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ARKANSAS CONFERENCE

Greetings in the name and spirit of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

United Methodists in Arkansas find ourselves in an interesting season. On the one hand, there is amazing ministry occurring not only in local congregations, but throughout our state as we connect together in mission. On the other hand, we are in a tender time as congregations have the opportunity “for reasons of conscience related to human sexuality” to utilize legislation adopted at the special called 2019 General Conference to consider disaffiliating from the denomination through December 31, 2023. This is a hard and painful process that is breaking my heart. I also believe it is breaking Jesus' heart because He created the church to live in unity. Sadly, however, it is the reality in which we find ourselves.

To date, fewer than 10% of our churches have formally entered into the discernment process that may or may not lead to a vote on disaffiliation. I believe the vast majority of congregations in Arkansas, as well as most Arkansas United Methodist Christians, will choose to remain in the United Methodist Church.

Those who remain will include those often identified as centrists and progressives, because they have been clear in stating their intent to stay in the United Methodist Church. There will also be many moderates and traditionalists who will stay part of the United Methodist Church. They value their deep relationships with those in their congregations who may have a different theological perspective, embrace a Wesley understanding of the Christian faith, and long to be a part of our vital ministry that makes disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world. Quite simply, their deep love for connection transcends individual divisive issues. I am grateful for all of these individuals and congregations. At the same time, however, I know that good and faithful Christians are sensing that their future is not with the United Methodist Church.

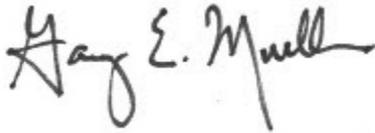
I have been consistent in stating that I want to see congregations land where God is leading them as easily and quickly as possible, even if that means leaving our denomination. However, discerning God's vision requires persons engaging in deep prayer, study, and holy conversation over a period of months. Two things are essential as congregations embark on this process. First, it must be open, transparent and fair; especially for those who have a perspective different from the majority in their church. Second, it is the work of the laity as they truly seek God's will and not just an exercise of going through the motions to arrive at a predetermined outcome.

You will find below in-depth and important information for laity, pastors and congregations contemplating the possibility of entering into a discernment process concerning their future. It is

organized into topics that provide detailed information. If you have any questions, please contact your district superintendent as quickly as possible.

I continue to pray that those of us in the Arkansas Conference will be swept up by spiritual revival, renewed by a move of the Holy Spirit and become even more passionate about spreading the fullness of the Good News of Jesus' grace. I believe this is God's deepest desire for us and hope you do as well.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary E. Mueller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Gary E. Mueller
Bishop