

Discernment Team Questions Part II

- Why is voting on this issue being labeled divisive?
 - Voting by definition is divisive. Voting is designed to settle disputes. When you vote, there is a winner and a loser, that divides. The necessitation of a vote to disaffiliate leads to inherent divisiveness.
- Assuming that we get to vote. Who from our church will choose the tellers? Who will be responsible for the tabulation of votes?
 - (The following answer was emailed from Rev. Donald Smith, Southeast District Superintendent)
 - There will be a vote unless the church decides through its leadership that it does not need to have a church conference. The pastor or leadership can choose the tellers. The teller's (2-4 depending on the number of members present) only responsibility is to collect the ballots. Ballots are given to the members when they arrive and are checked in. The pastor may appoint someone to count the ballots, or I will assign it to someone when I get there. I have on occasion used tellers to count. Ballots are counted in the front of the church where everyone can observe the count. Depending on the number of ballots cast we may need two counters. We will need one or two observers (usually a church official). Their responsibility is to watch while the ballots are counted and verify any discrepancy presented (illegible or unmarked ballot). I am there to direct the proceeding. To date I have not had any problems or challenges with the process. Total time from beginning to completion (with over 120 members present) was approximately 22 minutes. Preparation is key. Having the church roll at the registration table(s) with alphabetic separations helps expedite the registration. You need at least 3-4 people doing registration.
- We have been told that if the discernment team recommends that the church should vote, the administrative board must approve their recommendation. What happens if the vote is split?
 - In the event of a tie vote by the administrative board, the motion would not pass. There must be a majority.

- I want to know who the people who were nominated as leaders of First United Methodist church who the members trust to conduct and lead our church, would vote to take away the voice of the members who support this church? We the members are the CHURCH!
 - The administrative board is vested with the authority to accept or deny the recommendation made by the discernment team. Should the admin board vote to proceed with a vote to disaffiliate, all members of SFUMC will get to vote at the designated church conference.
- True or False: If we stayed with the United Methodist Church and we created a policy that we wouldn't allow LGBTQ persons in leadership or to be married in our church, our tithes would still be going to support the organization that allows LGBTQ persons in leadership through the money we have to pay to the United Methodist Church.
 - The proposed assumption is not necessarily true. The church has the autonomy to determine which designated fund(s) their tithe goes to. For example, if SFUMC wants 100% of the church tithe, which is submitted to the North Alabama Annual Conference, to be designated to Birmingham Southern College, the local church has the ability to do so.
- The below scriptures say that homosexuality is unacceptable. What scriptures tell us that it is acceptable, especially in leadership?
 - Romans 1:26-27
 - 1 Corinthians 6:9
 - 1 Timothy 1:10
 - Matthew 19:4-6
 - The verses listed above are part of what are commonly referred to as “clobber verses.” There are many resources available that offer different, yet integrity-filled, methods for interpreting these (and other) biblical passages that seem to establish a firm theological stance related to the matter of human sexuality and same-gender sexual orientation. Along with the Bible, the SFUMC discernment team has utilized the following resources in guiding our work and conversation. You are invited to incorporate these resources into your Bible study as you dive deeper into this matter. (The “papers” linked below are used by

permission from Rev. Dale Cohen, Senior Pastor at Florence First UMC, Florence, AL)

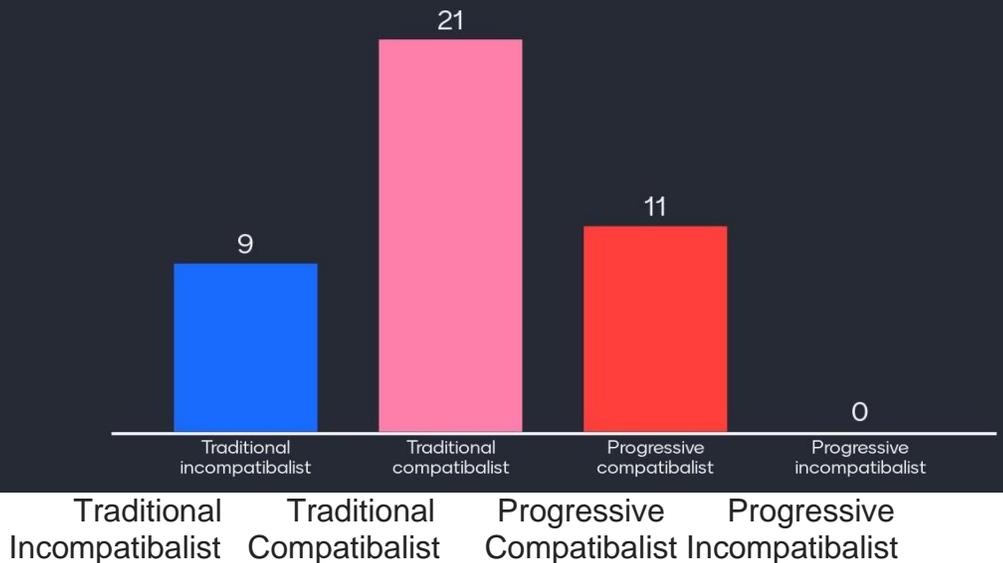
- [Paper on Biblical interpretation - 1 Cor. and 1 Tim.](#)
 - [Paper on Biblical interpretation - Leviticus and the Holiness Code](#)
 - [Paper on Biblical interpretation - Romans](#)
 - [Living Faithfully: Human Sexuality and the United Methodist Church by Alex Joyner, et. al.](#)
 - [For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body by Timothy C. Tennent](#)
 - [Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same-Sex Relationships by Karen R. Keen](#)
- Jesus was the only man without sin. That said, what other “sins” should bar someone from holding a leadership role? A glutton, a drunk, a liar, a womanizer, an adulterer, a thief, a pedophile, a rapist, a murderer?
 - In all transparency, the discernment team was a bit confused by this question. Is the author asking if we should “grade” sin; i.e. which sins are worse than others? Is the author requesting perfection of any/all church leaders? The exact question being asked is unclear. However, what seems to be clear is the need for high moral character among church leaders, which the discernment team agrees should be a priority—church leaders, with God’s help, should strive for and display a high degree of moral character.
 - Who are the voting members of the administrative board that will be voting on the discernment team recommendation?
 - Earl Lewis (admin board chairperson)
 - Steve Persons (lay leader)
 - Erin Hathcock (SPRC chairperson)
 - Randy Tankersley (lay member to Annual Conference)
 - Ryan Coleman (trustee chairperson)
 - Travis McKay (finance chairperson)
 - David Simpkins (worship and arts director)
 - Leslie Lucas (children’s ministry director)
 - Chrystal Whitehead (youth ministry director)
 - Dolly Perry (recording secretary)
 - Andy Curtis (pastor)
 - Judy Jones (at-large member)
 - Jim Nail (at-large member)

