



## Conley's United Methodist Church

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Monday, April 24, 2023

Dear Conley's Church Family,

As you are aware, Conley's has recently engaged in a Process of Discernment regarding whether we should disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. All members of our congregation were encouraged to participate in a four-week class to consider all the pertinent issues. At the conclusion of the class, participants--though they had deep disagreements over a number of issues--overwhelmingly indicated a preference for remaining with the United Methodist Church for the time being. Then, on April 1<sup>st</sup>, our District Superintendent, Rev. Joseph Archie, led a forum in our sanctuary where everyone had the opportunity to ask questions and to be heard. Following the forum, Conley's Church Council conducted an informal poll (via email and in person) regarding Conley's decision whether to proceed to an official vote on disaffiliation. Again, the overwhelming consensus among those who gave feedback to the Council was that Conley's should not disaffiliate at this time. Based on this information, the Council unanimously voted at their regular monthly meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to end the disaffiliation process, effective immediately. I informed Rev. Archie by telephone the following day and Council Chairperson, Bob Marx, officially notified him in writing.

There are multiple reasons why people were led in this direction, including but not limited to:

- The desire to see what happens at the 2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, at which time we will gain more information regarding both the Denomination's policies regarding human sexuality and the process of disaffiliation moving forward.
- The desire to focus on encouraging and growing the current, exciting new ministries of Conley's Church, and to protect these ministries from the discouraging and divisive machinations of denominational politics.

- The current financial requirement to disaffiliate is exorbitant and unjust; 50% of the market value of Conley's properties would need to be paid to the Peninsula-Delaware Conference by the end of calendar year 2023.
- A preference to remain true to the United Methodist Church, whether we be in agreement with United Methodist doctrine or in dissent.
- The belief--after much prayer and consideration--that this is the path on which the Spirit of God is leading us, as demonstrated by overwhelming consensus within our congregation.

As your pastor, I have been pleased to observe the care this congregation has given to this issue, and I offer a heart-felt "thank you" to those who actively participated in the process of discernment. What could easily have become a contentious situation, was informative and peaceful throughout. You have encouraged me. And, more importantly, I am sure that the spirit of gentleness and respect you exhibited for one another while engaging this controversial (and, for some, very personal) topic was pleasing to God.

In difficult times, people are easily tempted to pursue agendas and belittle others, to score points and make statements. Conley's can be grateful that God has blessed us with a spirit of unity. This has enabled us to diligently seek to discern God's will with grace. In a particularly difficult time in Israel's history, the prophet Jeremiah offered assurance that God always has plans for God's people, "plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). In the midst of uncertain and troubling times, be assured that God has good plans for Conley's United Methodist Church!

Peace,  
Pastor Bill Davis