



February 23, 2023

Dear Church Family,

Earlier this evening a joint meeting was held between the Church Council and the Board of Trustees to discuss two important developments that have been occurring over the last couple of months. As you are aware, our discernment process has been on pause since Dec. 29th at the behest of the District Superintendent (DS) until we could work through issues related to our Genesis campus. Those issues have led to an opportunity to bless and support Genesis Church's desire to spin off from Central and become its own congregation. The Trustees have recommended selling the property to Genesis for \$1 so that they can continue to use their resources for the needs of the Kingdom in South Fayetteville. The DS and the Annual Conference are supportive of this, as were those present tonight. It will be voted on at a called Charge Conference that has been scheduled for March 5th.

In the midst of that pause, some conversations began regarding the discernment process as a whole and whether there might be a willingness to consider some sort of resolution that didn't require a churchwide vote where one side "wins" and one side "loses." The reality is that no one wins with the disaffiliation vote. Regardless of the outcome, many members of Central would feel disenfranchised. Even if Central reached the required 2/3 threshold required to disaffiliate at a Church Conference, the Arkansas Annual Conference would still need to ratify the disaffiliation at a special Annual Conference in May. There is great uncertainty whether that would happen, given the outcome of the previous Annual Conference in November where three of the four largest churches on the list were denied the ability to disaffiliate. If that were to occur, Central would be left with the likelihood of possibly protracted and costly litigation or, for those who desire, to leave Central and form a new church.

With these options before us, leaders of our two advocacy groups met with the Senior Pastor Rev. Carness Vaughan and the Chair of our Board of Trustees Brock Gearhart to attempt to come up with a solution. Over a period of weeks and multiple conversations with the leadership of the groups, the advocacy groups as a whole, as well as with our District Superintendent and Bishop, they have collectively put together an "Amicable Reconciliation and Separation Agreement." This agreement was the other item discussed tonight at the meeting and also received wide support. It will be voted on at that same March 5th Charge Conference. In broad terms, this agreement allows for Central to remain a United Methodist congregation on Dickson Street while blessing and financially assisting the launch of a new evangelical independent Wesleyan congregation elsewhere in Fayetteville. As part of the agreement, those who plan to join the new church will be replaced on our various boards and committees by persons who plan to remain at Central. The new Staff-Parish Relations Committee would work with the Bishop and DS to provide for appropriate pastoral leadership for Central, while the current pastors would leave to be a part of the new launch.

The March 5th Charge Conference will be open for all church members to attend virtually in our overflow rooms on the first floor of the Wesley Building. Only those who are members of the Charge Conference, which essentially are persons who are members of the Church Council, will be allowed to vote. If you

have any questions or need more information, feel free to reach out to Central's Executive Director Brian Swain (bswain@centraltolife.com), Senior Pastor Carness Vaughan (cvaughan@centraltolife.com) or Board of Trustee Chair Brock Gearhart (bgearhart@greenwoodgearhart.com). Once the Charge Conference has met, you will receive a full update from our Senior Pastor and our District Superintendent or Conference official on implications moving forward. Please continue to be in prayer for our church in the days to come.