



FIRST CHURCH Siloam Springs

A United Methodist Congregation

Dear Friends,

On June 7, 2022, our Church Council received a petition from a group of concerned church members which I have included with this letter. The petition requests that the church enter into a formal period of discernment regarding the future affiliation of the local church as it relates to The United Methodist Church. The Church Council voted unanimously to approve this request and have notified the District Superintendent of the desire to enter into a formal period of discernment.

So, what does this all mean and what does this not mean?

First, let me be very clear. No decision has been made to leave The United Methodist Church. The Church Council does not have that authority. There is an approved process for disaffiliation as outlined in paragraph 2553 of the *Book of Discipline* which permits local churches to disaffiliate from the UMC. This formal period of discernment permits a church to discern whether they wish to remain United Methodist or disaffiliate to become an independent church or to unite with another Methodist denomination.

Second, this period of discernment will include a series of at least three listening sessions where anyone who wishes to attend may do so in order that they may learn about the issues that have precipitated this season of discernment, the options the church has as it relates to its future, and through a straw poll at the end of this period of discernment to register their preferences regarding the future of this church. As we move forward through this period of discernment we will keep you updated via email through our weekly First Happenings e-newsletter including the dates of the three listening sessions.

Third, at the conclusion of this formal period of discernment should there be sufficient support for a change in the church's affiliation the church may hold a church conference where all professing members will be permitted to vote on the future of the local church as it relates to the United Methodist Church and/or affiliation with any other Methodist denomination.

Finally, this is a poignant and transformational time in the life of this congregation. Please make plans to be at our three listening sessions. I will plan to remain after Worship this Sunday, June 10th to answer questions you might have. Please treat others who might disagree with you with the care of brothers and sisters in Christ. Most of all, please pray daily for our church as we struggle to discern where God may be leading us next.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Clark". Above the signature is a small, simple line drawing of a fish, the symbol of the United Methodist Church.