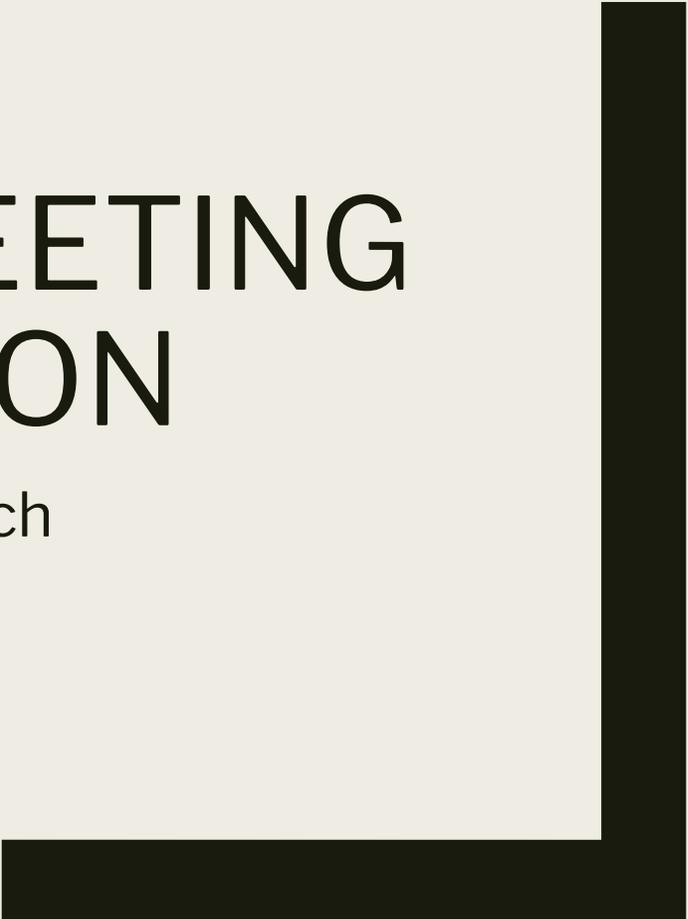


**Bethany United Methodist Church
Berwick, Pennsylvania**



INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON DISAFFILIATION

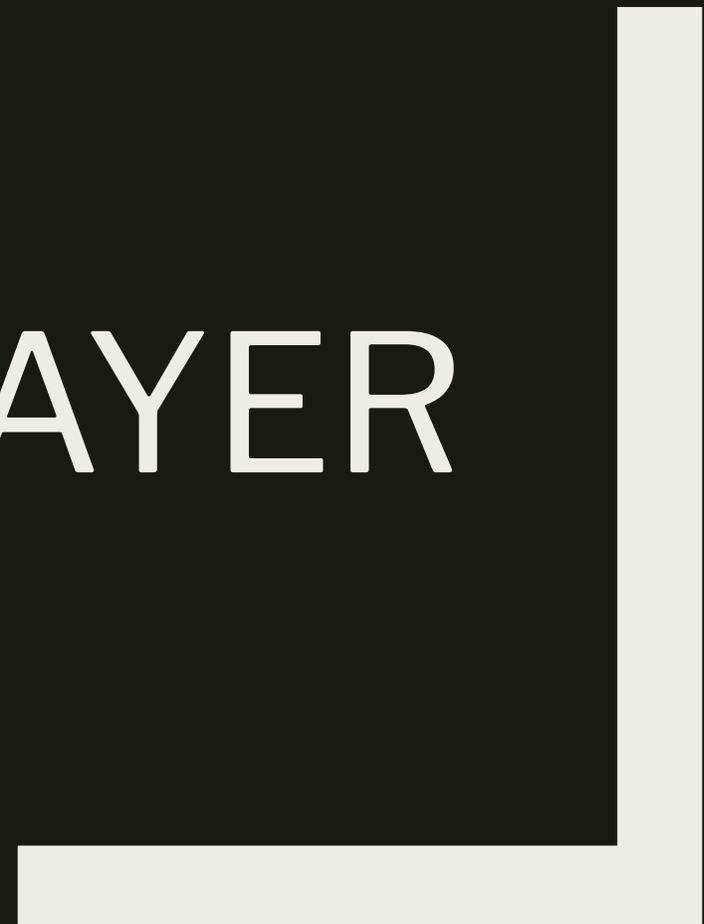
Bethany United Methodist Church
Berwick, Pennsylvania
Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022



Agenda

- Opening Prayer
- Background
- Disaffiliation
- Costs
- Consequences
- Next Steps
- Timeline
- Motion
- Closing Prayer

OPENING PRAYER



BACKGROUND



Background

- Why we are here:
 - *The UMC is leaning toward changing its stance on the question of ordaining and marrying openly gay and lesbian persons.*

Background

- 2019 Book of Discipline allowed for ***disaffiliation*** from the denomination — only for issues related to human sexuality.
- Susquehanna Conference requires materials by **March 31, 2023**.
- Disaffiliation must be completed by vote at Annual Conference **May 17-19, 2023**.

