

Who We Are...

The Discerning the Future Task Force members..... 1
Mission Statement..... 1
The Purpose/Role of the Conyers First Task Force..... 1

What Will Guide Us...

Guiding Principles.....2
Scripture to Guide Us..... 2
Ground Rules..... 2
Q&A Process..... 3

Where We Are Going...

Three Phases within The Discerning the Future with Key Dates..... 4
Phase 1: Introduction..... 4
Phase 2: Education..... 4-5
Phase 3: Call to Action.....5-6

Thanks to the folks of McEachern UMC for developing this document for their own church discernment process. The Discernment team has adapted it to fit our context at Conyers First UMC.

The Discerning the Future Task Force Members

Pastor Chris Shurtz, Senior Pastor

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Mission Statement:

Our task at hand is to inform and educate the congregation to be able to make a decision of disaffiliation or not based upon heart and mind. We will equally inform both perspectives.

Purpose/Role of the Conyers First Task Force

- Establish ground rules for the discernment process at Conyers First and teach these to the congregation
- Review, consider and discuss large volume of information that is “out there” on disaffiliation
- Discern information to be shared with the congregation
- Assemble/prepare collection of information and tools for use by congregation in discernment process -
- Disseminate information to congregation
- Facilitate events aimed at informing the church on the issues surrounding disaffiliation
- Teach congregation how to receive information

Guiding Principles

Be Heard.

Be Loved.

Be Informed.

Be Blessed.

Scripture to Guide Us

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV) - Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ 1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ground Rules

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you will be able to discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2 (NIV)

1. Begin each session with a time of prayer, seeking openness to and guidance from the Holy Spirit.
2. All involved in the decision-making process are invited to listen respectfully to all perspectives presented.
3. The decision before our church will be clearly described and defined, taking great care that everyone understands the facts as they are currently known and the decisions to be made by church council and by the membership of the church.
4. Thoughtfully and lovingly share with your Conyers First Family what you have seen, heard and felt in your personal reflection time.
5. Humility is crucial to our discernment process and should be exhibited by all involved at all times.
6. Spend time in quiet reflection and prayer, listening for God's intimations about the future and hints of God's direction.
7. Great care should be taken to ensure that this time of dialogue and discernment does not negatively impact the ministries and mission of Conyers First, which should remain the primary focus of our church body throughout.

Q&A Process

-FAQ page on church website will be continually updated based upon new and updated information

- Questions can be submitted online via the church website portal. Please do not expect a response from every single question. Questions will be addressed through the posted FAQ or at a live meeting

-Please opt-in to receive updates and access to this portal on the church website

- Recordings of all meetings will be posted on the church website and/or our Youtube account.

-Cards will be available to write down questions and submit at each live meeting but they will be reviewed for duplicity and time restraint purposes

Three Phases within The Discerning the Future with Key Dates

Phase 1: Introduction

Information Sessions and Listening Sessions over the Summer of 2022.

8/27/22 Leadership Board Retreat

Time: 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

-Leadership Board prayerfully decides to go forward with the Church Conference vote to potentially disaffiliate from the UMC in the Spring of 2023.

9/1/22 – 9/15/22 Nomination Team calls for a new Disaffiliation Discernment Team to help the church become educated of two choices of staying in the UMC or disaffiliation from the UMC to join with another Methodist denomination.

10/02/22 - 10/16/22

Congregation Survey

-Designed to properly inform the Leadership Board with feedback from the congregation on numerous topics -Paper and online version

10/16/22 Leadership Board

6:00 p.m.

Meeting to present The Discerning the Future Plan

-Handouts of The Discerning the Future Plan will be made available to each attendee

-This info will be posted on our church website as soon as the Leadership Board approves The Discerning the Future Plan

Phase 2: Education (Updated)

*The following events are stand alone and serve a specific purpose - they are NOT duplicative

10/1/22 - 11/23/22

Scheduled Updates and Special Events

11/24/22 - 12/31/22 Advent and Christmas Season of Prayer

1/1/23 - 2/28/23 Continued Education

Phase 3: Call to Action

-Following education and the presentation of survey results by the Task Force, the Leadership Board will meet to determine next steps in our Discerning the Future. The Leadership Board has decided that Conyers First UMC will submit a formal request to the District Superintendent that he conduct a Church

Conference wherein the membership of the church shall be given an opportunity to vote on disaffiliation from the UMC.

1/1/23 - 2/28/23

-Per the guidelines set forth by the North Georgia Conference, such a request shall be made by the Leadership Board, between January 1, 2023 and February 28, 2023.

3/1/23

-The District Superintendent shall begin the process of scheduling church conferences for those churches requesting a conference on disaffiliation, set to ensure completion and efficiency (not based on when a request is made). Conyers First Church Conference on disaffiliation will occur sometime after this date. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

May use this info later when we set up events. Chris

9/18/22 *New Date

Theological Issues

- Presentations from Rev. Dr. Alice Rogers and Rev. Glenn Hannigan
- Designed to address theological issues raised through disaffiliation discussions
- Venue: Sanctuary
- Time: 6-8 pm
- Managed and moderated Q&A from questions submitted on website or through written cards
- This event will be recorded and live streamed
- Website will be updated after this meeting is over and the tech team has had time to post the recording and upload any additional information

3. 10/02/22 *New Date

What is Disaffiliation, Why Now and Practical Implications?

- Designed to address logistical and practical considerations surrounding the decision to remain UMC or disaffiliate
- Presenters and format TBD but will be announced beforehand

10/23/22

8/21/22

Forum with 2 presentations - 45 min each

Venue: Sanctuary

Time: 6-8 pm

- Managed and moderated Q&A from questions submitted on website or through written cards
- Informational handouts from each perspective will be printed and available to each attendee
- This event will be recorded and live streamed
- Website will be updated after this meeting is over and the tech team has had time to post the recording and upload any additional information