

UMC Update

& Lead Team Recommendation on Discernment Process

November 14, 2022

We are learning from Jeremiah...

GOD SPEAKS

(Really. We believe that.)

Lead Team
exists to listen, learn, and advise.

Recent Work of the Lead Team

- Understanding impact of denominational issues
- Exploring ways to lead church through this time



The Lead Team consists of

- **Pastors + Exec Staff**

- Tom
- Stella
- Don
- Thomas
- Kevin

- **Committee Leaders**

- Ramona Hovey (Ad Board Chair)
- Chris White (Ad Board Vice Chair)
- Scott Morgan (Finance)
- Jim Murray (SPRC)
- Rita Thompson (Trustees)

- **Worship Service Representatives**

- Sat 5:00 Nancy Wright
- Sun 8:45 Linda Winn
- Sun 11:15 Matt Poole

- **At Large Members**

- Danielle Cowan
- Paul Deere
- Paul Draper
- Tamra Kerns
- Larry Russell
- Charles Schroeder
- Sue Thomas

Recommendation

The Lead Team is recommending that the Administrative Board vote to enter into a Discernment Process.

God SPEAKS through the events of history.

We have been listening for God's leading in what has happened in the UMC so far.

1968

**UMC
formed**

Differing viewpoints come together, with difference built into the system.

1972

**Statement on
Human Sexuality
Added to BoD**

Discord has occurred at every General Conference since.

“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Paragraph 161 (G) BOD

A Brief History Lesson

1968

**UMC
formed**

Differing viewpoints come together, with difference built into the system.

1972

**Statement on
Human Sexuality
Added to BoD**

Discord has occurred at every General Conference since.

2016

**Portland
General
Conference**

Disagreement about human sexuality comes to a head. Bishops asked to propose a plan for a way forward.

2019

**Commission
on a Way
Forward**

Bishops propose multiple plans; the Traditional Plan prevails. Disaffiliation process hastily added. Churches and conferences resolve to disobey/resist.

2020

**Protocol for
Grace through
Separation**

A plan is developed with a mediator, but does not get a vote because General Conference is postponed due to COVID.

2022

Fracturing

Conference delayed again; tensions rise; protocol loses support. Global Methodist Church launches to receive traditional churches exiting denomination.

A Brief History Lesson

What Now? [Part 1]

- Externally, people are seeing many changes
 - Many churches have voted to leave the denomination
 - Many more are in their own discernment process
 - The landscape continues to evolve
- Internally, people are feeling the consequences of inaction
 - Many within our church are already having discussions
 - Incomplete information and inaccurate understanding is increasing anxiety
 - People within our church are considering leaving or have left

What Now? [Part 2]

- Par. 2553 in Book of Discipline (added GC2019)
 - Allows churches to amicably disaffiliate over issues related to human sexuality
 - Expires on December 31, 2023
 - Requires local church Discernment Process, set by their local Annual Conference
- Rio Texas “Discerning Pathways” Discernment Process
 - Requires a six-month process of prayer, learning, and listening
 - Any vote to leave requires $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of present, voting congregation members
 - Any decision to disaffiliate must be ratified at Annual Conference
 - Our only Annual Conference session in 2023 is June 6

What Now? - [Part 2 Timeline]



What happens if we wait?

- Bishop Schnase has stated that there is no rush. We believe he has the best of intentions.
- As a way to “get around” the deadline of Par. 2553, the Rio Texas Conference is proposing to use Par. 2549 (a rule used for churches that are closing their doors). It requires a church to close, give all property to Annual Conference, and then buy it back for a nominal fee.
- Unproven in this context, and recent history suggests this could be sent to Judicial Council for review.
- If we don't decide tonight to start the discernment process, and the use of Par. 2549 as an amicable way of leaving is struck down by Judicial Council, there are no other apparent options should the congregation wish to disaffiliate.

Recommendation

The Lead Team is recommending that the Administrative Board vote to enter into the Discernment Process outlined by the Rio Texas Annual Conference.

Discernment

is the act of listening to God
to decide a course of action.

We find God's will, not our own.

Discernment

does NOT mean we are deciding to leave.

