

Pastor's Corner Winter 2023

Dear Lake Toxaway
family and friends,

Our denomination, the United Methodist Church, has wrestled with many issues over our 54-year history. We again have found ourselves in a place of discernment over the issue of human sexuality and various Biblical and theological understandings.

The Administrative Council at Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church has examined our current denominational situation and at the present time supports keeping our connection with the United Methodist Church rather than seeking a route of disaffiliation and moving to another expression of Methodism.

While I support this decision, I think it wise for us to attempt to gain some insight to the current position of our constituency on this matter. We are sending you condensed and accurate information in this newsletter so you might be better informed. If you

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research independently, please be careful with your resources as unfortunately there are groups that have circulated false information in an attempt to harm the body of Christ.

This newsletter will be followed in a few days with a short, electronic survey from pastor@laketoxawayumc.org (powered by Survey Monkey) to get your input. Please be honest in your responses because we want to truly understand the congregation's sentiments on this matter. To move to a vote for disaffiliation, we would need to have consent from our District Superintendent, Dr. Mark Rawls, with significant indication we have a 2/3 margin of individuals connected as full members ready to be physically present at a meeting and ready to vote for disaffiliation.

As the pastor at Lake Toxaway UMC, this issue has taken much energy and time for many committed lay individuals. I thank God for their work, study, prayer, and discernment! Whether we agree fully on this present issue, I pray we

Disaffiliation Communication

This special Winter edition of LTUMC Newsletter focuses on issues of conflict that are and have been going on within The United Methodist Church for 50 years. In 1972 The United Methodist church banned the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy in the church's Book of Discipline. Since that time the issues of conflict around human sexuality have only intensified and become so deep that today they are unreconcilable.

The links to six articles chosen for this newsletter allow you, the reader, to get as much information about this subject of conflict within the church as you care to have. The articles are sequenced so that if you only choose to read first or second articles, you will get a good overview, or you can go deeper, reading as much as you like. One word of caution, if you choose to turn to the internet for additional reading, make sure that you understand the source of information on this subject and what their special interest might be. Much of the internet content on this subject matter is exaggerated, overstated, and out of context. The articles presented here have been chosen because they are objective, and fact based.

The first article [What's next as NC churches leave the United Methodist fold? | Raleigh News & Observer \(newsobserver.com\)](#) is from the Raleigh News & Observer. The article is dated in late November 2022 and provides a good overview of what is going on with The United Methodist Church in the North Carolina Conference.

The second article [Is The United Methodist Church really...? \(Part 1\) \(umc.org\)](#) is from The United Methodist Church and responds to basic questions from congregants about what is going on within the church and what is not. The next article [Is The UMC really... ? \(Part 2\)](#) is also from UMC and is of a similar format. This article deals with the specific issues around human sexuality that are causing the conflict within the church.

The third article [What should United Methodist congregations know about disaffiliation? \(umc.org\)](#), also from UMC, breaks down the mechanics of disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church and what is required of churches that choose to pursue disaffiliation. And finally, the last two articles [Is The United Methodist Church really...? \(Part 3\) \(umc.org\)](#) and [Is The United Methodist Church really... ? \(Part 4\) \(umc.org\)](#) use the same format to answer questions that the church has received from congregants about disaffiliation and other related topics.

You probably have questions regarding the topic of disaffiliation within The United Methodist Church and the leadership of LTUMC wants to give you a forum to get those questions answered. To do just that, we are dedicating the covered dish dinner scheduled for January 10th to have an open discussion of these issues and give everyone an opportunity to ask questions of Marcus and the leadership. If you are out of town and cannot attend the covered dish dinner then perhaps you can call in on a Zoom call scheduled for Friday, January 13th at 9:00AM. Both opportunities together should give everyone in the congregation an opportunity to get their questions answered.

can remind ourselves of the word "United" in our denomination's name and prayerfully agree to continue to love each other as Christ taught and as we have in this unique mountain church. Whatever your opinions and Christian conscience, I hope we can remain united in our love of Christ and each other and one in ministry to all the world! I recognize some individuals may decide to leave Lake Toxaway based on the decisions made. I respect your opinions and encourage you to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in answering the Survey Monkey questions.

