



To the congregation of Newnan First United Methodist Church:

*Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphant procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing Him. II Corinthians 2:14*

As many of you are aware, there have been ongoing discussions about the direction of the United Methodist Church and its potential effects on Newnan First United Methodist Church. There are differences within our church and conference, often unspoken, that are causing potentially irreparable division; the lack of direction is a distraction to the church's mission.

Our Church Council believes that on especially difficult issues, **communication is key**. As a congregation, we should be able to state our beliefs, based primarily on a thorough interpretation of scripture, and be able to stand by our beliefs with a conviction that we can share when welcoming non-believers.

The United Methodist Church has a detailed and longstanding process for addressing potential changes to the Book of Discipline, the large volume which governs and structures our denomination. This process is conducted at the United Methodist General Conference with much debate, consideration, and oversight. **Making changes to the Discipline is out of the purview of any individual, church or Annual Conference.**

Therefore, our Church Council was disappointed by the recent decision of our Bishop to stake out a specific position for our Annual Conference while inviting those with different views to Come to the Table and discuss the issue. The declaration gives the impression all are invited to the table as long as all are willing to eventually conform to the Bishop's view. We are willing to engage in honest and loving conversation regarding all key issues but we want the conversation to be meaningful.

**We as a church will continue to follow the current United Methodist Book of Discipline.**

Specifically, in relation to the Bishop's recent comments, this means:

1. **We affirm the United Methodist Discipline which upholds two millennia of Christian doctrine by stating that holy matrimony is to be between a man and a woman and endorses scriptures' command of celibacy in singleness (161.C).**
1. **We confirm our Church Discipline which requires high moral standards for clergy (304.2, 304.3).**

It is time for our church to begin the process of determining our path for the future. Therefore, we would like to announce **the formation of an education committee to facilitate an open and inclusive**

Thursday, May 27, 2021

**conversation, rooted in love and respect, among all members of our church.** Our goals are to educate our congregation about all sides of current issues, our church's current stance on those issues, and to give the Church Council insight into the congregation's concerns. It is possible that our church will have to make a decision regarding our future direction, whether that is staying with the United Methodist Church, joining the newly formed Global Methodist Church, or some other option. We understand the Church Council may not be representative of every different view within our congregation; therefore, we plan to hold forums for discussion. If you would like to learn more about and to be part of these discussions, look for updates from our education committee in the coming weeks.

In closing, your Church Council hopes to ensure that Newnan First United Methodist Church will remain a church united and empowered by the Holy Spirit, serving all people of our community and the world, and recognizing Jesus as both our Lord and Savior.