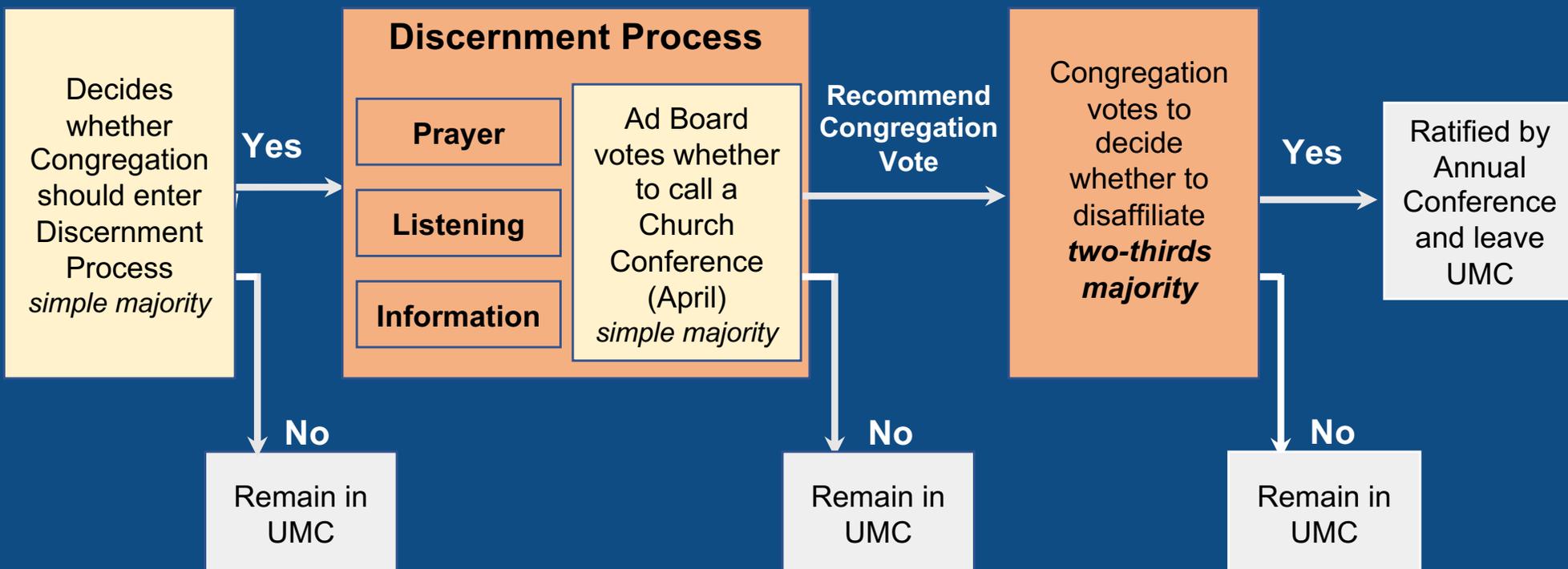
It means we are creating time and space to intentionally listen to God and each other.

Rio Texas “Discerning Pathways” Process for Bethany

Ad Board

Congregation (Nov - May)

Congregation (May)



Expected sequence of events based on current documented process. Subject to change if situation changes.

Process Summary

1. Tonight, Ad Board decides whether to start a Congregation-wide Discernment Process
 - a. If Yes, Congregation enters six-month process to discern God's will