I came into the United Methodist Church from another tradition. One of the ways the Holy Spirit brought me to this denomination was the distinctive Wesleyan ways of doing theology and our historic focus on outreach to the poor and marginalized. I found it spiritually invigorating to hear loud debates and disagreements at conferences and gatherings, but then watch as disagreements were placed on hold as Christians came to worship and gather at the Communion Table of

We want to know your opinions regarding the splintering within The United Methodist Church and so at the end of the week on January 13 we will be sending out a survey to all congregants of LTUMC to get your opinion regarding the issue. The survey will be short and should only take one minute to answer the very few questions. Please look for the survey on January 13 and please take a minute to respond.

Recap of important dates:

January 10th – 6:00 PM Covered dish & opportunity to ask questions

January 13th – 9:00 AM Zoom call to ask questions

January 13th – LTUMC survey to be emailed during this week

Letter from Leadership

From: LTUMC Lay Leadership
Paula Markert, Lay Leader
Scott Walter, Lay Leader
Tom Blackstock, Administrative Council Chair

Date: December 30, 2023

To: The Congregation of LTUMC

The leadership of LTUMC has been staying abreast of the issues and conflicts surrounding human sexuality within The United Methodist Church. As part of the Administrative Council, the leadership body of LTUMC, we have had numerous discussions about the issues and the process of disaffiliation available to local churches, also called Paragraph 2553 provision. At this time, we do not believe that it would be in the best interest of LTUMC to pursue disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church.

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church has been deeply rooted in The United Methodist Church for as long as anyone can remember, and probably since its inception. These are difficult times for The United Methodist Church, but the conflict is not new and has been with us since the church banned the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy in 1972. The governance processes of the church have not handled this issue very gracefully, but we have hope that the issues will be resolved in the next few years.

The process of disaffiliation would be very disruptive for our church. Churches that have gone through the process have found it to be very divisive and at its conclusion these churches have lost many members. We would like to minimize that outcome for LTUMC. God's work at LTUMC is alive and well and church leadership believes that it is in the best interest of LTUMC to stay the course and not disrupt the good work of the church.

our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I received new wine in the reminder I did not earn my place at the table but rather came by the invitation of Christ who welcomed and ate with sinners. I have decided to remain a United Methodist pastor. My future will be in the United Methodist Church, and I trust God to use me for many more years in His service. I hope it will be with Lake Toxaway UMC.

I love each of you and recognize the holy privilege I have in serving among you. I look forward to the exciting future the Lake Toxaway UMC has; there are some very exciting things taking place! God is at work!

Faithfully,
Marcus



We know that congregants are on both sides of this issue and that regardless of what we do, we will lose membership because of deeply rooted opinions. This issue and discussions around it will not go away any time soon and as a result, your leadership would like to know where our congregants stand. On January 13, we will be asking everyone to participate in a simple survey. This is not a decision-making vote of any kind, just an opinion survey which will be very helpful for understanding the views of the congregation. We hope that you will choose to participate when you receive your survey through email.

Please join with us in prayer for our church during these difficult times and pray for a more settled future that will continue to enable us to do God's Work.

Tom Blackstock Paula Markert Scott Walter

Finance Committee Update

Andy Harvill, Finance Committee Chair

John Lefler, Treasurer

The Finance Committee is happy to announce another excellent year of giving and Outreach support for the community.

The wonderful year-end response to Pastor Marcus Dodson's message of need in the last few months, along with generous giving from our church family during the year has fueled this success.

You exceeded our gifting budget by over \$17,000, and we committed the majority of that to additional community support. Our church provided \$172,692 in 2022 for Outreach; a much-needed help during a very difficult year for many in our area, nation, and around the world. We continue to comply with our commitment to 50/50 operational expense and Outreach. ***This is the third consecutive year that Outreach has exceeded our 50% goal.***

Thank you so much for your generous donations!



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Physical address: 174 Cold Mountain Rd.
Mailing address: P O Box 83
Lake Toxaway, NC 28747