Pastor’s Pen by Nathan Custer

Do you remember reading from Shakespeare in high school and thinking, “Uhhhh – is this really in English!?” I made it through a college Shakespeare class only because I found books that had his original writing on the left and a modern translation with definitions on the right! Ha! I realize that our “denominational disaffiliation vote” discussion might feel like that these days. Until recently we might have gone our whole lives without ever using the words “denominational” or “disaffiliation” in a regular conversation! I’ll even admit that there are times when I see the denominational initials UMC at the end of our church’s name – Marysville First UMC – and my mind will think it's USMC…and then I picture Gomer Pyle from the funny TV show as the bumbling Marine declaring “Well Goooollllyyyyyyy!”

So here’s my best attempt to bring you up to date in as simple a way as possible, but there’s a twist at the end that’s REALLY complicated...so, no promises, but it’s my best attempt. You probably remember that years ago a grocery store chain called Big Bear went out of business as a corporation. In Marietta, OH, the local Big Bear building changed over to became a Giant Eagle. It was the same basic store with the same food -- and residents undoubtedly felt safer with an eagle grocer than they did with a bear! The people were excited to still have their beloved store and the groceries they loved and the bag boy that helped them – but the managers had new bosses with healthier new ways of doing things that kept the company afloat into the future. That’s the kind of change our Leadership Team and pastors are recommending we do: Keep doing the same great ministry here that we’re doing, but change corporate affiliation from the United Methodist Church (UMC) to the newly forming Global Methodist Church (GMC). You can see more about the GMC on their website GlobalMethodist.Org. It’s the same basic beliefs as the UMC but with tweaks in its organizational
structure to hold leaders accountable to them. (And now that talking about grocery stores made you hungry, grab a snack before reading on…!)

To change our denominational label as a church, a big meeting has to be called of all the Professing Members of Marysville First United Methodist Church. That meeting will soon be called by, and presided over, by a helper of our West Ohio Bishop called the “District Superintendent.” Whatever Professing Members are present in-person or online on Zoom, if allowed, on that day are the ones whose votes will count, and if 2/3 of those people vote “YES – DISAFFILIATE” then that result would be voted on at the November specially-called Annual Conference vote called by and presided over by the Bishop. So, if all of that happens, we would by next year be Global Methodist rather than United Methodist – but would keep doing our same ministries here, just like how the Marietta building changed from Big Bear to Giant Eagle.

Some folks will ask: WHY GO THROUGH THIS? We have a great church – why do this? And, don’t some people just want to stay UMC? And, while we’re at it, who really killed JFK? (just kidding – stick to the topic, Nathan!) Well, we DO have a wonderful church – but we’re trying to figure out how to keep it wonderful! The official United Methodist seminaries are producing pastors who often do not believe the way most of the people in our pews believe, and who often believe things very differently from pastor to pastor. For instance, within just our West Ohio Conference of the UMC, you can visit one UMC church whose pastor believes the traditional view that Jesus is God and human, born with God as his Father and Mary as his mother – but then go to another church whose pastor believes that Jesus was born of two human parents and was just a human who was greatly connected to God; and you can visit a church with a heterosexual pastor and a different one with a male pastor married to a man; and, you can visit a church that teaches that the only way to eternal life is through the Jesus of Christian teaching, but another that teaches that there are many various, valid ways to get to eternal life. Since our congregation gives well over $100,000 a year as our portion of UMC “apportionments” to support all of these types of churches and the seminaries that produce these wildly different pastors, and we care for our property “in trust” for the UMC denomination rather than owning it, and the Bishops now and into the future believe very different things one to another and can appoint here whatever pastors they so choose -- some see this as a very good thing (and so want to stay UMC) and others see this as a very bad thing (and want to disaffiliate and join a denomination like the GMC that would compassionately but clearly hold to the traditional views on these things).

Hopefully that makes it easier to understand both the WHAT and the WHY, but the really confusing twist comes in the HOW. I already touched on that a little bit – there’s a church vote, and then an annual conference vote (oh and a ton of paperwork that you don’t have to worry about…but I do…hooray…hal!). But additionally, according to the
Bishops’ interpretation of the *Book of Discipline* and especially paragraph 2553, we can’t just ask in the vote “do you want to disaffiliate: YES, or NO” – but we have to declare that the main reason we are disaffiliating is because *EITHER*: we disagree with the traditional/conservative position the current UMC has on sex (that it should only be between one man and woman who are married); *OR* we disagree with the lack of enforcement of that standard among clergy and other leaders by our Bishop and Conference staff. (The actual language is *more* complicated than that – but that’s my interpretation of the Shakespeare!)

Well, as I and our Leadership Team keep explaining, we support the traditional language about sexuality in the *Discipline*, so it is the second option – the lack of enforcement—that is a problem. But for us it is *A* reason not *THE* reason we want to disaffiliate from the UMC. As we’ve said, it’s just one of seven reasons, and isn’t even the most important reason. However, because of the Bishops’ directions to churches, we *HAVE* to agree to state that we are voting to disaffiliate because of our disagreement with the *lack of enforcement* of the *Discipline*s stance on traditional sexuality.

So, if you are a Professing Member and want to vote, you’ll need to decide which of these you want:

**YES – DISAFFILATE FROM THE UMC** – (I want to: support with our money and effort only the pastors & seminaries & ministries that hold to a traditional understanding of the Gospel and Bible and sexuality; *and* have greater accountability among our Bishops and pastors to ensure that traditional understanding is upheld; *and* own our property;).

**NO – STAY UMC** – (I want to: continue to have the Conference own our property; keep supporting with our money and effort the pastors & seminaries & ministries that hold to whatever view of the Gospel and Bible and sexuality that they choose to hold; and continue to give Bishops and Pastors very wide freedom to do and teach however they see fit relating to the *Book of Discipline* and Bible).