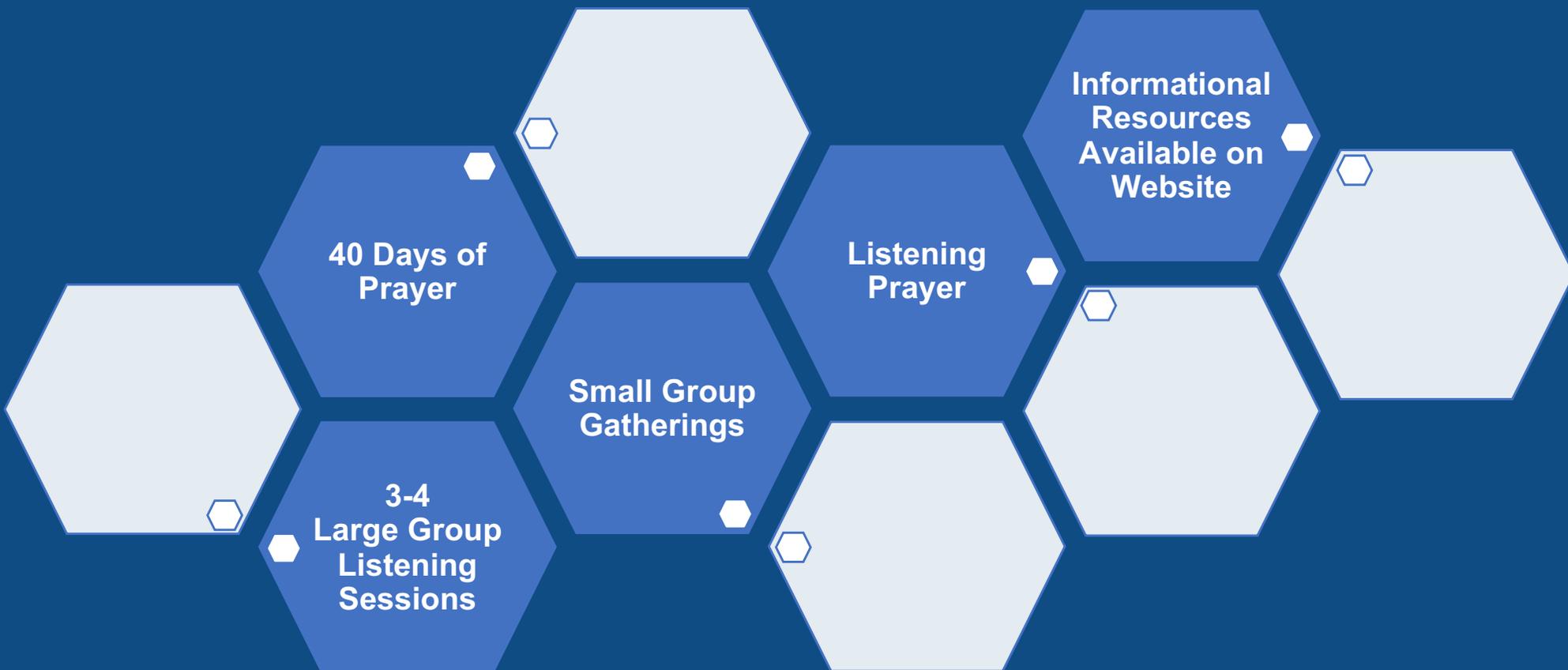
1. In April, Ad Board decides Next Steps
 - a. If Ad Board chooses to move forward with a Congregational vote, Congregation will vote in May on whether to remain in the UMC or disaffiliate, and if so, where to go

1. If Ad Board votes "No" tonight, or decides not to call a Congregational vote in April, the process stops and Bethany remains in the UMC.

We are in the UMC

- We do not have to vote to **stay** in the UMC.
- A vote is only required if we want to consider a different affiliation.

Discernment Process Elements



Discernment Process Commitments

1. Seek God's Will for Bethany

- Operate from a place of trust rather than fear
- Ask for His guidance to determine what is best for Bethany

2. Create Safe Places for All to Express Their Viewpoints

- Acknowledge differences within Bethany
- Assume each person is acting with good intentions

3. Openly Consider Potential Pathways

- Educate ourselves about the possible options
- Be honest about the uncertainties and challenges

Remember Jeremiah...

God was with them
as a united kingdom,
as a divided kingdom,
in exile,
in rebuilding.

Their relationships changed, but their mission did not.

We can move forward without fear, knowing God will work
in and through our church as we determine the best
alignment.

“His word is in my heart like a fire shut up in my bones and I am weary of holding it in.”

- Jeremiah 20:9

Questions and Discussion

Guidelines

- Raise your hand and we will bring a microphone to you.
- Be concise.
- Be respectful and assume noble intent.
- Focus questions on information you need clarified for tonight's decision.
- Ad Board will be voting, so we ask that preference first be given to Ad Board members.

Questions and Discussion

Motion Made on Behalf of the Lead Team

The Bethany Lead Team recommends that the Administrative Board vote to begin the Rio Texas “Discerning Pathways” Discernment Process immediately to seek God’s will in determining whether Bethany should remain in the United Methodist Church or seek an alternative.