

January 9, 2023

*Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ!*

*I am writing to you once again on behalf of the administrative council of SDUMC. I wanted to share with you that no action was taken towards disaffiliation at our December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Discussion was held and no vote was taken. It was decided that the council wanted more time to hear from the general membership their thoughts on disaffiliating. I hope to provide some information and some resources you all can look at and reach out to me or any council member and share your thoughts.*

*At our February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting the council will vote whether or not we will take the first step of the process to call Rev. Dr. Gomez our District Superintendent. If the council votes to not call the D.S. then the process will end and we will remain part of the UMC. If we vote to begin the process, the D.S. will come and hold an informational meeting with us to explain the process and give us a number of what it would cost us to disaffiliate. (Our best prediction puts this number around \$150,000) After that there are at a minimum 30 days of discernment. The church would only disaffiliate if we held a church conference where 2/3 majority of active members voted to leave the UMC. From there it would need approval from a special called annual conference. The process is a bit hard to follow but these are the basics. This particular process does expire at the end of this year. There are other ways a church can disaffiliate apart from this process but this is the easiest way currently available.*

*The issue spurring on this denominational strife is the issue of members of the LGBTQ+ community serving as pastors and leadership within the church. There are other issues of distrust of denominational leadership and the unknown of what will transpire at the next general conference in April 2024.*

*I want to give you some of the reasons for disaffiliating and reasons for remaining UMC along with some resources for your own information gathering.*

**Reason to leave the UMC:**

*Concerns of LGBTQ+ in leadership roles in the church.*

*Concerns of leadership within the denomination and the direction the denomination is heading.*

*Currently the VAUMC owns the property. If we disaffiliate we will be given the deed to our properties.*

*The Church would be able to hire a pastor on their own.*

**Reasons to remain in the UMC:**

*We would remain part of a connectional church that works together in ministry and mission around the world.*

*We would have access to the resources of the UMC connection.*

*Pastors would be appointed and credentialed from the conference and receive benefits of retirement and health insurance through the conference.*

*We would retain our non-profit status and operations under the umbrella of the UMC.  
This list just scratches the surface.*

*Below are some resources and links I encourage you to read through to be better informed. I must also warn you, there is a lot of mis-information out there.*

<https://vaumc.org/general-conference-2022/>

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-series-is-the-umc-really>

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2022/11/01/exiting-virginia-united-methodism/>

<https://apnews.com/article/religion-gay-rights-marriage-1ed8df15ecbb36700cbe638b29dc6617>

*I have been very proud to witness the way these conversations have been shared within our church and at council meetings. We have been able to all sit around the table and not always agree but there is still love and a familial feel from everyone involved. This is a tough time we find ourselves in. Let us all breathe deep and sense where God is calling us.*

*If you have questions or wish to share your opinion please contact me or one of the council members.*

*Barry Davis, Leon Miller, Dixie Miller, Mick Dick, Ed Roach, Dale Cupp, Sandy Cupp, Sue Olson, Matt Krantz, Lacey Roberts, Phyliss Reeves, Kenneth Reeves.*

Blessings,  
Pastor Tommy

Tommy Lewis-Crosby  
Senior Pastor Sunset Drive UMC  
pastortommyboy@gmail.com