



GARBER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Date: October 6, 2022

To: the Garber Church Family

From: David A. Banks, pastor

Re: Last Evening Church Conference

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Last evening was a singular moment in the life and history of Garber Church. Our Church Conference voted to disaffiliate with the United Methodist Church. To me, this is a good decision, but it is heartbreaking. It is heartbreaking because it is a separation from the denomination we have known and loved for 54 of our 63 years as a Church. Only a very few of our church family remember when we were Methodist before we were United Methodist. While we are disaffiliating, may we always respect and cherish these 54 years of our Church's life.

The decision is also good as it situates us faithfully to worship, grow, serve, and love in continuity with what we have endeavored to be in Christ for all of our 63 years. For 63 years, we have endeavored to be biblical in our beliefs, faithful in covenant, and self-denying in taking up the cross and following Jesus. In this good direction, we are by God's grace wonderfully agreed as our vote indicated.

This decision reminds us and it establishes anew that Garber Church seeks to be a biblical people in our teachings. For love of Jesus Christ, our hearts are held captive to the Word of God. With John Wesley, we declare,

O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *Homo unius libri*. (A man of one book)

The decision reminds us and it establishes anew that Garber Church seeks to make disciples of all people; to welcome, love, care for, and invite all persons to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Shepherd of our souls sets the pattern of our following; he makes the demands; he gives the grace; he fulfills the promise that in everything God may be glorified.

The decision reminds us and it establishes anew that Garber Church seeks to live in continuity with our history. Garber Church always received and submitted to Discipline and joined in a greater ministry. From the day of our chartering in 1959, and before the chartering, we have been Methodists who accepted the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church. As Methodists and then as United Methodists, our heart has always sought to submit humbly to the leadership of the larger Church believing and knowing the bishops, the General Conference, and our annual conference had a spiritual stewardship for the souls of many people. It was this heart that led Ralph Morris in our early years to knock on the doors of church members to receive enough offerings for the apportionments. We knew intuitively that this fidelity to the Discipline, this submission was essential to our following Jesus as disciples.

Even in our decision of last evening, we sought God's glory as we kept the covenant of the Book of Discipline and followed the pattern set by our NC Annual Conference. This faithfulness and submission will continue to be in our spiritual DNA.

We hope all our members, constituents, and friends will remain and share in the journey of following Jesus. It is a great sorrow that some will not. For those who decide to leave, we pray God's care and

blessing upon them. Furthermore, we will do all we can, if they desire, to help them become established as faithful and devoted members in another congregation.

For those who remain as Garber Church, there are additional decisions yet before us. One is to decide our legal name. We are legally Garber United Methodist Church until December 31, 2022. Until the congregation decides in the near future what our new name will be, I will try to use our original name, Garber Methodist Church or our common name Garber Church.

The second decision is our destination. Our Church Council recommends The Global Methodist Church. Its Doctrine and Discipline are in continuity with our 63 years as Methodists. To be admitted, the congregation must agree to the doctrinal standards and social witness as presented in the Book of Doctrine and Discipline. We must also record in church minutes a majority vote desiring to join. The date of that congregational meeting will be forthcoming.

The third decision is not ours to make. The North Carolina Annual Conference must confirm our disaffiliation. Bishop Leonard Fairley has called for a special session to meet on November 19, 2022. The only purpose of that session is to act upon the disaffiliation of 90 to 100 churches. David Youngs and I will attend the annual conference session on behalf of Garber Church.

The threefold Methodist understanding of following Jesus remains. Sound biblical teaching, discipline, and self-denial are in the way of Christ. We reaffirmed these last evening. Hopefully we will reaffirm these yet again as we choose our denominational destination.

Thank you for all you have endured during these days. Even with all the hope that is before us, the days were at times very painful and filled with sorrow. I praise God for your deep faith and love for Jesus Christ, your love for one another, and your passion to serve Jesus Christ in offering his ministry of love to all people.

Your staff dearly loves you. I must commend their devotion to our Lord and to you. I must also commend and thank our Church Council whose leadership in a painful season has opened a very hopeful future for Garber Church.

Since December 31 is the effective date of disaffiliation, January 1, 2023 will be our first worship service in our new spiritual home with our new name. On that Sunday, we will worship using the covenant service. That service reminds us in the covenant prayer,

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Sincerely in our Lord Jesus Christ,



David A. Banks

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17