Background

*Bethany UM Church
does and will continue to
welcome and affirm
the sacred value of ALL people,
regardless of sexual orientation.*

Background

- The UMC first addressed the issue of homosexuality at the 1972 General Conference.

Background

- Current policy, according to the Book of Discipline:
 - *“The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.”*
 - *Pastors may not be “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” and may not conduct ceremonies that celebrate same-sex weddings or unions. Such ceremonies also may not be held on church property. (2016 Book of Discipline, Par. 304)*

Background

- Policy is ignored by some UM bishops with no consequences.
- Debate on the policy is expected at General Conference in 2024.
- We cannot predict the outcome.

Background

- The issue distracts from our mission of helping people to see, accept and grow in the light of Christ.
- The lack of clarity on the issue may prevent some church goers and seekers on either side of the issue to avoid UMC churches — including Bethany.

Background

- Staying with the UMC will likely mean that Bethany could be served by gay or lesbian pastors and be expected to marry same-sex couples.
- Those worshippers who do not wish to accept this have the option of leaving the denomination.

DISAFFILIATION



Disaffiliation

- Disaffiliated churches are no longer part of the United Methodist Church.
- Churches may become independent or join another denomination.

Disaffiliation

- Why now?
 - *Until recently, it appeared it would cost as much as \$1 million to disaffiliate.*
 - *A new formula presented by the Conference Trustees makes it more affordable for Bethany to consider.*

Disaffiliation

- Trust Clause

- *Since 1784, the Methodist denomination has held property of affiliated churches “in trust” to ensure continued use benefiting the entire church.*
- *Local churches DO NOT own their property.*

COSTS



Costs

- Disaffiliation would require paying UMC:
 - Apportionments
 - Two additional years of apportionments*
 - Property
 - 1% of appraised cost of property (\$28,000)*
 - All costs of transferring property*
 - Pension Liabilities
 - Pro rata share of aggregate unfunded pension obligations*

Costs

- Estimated total cost for Bethany to disaffiliate:
 - *Just over \$150,000*

COSTS

- Potential funding sources:
 - *Bequest*
 - *Gift*
 - *Capital campaign*

Council estimates that we have two-thirds to three-quarters of the total amount.

CONSEQUENCES



Consequences

- What would we gain by disaffiliating?
 - *The congregation would be free to minister and make disciples according to our interpretation of scripture.*
 - *We might become an independent church, creating our own bylaws according to God's leading, or we may choose to join a similar denomination.*

Consequences

- What would we gain by disaffiliating?
 - *As an independent church, we could hire our own pastor.*
 - *Depending on the direction chosen, we may no longer be under a trust clause and could instead own our buildings outright.*
 - *Funds raised by the congregation could be dedicated to ministries of God's leading and our choosing.*

Consequences

- What would we lose by disaffiliating with the United Methodist Church:
 - *We would no longer be connected to worldwide ministries of the UMC.*
 - *We would have to obtain property and liability insurance on our own.*
 - *We would be responsible for hiring our own pastor.*

Consequences

■ Pastor Steve's Status

- *The pastor should not factor into the decision whether or not to disaffiliate.*
- *If the church decides to disaffiliate, the Pastor and the Church Council will need to enter negotiations. The church needs to decide first before Pastor Steve will be able to make a decision.*

NEXT STEPS



Next Steps

QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 27

Church Sanctuary

Next Steps

CHURCH CONFERENCE VOTE

6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30

Church Sanctuary

Next Steps

- Only members may vote.
- Disaffiliation requires ***TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY VOTE*** of professing members.
- Members must be present at the church conference to vote.

Next Steps

- After the church conference vote on Nov. 30
 - *Pastor Steve invites the congregation to remain in the Church Sanctuary after the vote to debrief and explore the next step.*

Next Steps

- Submit questions for Nov. 27 meeting:
 - *Return the question card today.*
 - *Email questions by **noon Tuesday, Nov. 22**, to bumc@pa.metrocast.net.*

TIMELINE



Timeline



CLOSING PRAYER





We are a beacon for God —
helping people to see, accept
and grow in the light of Jesus Christ!