

**Central UMC Administrative Council June 5, 2024
7:00pm**

Call to Order - Phyllis Wilburn

Opening Devotion and Prayer

Ministry Celebrations of Living our Vision and Mission - Sharing Together

Our Vision: Helping People to Find and Follow Jesus

Our Mission: "We exist to CONNECT, GROW, SERVE, GIVE, and GO so that all may know God's love through Jesus Christ!"

Agenda Items:

1. 2024 Overview Update

2. Discussion of Survey Results from Congregation

3. Our Next Steps

5. Lay Leader/Staff Pertinent Reports

6. New business: Finance Recommendation - Local Budget Fund

2024 Scheduled Administrative Council Dates: (Subject to Change)

July 16: 6pm

Sept 17: 6pm

Dec 10: 6pm

Closing Prayer

Lay Leaders

Lisa Thompson - Connect
Kara Scheetz - Grow
Steve Abercrombie - Serve
Jennifer Hensley /Joel or Karlee - Give
Shelia Borders and Steve Rodier - Missions
Tim Sayers
Danny Lantz

Trustees

Staff Parish

Staff Reports

Central Kids	Hannah Collins
Central Students	Michelle Garcia
Worship and Music	Lindsey Blocker
Associate Pastor	Audrey Madigan
Lead Pastor	Scott Layer

Pastor Report for Council - Scott Layer

1. We are not the same church we were about 6 weeks ago. Since General conference decisions, we are not as strong as a church.
2. I believe there is more that unites us than divides us.
3. I believe many of you have been praying and seeking God on our behalf.
4. The divisions in the church over human sexuality that were always there have now come to the forefront at Central and other UMC churches.
5. We know that this division is emotionally and spiritually painful for everyone.
6. We know our common enemy is Satan, not other Christians. (Eph 6:12)
7. We know God can redeem and use all things for his good (Rom 8:28)
8. Some churches are having no reactions to GC changes. Possible reasons include:
 - they are more centrist or progressive congregations,
 - people have left over the past few years who would have objected
 - people have not been as informed,
 - they have pre-decided not to talk about it to not have conflict,
 - or they are more apathetic and/or have bigger issues.
9. There are other churches within Holston Conference and within United Methodism that are experiencing reactions to General Conference. Many medium to large churches who have a diverse membership are having conflicts. We are not alone.

Francis Asbury, one of the first bishops of the Methodist Church in America, in his book *The Causes, Evils, and Cures of Heart and Church Divisions* written in 1849,

“if ever the church is healed of its wounds, it must be the the peaceful disposition of the pastors and people. If ever men come to a peaceable disposition, it must be by peaceable doctrine and principles, by a full and frequent explication of the nature, pre-eminence and power of love; till love be made their religion, and become as the natural heat and constitution of their souls. To promote this, the aged, experienced and ripe kind of ministers, and private kind of Christians, must instill it into young Christians and scholars, so that they may have nothing so common in their ears and studies as unifying love.”

Therefore, we need to bring resolution to our local body as soon as we can for its healing and for the love of its members. Some of this is not within our control; some is. That is the primary purpose of our meeting tonight, to respond to the congregational survey, to listen to the words shared, have discussion, and lay out a course of action.

I also believe that we need to two things at once. We need to bring resolution and we need to continue to live into helping people find and follow Jesus.

As council knows, our three main focuses for 2024 in addition to growing our front door by reaching people and helping them get connected into the life of the church are:

1. Lead our Church Through General Conference
2. Greater Mission Engagement by our church
3. Establish Intergenerational Ministry

It seems to me that we cannot do number 2 and 3 until we get through 1. This is a tentative timeline I see for the rest of 2024

May/June/July

- GC Response
- Congregational Survey
- Temperature Check?
- Vote on Discernment

August - December

- Discernment Process ?
- Help Us Heal
- Rebuild Ministry Teams
- Refresh our Vision

Preaching Plan

June 30 - July 28 Summer Playlist

Aug 4 - Sept 8. Faith & Doubt (Helping People Find)

- Is it ok to Doubt?
- Can Science and Religion be reconciled?
- Can We Trust the Bible?
- There Can't be Just *One* True Religion
- How can a loving God send people to hell?
- How could a Good God allow Suffering?

Sept 15 - November 3 Practicing Christian (Helping People Follow)

- Around 63 percent of Americans self identify as Christians. Some surveys put the number who are following Jesus at around 4%.
- What does it mean to be a practicing Christian?

Other:

1. **Companion Study for Practicing Christian: Practicing the Way.** This 8 session course will be offered in midday groups, week night groups and offered to Sunday school classes to participate in. This will flesh out spiritual practices in a smaller community.
2. **Small Group Kickoff - Sunday School Promotion - August 4**
3. **Habitat Build** (ongoing)
4. **Grief Share Group** - Katie Bellnier-Thomas. 13 Week group helping people process their grief.
5. **Fall Confirmation Class:** August- December
6. **Hands on Mission Backpacks for children in Costa Rica** - September
7. **Friday Night Worship Night** - Friday Oc 4
8. **Falloween Outreach** - Oct 27
9. **Hanging of the Greens** - Dec 8
10. **Combined Christmas Worship** - Dec 22

Central UMC Survey Results

A. Who?

- Mailed to 245 Households.
- Received 154 surveys were completed representing 167 people
- Of 167 people, 160 were members, 7 were non-members
- Some people are very active, somewhat active, a few inactive and online only

