



FIRST UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH ALBANY

Dear Albany First Family,

We held our Church Conference earlier today to vote on matters of affiliation and disaffiliation with the United Methodist Church. After nearly a year of corporate discernment, including prayer, learning, and conversation, **the members of Albany First voted by 90% of ballots cast to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church.**

Out of the 494 ballots cast, 446 voted to disaffiliate, 46 voted to remain, 1 abstained, and 1 ballot was invalid.

What does this mean for our church? First, very little will change in our experience and mission. We will worship as we always have, serve our community, gather for fellowship, and be served by our pastors and staff.

Second, our disaffiliation must be approved by the South Georgia Annual Conference at the special session on May 21st. Our actual disaffiliation will take effect in July of this year.

Third, in the coming weeks, our Church Council will assess our next steps in affiliating with another Wesleyan/Methodist denomination. We'll be sharing information with the congregation for further discernment.

One of my dear friends reminds me **there are no winners or losers in congregational votes, just decisions made through discernment and hope for the common good.** I wholeheartedly agree. While we have decided to separate from the United Methodist Church, we can remain united as a church family. I believe that God has a beautiful and powerful future in store for our church. As I said in my recent article, "[The Day After](#)," we can lean into God's plans for us *together*. That will take some deep work, but I know our church well enough to know that we want to do it and can do it.

There is grief and hurt among us. For some, grief that the situation had to come to this. Others are hurt and grieving about the decision we made. We need to recognize that and make space for healing. If you voted to remain in the United Methodist Church, please know that I love you, your church loves you, and you are an important part of our congregation. I pray that you'll stay and be a part of the family you've been a part of for so long. Our church needs you, and you need the church.

If you voted to disaffiliate, please remain aware of how other people are experiencing this moment. Also, please remember that this season of discernment has been but a waypoint in the greater journey of our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and offer Christ to the city. We move forward with clarity and hope.

Finally, **be in worship this Sunday** if you will be in town. Sit in your same spot in the same sanctuary as we worship Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

I love you, dear ones. Thank you for being such faithful partners on this challenging journey. I look forward to journeying with you into the future God has in store for us.

With love in Christ,

Jim Morrow
Senior Pastor