- Carolyn Etress (at-large member)
- What were the results of the poll taken during the congregation update this past Sunday? We couldn't read the numbers and the results were not provided.

How would you describe Sylacauga First UMC?



Which best describes you?



Where are we?

Traditional incompatibalist - traditional view of human sexuality; cannot be in fellowship with a denomination or persons who share different views on the matter.

Traditional compatibalist - traditional view of human sexuality; though important, doesn't view the topic as essential and can be in fellowship with others who have different views.

Progressive compatibalist - believes monogamous same-gender relationships are ok; though important, doesn't view the topic as essential and can be in fellowship with others who have different views.

Progressive incompatibalist - believes monogamous same-gender relationships are ok, and sees full inclusion of such persons as a justice issue; cannot be in fellowship with a denomination or persons who share different views on the matter.

- This information is also available on the “Discernment” page of the SFUMC website, <https://www.firstmethodistchurch.com/general-5>

- On the papers y'all gave us Sunday, concerning the congregational vote (church Conference) it specifically said "2.3 of the members present & voting." This contradicts a statement made by the preacher during a previous meeting when he said "those not attending the conference will be counted as a NO vote." Please verify which is correct. I understand that by not attending it SEEMS to mean the person does not care one way or the other but those NOT present do not get an ACTUAL vote. Correct?
 - There is no proxy or absentee voting. Voting members must be present for the Church Conference which is scheduled for March 9th @ 6pm. If members are not present, they do not get a vote. To pastor Andy's knowledge, this has been the message expressed all along. If a different message was conveyed or received, it was unintentional and a misunderstanding.
- What is the single best argument to Stay UMC?
 - We love the UMC, its open hearts, open minds, and open doors; there is no reason to disaffiliate from the UMC based on the parameters of paragraph 2553; those parameters are not applicable for a traditional congregation which exists within an Annual Conference that is abiding by *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* such as the North Alabama Annual Conference.
- What is the single best argument to Leave?
 - The consensus seems to be that due to distrust and fear regarding what may occur at GC2024, leaving will allow disaffiliating congregations to fulfill the individual church's mission without interference from the progressive agendas set by some UM leadership.
- Will we be able to look at a sample ballot to see how the wording is to make sure people understand what they are voting for?
 - (The following answer was emailed from Rev. Donald Smith, Southeast District Superintendent.)
 - The church can make ballots on 3x5 pieces of white paper. Wording should be consistent requesting only one vote. See example below. The vote is only to remain or leave (disaffiliate) with/from the UMC. They are not voting on who they will align with. If the vote is to disaffiliate, the church decides where and who it will align with after the vote.

Date: March 9, 2023

As a member in good standing of:

○

Sylacauga First United Methodist Church, my vote is the following:

_____ REMAIN UMC

_____ DISAFFILIATE – in accordance with ¶2553 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*

- If the Discernment Team advises the Administrative Board that their recommendation is to not leave the United Methodist Church and the Board approves by their vote, does this stop a vote by the Congregation?
 - Yes
- If this church disaffiliates, what Sunday will be our pastor's final?
 - If disaffiliation occurs and all obligations are met by the May 1st deadline, SFUMC will be disaffiliated from the North Alabama Annual Conference on May 11th. If this occurs, the Sunday prior to May 11th could be your pastor's last Sunday.
- How much will it cost us to leave UMC?
 - The financial obligation for SFUMC's disaffiliation from the North Alabama Annual Conference is **\$111,047**. This total does not include additional fees related to the establishment of a new religious entity and/or other "new church" expenses that may become necessary after disaffiliation occurs.
- The results of the info poll were 9-21-11-0. Why is there still a strong push to stay UMC from a small group that can live with the other side?
 - This particular poll was merely a representation of those present in the room at that time. It was not intended to serve as a representation of the overall congregation. At the information

session, there were 61 people in attendance. Of those present, 41 (of the 61 present) voted. As well, that meeting didn't require membership to attend or participate in the poll; however, the church conference requires full and professing membership.

- In answer to the question what's going to happen to the kindergarten, you give an answer if disaffiliation occurs. What if disaffiliation doesn't happen and dozens of families vote by leaving?
 - Though the question being asked is unclear, the discernment team believes the following should clarify: The kindergarten is a self-sustained entity and not reliant upon the tithes collected by the church. The kindergarten reimburses the church for utilities, insurance, HVAC, worker's compensation, etc.