We were blessed to witness 21 new members recite their vows at the Combined Service on July 31. Please join us in welcoming them to our church,
We are Keith and Joanne Huffman. Keith was born and raised on a large livestock and crop farm in southwest Indiana. He then attended and graduated from Purdue University. After graduation, he entered the U.S. Army and served in active and reserve duty for 6 years. In April of 1958, he began his career with the USDA, training in Greencastle, Indiana (home of DePauw University.)

Joanne was born and raised in La Grange, Illinois. She began music lessons at the age of 9 and continued with that love of music while she attended DePauw University and majored in violin and viola; graduating in June of 1958.

A friend of Keith knew a friend of Joanne, and thus friends set them up on a blind date two weeks after Keith reported to Greencastle. We hit it off immediately and were married December 28, 1958. On our second date, Joanne asked Keith if he would like to join her for a church service on Sunday, knowing we were both raised in Christian church-going homes. We wanted to carry on that tradition.

During Keith’s career with the USDA, he was asked to accept a 6-month assignment to The Gambia in West Africa. This assignment was a joint effort between the U.S. State Department, FAO (a branch of the United Nations) and the USDA. Unfortunately, Joanne and the family were not permitted to travel with Keith. Keith ended up accepting the assignment. It was a lifetime of memories, gratification, experiences, and learning five different native dialects.

We decided to return to Ohio in 2013 to be near 3 of our 4 children and so that we could attend sporting events with our grandchildren. We have been Methodists for our entire married life. Our first Sunday back in Ohio, we attended Marysville FUMC. We were met, greeted, and welcomed and were very impressed. We decided to join “our church” a few months later. We have been involved in the church family since then. Joanne has played in the Joyful Music Ensemble, the bell choir and has sung in the choir. Keith has been an usher, served on church committees, leadership board, and has worked with the Bluegrass concerts since inception in 2013. We are both currently greeters. We have each taken opportunities to meet, greet, and welcome others to our church. Keith was greeting the day one of our neighbors chose to attend our 9 am service, and now they attend regularly.
Music has always been a part of our lives. Keith participated throughout high school in the band and the choir and all four years in the Purdue University military marching band and concert band. He played sousaphone and concert bass. Joanne began violin lessons at the age of 9 and maintained playing violin all through high school and in college at DePauw University. After we were married, Joanne taught lessons in strings and piano plus played in 3 state symphonies. Joanne now offers private lessons to two students.

We were blessed with four children, a son and three daughters, all of which with a college education. They have provided us with 8 grandchildren and a great granddaughter, Riley.

Volunteering has been an integral part of our lives and continues. We have benefited spiritually and socially by doing this. We are active in a bible study group and support the youth programs whenever possible (ie confirmation classes). We also love to travel, do wood working and support activities in our Walker Meadows community. Our travels have taken us to four different continents, enabling us to collect art, visit museums, and visit many religious cathedrals. Keith loves the outdoors and has enjoyed scuba diving and skydiving.

We were both brought up and raised in the Christian faith. If you believe, it is natural to follow Christ and take opportunities to serve others. Even though we came from vastly different backgrounds, our faith has always been a common thread in our lives.

Blessings, Keith and Joanne Huffman
During our combined worship service, 330 attendees enjoyed the beautiful sounds of Joyful Noise, The Choir, and The Praise Band and then had a fellowship luncheon following.

Transformation Zone was our first full in-person local mission trip since 2019. We had our friends from New Albany UMC join us in serving our local community and throughout Columbus. A few of our many service projects included making and delivering 20 beds to kids in Columbus, we collected 51 bags of canned goods for the Marysville Food Pantry, and we made 25 tie blankets to give with the beds we made, we served in three food banks in Westerville and Grove City. We packed over 5,000 meals with Life Line to send to Haiti. Our local church really stepped up by providing meals, baked cookies, and serving all week in the kitchen. Thank you to all who prayed, gave, and supported this valuable ministry for our church. We are looking forward to next year’s Transformation Zone. Please be in prayer for the Transformation Zone leadership team as we will begin our meetings for the 2023’s mission trip in the next month.
August Birthdays

2  Florence Allen
4  Dotty Stump
10 Carol Whitman
12 Dave Metcalf
   Dave Speicher
14 George Freeman
15 Beth Marshall
20 Gene Brumbaugh
   Ellen Traucht
22 Ken Stults
23 Gary Bowman
   Kathryn Shaw
30 J.L. & Liz Herron
   Max & Elaine Mohler
   Greg & Ellen Traucht

August Anniversaries

4  Dave & Pat Metcalf
18 Paul & Jackie Lazenby
   Bruce & Kae Zorman
30 J.L. & Liz Herron
   Max & Elaine Mohler
   Greg & Ellen Traucht

$1784.38 was donated during the Baby Bottle Campaign from our church, and over $49,000 from churches in Union, Logan, Franklin, Madison, Champaign and Marion.

Upcoming Church Events

Aug 7 5p-630p  Hymn Sing @ Kevin and Nancy Mabry’s house
                17850 Kleiber Rd Marysville, OH 43040

Aug 13 8a       Men’s Breakfast please register on the church website

Aug 21          Promotion Sunday in services

Aug 25 1130a-1p  Senior Luncheon in BFLC (Gym) please RSVP to church office

Aug 30          Blood Drive in BFLC (Gym)

Musical Events in the church

Aug 28 5p (doors open at 4:30p) Marysville Community Ensemble in the Sanctuary

Sept 18 5p (doors open at 4:30p) Linda Forry Organ Concert in the Sanctuary
Notify the church office, if you would like added to the Court Street Courier mailing.