



Conley's United Methodist Church

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Monday, January 23, 2023

Dear Conley's Church Family,

As most of you know, there has for many years been an ongoing debate in The United Methodist Church (UMC) regarding issues of sexuality and the marriage and/or ordination of LGBTQ persons. In recent years, this debate has reached the point where the UMC is seriously considering dividing into two or more Methodist denominations. In light of this, many congregations are considering disaffiliating from the UMC . . . and some have already done so. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the UMC, of which Conley's is a member, offers a "discernment process" that assists churches to inform members of all the issues and options pertaining to this decision. After months of discussion and prayer, Conley's Church Council decided to take advantage of this offer.

Members of Conley's should have already received a letter from District Superintendent Joseph Archie inviting them to an Informational Conference.* This conference is the first step in the discernment process. Details about dates and times for this and succeeding steps in the process will be made available to church members as we proceed. To be clear: ***no decision has yet been made*** beyond the decision to call the congregation together to seek to discern God's will for our church. When the time comes to make a decision, every member of Conley's UMC will be able to cast their vote in person.

The decision to enter the discernment process was not made lightly. Your Church Council understands that there are differing views within our congregation. Indeed, it is for this reason that a thorough and thoughtful discernment process is important – we want to ensure that every member of our congregation has accurate and current information, and is afforded the opportunity to have their voice heard. Participating in this process empowers Conley's United Methodist Church to make an informed decision.

So, what do we do in the meantime? "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near! Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition and with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7). Simply put: keep on being the church. This is an important decision . . . but not so important that it

should be allowed to hinder the much more important call of God to love and serve one another and our community. In obedience to God's Word, let's commit to being a non-anxious presence in our community and in our denomination, remaining in the peace of God that outmatches every earthly challenge. Let's continue in conversation with one another - with gentleness and respect to all, let's each endeavor to increase our understanding of the issues and of those who hold differing viewpoints. Finally, let's earnestly pray for our denomination and our church; may God's will be done in all things.

Peace,
Pastor Bill Davis

** If you are a member of Conley's UMC and have not yet received the District Superintendent's letter, please contact the church office to confirm your membership status.*