B. What 2-3 things do you like best at Central? (This is our DNA, our values)

1. Hospitality

- *"I Love the people! That is what was most attractive to me was the friendliness"*
- *"Everyone is insanely friendly"*
- *"Friendly, loving people. Diversity of ages, beliefs, social-economic"*

2. Love (Fellowship, Care, Family)

- *"We've made long lasting friendships and shared bonding experiences."*
- *"The people at CUMC are caring, friendly and generous."*
- *"I feel like I truly belong. I feel like I am a part of the church body"*

3. Mission

- *"Central lives its mission statement!"*
- *"I love how mission focused we are, serving the needs of our community and beyond."*
- *"We have an outward focus. Members are involved. We 'walk the talk'."*

4. Worship

- *"Worshiping God with the church family restores and feeds my soul. We love the musical talent"*
- *"Thought provoking messages and prayers"*
- *"A Christ Centered Church"*

5. Discipleship/Growth (Sunday School, Groups, Bible Study, Children, Youth)

- *"I am impressed by the quality of activities for the children and youth of our church."*
- *"I enjoy the small groups that are available for a wide range of interests."*
- *"Bible centered preaching and teaching."*

6. Service

- *"Central is a great church with an awesome church family. I feel compelled to serve here over anywhere else"*
- *"Our focus on serving is evident by the number and variety of people who volunteer for church projects and in the community."*
- *"Central's commitment to serve the community"*

7. Generosity

- *"Our congregation is amazingly generous, giving to the general budget, faith promise, and any other project any group is leading."*
- *"We feel like Central represents what organized religion should be."*
- *"I like that we support so many missions."*

3. How concerned are you with the changes that were made at General Conference?

<u>Very Concerned</u>	<u>Somewhat Concerned</u>	<u>Not Concerned</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
71	20	48	17

4. What comments that you want to share with Administrative council that all help us as we move forward?

a. Disappointment

- *We were disappointed in the communication from Holston Conference, our pastors, and our administrative council.*
- *Disappointed that we could not enter into discernment in 2023.*
- *I feel the Methodist Church has left me*
- *Disappointed by the reaction of some members.*

b. Celebration

- *GC made the right decision to give each local church autonomy.*
- *I hope and pray Central continues to welcome everyone.*
- *I embrace the General Conference decision to be a inclusive church.*

c. Biblical Authority

- *General Conference has adapted to the culture and away from scripture*
- *The church has relaxed its definition of marriage, abortion, and not supported Israel. The fact that the UMC is saying homosexual behavior is not a sin is a big issue for me.*
- *I can't support the general church financially based on GC decisions.*

d. Fear

- *We have a great church. I'm afraid this will tear us apart.*
- *I pray that we can remain the church we are.*
- *Our church family has not changed, please don't let this divide us*
- *It saddens me that some departing are my friends.*
- *Fear of the future, who will our pastors be, our bishop,*
- *Satan is attacking our church using the homosexuality wedge issue to split the church. It doesn't matter which side of the wedge a person is one as long as the wedge works. We need to refocus on the gospel, bring the kingdom of God to earth by being the body of Christ.*

e. Teaching is Needed

- *What does the Bible say? Explain the doctrine*
- *Where do our pastors stand?*

f. Discernment Process

- *I wish that we would enter discernment process and consider disassociation.*
- *I fear going through discernment process could cause additional harm.*
- *I would like us to vote to see where the congregation stands.*

g. Future Participation

- *If we stay UMC, I will have to find another place to worship*
- *If our church votes to leave UMC, we will leave.*
- *I'm staying - This is my church and I don't plan on leaving it.*

SAMPLE

Date

Dear Central Members:

In response to our recent information survey distributed on May 19, 2024, your administrative council has decided to "take the temperature" of the congregation to determine who can continue or not continue to be part of the United Methodist Church as the result of the recent changes to the Book of Discipline.

Therefore, we will have a meeting with a temperature check taken on June 30, 3 pm. in the Worship Center. This temperature check IS NOT A VOTE to enter discernment regarding disassociation. This will not have any standing with Holston Annual Conference. Nothing can be done regarding discernment or disassociation until the Conference Trustees have developed a plan for churches to leave the United Methodist Church. No such plan has been completed. The trustees met on May 21 and approved a disassociation process framework and discussions are continuing to fine tune specifics. The goal is for the new Board of Trustees to give final approval for the process when they meet later in June.

In order to take part in the temperature check you will need to be a member of Central Church and be present on June 30. Responses will be made on a confidential ballot and the result will be announced before the end of the meeting.

In summary, this is not a vote but an opportunity to express your views. As soon as we hear from Holston Conference Trustees, we will communicate the information to the congregation. In terms of Central UMC, we will continue our ministries which are bearing fruit: Sunday worship, invitations to discipleship, small groups, children's and youth ministries, and mission ministries just to name a few.

Please continue to pray as Central moves forward in helping people find and follow Jesus.

COMMUNICATION

Wednesday, June 10

Mail and email letter to members

Sundays, June 16, 23, 30

Announce meeting in worship services

Sunday, June 30

Temperature check meeting

LOCAL BUDGET FUND

While we as United Methodists are a connectional church, we recognize there are some in our body who wish to support their local church, but not the larger United Methodist Church due to the recent General Conference decisions. With this in mind, the Finance Committee has established a new fund called Local Budget Fund which will be used only at the local level to support the expenses our church such as salary support, ministry support, missions, ministries, and operating expenses like telephone and utilities. No monies will be applied to anything but local needs.

Please write "Local Budget Fund" on your check or envelope. There will be a new choice on the online giving website as well.

If you have any questions, please call the Finance Department at the church.